

# Hispanic American Diversity of Languages

If after studying Spanish hard at school still makes you confused when conversing with native speakers, don't be. It so happens Spanish is spoken by [over] 19 different Latin countries so expect variations in accents and vocabulary. The diversity of the Hispanic American languages is largely explained by this. The countries of origin of Latinos/Hispanics are as diverse as their speech. In this article, both will be presented.

## Latin American Spanish

The most common Spanish dialect taught in the U.S. is standard Latin American which is sometimes called "Highland" Spanish because it is generally spoken in the mountainous areas of Latin America. Though many Latin countries retains its own accents and has its unique vocabulary, the residents of countries such as Mexico, Colombia, Peru and Bolivia generally speak Latin American Spanish, which is most commonly used in the urban areas.

This Spanish dialect is noted for its pronunciation of each letter and its strong "r" sounds. It was spoken in Spain in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and was brought to the Americas by the early colonists.

## Castilian Spanish

However, the Spanish of Madrid and of northern Spain, called Castilian, developed characteristics that never reached the New World. These include the pronunciation of "ci" and "ce" as "th." In Madrid, "gracias" (thank you) becomes "gratheas" (as opposed to "gras-see-as" in Latin America.)

Another difference is the use of the word "vosotros" (you all, or you guys) as the informal form of "ustedes" in Spain.

Castilian sounds to Latin Americans much like British English sounds to U.S. residents.

French, on other hand, is a highly centralized language, with the Parisian accent setting the standard for the world. If other French-speaking political entities had risen to rival France, the situation might be different. If for instance,

Quebec had remained a separate country, or if Haiti had been a larger country, then perhaps other French dialects might have become more accepted.

## "Trade Winds" Spanish

The third major type of Spanish is spoken in the Caribbean, coastal areas of Latin America, and in some cases in southern Spain. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the accent in Seville, Cádiz, and other cities in Andalusia, in Southern Spain, began to change. Speakers began to drop the final "s" on words.

The settlers and traders of southern Spain took this dialect with them to the Caribbean and other coastal areas. Today Caribbean or "Lowland" Spanish is characterized by its relative informality, its rapid pace, and the dropping of "s" sounds, allowing people to talk more quickly.

## Italians Influence Argentina

A fourth type of Spanish has developed in and around Buenos Aires and in parts of Uruguay. It is characterized by some out-of-date grammar, and a vocabulary and pronunciation heavily influenced by Italians who settled the area in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Generally in the Spanish world "tú" is the singular way of saying "you." In Buenos Aires, however, "vos" is used instead. It is accompanied by a modified old Spanish verb form. It is as if part of the English-speaking world still used "thee" and "thou" in everyday speech.

For instance, they pronounce the "ll" as an English "zh," while most other Spanish speakers pronounce "ll" as an English "y."

The Buenos Aires accent is instantly recognizable throughout the Spanish world. Gaucho poetry and twentieth-century Buenos Aires novelists have preserved this speech as a literary style.

The influence of Italian has even led to the development of a separate language, Lunfardo, which blends Spanish and Italian. Argentine intellectuals have produced Lunfardo dictionaries and books in an effort to keep the language alive.

*Exerpts from "Why Spanish Accents Can Be So Different" by David Johnson.  
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For further reading, check out Wikipedia's article on **Calo or Kalo**, the Chicano slang language used by modern Chicano youth.

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