

LESSON NOTES

Absolute Beginner S1 #7

Can You Describe that Person to Me in Spanish?

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INFORMAL SPANISH

1. DIEGO: ¿Quién es tu amiga? La morenita...
2. PEDRO: Es Adriana. Y tiene novio.
3. DIEGO: Ni modo. ¿Me presentas?
4. PEDRO: ¡Claro!

ENGLISH

1. DIEGO: Who is your friend? The cute, dark-skinned one...
2. PEDRO: It's Adriana. And she has a boyfriend.
3. DIEGO: Oh well. Will you introduce me?
4. PEDRO: Of course!

VOCABULARY

Spanish	English	Class	Gender
amigo	friend	noun	masculine
moreno	dark-skinned, tanned, dark-haired (Europe)	adjective	
novio	boyfriend, groom	noun	masculine
quién	who, whom	pronoun, interrogative adverb	
presentar	to introduce	verb	

SAMPLE SENTENCES

Ustedes son amigos. "You all are friends."	Regresaste bastante morenita de la playa. "You came back from the beach rather dark."
Yo he conocido a muchos latinos morenos. "I've met many dark-skinned Latinos."	Mi novia es muy guapa "My girlfriend is very beautiful."
¿Quién es el padre de Mario? "Who is Mario's father?"	Te presento a mi hermano Pedro. I introduce you to my brother Pedro.

VOCABULARY PHRASE USAGE

***¿quién?* ("Who?")**

This is an interrogative pronoun. Unlike the English "who," the Spanish *¿quién?* has a plural, *¿quiénes?*, which we use when the anticipated answer is in the plural.

***la amiga* ("friend")**

This is the feminine form, which we use to refer to a female friend. In dictionaries, glossaries, and vocabularies, the masculine *el amigo* is usually the form that's listed.

***la morenita* ("the dark-skinned girl")**

This is the feminine diminutive form of the adjective *moreno* ("dark-skinned," "tanned," "dark-haired"). Here, using it with the article *la* ("the") makes this the nominal usage of the adjective.

***el novio* ("boyfriend," "groom")**

The feminine form of this word is *la novia* ("girlfriend," "bride").

***presentar* ("to introduce," "to present")**

The main sense of this verb is "to present," as in "to show" or "to give someone an object."

However, we also use it very commonly in social situations when introducing one person to another.

GRAMMAR

The Focus of This Lesson Is the Gender and Number of Adjectives.

¿Quién es tu amiga? La morenita...

"Who is your friend? The cute, dark-skinned one..."

In the Spanish language, adjectives have gender and number. This means that they are either masculine or feminine and either singular or plural. The majority of adjectives (but not all) follow the same basic patterns.

The function of an adjective is to modify a noun. For example, let's look at the phrase "full stomach." Notice how the adjective "full" modifies the noun "stomach." It tells us something about the quality or state of the "stomach."

In Spanish, the gender and number of an adjective must agree with that of the noun it modifies. If the noun is masculine and singular, then the adjective must be masculine and singular. If the noun is feminine and singular, then the noun must be feminine and singular and so on. For the most part in Spanish, masculine nouns end in *-o* when they are singular and *-os* when they are plural. Feminine nouns for the most part end in *-a* when they are singular and *-as* when they are plural.

Let's take a closer look at how the endings of an adjective change in order to agree in gender and number with the nouns they modify.

For Example:

Singular:

1. *moreno* (masculine)
"dark skinned," "tanned," "dark haired" (Spain)
2. *morena* (feminine)
"dark skinned," "tanned," "dark haired" (Spain)

Plural:

1. *morenos* (masculine)
"dark skinned," "tanned," "dark haired" (Spain)
2. *morenas* (feminine)
"dark skinned," "tanned," "dark haired" (Spain)

Using Adjectives as Nouns

In this lesson, Diego asks *¿Quién es tu amiga? La morenita...* ("Who is your friend? The cute, dark-skinned one...")

The phrase *la morenita* ("the cute dark-skinned girl") is related to the adjective *moreno* ("dark skinned"). Obviously, he uses the feminine form to refer to a girl, and he adds the diminutive suffix *-ita*; in this case, we assume that the diminutive marks his affection, i.e., attraction, to this woman.

Note as well that we are using *morenita* as a noun, as a definite article precedes it. In Spanish, adjectives can follow by the definite article, which in effect makes them nouns. Notice that the English equivalent often adds a noun indicating gender or alternately the word "...one."

For Example:

<i>Spanish Adjective</i>	"English"	<i>Spanish Noun Form</i>	"English"
<i>alto</i>	"tall"	<i>el alto</i>	"the tall guy," "the tall one"
<i>loco</i>	"crazy"	<i>la loca</i>	"the crazy woman," "the crazy one"
<i>tonto</i>	"dumb," "foolish"	<i>el tonto</i>	"the dumb guy," "the dumb one"
<i>gordo</i>	"fat"	<i>la gordita</i>	"the chubby girl," "the chubby one"
<i>rubio</i>	"blonde"	<i>las rubias</i>	"the blonde girls," "the blonde ones"

<i>castigado</i>	"punished"	<i>los castigados</i>	"the ones who got punished"
<i>afortunado</i>	"lucky"	<i>los afortunados</i>	"the lucky guys," "the lucky ones"

CULTURAL INSIGHT

Don't Hate Me Because I'm Blond

Physical descriptions are often colored by cultural perceptions; the way people are described in your country may be different than the way they will be described in Mexico and other Spanish-speaking countries. That said, here's a fact for you listeners and readers: I'm more on the toastier side of the skin-color continuum. If visualizing my skin helps, then let's say I have olive-color "tanned" skin. In Spanish, that word would be *prieto*. And yet, as we heard in the lesson dialogue, we used the word *morenita*. That word-in the masculine-could also apply to me. And my hair and eyes are dark. Let me state the obvious for you: nothing exciting.

Now that you know that, I've been called *güero* and *güerito*, which means "blond" or "blondie" (masculine). I know what you're thinking: who in the WORLD is his optometrist?! Well, in central and southern Mexico, it has nothing to do with skin color; it's a class distinction. These class distinctions, however wrong, are made by blue-collar workers (e.g., parking attendants, bricklayers). So if you're dark skinned like me but are on vacation, let's say in Mexico City, and are driving into a parking lot, the parking attendant (never disrespectfully) may call you *güero/a*. When that happened to me for the first time, I immediately had a blond moment. Just kidding.

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