

¿Qué? Podcast, Season 3, Episode 2:

Melissa: In 'La Almuedina'... 'La Almodina?'

Simon: *laughter*

Melissa: What is wrong with me?

Simon: *gibberish* let me think of the word

Simon: Hello everyone! My name is Simon Hunter, I'm the editor of the English Edition of EL PAÍS, and this is ¿Qué? A podcast from El País that will do its best to dig up the best of the Spanish news and bury it in its final destination – your ears!

Whether you're after information about Catalonia, Córdoba or Castilla La Mancha, you'll find it all here, estamos a tu lado.

So sit back, relax, and let us break down all the Spanish stories that make you say, "Manuel, there is too much butter on those trays"

Today is October 2, 2019 and I am, as ever, here with my extremely hardworking antipodean colleague Melissa Kitson, hello Melissa!

Melissa: Hi!

Simon: How are you this week?

Melissa: Good, good

Simon: what have you got to tell us?

Melissa: err..I have to wear a mouthguard *laughter* is that interesting? *laughter*

Simon: What, during the podcast?!

Melissa: No! When I sleep! That's my news.

Simon: *laughter* Well that is big news

Melissa: *laughter* Woaahhhh

Simon: When will you be fitted with this mouthguard?

Melissa: I've been fitted

Simon: You've been fitted already, excellent! I will tell you that I too wear a mouthguard at night, so you're in good company. You get used to it very quickly! *laughter* Well I didn't expect the conversation to go down that route.

Alright well this is episode two of season three of the ¿Qué? Podcast. After saying last week it was a bit quiet on the correspondence front, we have had a deluge of communications from our beloved listeners.

Good job we're here with José Juan again this week who lets us run a little longer than Veronica

José: I'm a nice guy

Simon: Hope you're enjoying your holiday Veronica by the way in New York

As always, we encourage you to get in touch, you can find me on twitter @simoninmadrid use the hashtag #quepodcast or you can email EnglishEdition@elpais.es

Let us know where you're listening, why you're listening and suggest topics for us to talk about, and of course leave us a review and share our podcast on social media! Get the word out!

So I heard from Ronnie, he says "@simoninmadrid listening to your podcast on the train. My other half is a Madrileña which is why I'm so interested in all things Spanish." Ronnie was in the UK I think. Now, he says about this debate whether we should write in US or UK English on the El País English edition website. He says "not terribly bothered by US/UK English incidentally but very slightly in favour of the UK version." Which I guess is normal if you're reading from the UK. He says "I initially thought UK English was the obvious answer **[Sound bite]** but then when you pointed out that it was in the minority compared to US English I felt bad!" **[Sound bite]**

You know, I said that last week and then I went away and thought about it and thought, well, on the assumption that most of our readers in Spain are probably British and then you add that to the readers in the UK, that kind of probably trumps the US. I'm still very much in two minds about it!

Then we heard from Shane Enright on twitter, he said, "I look forward to a season of your "mellifluous" double act." *laughter* Do you remember the "mellifluous"? Yeah that was a nice comment from someone else.

"The Brexit crisis/car crash coming sometime, somewhere, somehow will need your attention but I love that you cover way more parochial stuff too. Help me stay sane! Viva España!" So, yeah, that was before, I think before we did our episode last week where we discussed Brexit.

We heard from Richard Zucker, now Richard Zucker was in such a kerfuffle about the absence of the podcast that he wrote to El País customer service who forwarded it on to us. That was the email that we all got saying, "where's the podcast?! Where's the podcast?!"

Fortunately Richard has now reconnected with the podcast, he says "Dear Simon and Melissa, we just enjoyed your latest podcast over breakfast. I was distraught when I thought you were cancelled without notice, and my assumption was reinforced when I saw that another reporter took over the weekly English news summary."

That's the newsletter which our colleague, Susana, has been doing *laughter* which prompted Richard to think we'd both been summarily dismissed from our jobs which is quite funny. No, we're just giving Susana a run at that Richard, because, unbelievably, she still doesn't know how to do it! *laughter* It's alright, Susana doesn't listen to the podcast so she won't mind or hear that comment, I should say.

So Richard says, "So I contacted El Pais, got this response, immediately opened my podcast app and saw you were waiting there for me. Made my day. So happy!" Well, thank you Richard that's a lovely message.

And then we heard from the original friend of the show, Señora Wright, our Spanish teacher from the UK. "Dear Simon and Melissa, it's great to have the Qué podcast back in my life! I am a bit of a podcast addict," as am I Señora Wright, "but your one is by far my favourite." Which is very nice, thank you! "It's so informative on current affairs in Spain but it also never fails to make me chuckle!

I would just like to echo your response to the students who are asking you," that's me, Simon, "for help with their A Level / university work. I thought you were way too polite to them. I would like to say in a less polite fashion - do the bloody thinking and work for yourselves!!! You'll get much better grades and a lot more out of your studies in the long run if you use your own brains!" Words to live by there Señora Wright... I wonder if they were your students getting in touch... *laughter* And Señora Wright also weighs in on

the UK versus American English, she says “Some Brits can be so judgemental about the use of American English.” Well we *never* see that in our Facebook comments, do we Melissa?!

Melissa: *laughter*

Simon: “I have read that a lot of the turns of phrase/grammar that these people take offence at is language that the English brought over to the US when we invaded in the first place!” We invaded? Did we invade? That’s an interesting choice of language. “So there is a degree of hypocrisy there. As long as people can understand your articles in English, then what does it matter?!”

Well thank you very much for that Señora Wright, it’s great to hear from you again.

Elaine Jones got in touch again, she was the lady that emailed us as well saying, “Where’s the podcast?! Where’s the podcast?” She says, “In response to your question about using British or US English... I think you should use the one you’re most comfortable and familiar with. I don’t think it matters to the reader which one, as of course we can understand both. But when you’re writing in English and have to adjust words or spelling it’s a bit frustrating and you’re more likely to make mistakes.”

Now, Elaine, I’ve been doing this job for 13 years, I’ve been writing in American English for 13 years and actually, to be honest, I think trying to switch back now to British English would be a nightmare, wouldn’t it?! Being so used to it...

Melissa: Yeah, I mean I have not been writing in American English for so long so I think I could make the switch but...

Simon: Should we go to Australian English?

Melissa: Yeah! ‘Yeah mate!’

Simon: *laughter* And then Elaine asks, she says, “Just out of interest, do you, Simon, have Spanish nationality or are you thinking of applying, in view of Brexit? I’ve been waiting to see what happens but we’re still in the dark and I now wish I’d applied when the Brexit vote was declared. I was deterred by the cost and the whole application process but now I’m going ahead with it. Perhaps you could ask your listeners for any comments, advice or personal experience with the process?”

Interesting you should ask that Elaine, in my personal case, I’ve actually got...I must have explained about this before on the podcast, surely, I’ve told everyone else...I went for the ‘get out of jail free card’ option which is to get Irish nationality. My grandmother

was Irish so I was able to apply for Irish nationality. That said, I still haven't actually done anything with it. I'm still officially registered with the Spanish authorities as a British person.

So, obviously depending on what happens with Brexit, I shall hotfoot it down to my local police station, well not my police station, but the immigration police station and I will apply to switch over. As far as I know, theoretically, I can just switch over my nationality without having to change my identity card number or anything like that, then hopefully that will protect me from any negative fallout from Brexit if and when, indeed, it does finally happen.

I would recommend that you go and check out 'Eurocitizens' which is one of these associations that has sprung up in the wake of Brexit to fight for Brits' rights, British people who are British migrants in the EU. They did a survey about British citizens trying to get Spanish nationality and the struggle that many are facing. And if you just google 'Eurocitizens' and go and find their website you can read all about the results of that. It's not going to make you feel much better about the situation but I guess it's good to know that someone out there is at least looking out for our interests.

And now, the other long-term friend of the show has also been in touch, Chris Thompson, in an email, quite a long email Chris, with the subject line 'Disconnected jottings.' Here's a quick galavant through Chris's email: "My podcast app missed your rebirth. I can only guess though that we share some sort of astral link because last night, at around 2 a.m., I thought of you two and there you were. I listened to you, twice this morning, as I raked up the kilos and kilos of rotting figs and pomegranates from our garden and hoed out the weeds fed by the torrential downpour of the DANA." Otherwise known as...

Melissa: "La Gota Fría"

Simon: The "cold-drop," thank you very much

"We escaped lightly but only a few kilometres away the effects were and are devastating."

Now Chris, we do seem to have this early morning connection. *laughter* Avid listeners might remember that Chris is a gentleman with whom I exchanged tweets with at about 11 o'clock on a Friday evening just as I was going to bed, which was quite funny. So, good to know you're thinking of us in the wee small hours Chris.

He then says, "Great to have you and the warm chaos of your podcasts back. Even better that you gave me a mention. I've played bits with my name to friends - it makes me feel like a celeb."

"On the American or British English thing I sometimes notice the US English in your articles - beltway for ring road in the Kamikaze driver piece comes to mind - but just like we're all a little bit bi nowadays I think that Britons use US English all the time - trucks, movies, to go, I guess so, etc."

Of course," says Chris "you could be early-in on the trend and use Indian English - when the Indians overtake the Chinese as the most populous nation on earth with the biggest number of English speakers then you'll be ahead of the game."

Un abrazo fuerte, varonil y solidario. From Chris." So thank you very much for that.

And finally, I got a lovely email from a man who says, "My name is John Tkac," T-K-A-C, apologies John I probably messed up the pronunciation of your surname, he says, "and I am a Lecturer of Spanish at James Madison University in the US. This past summer I traveled to Barcelona with 20 students for a course centered on historical memory, nationalism, gender roles, sports and Spanish culture in the 20th and 21st Century. You would be delighted to know that your name appeared as a source in at least five of my students' final papers (properly cited, of course). I also recommended that my students listen to the podcast to learn more about modern Spain."

In addition to this, I am an avid listener to the podcast and would like to say the following: continue with American English, it is pronounced Yourahnuhl (urinal) and please continue to be frank and honest in your coverage of Catalonia." More on that later...

"Take care. John. P. S. Melissa is wonderful. Your show is a delight." *laughter*

Melissa: Awww *laughter*

Simon: Well thank you John, you made a woman with a freshly installed mouthguard very, very happy.

Sound bite

Simon: Let us, without further ado, turn to our topics, now... *sigh* a bit like last week, we're coming back to two issues we have discussed several times on the podcast

before and have written, who knows how many pages of copy about but here we are yet again. Let's start with Catalonia. What is happening, Melissa?

Melissa: Well, this week has been important for Catalonia because it is the second anniversary of the illegal independence referendum of October 1. So on Tuesday, to mark the date, around 18,000 people took to the streets in Barcelona, and there were smaller marches in other Catalan municipalities.

Pro-independence political parties used the day to call for mass civil disobedience if the Supreme Court rules against the 12 separatist leaders who were tried earlier this year for their involvement in the 2017 breakaway attempt. So as we have discussed in other podcasts, these political and social leaders face charges ranging from misuse of public funds to rebellion, and could be sentenced to lengthy prison sentences.

Now, the premier of Catalonia, Quim Torra, who is a hard-line supporter of the separatist movement, said he would only accept the Supreme Court's decision if the defendants are acquitted.

Meanwhile, Pedro Sánchez has warned that, although he is acting as Spain's caretaker prime minister, he still has the power to reapply direct rule in Catalonia under Article 155.

Now this highly anticipated verdict is expected in the coming days and is likely to cause more tension in the deeply divided region.

Now, adding to the tension is the recent arrest of seven Catalan separatists on suspicion of planning acts of violence ahead of the October 1 anniversary and Supreme Court verdict.

These individuals are accused of belonging to a radical offshoot of the pro-independence network Committees to Defend the Republic, or CDR, known as Technical Response Teams.

So, while the CDR are known for their public protests, which involve blocking highways and lifting toll barriers to allow drivers past, investigators say the Technical Response Teams were planning to use violence to instate a Catalan republic.

Two of the arrested individuals have confessed to making explosives and testing them. According to sources close to the case, the detainees were storing bomb-making materials like sulfuric acid and thermite, had floor plans of several public buildings and photos of regional police stations, as well as notes on how to make Goma-2, which is a

powerful industrial explosive that was regularly used by the Basque terror group ETA in the 1980s and 1990s.

To make matters even more complicated, the suspected terrorists are accused of meeting with Anna Puigdemont, the sister of ousted Catalan premier, Carles Puigdemont. This meeting was supposedly organized to arrange a way to channel sensitive information between Puigdemont's headquarters in Brussels and Barcelona.

Needless to say, given these high-running tensions, all eyes will be on Catalonia when the Supreme Court announces its ruling in the trial against the separatists leaders.

Simon: Yeah, so a lot to unpack there. Let's start, I think, with the issue of violence.

Now of course the whole of the pro-independence movement has been very much based on an approach of non-violent, in some cases, civil disobedience - there's a lot of talk at the moment about civil disobedience ahead of the ruling from the Supreme Court. So these arrests look very bad for the pro-independence movement, which of course had prompted a load of conspiracy theories about how it's all a fit up, about how these people were plants, about how this couldn't possibly be terrorism.

But certainly there's a lot of leaks coming from this, you know, this investigation is supposed to be under seal but there's a lot of leaks coming out and it really doesn't sound good for the people who have been arrested just purely based on the materials, the explosives, the bomb making materials that have allegedly been found as well as the documents. You know, some of these suspects are alleged to have had pictures of police stations on their mobile phones and were basically being accused of planning to plant explosive devices around Catalonia in a bid to basically...not 'collapsar' - I've got that word that Spanish word *laughter* but basically to cause disruption basically within the region.

On a side note in terms of violence there were also, I mean, there weren't really any incidents last night at the protests on the second anniversary of the referendum, but there was, again, one of these really ugly scenes involving a TV reporter and this is not the first time that we've seen this. There was a Telecinco reporter who was trying to do a piece to camera. She was getting ready to a piece to camera, someone threw a bottle or something with liquid in at her, it hit her in the head, she got covered in the liquid and then people were basically screaming at her. I mean, to be fair, you can go and see the video, the video's on our website, to be fair, some people were trying to help her, were trying to defend her, gave her paper towels to wipe herself down. But there were also

some people being very aggressive towards her shouting “Fuera! Fuera!” “Out of here! Out of here!” and accusing her and her channel of lying and manipulating the news.

So that kind of stuff doesn't do the movement any good at all obviously, on the basis that its trying to sell itself as a non-violent movement which is, of course, so important given the huge amount of controversy that was caused by the actions of the Spanish authorities on the day of the October 1 2017 referendum which we all remember so well - of police violence towards ordinary members of the public who were trying to vote in that referendum.

I thought it was interesting to see the Catalan premier, Quim Torra, in his address yesterday urging citizens to revive the spirit of the breakaway bid from two years go. I mean, does that suggest that they've sort of got the sense that there's a bit of a waning backing for the pro-independence movement?

There was an opinion poll published in May by the regional government's own opinion study centre that said that 48% of respondents rejected secession from Spain compared to 44% in March. This has been going on for a very long time now and let's not forget, who was the most voted party at the last regional elections? It was Citizens, and Citizens was born out of an anti-Catalan independence message.

Of course, let's not forget, there was enough support for the pro-independence parties for them to form a government, Citizens didn't manage to get a majority but, you know, there's never been a majority behind the pro-independence movement in Catalonia, albeit probably I think the polls suggest that the majority do want to have a referendum, there's never been an overwhelming support for the independence movement.

So we're really kind of stuck in this situation with no clear way out and, as you said Melissa, we've got the upcoming ruling from the Supreme Court trial which yesterday representatives from pro-independence parties and groups such as 'Together for Catalonia', the 'Republican Catalan Left' and the far-left CUP and 'Òmnium Cultural' and 'ANC' which are civil pro-independence societies. They read out a manifesto and that was where they were calling for the non-violent struggle and civil disobedience among the public, they're calling for a massive response. But you know, really if you listen to what they were saying, they're kind of saying...it's almost a foregone conclusion for them that the political leaders and the pro-independence leaders who have been on trial in the Supreme Court are going to be found guilty of some of the charges, if not all, that they've been facing which have been charges such as rebellion which can mean very long prison terms.

So yeah I think really, you know yesterday was all very muted apart from that one incident that I referred to but, yeah really, all eyes are going to be on Catalonia now when we get this ruling from the Supreme Court because, depending on what the ruling says, there could be a very, very strong reaction.

And if these pro-independence leaders are convicted, there is, of course, a possibility that the government, whoever *laughter*...if we indeed have a government, that the government, whatever the shape and form it might be after the November 10 elections, could actually pardon them which is something that conservative parties such as the Popular Party, centre-right Citizens and far-right Vox are dead set against so let's see what happens when we get that ruling.

Music interlude

Simon: Alright, let's move on to our second story which is, again, another old favorite. What's going on in the Valley of the Fallen, Melissa?

Melissa: Well, big news this week, Spain's Supreme Court has given its final green light to the exhumation of Francisco Franco from the Valley of the Fallen.

This decision could put an end to a legal saga that has been dragging on since June last year, when Pedro Sánchez first announced the government's plans to remove Franco's body from the controversial monument.

The Valley of the Fallen is meant to be a monument to victims on both sides of the Spanish Civil War but the only marked graves at the site belong to Franco, and José Antonio Primo de Rivera, who was the founder of the fascist-inspired political party Falange. Many of the Republican victims were buried there without their family's consent and the site itself was built by thousands of prisoners of war.

When Sánchez came to office he promised to right this wrong by removing Franco's remains and transferring them to the El Pardo cemetery, where Franco's wife is buried.

But at every step of the way, the government's plan has been met with legal challenges and appeals, especially from Franco's grandchildren.

Franco's family are staunchly opposed to the exhumation and appealed the decision with the Supreme Court. Making matters worse, they argued that if Franco were to be exhumed, he should be reburied with "military honors" in La Almudena Cathedral.

This would have been a disaster for the Spanish government. La Almudena is a popular tourist destination and is located right in the center of Madrid, next to the Royal Palace, meaning Franco would be resting in an even more esteemed position.

Adding to this challenge, were supposed safety concerns over the exhumation. In February, an administrative judge suspended the building license to carry out the work, after the Francisco Franco Foundation claimed the project was a danger to the “safety of persons and assets.”

And to complicate the situation even more, the acting prior at the basilica of the Valley of the Fallen, Father Santiago Cantera, also put up obstacles and refused to grant the government authorization to access Franco’s tomb. Cantera incidentally is a former candidate for the neo-fascist party Falange.

But on Monday, the Supreme Court removed all of these obstacles, ruling that the plan to transfer the remains of the former dictator to a different cemetery is constitutional and does not infringe planning laws or local legislation.

But the story may not be over yet. Franco’s family has announced that it will file an appeal with Spain’s Constitutional Court on the grounds that the exhumation is a violation of fundamental rights. Sánchez wants the exhumation to happen as soon as possible, but it looks like there may be one last obstacle to get passed.

Simon: That's the thing with this story! It's just like every time we publish this story, “ahh the courts give the final green light” and then you kind of get into the story and its like, “but there's still this thing that they have to sort out.”

So we’ve had all of these obstacles that have been thrown in the way of Pedro Sánchez’s plan. The one that I like the most is the one about the local judge who suspended the building because, “Ah, it's going to be dangerous!” And you just walk around Madrid and see all of these dangerous building sites *laughter* and you think, really?! Really, that’s the best that you could come up with? That it's going to be dangerous to pick up this heavy tombstone? I think you can find someone that will manage to do it.

But yeah, it just really, it's the neverending story and of course now we've got this time limit because Sánchez really wants to get it done before we go into campaigning for the November 10 elections, which means there's not really much time to go. It's worth pointing out here that Franco actually never even wanted to be buried in the Valley of

the Fallen. It was a decision that was made after his death, it's not where he wanted to go.

In terms of what the political parties are saying, it's only far-right Vox that is actually kind of outright opposed to this plan. The rest of the parties are just sort of, kind of, keeping their distance. Vox is calling it a "desecration of Franco's tomb." They're actually trying to use the Madrid regional government's sway to get it stopped. Like in many other places in Spain, the Madrid regional government was formed with the support of the seats that Vox had. It's run by the PP and Citizens but it's got the support of Vox. But, you know, as far as anyone can tell the Madrid regional government has just got no powers in this respect so couldn't do anything anyway.

The Popular Party, for its part, is opting to criticize the Socialist Party for what it calls 'politicizing' the move. Pablo Casado said this week he was "more concerned about live dictators than dead ones," and he had a pop at Sánchez, who was at the UN last week for a meeting with the Iranian president, but he said the the PP will respect the Supreme Court ruling.

The Franco family has said that it's only going to stop it's opposition when the Pope intervenes! So their plan now is to take this to the Constitutional Court, that's another step up, but legal experts are pretty much saying that that doesn't have much chance of prospering. And the Franco family lawyer came out and said it was "a violation of the Franco family's human rights," which the obvious answer to that is - what about the human rights of the thousands of dead Spaniards who are lying in, still lying in, unmarked roadside graves and were executed during the Civil War and Franco era repression?

The Franco family apparently could still opt for an alternative site. As it stands at the moment, he's going to be taken to El Pardo cemetery in...is it? Oh no, it's the other way round, isn't it? Is it Mingorrubio cemetery in El Pardo which is north of Madrid and that's where his wife is buried... was it his wife or his daughter?

Melissa: His wife, Carmen Polo

Simon: Yeah, Carmen Polo, yeah that's where his wife is buried. So, as it stands at the moment that is where he is going to be taken but who knows, who knows what's going to happen.

It looks though, you know, I'm almost nervous to say this because of how many times we've been here before, but it looks now that it is going to happen. The government has it in its favor the fact that the court found that the general interest should take

precedence over the rights of the family to bury Franco in the Almudena and, of course the ruling from the Supreme Court judges was unanimous which I thought was interesting. So that suggests that the law is with Sánchez on this.

But, you know, who knows, it's one of those things that's kind of revived a lot of decisions. I still find so shocking, those photos of very ordinary looking middle-class Spaniards up at the Valley of the Fallen doing Fascist salutes, which we covered a while ago, and it's something that is not going to sit well with a lot of Spanish people. So you could say well, "why not just leave it be?" But then of course when you look at the other side of the argument you say well "why have we got this kind of burial spot in this monument for someone who was a Spanish...who was a fascist dictator and was responsible for so many deaths during the Franco, sorry, during the Civil War and the Franco era."

So, it's a tricky one but it looks like the Socialists have managed to make some headway with historical memory which has long been one of their key policy points.

Sound bite

Simon: All right, so let's wrap up the second episode of season 3

My name is Simon Hunter

Melissa: I'm Melissa Kitson

Simon: and this was "¿Qué?" A podcast that tries to explain what happens in Spain to those of us who sometimes get a little bit lost in translation.

This is an EL PAÍS production, it was recorded right here in the EL PAÍS newsroom under the expert guidance of our stand-in producer José Juan Morales, whose name is definitely not Juan José Morales, and you can listen to it on your favorite podcast app.

You can also request it via Alexa, Siri or your Google Assistant. We'll be back next week with a brand new host of issues. Thank you for listening, adios!

Melissa: Ciao!