

POCO A POCO PODCAST

Siesta, sobremesa y cenar tarde — ¿Tópicos o realidades?

Episode 02 · Full English Translation

Optional support resource — read the episode in Spanish first whenever you can. Words in **TERRACOTA** **CAPS** have a full entry in the Vocabulary document; phrases in underlined navy italics connect to the Grammar document.

INTRODUCTION

Hey, welcome back to Poco a Poco.

I'm Juan... and today we're talking about three things that, if you've ever traveled to Spain, you've probably heard about.

The siesta.

The sobremesa.

And eating dinner... really, really late.

Are these real things... or just stereotypes that tourists repeat?

Well... I have personal experience with all three.

And I'm going to tell you exactly what happens when my foreign friends visit Spain for the first time.

Let's get into it.

EPISODE BODY (TRANSLATED FROM SPANISH)

Well... let's start with the siesta.

For a lot of people outside Spain, **THE SIESTA IS A JOKE**.

As if all Spaniards... closed up shop at three in the afternoon to sleep for an hour.

And... well, sometimes it's true.

But for me, the siesta isn't **PEREZA**.

It's... **NECESIDAD**.

Let me tell you something.

When I was in England, studying at university...

...at first I didn't miss it.

But after a few weeks...

I started noticing something strange.

Around three... three thirty in the afternoon...

an enormous **CANSANCIO** would hit me.

And I'd think, "what's wrong with me?"

My classmates kept working, normal as ever.

And I... would almost fall asleep on top of my book.

Of course... my body still had **EL RELOJ** español — the Spanish clock.

The siesta clock.

And I **MISSED IT**.

A lot.

Not just sleeping...

but that moment of the day when... everything stops.

And here's the interesting part.

Because it's not just culture.

There are studies... real scientific ones...

that say a short siesta...

twenty... thirty minutes max...

improves memory...

improves concentration...

and reduces stress.

In other words... we're not crazy.

WE'RE AHEAD OF THE CURVE.

That's what I say, anyway.

And I have the perfect story about this.

I have a German friend... his name is Lukas.

He came to spend a summer in Valencia, with my family.

And the first day... after lunch...

the whole house went silent.

Lukas thought something was wrong.

He came out of his room... **ON TIPTOE**...

like there was a funeral going on.

And he saw my dad... asleep on the sofa.

My mom... asleep in her armchair.

And my brother... asleep on the floor, literally.

Lukas told me later he thought... "is everyone sick?"

And I told him, "no, Lukas... it's the siesta."

By the end of the summer... you know what?

Lukas was napping too.

Every single day.

And it wasn't just Lukas.

I have another friend... her name is Yuki, she's from Japan.

And with her, it went the other way around.

Yuki came to Valencia... two summers ago.

And on the first day, after lunch, I told her, "come on, let's get some sleep."

And she just stared at me... very serious.

She said, "sleep?"

It's three in the afternoon."

And I told her, "exactly... that's why."

In Japan, Yuki explained to me...

there's something similar... it's called "inemuri."

But it's not the same thing.

Inemuri is falling asleep... in public, without meaning to.

On the subway, in a meeting, even standing up.

But nobody plans it.

Nobody says, "now we're going to sleep."

The Spanish siesta... is different.

It's intentional.

It's **A RITUAL, ALMOST SACRED.**

It took Yuki three days to give in.

But in the end... she **CAYÓ** too — she gave in.

She sent me a message last year.

She said, "Juan... I nap in Tokyo now, and my coworkers think I'm crazy."

IT REALLY MADE ME LAUGH.

Okay, now... the sobremesa.

This one's harder to explain.

Because the word doesn't even exist... in English.

SOBREMESA is... the time after eating...

when... you stay at the table.

Not to eat more.

To talk.

To laugh.

To argue about politics with your uncle... again.

And it's not just politics.

You talk about everything.

Football.

Who's going to marry whom.

About **THE NEIGHBOR FROM THE FIFTH FLOOR**, nobody really knows **WHAT SHE DOES FOR A LIVING.**

And, above all... stories get told.

The same story, a thousand times.

My grandfather tells the same story about his **MILITARY SERVICE**... since I was five years old.

And we all listen... like it's the first time.

Because the story doesn't matter.

What matters is being there.

What matters is the coffee, the clinking of spoons, the laughter.

It can last... twenty minutes.

It can last... three hours.

In my family, on Sundays...

we used to finish eating at three...

and we'd stay at the table...

until five, or six.

No phones.

Well... almost no phones.

And I have foreign friends who've come to eat at my parents' house...

and after the meal...

they get up.

And my mom says, "where are you going? Sit down!"

And the friend... doesn't understand a thing.

Because for them, the meal... is already over.

But for us... the meal is just the first part.

SOBREMESA is the second.

And, for me... it's the best part.

I have another example, even better.

My friend Lukas... the same one from the siesta summer...

the first sobremesa he experienced, at my parents' house...

lasted... four hours.

Four hours, talking about football, politics, life.

And Lukas, around hour two...

asked me quietly, "Juan... when are we leaving?"

And I told him, "leaving?"

Lukas, we haven't even finished the coffee."

For him, the sobremesa was... **A FRIENDLY KIND OF TORTURE.**

For us... it was a normal Sunday.

And now... the topic that surprises people the most.

Dinner time.

I have a friend... from Sweden.

She came to visit me in Valencia last summer.

And I told her, "let's have dinner at ten."

HER FACE WAS PRICELESS.

"Ten at night?"

"In Sweden... I have dinner at six."

And I told her, "**WELCOME TO** Spain."

But this isn't just... some weird **COSTUMBRE** either.

It has a historical explanation.

Spain, geographically...

is in the same time zone as... Germany.

But the sun... sets much later here.

So, in reality...

our clock... is a little **DESAJUSTADO** — out of sync — with the sun.

We eat late because **THE SUN IS STILL HIGH.**

And we have dinner late... for the same reason.

My Swedish friend **TOOK THREE DAYS TO ADJUST.**

On the fourth day...

she was already ordering tapas at eleven at night.

Like a local.

And it's not just her.

I have another friend... American, from Chicago.

Her first night in Madrid...

she asked me, very seriously, "what time do restaurants close?"

And I told her, "close?"

They haven't even opened yet."

Her face... priceless, again.

It was eight thirty in the evening.

In Spain... that's almost **MERIENDA** time — snack time.

And that's because the whole Spanish schedule is... **DESPLAZADO** — shifted.

We have breakfast late, compared to the rest of Europe.

We eat at two, or three.

We have a snack at six or seven.

And we have dinner at nine, or ten.

My foreign friends always ask me the same thing.

"But Juan... when do you eat so much?"

And I tell them, "all day long... **POCO A POCO.**"

That's the name of the podcast, right?

It's not a coincidence.

So... stereotypes, or realities?

I think... they're realities.
But realities that make sense.
The siesta... isn't laziness.
The sobremesa... isn't wasting time.
And having dinner late... isn't chaos.
It's... another way of living time.
Slower.
More... shared.
And, honestly... when I'm away from Spain...
it's what I miss the most.
Well... that, and my bed.
But mostly... time.
The time of not being in a hurry.

CLOSING — VOCABULARY & GRAMMAR RECAP

Okay, let's break down some of the vocabulary from today's episode.

First word: "sobremesa."

There's no real translation for this in English... it's the whole ritual of staying at the table after eating, just to talk.

I said... "la sobremesa es la segunda parte."

The meal is just step one.

The real connection happens after.

Second expression: "echar de menos."

I said "lo echaba de menos"... it literally means something like "to throw from less," which makes no sense — it actually means "to miss" someone or something.

In Latin America, you'd more often hear "te extraño" instead.

Same meaning... different flavor.

Third word: "pereza."

I said, "la siesta no es pereza" — it means laziness, but it's used very casually, almost affectionately.

You can say "qué pereza" about almost anything you don't feel like doing, even answering an email.

It's much softer than calling someone lazy in English.

Fourth word: "desajustado."

I said our clock is "un poco desajustado con el sol" — out of sync, or misaligned.

It comes from "ajustar," to adjust, with "des-" reversing it.

Useful for schedules, machines, or relationships out of sync.

Now, a quick grammar point.

Did you notice how many times I used the imperfect tense today?

"Terminábamos," "seguíamos," "tenía"...

The imperfect describes repeated, habitual actions in the past — not one completed event, but something that used to happen, again and again.

"Terminábamos de comer a las tres" means... every Sunday, that's just what happened.

For one specific Sunday, I'd switch to the preterite... "el domingo pasado, terminamos a las cuatro."

That's it for today's episode.

Thank you so much for listening, and... poco a poco, you're getting there.

See you next time.