

Talk Like a Venezuelan: Slang Words for Everyday Use

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Venezuelan slang is one of the most unique in all of Latin America. In the last few years, I've had the privilege of meeting and making friends with a lot of young Venezuelans.

It's always a pleasure to meet people from other cultures. While many similarities exist within Latin American countries and their inhabitants, slang words are one of the most prominent differences you'll notice among Spanish speakers in Central and South America.

The most curious part about Venezuelan slang words isn't actually the words themselves, but the meaning assigned them, which is wholly unique to Venezuela.

One example is the Venezuelan slang word *bulto*, which also exists in Guatemala, but has a different meaning. Keep reading to see the difference.

These nuances in slang are often the source of funny misunderstandings.

Sometimes, a commonly used slang word in one country is inappropriate in another. The existence of these misunderstandings is well known and mostly leads to a laugh or two and an easy moment of forgiveness.

Today we'll be looking at the most commonly used Venezuelan slang, so you can prepare for your next trip, or surprise your new Venezuelan friend with some new words!

Venezuelan Slang: Nouns

Bulto

Bulto generally means a mass or a bundle of things—and as I mentioned, this word exists in Guatemala and carries with it this general meaning. It's also used to describe lumps and bumps. However, if you're walking around Venezuela and someone stops you to tell you that you forgot your *bulto*, they're most definitely not talking about any lumps or bumps! *Bulto* for Venezuelans means "backpack," so whenever you go to school, hiking, or to a sleepover, never forget to take your *bulto* with you!

Pana

Pana is one of the most famous Venezuelan slang words. Typically used to describe friends or friendship, *pana* is one of the first Venezuelan slang words you'll learn if you ever visit the country. You can say *esos chicos son mis panas* or *esas chicas son mis panas* (those guys/girls are my friends) to talk about your

group of friends. Depending on the context, *pana* can also describe someone who's an acquaintance. As an adjective, it's similar to the word "cool" in English.

Conocí a Pedro en el trabajo, es pana.

I met Pedro at work, he seems cool.

Guachimán

This word is not exclusively a Venezuelan slang word, but you'll hear it there nonetheless. *Guachimán* describes a patrol or security guard. Since Latin America is not the safest of places, having guards in nearly every public establishment is commonplace. I've seen many tourists and visitors shocked by the armed guards at the entrance to McDonalds, but as a local I've learned to tune them out and even no longer notice them.

Interestingly, the word *guachimán* comes from English! It's the hispanicization of the word "watchman."

- *guachi* = watch
- *mán* = man

Bonche

It's been a while since I've been to any kind of *bonche*. This word refers to any and all kinds of celebrations. Weddings, birthdays, proms, and poetry slams are all *bonches*. In other countries, this word most frequently describes crowds—sometimes even mobs—but in Venezuelan slang, *bonche* is reserved for jolly people and good times only.

Dinosaurio

I'll admit this one is especially funny. *Dinosaurio* is a common noun that you might already be familiar with. Translated as "dinosaur," *dinosaurio* often has a completely different meaning when used by a Venezuelan. While we share the formal meaning of the word, Venezuelans also use *dinosaurio* to describe cheap, penny-pinching people. Why is that? Well, certain dinosaurs (especially the T-rex) have very short arms, meaning they can't extend them to give you money, or a pat on the head even. So all the frugal people in Venezuela will get called *dinosaurio* at some point, even if they don't really deserve it.

Venezuelan Slang: Adjectives

Cuchi

Imagine you have a new pet rabbit and you take it to your Spanish class to show your friends. One of them looks at it and says: *¡Ay, qué cuchi!* At first you don't know what they mean since they never taught you that in your B2 Spanish course, but you're smart enough to use context clues to your advantage and you figure out that *cuchi* means "cute." Sunshine, rainbows, a baby panda sneezing, all of these things are considered *cuchi*.

Arrecho

Arrecho is that feeling you get when your sibling eats the last cookie you hid in the back of the pantry for safekeeping. This is a Venezuelan slang word used to describe anger or someone who's angry. You can also say *¡Qué arrechera!* to say something like "That's infuriating!"

Be careful, though, because while this word is perfectly harmless in Venezuela, it's inappropriate in some places like [Colombia](#).

Burda

Burda is a Venezuelan slang word to express abundance. If you go to the central park, you'll find *una burda de palomas*, or a bunch of pigeons. Any words that describe "lots of something" can be replaced with *burda*.

Chévere

Chévere is the default way of saying "cool" in Venezuela. Most, if not all, Latin American countries have their own ways of saying *chévere*. In [Guatemala](#), we have *chilero*, and *chido*, for example. It's very interesting to analyze these words because you'll find patterns such as the appearance of *ch* in many slang words. A lot of the influence for these words comes from ancient civilizations that lived here before colonization changed the way we speak. That's why the closer the countries, the more similarities you'll find in slang.

Check out the most used [Spanish slang words in Central America](#) to learn more about the different ways we speak in Central America.

Ladilla

Ladilla as a Venezuelan slang word is used to describe something that you don't want to do or that is annoying to do in general. It's that feeling you get when it's Saturday morning and you have to get out of your cozy bed to take your car to the shop. It's been a hard week and you're so tired you just want to lay down. If I were in that position I'd probably throw a small tantrum and say *¡Qué ladilla!*

Venezuelan Slang: Verbs

Mamar Gallo

This is a phrase that when I first heard it as a Guatemalan, I believed it was highly inappropriate, but it turns out it's not! *Mamar gallo* means to pull a prank, to trick someone, or to generally make fun of someone. It's a word that denotes mischievous behavior, and while it started out as a bad word in Venezuela too, it's now commonly used and not considered inappropriate anymore. This is a similar case to the English word "dude," which used to be derogatory and it's now endearing.

Engorilarse

Engorilarse is the action of becoming riled up and angry. Usually, the result of an unfortunate situation in pent up frustration, when someone *se engorila* it means they went from zero to out-of-control mad in a matter of seconds. Like those times when you've been writing for a couple of hours and then a power outage deletes a good portion of your work, cutting the flow of your writing.

Levantar

Levantar generally means “to lift,” or “to pick up yourself, another person, or an object”. However, the Venezuelan slang words *levantar* actually means to get romantically involved with someone. It’s reminiscent of the phrase “to pick up” when talking about a couple, except that the connotation, in this case, is more romantic and relationship-oriented than it’s English counterpart.

Parar Bola

This is a weird phrase! *Parar bola* literally translates “to stop the ball,” but it actually means “to pay attention.” This might come from the action of stopping a soccer ball mid-game to attend to something else. Literally “stopping the ball” to shift your focus to something or someone else.

Dar Un Baile

Last but not least, we have *dar un baile*. This is something that you’ll want to do to others, but avoid having it done to you at all costs. When you’re playing sports, video games, or board games, *dar un baile* is a Venezuelan slang word that describes winning by a landslide. Remember when Germany had a whopping victory against Brazil in the soccer world cup? Venezuelans would say that the Germans *le dieron un baile* to Brazilians. Poor guys.