

Perdido en tres idiomas — English translation

Recurso de apoyo opcional. Úsalo solo si te atascas —
la inmersión en español es donde está el aprendizaje
real.

Antes de leer esto en lugar del español...

Este documento es una red de seguridad, no un sustituto. Las palabras en MAYÚSCULAS tienen su propia entrada detallada en el documento de Vocabulario. Las frases en *cursiva subrayada* están explicadas en el documento de Gramática. Consulta esos documentos para entender el matiz real — esta traducción solo da el significado superficial.

PALABRA = vocabulario destacado frase = punto de gramática

INTRODUCTION

Hey, welcome to Poco a Poco Podcast.

My name is Juan, and... this is the very first episode.

So, no pressure, right?

Okay, a little pressure.

Here's the idea behind this show.

We're going to learn Spanish... the real way.

Not with flashcards.

Not with a list of verbs to memorize.

We're going to learn it through stories.

My stories, actually.

I'll talk mostly in Spanish... slowly, clearly... and at the end, we'll break down the words and the grammar that actually matter.

No boring tables.

Just real language, explained properly.

So, today's story.

I want to tell you about something that happened to me three times... in three different countries.

I got lost.

Yes, lost. Like, "where am I, what is happening" lost.

Once in Valencia, my hometown.

Once in London.

And once in Tokyo.

Same situation, more or less, every time.

But three completely different reactions from the people who helped me.

And I think that... says a lot about culture.

Maybe more than any textbook could.

Alright. Let's get into it... in Spanish, from here.

Stay with me, even if you don't catch every word.

That's exactly the point.

Well... before starting the story... let me introduce myself a little.

My name is Juan.

I was born in Valencia.

And I **WAS RAISED** here too... in Spain.

But over the years... I lived in several places.

I studied at university... in England.

Several years... there.

That's why I speak English **FAIRLY FLUENTLY**.

Well... I hope so.

After university... I worked many years at a big company.

I was a **SALES DIRECTOR**.

I traveled constantly.

Madrid... Barcelona... Valencia...

Meetings... presentations... public speaking all the time.

I **MANAGED TEAMS**... fairly large ones.

I learned a lot from that time... honestly.

Managing people... speaking in front of a hundred people **WITHOUT YOUR VOICE SHAKING**.

Well... almost without it shaking.

But... my **TRUE PASSION** was never the corporate world.

My passion was always languages.

Two years ago... I left that job.

And I started this project.

This podcast... I mean.

Ah... one more thing... before the story.

Since I was young... I've studied Japanese.

As a hobby, at first.

But at some point... I said, well... I'm going to **TAKE A YEAR OFF**.

And I went to live in Japan.

A whole year... in Tokyo.

Okay... now yes... the story.

I'm going to tell you something... that happened to me three times.

In three different countries.

I GOT LOST.

All three times... I got lost walking down the street.

And all three times... I had to ask **A STRANGER** how to get to my destination.

Let's start with Valencia... my city.

This was years ago... when I still lived here.

I was going to a friend's house... to an area I didn't know well.

And, of course... I got lost.

As always... I mean.

So... I stopped a man... who was at the door of a bar.

And I asked him, very politely... **"DO YOU KNOW WHERE THIS STREET IS?"**

And the man... **TOOK IT AS A PERSONAL PROJECT.**

I'M NOT EXAGGERATING.

He asked me where I was coming from.

He asked me who I was going to visit.

He told me he'd known that street... for forty years.

And then... he called over another man... who was passing by.

"Hey, Paco! Do you know where such-and-such street is?"

And now there were three of us... arguing about the best route.

In the end... between the two, or rather the three of them... they **EXPLAINED THE WAY IN GREAT DETAIL.**

And before I left... the first man said to me... **"WAIT, WAIT, DO YOU HAVE TIME FOR A COFFEE?"**

I had to say no... that I was running late.

But I left thinking... **WHAT A LOVELY GUY.**

Five minutes to give directions... turned into fifteen.

And **NOBODY WAS IN A HURRY.**

Now... London.

This was during my university years.

I was going to a job interview... in an area of the city I didn't know.

And, once again... I got lost.

I'm starting to think... that I'm the problem... not the cities.

So I asked a woman... who was waiting at a traffic light.

"Excuse me, do you know where this street is?"

And the woman... **LOOKED AT ME, VERY KINDLY.**

She gave me the exact address.

Clear... direct... perfect.

"Turn left, then it's the second street on your right."

And that was it.

NOT ONE MORE QUESTION.

Not "where are you going?"... not "where are you from?"

Information... and done.

And the curious thing is... **SHE WASN'T COLD.**

She was kind... she smiled... everything proper.

But there was **A POLITE DISTANCE**... right?

As if saying... "I'll help you, but I won't invade your space."

And honestly... in that moment, rushing for the interview... I appreciated it enormously.

And now... Tokyo.

This was during my year living there.

I was going to a Japanese class... in a neighborhood new to me.

And... well... you know what happened.

I got lost... again.

So I asked an older man... who was closing his shop.

In my still somewhat **CLUMSY** Japanese... I asked him how to get there.

And the man... **PAUSED TO THINK FOR A MOMENT.**

And then... he closed the shop.

Literally... he closed the shop.

And he told me... "come on, I'll walk you there."

We walked together... about ten minutes.

Almost without talking... honestly.

The occasional brief question... the occasional brief answer.

But he walked with me... all the way to the building's door.

And then he made **A SMALL BOW**... and left.

WITHOUT EXPECTING ANYTHING.

No small talk.

Just... action.

I stood there for a moment... thinking... "okay... that was special."

So... three countries.

Three completely different reactions.

In Valencia... directions turn into a conversation... almost a little party.

In London... directions are precise, polite information... and fast.

In Tokyo... directions turn into an action... into walking with you physically... without needing extra words.

And which one is better?

None of them.

That's really the point.

It's not better or worse.

It's different.

Each reaction has its own logic... its own way of showing that you matter to them.

Spanish shows it with words... with time... with closeness.

English... at least in that moment, in London... showed it with efficiency and respect for my hurry.

Japanese showed it with a gesture... with an action worth more than a thousand words.

And I learned something else... that day.

That sometimes... the biggest help... doesn't need a single word.

Well... and here's my final reflection... for real.

I could have learned this from a book.

"The Spanish are warm, the English are reserved, the Japanese are discreet."

Very pretty sentences... and very empty.

Because you don't truly understand anything... until you get lost in the street.

Until you need help from a stranger.

And there... in that small moment... **THE ENTIRE CULTURE OF A COUNTRY** appears.

That's why I'm passionate about languages.

They're not just words.

They're the door to understanding how people think, feel, and help... in other places.

And that door... only opens... if you speak the language.

Well... and that's today's story.

Lost three times... in three countries.

And a little wiser... I hope.

CLOSING

Okay, let's break down today's episode.

Five expressions, plus one small grammar point.

First word: "majo."

I said, about the man in Valencia, "qué majo, este hombre."

A dictionary will tell you "majo" means "nice" or "kind."

And... that's not wrong, but it misses something.

"Majo" is warmer than "nice."

It's almost affectionate... like you genuinely enjoyed the person, even briefly.

In Spanish, "qué majo" after a thirty-second interaction is totally normal.

It's a very Spanish-specific kind of warmth toward strangers.

Second one: "se lo tomó como un proyecto personal."

Literally, "he took it as a personal project."

This isn't a fixed idiom, exactly, but it's a very common way of describing... someone who goes way beyond what you asked for.

You ask a small favor, and suddenly it's their mission.

If you want to describe that feeling in Spanish, this phrase works perfectly.

Third: "¿tienes tiempo para un café?"

On the surface, this just means "do you have time for a coffee?"

But culturally... this is huge.

Offering coffee to a complete stranger, after just giving directions, is a small but real gesture of hospitality.

It's not really about the coffee.

It's about extending the interaction, showing goodwill.

In many English-speaking contexts, that same offer to a stranger might actually feel a little surprising, or even slightly intrusive.

Fourth: "torpe."

I used this about my Japanese... "mi japonés todavía un poco torpe."

The direct translation is "clumsy."

But "clumsy" in English usually describes physical movement... tripping, dropping things.

In Spanish, "torpe" extends naturally to skills... a clumsy way of speaking, a clumsy way of explaining something.

"Torpe" simply covers more ground than "clumsy" does.

Fifth, and this one's Japanese, but it matters for the story: the bow... the small reverencia the man made before leaving.

In Spanish, we'd call it "una reverencia."

In English, "a bow" is accurate, technically.

But "bow" in English carries some... royal, formal weight, like bowing to a king.

In Japanese daily life, a small bow like that is closer to... a polite nod, a quiet "you're welcome," with your whole body instead of words.

Neither English nor Spanish really has an equivalent gesture that's that common in everyday interactions.

Okay, now, a small grammar point.

Did you notice how many times I used the preterite versus the imperfect?

"Me perdí" — preterite, a completed action, a specific moment.

But "estaba cerrando su tienda" — imperfect, describing an ongoing action happening in the background.

Here's the simple way to think about it.

Preterite is for the plot... the specific events that happened.

Imperfect is for the scenery... what was already happening around those events.

"Me perdí" — plot.

"Estaba cerrando la tienda" — scenery.

If you keep that distinction in mind... plot versus scenery... Spanish storytelling becomes much easier to follow, and eventually, to produce yourself.

Okay, that's it for episode one.

Thank you for being here, for this very first... slightly nervous... episode.

Next time, a new story, a new piece of language.

Poco a poco, as always.

See you next time.