

Dialects and Slang

People often confuse the words dialect and slang. Linguists often define a dialect as a variant of a language that is still mutually intelligible to speakers of other dialects of that same language. The linguist John McWhorter says, "Dialects are all there is." That is, that the word language only applies to a dialect that has been chosen for political or social reasons to have the status of language. My dialect of English, West Coast US English, is easily understood by people speaking Southern US English. Although Scots English is a dialect of English, I often miss too many words to understand it, until I have heard it for many hours.

There are many dialects in the Spanish speaking world. The five major dialect areas are:

- Spain
- Caribbean (including Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico and the Caribbean coasts of Mexico, Central America, Venezuela and Colombia)
- Mexico and Central America (Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panamá)
- Andean countries: Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Perú, Chile, Bolivia
- Rio Plate Region: Paraguay, Argentina, Uruguay

These areas are further divided by country and then by region. Dialect differences include pronunciation, vocabulary and some slight grammar differences.

If you want to read more on dialects and languages read the very engaging book *The Power of Babel* by [John McWhorter](#)

This link to Spanish dialects and varieties is in English. It is quite complete, with many other links of interest.

This link to [Idioma Español](#) is in Spanish. It also has many other interesting links.

Remember that Wikipedia entries are written and edited by people like you and me; there may be inaccuracies.

Slang is a subset of vocabulary and grammar used by a select group of people. There is surfer slang and doctor slang and pickpocket slang and teenager slang and Hollywood slang and so on. Slang varies greatly from region to region and changes frequently. Older people use less slang than young people. Some slang words like "cool" go in and out of fashion over 80 plus years. Others, like "nifty" or "boss," come, and then are gone forever. Slang words usually start in lower socio-economic classes and move upward.

There are many websites devoted to slang from various Spanish speaking countries. I have not included any links to websites devoted to slang because so many of the pages on slang post terms that are not appropriate for an unrestricted audience.

If you want to read more on slang from Spanish speaking countries go to any search engine and type in the words **Mexican** (or **Cuban, Argentinean, etc.**) **slang** or **vocabulario mexicano** (or **cubano, argentino, etc.**)