

TIDBITS: Spanish Language Differences between Spain and Mexico

Between Spain and Mexico are differences in vocabulary. Different words are used to refer to the same object, and different verbs are used to refer to the same action. For example:

- In **Spain** one says “**conducir a coche**,” but in **Mexico** it’s “**manejar a carro**” (to drive a car).
- In **Spain** you will find a **gaseosa** in the **nevera**, while in **Mexico** you’ll find a **soda** in the **refrigerador** (soft drink in the fridge).

Here is some more vocabulary that differs between the countries:

| | |
|---------|-------------------------|
| Spain: | Un ordenador (computer) |
| Mexico: | Una computadora |
| Spain: | Unas gafas (glasses) |
| Mexico: | Unos lentes |
| Spain: | Un bolígrafo (pen) |
| Mexico: | Una pluma |
| Spain: | Una patata (potato) |
| Mexico: | Una papa |
| Spain: | Un melocotón (peach) |
| Mexico: | Un durazno |

Another important difference is the use of the verb **coger**. In Spain, **coger** means “to take.” In Mexico the equivalent is **tomar**. For example, in Spain it’s common to say *voy a **coger** un taxi* (I’m going to take a taxi); but in Mexico *voy a **tomar** un taxi*. In Mexico **coger** is a colloquial expression to describe having sex, so it’s not used in the sense of “taking” something.

Pronunciation is another distinct difference between the two varieties of Spanish. In Spain there are three types of pronunciation; **distinción**, el **seseo**, and el **ceceo**. Most of Spain uses **distinción**, while in Mexico only **seseo** is used.

Distinción: The letter **s** is pronounced **ess**. The letters “**c**” and “**z**” are pronounced as **th** (as in **thing**). For example, the words **casa** and **caza** are pronounced as **kasa** and **katha**.

Seseo: the letters **s**, **c**, and **z** are pronounced the same as **ess**. **Casa** and **caza** are pronounced as **kasa** and **kasa**. Both are pronounced the same with no differences. (Note that seseois is used in all Latin American countries.)

Ceceo: the letters **s**, **c**, and **z** are all pronounced as **th**. Therefore, in Spain **gracias** is pronounced **grathias**, and in Mexico is pronounced as **grasias**.

Finally, the **leísmo** is commonly used in Spain and means the incorrect use of the indirect pronoun **le** when it refers to a man. In Mexico and the rest of Latin America the direct pronoun **lo** is always used. Here is an example to clarify the situation:

| | |
|---------|---|
| Spain: | A Santiago no le vi ayer (I did not see Santiago yesterday.) |
| Mexico: | A Santiago no lo vi ayer. |