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## Doughnuts and Tomatoes

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Here are some musings on the Spanish language, in no particular order.

In the UK, if you bump into a friend in the street, you say “hello”. However, in Spanish people say “Goodbye” or “See you later”. If you greeted a friend by saying “goodbye” in English it would seem quite rude!

In the English version of “The Simpsons”, when something bad happens to Homer Simpson, he says “D’oh!”. This is not a word in English (well, it didn’t used to be, but its popularity in the Simpsons led them to add it to the Oxford English Dictionary). It’s more like a noise. Apparently it is represented in the show’s script as “annoyed grunt”. However, when dubbed into Spanish, “D’oh!” is translated as “¡Ouh!”. The problem is, you just can’t put the same emphasis on “¡Ouh!” as you can on “D’oh!”, and it’s not nearly as funny. As far as I know, “D’oh!” doesn’t mean anything in Spanish, so why did they translate it when there was nothing to translate?

English seems a lot more succinct than Spanish to me. For example, to practice writing in Spanish, I write my “to do” list at home in Spanish. A common item on that list is a reminder to pay my credit card bill. In English, I would write “pay credit card bill”. However, in Spanish I have to write “*paga la factura de la tarjeta de crédito*”! I wonder if books in Spanish are heavier than their equivalents in English...

A doughnut (or donut) is a small, ring-shaped cake. As we know, simple plurals are formed by adding an “s”. So: *one* doughnut, but *two* doughnuts. So

why do some people in Spanish say “*un donuts*”? You wouldn’t say “*un croissants*”, would you?

Some words in Spanish seem to be “borrowed” from English, for example, “*un camping*”, “*un parking*”. However they aren’t used in the same way. For instance, “*un parking*” is “a car park”. “Parking” is the act of putting the car in the car park, as in “I am parking the car at the moment”. You can’t say “The car is in the parking.” In any case, if there is an existing Spanish word (*aparcamiento*), then why use the foreign one?

Perhaps one of the more difficult things to grasp for an English native is the way words have a gender in Spanish. There are patterns, but mostly you just have to learn them. I failed in this attempt to find some logic in it: these words are feminine: kitchen, washing machine, curtain; and these are masculine: car, football, and cigar. However, “beard” is feminine and “pregnancy” masculine, so alas the chauvinist logic doesn’t work. In any case, does it really sound so bad if I get it wrong and say “*un botella*”??

“No” is a question tag in Spanish. Lots of people in Spanish say “no” at the end of their sentences. This leads to the rather confusing phrase “*¡Sí, ¿no?*” (to which I’m still not sure what the correct response is). “No” is not a question tag in English. If you say “no” at the end of a sentence in English, it sounds a bit like a “not joke”. Such a joke is one where a phrase is said in sarcasm, followed by a pause and then the word “not”, thereby negating what just went before. For example:

Spanish television is full of high quality programming and professional journalism - not!

Learning vocabulary is not necessary anyway, because Spanish is basically English with an “o” on the end. Compare the same sentence in Spanish and English:

English: Robert the sarcastic Viking is a fantastic helicopter pilot.

Spanish: *Roberto el vikingo sarcástico es un fantástico piloto de helicópteros.*

Why do Spanish speakers seem to shout “tomato” at things they are annoyed with?