

LESSON NOTES

Absolute Beginner S3 #18

Which Mexican Dishes do you Like?

CONTENTS

- 2 Informal Spanish
- 2 English
- 2 Vocabulary
- 3 Sample Sentences
- 4 Vocabulary Phrase Usage
- 4 Grammar
- 7 Cultural Insight

18

INFORMAL SPANISH

1. ASHLEY: Perdón, María, no puedo comer este mole.
2. MARÍA: ¿Por qué?
3. ASHLEY: Porque está muy picante.
4. MARÍA: No te preocupes, tengo tamales.

ENGLISH

1. ASHLEY: Sorry, Maria, I can't eat this mole.
2. MARÍA: Why?
3. ASHLEY: Because it's very spicy.
4. MARÍA: Don't worry. I have tamales.

VOCABULARY

Spanish	English	Class	Gender
por qué	why	interrogative pronoun	
porque	because	conjunction	
tener	to have	verb	
mole	sauce made from dry chile, chocolate and spices	noun	masculine

comer	to eat	verb	
poder	to be able to, can	verb	
picante	spicy	adjective	masculine and feminine
este	this	pronoun	
muy	very	adverb	
preocuparse	to worry	reflexive verb	

SAMPLE SENTENCES

¿Por qué no trabajas? "Why don't you work?"	Me gustas porque eres bonita. "I like you because you are pretty."
Tengo sueño. "I'm sleepy."	Tengo dos hermanos. "I have two brothers."
Hice mole. "I made mole."	Ellos comen mucho. "They eat a lot."
No voy a poder ir. "I won't be able to go."	¿Puedes cerrar esa ventana por favor? "Can you close that window, please?"
Puedes trabajar. "You can work."	Para mí la salsa es demasiado picante. "The sauce is too spicy for me."

<p>Este camino nos lleva directamente a mi casa.</p> <p>"This route will take us directly to my house."</p>	<p>Tu suéter es muy feo.</p> <p>"Your sweater is very ugly."</p>
<p>Ni modo, ya es muy tarde.</p> <p>"There's nothing anyone can do about it: it's too late."</p>	<p>Me preocupé cuando no llamaste.</p> <p>"I got worried when you didn't call."</p>

VOCABULARY PHRASE USAGE

picante ("hot/spicy")

Mexico is known for being the land of chile and hot peppers. There are more than forty varieties of them. When something is hot we say *pica* or *pica mucho*, *está picante*, or *está muy picante*. If you can't eat hot food, say *no puedo comer picante*.

preocuparse ("to worry")

Even if Mexicans do often get worried about things, the expression *no te preocupes* ("don't worry") is far more common than *estoy preocupado* ("I'm worried"). "Don't worry, be happy" is *no te preocupes, sé feliz*.

mole

Mole is a dark paste similar to curry, made with chocolate and dozens of other spices, in which typically chicken is cooked and sprinkled with sesame seed. It constitutes a main dish and is originally from the southern state of Oaxaca. It has an intense, mildly hot, and slightly sweet flavor.

GRAMMAR

The Focus of This Lesson Is to Teach You the Verb *Poder* Both in the Affirmative and

Negative Forms: *Puedo/No Puedo.*

Perdón, María, no puedo comer este mole.

"Sorry, Maria, I can't eat this mole."

Let's review the verb *poder* ("to be able") in its first, second, and third person conjugations:

Spanish	"English"
<i>yo puedo</i>	"I can"
<i>tú puedes</i>	"you can"
<i>él/ella puede</i>	"he/she can"
<i>usted puede</i>	"you can (formal)"

Expressions using *puedo/no puedo* ("can"/"can't") always imply the use of another verb, which can be transitive or intransitive. This means the verb may be enough in and of itself or that it may need to be followed by a direct object in order to complete its meaning. For example, compare the sentences "I can/cannot eat" vs. "I can/cannot eat hot peppers." We can use verb *comer* ("to eat") as transitive or intransitive, depending on what follows. See the following examples.

For Example:

Affirmative	Negative
<i>Puedo comer mole.</i> "I can eat mole."	<i>No puedo comer mole.</i> "I cannot eat mole."
<i>Puedo cantar.</i> "I can sing."	<i>No puedo cantar.</i> "I cannot sing."
<i>Puedo correr.</i> "I can run."	<i>No puedo correr.</i> "I cannot run."

To change a verb into its negative, just add *no* before the verb. This goes for any verb in Spanish. On the other hand, it is not necessary to add the article *Yo* ("I") before the verb since the conjugation already implies the first person. Let's review the second and third

persons of the singular as well.

For Example:

Second Person Affirmative	Second Person Negative
<i>Puedes comer mole.</i> "You can eat mole."	<i>No puedes comer mole.</i> "You cannot eat mole."
<i>Puedes cantar.</i> "You can sing."	<i>No puedes cantar.</i> "You cannot sing."
Third Person Affirmative	Third Person Negative
<i>Puede comer mole.</i> "He/she can eat mole."	<i>No puede comer mole.</i> "He/she cannot eat mole."
<i>El/Ella puede cantar</i> "He/she can sing."	<i>El/Ella no puede cantar.</i> "He/she cannot sing."

In the dialogue, María asked Ashley why she couldn't eat the food she had prepared, and Ashley explained "because it is too spicy." In other words, she can't eat hot food. Ashley used the expression *muy picante* ("very spicy"), which follows the structure: *está* ("it is") *muy* ("very")... + adjective. You can use this structure with other adjectives too.

For Example:

Adjective	Structure
<i>picante</i> ("spicy")	<i>está muy picante</i> ("it's very spicy")
<i>dulce</i> ("sweet")	<i>está muy dulce</i> ("it's very sweet")
<i>grande</i> ("big")	<i>está muy grande</i> ("it's very big")
<i>chico</i> ("small")	<i>está muy chico</i> ("it's very small")

For Example:

1. *El agua está muy caliente.*

"The water is very hot."

2. *No puedo cantar.*

"I cannot sing."

Examples From This Dialogue

1. *Porque está muy picante.*

"Because it's too spicy."

CULTURAL INSIGHT

Table Manners in Mexico

In Mexico, housewives are quite proud of the food they make, so it won't be easy to sneak away from it. But if you really can't eat something, speak out from the beginning and don't wait until it is served. This way, the person who made it will not feel it as a judgment when you leave it on the plate. You may also say you have an allergy or personal problem with that food, but make sure you do it ahead of time. Heavy foods, such as *chicharrón* ("pork skin"), *chile relleno* ("stuffed chili peppers"), or *cochinita pibil* ("shredded pork meat with sauce") may be hard on foreigners, but make sure you thank the person who cooked it and, if possible, praise it lavishly.