

## Spanish makes me blush\*

**It's possible to make a fool of yourself in your mother tongue but its doubly easy when speaking a foreign language**

Before you read the complete article, look at this vocabulary and find it in the text:

\***blush**: go red in the face from embarrassment

**utterly**: completely, absolutely

**ludicrous**: absurd

**awkward**: uncomfortable

**wander**: walk or move in a leisurely way with no exact direction or purpose

**subtleties**: a subtle distinction

**counter**: a table or area on which products can be shown or business transacted

**slapped**: hit or strike with the palm of the hand

**couldn't contain themselves**: couldn't stop themselves from laughing

There is no doubt that language shapes the way you think and what is completely normal to say in one language seems **utterly** crazy in another. I had been living in Vitoria-Gasteiz for about a month when a guy I had met through work spotted me in a restaurant. He came over to me to say hello and then said a phrase which left me not knowing what to say next. "Estoy aquí a ver si como algo". Translated to English, "I'm here to see if I eat something". Perfectly normal to say in Spanish but **ludicrous** to the mind of an English speaker. Nobody walks in to a restaurant, sits down at their table and then decides whether they will eat something or not, do they? Luckily my wife - girlfriend at the time - was there to break the **awkward** silence. However, she did get a little laugh out of it as it was the first time she had seen me **blush**.

Two weeks later, I met the same guy at the supermarket. "Estoy aquí a ver si compro algo". I quickly translated the sentence. I'm here to see if I buy something. Oh no. This time there was nobody to save my blushes. The experience has left me thinking that the Basques just **wander** into a supermarket in case they decide to buy something and I have to say, me too.

There is also the problem of learning how to say things correctly, understanding double meanings and little **subtleties** that can mean something totally different to

what you want to say. One day when leaving the house to go to the bakery to buy bread, my wife Maria asked me, in English, to buy two cartons of milk. On my way to the shop, I realised I didn't know how to ask for two cartons of milk in Spanish. Was it "dos leches" or "dos de leche"?

Back then, I couldn't just google it. I was going to ring Maria to ask her how to say it but I decided that I couldn't call Maria every time I needed a word in Spanish. I had to get out there and do it myself. Live the experience. When I got to the bakery, I successfully ordered the bread. Now it was time to ask for the milk. I had a decision to make and I made the wrong one. I decided to ask for "Dos leches, por favor". The girl behind the **counter** reached out and jokingly **slapped** me across the face. The people queuing behind me **couldn't contain themselves**. I just wanted the ground to open up and swallow me.

Making these mistakes is part of the learning process. Believe me, you don't forget and I got very used to it from a very early stage. During my first weekend in Vitoria, we spent the Saturday morning walking around the medieval market in the old quarter. Having worked up a thirst, I went into a bar with my brother-in-law to buy a round of drinks. Feeling brave, I decided to order the drinks and then I asked the barman, "Puedo pegarte por favor". He politely replied, "Are you sure you want to do that?" My brother-in-law laughed before telling me that I had just asked the barman if I could hit him. That's when I learned "Me cobras?"

**"Let's chat about that!"**

Write your answers in an email and send them to your ECP coach!

- Do you enjoy speaking English? Why/not?
- Are you comfortable making strange movements with your mouth to pronounce well?
- Do you have the same personality when you speak another language? If not, how are you different?
- Have you had an embarrassing moment when speaking English? What happened?
- What are your expectations of learners of your language? Are you happy to listen to their foreign accents and their basic errors?



## Take advantage of **ECP's** **LIVE!English** events

*Come and socialise in English!*

For more info, send a WhatsApp to:

📞 **Ali:** 608 426 492

📞 **John (Cine):** 657 731354



### When?

The last **Friday** of every month  
19:30 to 21:30 - It's **FREE!**

**Next film:** 27th April

**Where?** The ECP Hub

C/ San Ignacio de Loyola, 15

## ANNUAL PINTXO COMPETITION

*Come and socialise (and eat) in English!*



**When?** 18th May

**Where?** The ECP Hub

## COFFEE SATURDAYS

*Come and socialise in English!*



### When?

The first available **Saturday** of  
every month from 11:00 to 12:30

**Next meeting:** 5th May

### Where?

Panadería Bertiz

C/ Francia 23

## PRONUNCIATION practice

If you can pronounce every word in this poem correctly, you will be speaking English better than 90% of native English speakers in the world.

*After trying this verse, a Frenchman said he'd prefer six months of hard labour to reading six lines aloud.*

*Dearest creature in creation,  
Study English pronunciation.*

*I will teach you in my verse*

*Sounds like corpse, corps, horse, and worse.*

*I will keep you, Suzy, busy,*

*Make your head with heat grow dizzy.*

*Tear in eye, your dress will tear.*

*So shall I! Oh hear my prayer.*

*Just compare heart, beard, and heard,*

*Dies and diet, lord and word,*

*Sword and sward, retain and Britain.*

*(Mind the latter, how it's written.)*

*Now I surely will not plague you*

*With such words as plague and ague.*

*But be careful how you speak*

**Click [here](#) for full version.**

It's not always that easy to understand someone if they don't pronounce words correctly. If you don't believe me, check out the link below.

**The Italian man who went to Malta**

