

## LESSON NOTES

# Absolute Beginner S1 #13 Can You Tell Me What to Do in Spanish?

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# # 13

## FORMAL SPANISH

1. CLIENTE: Joven...
2. MESERO: Sí, dígame.
3. CLIENTE: Me trae la cuenta, por favor.
4. MESERO: Como no.

## ENGLISH

1. CUSTOMER: Young man...
2. WAITER: Yes, what can I do for you?
3. CUSTOMER: Will you bring me the check, please?
4. WAITER: Of course.

## VOCABULARY

Spanish	English	Class	Gender
el joven	young man	noun	masculine
Dígame.	How can I help you? Tell me.	phrase	
traer	to bring	verb	
cuenta	account, check, bill, calculation, sum	noun	feminine
Cómo no.	Of course.	phrase	

## SAMPLE SENTENCES

<p>Disculpe joven, ¿nos toma la orden?</p> <p>"Excuse me sir, will you take our order?"</p>	<p>Dígame qué gusta ordenar.</p> <p>"Tell me what you would like to order."</p>
<p>Si no me traes los documentos lo más pronto posible, estás despedido.</p> <p>"If you don't bring me the documents as soon as possible, you're fired."</p>	<p>Nos pidieron que trajéramos nuestras propias bebidas a la fiesta.</p> <p>"We were asked to bring our own drinks to the party."</p>
<p>Traeme la cuenta, por favor.</p> <p>"Bring me the check, please."</p>	<p>Ayer yo traje un diccionario a la clase.</p> <p>"Yesterday, I brought a dictionary to class."</p>
<p>Tráigame la cuenta, por favor.</p> <p>"Bring me the check, please."</p>	<p>Quisiera abrir una cuenta de ahorros.</p> <p>"I would like to open a savings account."</p>

Cómo no voy a querer las papas fritas.

"Of course I'm going to want the french fries."

## VOCABULARY PHRASE USAGE

### **joven** ("young")

We usually think of this word as an adjective meaning "young." We often use the term in Mexico to address younger adult males in a formal situation. Using *joven* to address the waiter is very common in Mexico.

### **Dígame. ("What can I do for you?")**

Literally, *dígame* means "tell me"; it is a command in the formal register. Waiters, clerks, and other service people use this phrase with customers as a polite way to show that they are ready to serve.

### **traer ("to bring")**

In the present tense, this verb has a *-g* in the first person singular form: *traigo* ("I bring"). Apart from that form, we conjugate it regularly in the present tense.

### **la cuenta ("check," "bill")**

In accounting, *la cuenta* usually refers to a calculation or a sum. In the context of restaurants, however, we understand it as "the check" to be paid at the end of a meal.

### **Cómo no. ("Of course.")**

This is a strong affirmation. A literal gloss might be "how not?" as in "of course, how could it not be so?"

## GRAMMAR

### **The Focus of This Lesson Is Making Requests in the Present Tense.**

*Me trae la cuenta, por favor.*

"Will you bring me the check, please?"

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We often use the present indicative to make simple requests. Because we can also use the present tense for future actions, we can analyze these as simple interrogatives in the immediate future (e.g., "Will you do this for me...").

In translation, these requests with the present tense are often best understood as questions, even though the Spanish intonation or punctuation may not reflect it. Because of this, second language speakers of Spanish often analyze these sentences incorrectly as a form of command.

### **Sample Sentences**

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1. *Me trae la cuenta, por favor.*  
"Will you bring me the check, please?"
2. *Me da tres kilos de manzanas verdes y dos de las rojas, si es tan amable.*  
"Will you give me three kilos of green apples and two of red, if you'd be so kind?"

3. *Nos cierran la puerta.... gracias.*  
"Will you close the door for us? Thanks."
4. *Me pasas la sal.*  
"Will you pass me the salt?"
5. *Me escribes otro ejemplo, Fernando.*  
"Will you write me another example, Fernando?"

## CULTURAL INSIGHT

### Closing Out Your Restaurant Tab in Spanish

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There aren't too many differences in how to ask for the bill when at a restaurant in the Spanish-speaking world when compared to English. However, to lighten things up, I would like to shed some light on a few nuances when finishing up a meal at a restaurant:

- *La cuenta* is universally known to mean "*the check*." You can follow that up with some charade action with the commonly used air pen signature. You'll get extra points for using both hands: one hand holds the pen, the other the pad on which to write.

- *El cheque* has a more English influence: it is "*check*" in Spanish. This one you can hear more frequently in certain parts of Mexico or where U.S. tourists vacation or visit in the Spanish-speaking world.

- My favorite, though, is one people use in the motherland, Spain. *La cuenta y la puerta* is meant to convey the following image: give me the check so I can head toward the door immediately. (*Puerta* means "door.")

-Fernando