

LESSON NOTES

Absolute Beginner S3

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FORMAL SPANISH

1. ATTENDANT: Buenas tardes.
2. ASHLEY: ¡Perdón, yo no hablo español!
3. ATTENDANT: ¿No habla español?
4. ASHLEY: No, solamente un poquito.

ENGLISH

1. ATTENDANT: Good afternoon!
2. ASHLEY: Sorry, I don't speak Spanish.
3. ATTENDANT: You don't speak Spanish?
4. ASHLEY: No, only a little.

VOCABULARY

Spanish	English	Class	Gender
hablo	I speak	verb	
español	Spanish	adjective	masculine
no	no	adverb, adjective, exclamation	
tardes	evening (literal evenings)	noun (f., plur.)	feminine
buenas	good	adj. (f., plur)	feminine

un, una	a / an	article
perdón	sorry	interjection, phrase
solamente	only	adv.
un poquito(a)	a little bit	diminutive adverb

SAMPLE SENTENCES

<p>Si, hablo un poco. "Yes, I speak a little."</p>	<p>¿Hablas español? "Do you speak Spanish?"</p>
<p>No es una mala idea. "It's not a bad idea."</p>	<p>Las tardes en México son agradables. "Evenings in Mexico are pleasant."</p>
<p>Yo tengo muy buenas amigas. "I have very good friends."</p>	<p>Buenas tardes Señora. "Good afternoon, Miss."</p>
<p>Es un tipo de manzana. "It's a kind of apple."</p>	<p>Perdón, no puedo ir contigo. "Sorry, I can't go with you."</p>
<p>¡Perdón! ¿Estás bien? "Sorry! Are you ok?"</p>	<p>Perdón, ¿me podrías ayudar? "Excuse me, could you help me?"</p>
<p>Los estudiantes respondieron solamente la primera parte del examen. "The students answered just the first part of the exam."</p>	<p>Solamente quiero ir a mi cama. "I only want to go to my bed."</p>

Poco a poco todo es posible. "Little by little anything is possible."	Si, hablo un poquito. "Yes, I speak a little bit."
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VOCABULARY PHRASE USAGE

Buenas tardes

Buenas tardes means "good afternoon." Many people in Mexico simply say *buenas*, and it implicitly means *buenos días* ("good morning"), *buenas tardes* or *buenas noches* ("good evening"), depending on the time. We only use this greeting when you meet. When you part ways, say *que tenga buena tarde* (formal) or *que tengas buena tarde* (casual).

Solamente un poquito.

Poquito is the diminutive form of *poco* ("a little"). We use *poco* for uncountable amounts. We use *solamente unos pocos* (in plural) for things we can count. When we add the diminutive *ito*, "little" becomes "tiny." We can also shorten *solamente* to *sólo un poquito* or *sólo un poco*.

GRAMMAR

The Focus of This Lesson Is to Teach You the Use of the Verb *Hablar* ("to Talk").

¡Perdón, yo no hablo español! ¿No habla español?

"Sorry, I don't speak Spanish. You don't speak Spanish?"

We use the verb *hablar* ("to speak") to express language ability, as in *yo hablo/no hablo español* ("I speak/don't speak Spanish"). Alternatively, we can say *yo entiendo/no entiendo español* ("I understand/don't understand Spanish"). We conjugate the verb *hablar* ("to speak") in different ways depending on the person it refers to. The affirmative form normally takes the following structure: subject + verb + predicate.

Subject

Verb

Predicate

<i>yo</i> ("I")	<i>hablo</i>	<i>español</i>
<i>tú</i> ("you")	<i>hablas</i>	<i>español</i>
<i>usted</i> ("you")	<i>habla</i>	<i>español</i>
<i>él/ella</i> ("he"/"she")	<i>habla</i>	<i>español</i>

The negative form forms a very similar structure (simply add "no"):

Subject	Negative	Verb	Direct Object
<i>yo</i> ("I")	<i>no</i>	<i>hablo</i>	<i>español</i>
<i>tú</i> ("you")	<i>no</i>	<i>hablas</i>	<i>español</i>
<i>usted</i> ("you")	<i>no</i>	<i>habla</i>	<i>español</i>
<i>él/ella</i> ("he"/"she")	<i>no</i>	<i>habla</i>	<i>español</i>

The question form follows the same structure with question marks (you must also change the voice intonation).

Pronoun	Verb	Direct Object
<i>¿tú</i> ("you")	<i>hablas</i>	<i>español?</i>
<i>¿usted</i> ("you")	<i>habla</i>	<i>español?</i>
<i>¿él/ella</i> ("he"/"she")	<i>habla</i>	<i>español?</i>

When answering the question "Do you speak Spanish?" you have a range of options. You can say *sí hablo* ("I do speak"), or you can say:

Spanish	"English"
<i>nada</i>	"nothing"
<i>solamente un poquito</i>	"only a tiny bit"

<i>solamente un poco</i>	"only a little"
<i>más o menos</i>	"more or less"
<i>no mucho</i>	"not much"

Notice that it's not necessary to add the article *el* to the noun *español*, as in *Yo no hablo **el** español*. However, you may use the alternative form *Yo no hablo **el** idioma español* ("I don't speak **the** Spanish language"). In this conversation, Ashley could have asked the store attendant if she could speak English by saying *¿Usted no habla inglés?* or *¿Habla usted inglés?*

For Example:

1. *Yo no hablo inglés.*
"I don't speak English."
2. *¿Él habla español?*
"Does he speak Spanish?"

Examples From This Dialogue

1. *¿No habla español?*
No, solamente un poquito.
2. "You don't speak Spanish?"
"No, only a little."

Language Tip: Using the Diminutive Form *...ito* or *...ita*

People in Mexico tend to express feelings using the diminutive form of words. We use diminutives mostly with nouns but also with adjectives. This is generally a way to speak to children, but we can also use it to express gentleness and care toward an adult.

For Example:

Spanish	"English"
<i>regalo-regalito</i>	"little present"

<i>chocolate-chocolatito</i>	"little chocolate"
<i>poco-poquito</i>	"tiny bit"

We add the ending *ito* for masculine words and *ita* for feminine. Funny words like *poquitito* ("tiny tiny bit") are also possible.

CULTURAL INSIGHT

How and When to Greet People in Mexico

As close as it is to the United States, a lot of people in Mexico still cannot speak English. So don't be surprised if at stores or at an agency, they have to call someone else to communicate with you.

Say *buenos días* ("good morning") until noon, *buenas tardes* ("good afternoon") until around seven o'clock p.m., and *buenas noches* ("good night") after seven o'clock p.m. when greeting someone or when you go back home or go to bed.