

SPANISH RESOURCES FOR WORKING WITH UC

PART 2: SPOTLIGHT ON CENTRAL AMERICAN SPANISH

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Part Two of Spanish Resources for Working with Unaccompanied Children!

The second part of this resources focuses on the regional varieties of Spanish spoken in the three most common countries of origin for unaccompanied children – El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. We recognize that while the vast majority of the network already speaks Spanish, it is possible that the accents or some of the phrases used by recently arrived unaccompanied children might be unfamiliar to providers. To that end, we have included information on the use of *vos*, regional pronunciation, and demographic and geographic terms, as well as a host of external links to help flesh out certain linguistic details. We have also included a brief section on indigenous languages. The resource concludes with an Appendix of common words and phrases in El Salvador; we plan to add similar appendices for Guatemala and Honduras (as well as a section on gang/cartel terminology) in the future.

We consider this glossary to be a living document, so please feel free to send any related comments, questions or suggestions to William Castillo Guardado at wcastillo@vera.org.

¡Mil gracias!

GENERAL RESOURCES

English-Spanish/Spanish-English online dictionary

- <http://wordreference.com/>
 - One of the more comprehensive online dictionaries, it also offers detailed and extensive considerations of specific words and phrases through collaborative discussion forums.

Spanish verbs conjugator

- <http://www.donquijote.org/spanishlanguage/verbs/>
 - Simply type in a verb in Spanish and this website will generate a list of all the possible conjugations based on verb tense and pronoun-verb agreement.
 - **Note:** This tool does not have an algorithm to produce conjugations for the second person singular *vos*. For information on conjugating *vos*, see:
 - <http://study-spanish-language.com/grammar/conjugating-vos/>

Common mistakes in Spanish

- <http://www.donquijote.org/spanishlanguage/common-errors/>
 - You can click through this alphabetized database to see commonly misused phrases, review their proper usage, and learn appropriate alternatives.

Central American Spanish

- Spanish spoken in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras is distinguished by the use of *vos* for the second person singular (in English “you”). The usage of *vos* affects verb conjugation but does not otherwise impact grammar or syntax. It is important to note that the use of *vos* is culturally specific. It is, with some exceptions, generally used for those who are at the same age or societal level, or inferior to the speaker (i.e., animals). In other areas, *vos* is the dominant pronoun used between spouses, family members and close friends. In El Salvador, for example, *usted* is reserved as an honorific for strangers; in turn, *tú* is used when speaking to non-Central Americans. When speaking with children, *vos* can make the tone of the conversation more friendly and less formal than when using *tú* or *usted*.
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_American_Spanish
 - This page provides a brief overview of Spanish spoken in Central America and explains the main differences between it and Spanish spoken elsewhere.
- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voseo>
- http://es.wikibooks.org/wiki/Espa%C3%B1ol/La_conjugaci%C3%B3n/El_voseo
 - These pages give a more in-depth look at the use of *vos* throughout Latin America.

EL SALVADOR

Although *tú* is understood in El Salvador, it is not commonly used except in conversations with foreigners, or conversations between couples. In speech, the “s” is dropped at the end of syllables and words and usually pronounced softly as an “h” (*vos* is pronounced “voh”; therefore, *¿que pasó, vos?* becomes “que pahó, voh?” meaning “What’s up?”) Before consonants, the “s” is pronounced as an “h.”

- Brief overview of Spanish spoken in El Salvador:
 - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salvadoran_Spanish
- Common words and phrases in El Salvador:
 - <http://www.tubabel.com/pais/SV>
- Geographic vocabulary in El Salvador:
 - El Salvador is divided into 14 departments (*departamentos*) which are in turn divided into over 260 municipalities (*municipios*). Each municipality is further divided into *cantones*, which are themselves divided into *caseríos*.
 - A list of the departments and municipalities in El Salvador:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Departments_of_El_Salvador
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Municipalities_of_El_Salvador
 - A departmental map of El Salvador:
http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Divisi%C3%B3n_administrativa_de_El_Salvador#mediaviewer/File:Departments_of_El_Salvador_named.svg
- National group identifier:
 - Salvadorans refer to themselves as *guanacos*.
- Demographic identifiers in El Salvador:
 - *Mestizo* (Indigenous and European ancestry)
 - *Blanco* (European ancestry)
 - *Indígena* (Indigenous ancestry)
 - As in many parts of Latin America, the term *indio* is often used to describe people of indigenous ancestry; however, the word should be considered pejorative and should **not** be used interchangeably with *indígena*.
 - The indigenous community in El Salvador (between roughly one and 10 percent of the overall population, according to different estimates) is primarily composed of the Lenca, Pipil, Kakawira and Xinca communities. Many are monolingual Spanish speakers.

GUATEMALA

Using the second person singular *vos* is typical in Guatemalan Spanish. Speakers of Guatemalan Spanish use *tú* in more formal settings, especially when speaking with women. Some word combinations in Guatemalan Spanish reflect the syntax of Mayan-derived languages. For example, *uno mi amigo* (literally, “one my friend”) means “a friend of mine.”

- Words and phrases in Guatemala:
 - <http://www.tubabel.com/pais/GT>
 - <http://www.tulane.edu/~howard/spanling/AmLang/Guata.html>
- Geographic vocabulary in Guatemala:
 - Guatemala is divided into eight regions (*regiones*), and further divided into 22 departments (*departamentos*) which are in turn divided into over 300 municipalities (*municipios*).
 - A list of the regions, departments and municipalities in Guatemala:
http://www.oj.gob.gt/estadisticalaboral/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=171&Itemid=207
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Departments_of_Guatemala
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Municipalities_of_Guatemala
 - A departmental map of Guatemala:
http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organizaci%C3%B3n_territorial_de_Guatemala#mediaviewer/File:Departamentos_de_Guatemala.png
- National group identifier:
 - Guatemalans refer to themselves as *chapines* (singular: *chapín*).
- Demographic identifiers in Guatemala:
 - *Ladino* (identifier specific to Guatemala to refer to someone of *mestizo* ancestry)
 - *Indígena* (Indigenous ancestry)
 - As in many parts of Latin America, the term *indio* is often used to describe people of indigenous ancestry; however, the word should be considered pejorative and should **not** be used interchangeably with *indígena*.
 - The indigenous community in Guatemala (roughly 40 percent of the overall population) is primarily Mayan-descendant, but is extremely diverse in terms of language, geographic distribution and culture. (See below for more information on indigenous languages spoken in Guatemala.)
 - *Garífuna* (refers to the Garífuna people concentrated mainly in the Izabal department of eastern Guatemala who migrated from the Caribbean to coastal regions of Belize, Guatemala and Honduras. The Garífuna trace their ancestry to African and indigenous Caribbean communities.)
 - *Blanco* (European ancestry)

HONDURAS

Spanish in Honduras is characterized by the aspiration of the “j” and the “s,” which means that they can be pronounced as softly as the “h” in English or might not be pronounced at all.

- Brief overview of aspects of Spanish spoken in Honduras:
 - http://www.mission.net/honduras/san-pedro-sula/page.php?pg_id=1569
- Words and phrases in Honduras:
 - <http://www.tubabel.com/pais/HN>
- Geographical vocabulary in Honduras:
 - Honduras is divided into 18 departments (*departamentos*) which are in turn divided into almost 300 municipalities (*municipios* or *municipalidades*), which are in turn divided into *aldeas*, which are divided into *caseríos*, which are further divided into *barrios* or *colonias*.
 - A list of the departments and municipalities in Honduras:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Departments_of_Honduras
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Municipalities_of_Honduras
 - A departmental map of Honduras:
http://www.zonu.com/mapas_honduras/Honduras_Departments_Division_Map_2.htm
- National group identifier:
 - Hondurans refer to themselves as *catrachos*.
- Demographic identifiers in Honduras:
 - *Mestizo* (Indigenous and European ancestry)
 - *Negro/Afrodescendiente* (African ancestry)
 - *Mulato* (Could refer to someone with African and European ancestry, or African and *mestizo* ancestry)
 - *Blanco* (European ancestry)
 - *Indígena* (Indigenous ancestry)
 - As in many parts of Latin America, the term *indio* is often used to describe people of indigenous ancestry; however, the word should be considered pejorative and should **not** be used interchangeably with *indígena*.
 - The indigenous community in Honduras comprises approximately seven percent of the total population, and includes the Lenca, Miskito, Ch’orti’, Tolupan (Jicaque), Pech (Paya) and Suma (Mayanga) communities.

INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

The majority of unaccompanied children who speak an indigenous language are from Guatemala (with notable exceptions of children from Mexico who speak languages like Chatino, Mixteco, Triqui or Zapotec, for example, Quechua speakers from Ecuador, and children from Belize and Honduras who speak Garífuna or Miskito). Some indigenous languages spoken in Guatemala like K'iche, Mam and Q'eqchi' have native speakers numbering in the millions or hundreds of thousands, while other languages of lesser diffusion like Popti or Chuj have several thousand speakers. As many of you are already aware, there is often enormous variation within a Mayan-based language, with speakers of one form of Mam unable to understand speakers of another variation of Mam, for example; this is often based on geographic factors that have limited contact between speakers of what is considered to be the same language.

*Regardless of a child's national origin or linguistic capabilities, it is important to think of indigenous languages as languages in and of themselves and not simply as "dialects." While it might be common to refer in Spanish to indigenous languages as *dialectos*, this term can be considered derogatory and should not be used.

- A map of Guatemala showing the regional diffusion of indigenous languages:
 - <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Idiomasmmap.svg>

APPENDIX

EL SALVADOR

Common Words and Phrases

For a more extensive list of Salvadoran slang, please visit: <http://www.tubabel.com/pais/SV>.

achicar – to humiliate

aguambado – stupid, idiot (e.g., *qué aguambado que eres* – “you are such an idiot”)

artar – (1) to eat (usually to describe animals eating, but vulgar when describing people eating); (2) to be fed up with something (e.g., *jestoy arto de verte!* – “I’m sick of seeing you!”)

bayunco – asshole

bicho/bicha – kid/teen, sometimes derogatory, like “brat” or “punk” (also used to say “boyfriend / girlfriend”) (usually used by younger people amongst themselves)

bolado – thing; object (very commonly used by youth)

bolo/a – drunk

cabal – (1) nice, easygoing, nothing wrong (e.g., *él es bién cabal* – “he is very cool”), (2) Used in speech to denote that you are listening to or agree with the other, similar to “that’s right”

chachalaco – a very talkative person

champa – a ramshackle shelter or shanty

chanco – a liquid with coarse consistency (e.g., *no usaste filtro porque el café está bien chanco* – “you must not have used a filter because the coffee is very coarse,” meaning that pieces of coffee grounds are floating in it)

chele – pale or white in complexion; usually used to describe a blond or Caucasian person

chechehiado – askew, uneven (e.g., *me cortaron el pelo bien chechehiado* – “they cut my hair so unevenly”)

chicotazo – a beating/whipping (usually done with a stick called a *chicote*)

chindondo – a raised bruise

chivo – cool; awesome

chirgüe – a small, shriveled piece of meat/flesh (e.g., *tiene mucho chirgüe esa carne* – “that meat has too many pieces of shriveled meat,” such as the skin; *me corté un pedazo de chirgüe de mi dedo en accidente* – “I cut off a little bit of the flesh on my finger by accident”)

choyado – someone who is careless

chuco – (1) dirty; (2) a fermented corn drink

chucho – dog

chueco – crooked or bent. Can also describe somebody crooked or disobedient.

chulo – beautiful

chunche - thing; object

cipote – young boy or girl (very commonly used by older folk to describe young people)

cochino/a – filthy, dirty, repulsive

(una) **cualquiera** – a slut (very derogatory; used only to describe women) (lit. “just anyone”)

cucar – to tease someone (*me estaban cucando* – “they were teasing me”)

cumbo – a bucket

cuзуco – armadillo.

(dar) gato por liebre – to be ripped off in a financial transaction (e.g., *compré una computadora pero me dieron gato por liebre porque no sirve* – “I bought a computer but I was ripped off because it doesn’t work”)

dundo – stupid or dumb (note that the word *estúpido* is very offensive)

(eso es) gacho – that is useless/bad (e.g., *¡que gacho!* – “that sucks!” “That’s messed up!”)

galán – (1) sweet, nice (e.g., *que galán si pudiera ir* – “how nice it would be if I could go”) (2) handsome (for men)

guacal – large bowl, often used in the large cement sinks used to bathe or wash dishes/clothing

guaro – alcohol

lana – money

maitro/a – An older person, usually with authority (e.g., *esa maitra me dijo que no me subiera ahí* – “that woman told me not to climb over there”)

ni chicha ni limonada – not one or the other; neither bad nor good

¡nombre! – No way! C’mon! (Used in conversation to denote amusement, is an abbreviation of *No + Hombre*)

paja – lies (e.g., *no me digas paja* – “don’t tell me lies”)

panza – belly (usually used to describe a big person, e.g. *el está bien panzón* – “he is big bellied”),

pepenar – to clean scraps or pieces of something off the ground; most commonly used in coffee harvesting

pipian – (1) a type of squash; (2) derogatory term for homosexual male

pisto – money

puchica – (1) Fuck! (when something wrong or unfortunately happens) (2) no way! (when something unbelievable happens, to indicate amazement)

puesí – So anyway.... (a contraction of *Pues + Sí*) (commonly used to change subjects)

tarado – stupid