LEARN ECUADORIAN SPANISH – WORDS, PHRASES, SAYINGS AND GREETINGS IN THE ECUADORIAN LANGUAGE

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Ecuador is a small country located in South America. It is bordered by Colombia on the north, Peru on the east and south, and the Pacific Ocean on the west. Its name is Ecuador

because the imaginary line (equator) that divides the world into two hemispheres passes through several countries, and one of them is Ecuador. Kichwa is one of the native languages, and we will see that this influences some common phrases ins Ecuadorian daily lives.

Ecuador is divided into four regions (Coastal, Andean Highlands, Amazon Jungle, and Galápagos Islands). This is good to know since, despite being in the same country, each region has different phrases, words, and sayings. Not to mention that each region has specific traditional dishes and even people have different accents and ways of living. These aspects are influenced by the climate, social conditions, and characteristics of each region (presence of the sea, mountains, forest, jungle, etc.). Having said that, let's take a look into some Ecuadorian Spanish words, phrases, sayings, and greetings.

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Use of Diminutives

Ecuadorian people tend to use plenty of diminutives while speaking. Diminutives are usually formed with the endings "ito", "ita". It doesn't always mean something or someone is little or small, we use it because we want to show affection or kindness in some cases.

Ecuadorian Words

Pana(s), broder(s): people use these words when they want to refer to a very close friend. "Pana" could also be used with a diminutive ("panita") and "Broder" comes from the English word "brother". Some people usually say "bro" instead of the complete word, for example:

- "Qué fue, **bro**" (what's up, **bro**").
- Él es mi **panita** (he is my **friend**).

Camellar (verb), **camello**. (noun): Ecuadorian people like to use this verb or noun to refer to their job, for example:

- Tengo que **camellar** el fin de semana (I have to **work** on the weekend).
- Me va bien en el **camello** (I am doing well in my **job**).

Agachaditos: this word is always used in the plural form, but it refers to a small and informal place located on the streets where people can eat some traditional dishes or grilled food.

Caer: besides the meaning of "to fall", it also means "to visit". To know who a person will visit, we have to use the indirect object (te, le, les).

- Ya te **caigo** en la tarde (I'll **visit** you in the afternoon).
- Cae a la fiesta (**come** to the party).

Bacán: this word is used to describe a person or event. It refers to something that is great, amazing, nice.

- Ella es **bacán** (she is **great**).
- El concierto estuvo **bacán** (the concert was **amazing**).

Alhaja: it could be considered a synonym of "bacán" since it also means something or someone is nice, cool, beautiful, or great.

- Mi familia es **alhaja** (my family is **cool**).
- Esa canción estaba **alhaja** (that song was **nice**).**Cacho:** we will see that this word can be used in different contexts, for now, one of the meanings is "a joke".
- Cuéntame un **cacho** (tell me a **joke**).

Choro (noun), **chorearse** (verb): a common word to refer to a thief. The noun seems to have its root in Kichwa and in some other countries it may mean a different thing. Ecuadorians are excellent when it comes to creating words, and based on the word "choro", we have created the verb "chorearse".

- Ese es el **choro** que se subió al bus (That's the **thief** who got on the bus).
- Se me **chorearon** mi billetera (my wallet was **stolen**).

Mande: a really common word usually used with older people, for example, our parents. It comes from the verb "mandar" – "to give orders to" and now some people consider

this word inappropriate, but more than literally saying "give an order to me", it means "tell me" and it is a respectful way to answer when someone needs your help or wants to tell you something.

- "¡Hija, ven, por favor!" – "**Mande**, mami" ("Daughter, come please!" – "**Tell me**, mom").

Mijo, mija: if we analyze this word, it is a contraction from the words "mi hijo" or "mi hija" (my son or my daughter), but people have made it one single word. It is not only used to refer to a son or daughter, but also to a friend. As usual, we also use these words with diminutives.

- Oye **mijo**, ayúdame (hey "**my friend**", help me).
- **Mijita** no hagas eso por favor ("**my daughter**", don't do that, please).

Ñaño, ñaña: it is a synonym of "brother" or "sister". Once again, it could also be used with a friend who is considered our best friend or an excellent and close one. Remember that we also use these words with diminutives:

- Él es mi **ñaño**. Los dos vivimos con nuestra madre (he is my **brother**. Both of us live with our mother).
- Yo le quiero mucho a mi **ñañita** (I love my **sister** a lot).

¡Simón!: a word to show affirmation to a question or suggestion/invitation:

- Oye, ¿quieres ir a jugar fútbol? – **¡Simón!** (hey, do you want to go to play soccer? – **Of course!**
- Veamos una película –**¡Simón!** (Let's watch a movie – **Yeah!**).

Chuta: this word is used to express that something hasn't happened as expected, or maybe that someone is worried or upset, or maybe that something was not pleasant. The diminutive word, in this case, would be "**chuticas**":

- **¡Chuta!** ¿y ahora qué hacemos? (**Geez!** Now what do we do?).
- **¡Chuticas!** No sabía que estabas enferma (**oh my God!** I didn't know you were sick).

Cucayo: every Ecuadorian person knows that when he or she goes on a trip, it is almost mandatory to have a "cucayo" (a snack to eat once you arrive at a certain place):

- De **cucayo** trajimos chochos (as a **snack**, we brought lupine).

Tuco: this word is used when people see a strong person. Another meaning that we could confer to this word is "alhaja", "bacán" (cool, nice, great):

- ¡Qué **tuco** es ese jugador! (How **strong** is that player!).
- Ese carro está **tuco** (that car is **cool**).

Changar (verb): when a person crosses his or her legs over yours, this person is "changándote". In this case, we also have to use an indirect object (me, te, le, les) to know who you are crossing your legs over. This word comes from "chango" which is a way to say "monkey":

- ¡No me **changues!** (Don't cross your legs over mine!).

Poderoso: it doesn't mean something is "mighty". We usually use it with a dish (food or drink) that is extremely scrumptious. It has an indescribable flavor since it is so well-prepared:

- Este ceviche está **poderoso** (this ceviche is **scrumptious!**).

Atatay: the origin of this word is in our native language mentioned above (Kichwa). It means something is disgusting or awful.

- **¡Atatay!** Ese arroz está horrible (**yuck!** That rice is awful).

Arrarray: another word that comes from Kichwa. It means something is extremely hot.

- **¡Arrarray!** Me quemé (**Auch!** I got burned).
- Esta sopa está **arrarray** (this soup is **extremely hot**).

Achachay: this word also comes from Kichwa. It means something is freezing.

- **¡Achachay!** Qué frío hace (**brrr**, it is too cold).

Singa: it is a very peculiar term to refer to a person's or animal's "nose".

- Me duele la **singa** (my **nose** hurts).

Sobrado/a: it means a person is boastful or ostentatious.

- Él es muy **sobrado**. No me agrada (He is too **boastful**. I don't like him).

Ahuevarse (reflexive verb): this word is used when someone would like to mention that he or she fears doing something.

- No pude saltar del trampolín más alto, **me ahuevé** (I couldn't jump off the highest diving board, **I was scared**).
- No te **ahueves** (don't be **scared**).

Arrecharse (reflexive verb): this verb also refers to a person who gets angry ("cabrearse" or "emputarse") or it could mean that a person takes courage or decides to do something.

- Voy a **arrecharme** a hablar con ella (I am going to **decide** to talk to her).
- Mi jefe me hizo **arrechar** (my boss made me **get furious**).

Fresco / frescaso: one meaning could be when we describe a person who is cool and easy-going. Also, it is used when we agree on a plan or an idea, but not with big excitement.

- Mi hermano es fresco (My brother is cool).
- ¡Vamos al parque! – **Fresco** (Let's go to the park! – **Ok**).

Pegarse: it doesn't mean "to stick to the pan" as it is shown in the dictionary, or "to fight" with another person. Here it means "to have" or "to eat".

- **Peguémonos** una pizza (Let's eat a pizza).
- **Se pegó** dos partidos de fútbol (He **had** two soccer matches).

Acolitar: a verb that means "to help". It also needs the indirect object to identify who we are helping (acolitando).

- Oye, **acolítame** a mudarme (hey! **Help me** move out).
- **Te acolito** siempre y cuando seas sincero (I **help you** if and when you are sincere).

Barajarse (reflexive verb): it has two meanings, the first is used when we want to leave a place as soon as possible. The other one refers to a person who doesn't do his or her duties (he or she doesn't help).

- Estemos un momento aquí y luego nos **barajamos** (Let's be here for a while, and then we leave).
- Ella **se bajaró y no hizo nada** (she **didn't help** and didn't do anything).

Cucho/cucha: a word that could mean "dad" or "mom" (it is not considered disrespectful, but people use it when they are carefree), or in some cases, it could mean "old" (in a disrespectful way). Amazingly, this word has another meaning which is "corner".

- Mi **cucho** está durmiendo (my **dad** is sleeping).
- Esa **cucha** es mi profesora (that **old person** is my teacher).
- Voy a dormir en el **cucho** (I'm gonna sleep in the **corner**).

Chch: it is a very peculiar sound that Ecuadorian people say when they disagree with an idea.

- Te vi con alguien – **¡Chch!** Estás loco (I saw you with someone – ¡Chch! You are nuts!).

Guambra: another word that comes from Kichwa. It means "child" or "kid". It not only applies to little children, but it could be used with teens and young people. The diminutive would be "guambrito" or "guambrita".

- Apenas es un **guambra** que no conoce el mundo (he is just a **kid** who doesn't know the world).

Guagua: the origin of this word is also in Kichwa. It means "baby" and the gender is determined by the definite article "la" or "el" (the), but when we use the diminutive one, it will have a gender ("guagüito" or "guagüita").

- Mi **guagua** está creciendo mucho (my **baby** is growing up a lot).

"El man" or **"la man"**: Ecuadorian people now use these words to refer to a man or woman. It is hilarious because we made a masculine word "man" a feminine one by only adding the feminine article "la" (the). Also, it is not only used to refer to adults, it could also be used with a child or a young person.

- ¿Le ves a **la man** allá? (do you see that **woman** over there?).
- **El man** no está trabajando bien (**he** is not working well).

Chapa: it not only refers to the badge of a police officer but also a police officer per se. We will determine the gender by using the definite article "la chapa" or "el chapa". Some people would consider this term as disrespectful and we won't use it to directly address a police officer but only with our friends.

- **El chapa** atrapó al choro (the **police officer** caught the thief).

El veci or **la veci**: we know that "neighbor" means "vecino" or "vecina". These words would be abbreviations, but we not only use them with our actual neighbors, but with storekeepers. When we go to buy at a bakery, a small store, a market, etc., we would use this word to draw their attention or even say goodbye using this term.

- **Veci,** véndame 10 panes por favor (**Hey friend!** Sell me 10 pieces of bread, please!).
- ¡Hasta luego **veci!** (see you later, **my friend!**).

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Ecuadorian Phrases

Qué huevada: despite "huevada" being similar to a previously mentioned word "ahuevarse", when people say this expression, it means they are disappointed with an event.

- **¡Qué huevada!** Perdimos el partido (**what a dissapointment!** We lost the match!).

¡Qué vaina!: it is considered a synonym of "qué huevada", but it has a more subtle tone.

- **¡Qué vaina!** No me fue bien en el examen (**What a dissapointment!** I didn't go well in the exam).

Ya dice: this expression is used when we don't totally believe someone. It could be used instead of "you are lying" or "you are a liar".

- Me encontré 20 dólares – **¡Ya dice!** (I found $20 dollars -I **don't believe you!**).

Cachar algo: don't get confused! Remember that "cacho" means a joke, but "cachar" is a verb that means "to understand" or it can even mean "can you imagine?".

- **¿Me cachas?** (do you get me?).
- **¿Cachas** que no fui al concierto solo por ella? (**can you imagine** that I didn't attend the concert only for her?).

Meter labia: when someone wants to flirt with a person or even persuade someone to

do something (maybe buy a product). This person will start to say nice things that the other person wants to hear. In that context, Ecuadorian people "meten labia".

- Ese man me está **metiendo labia** (That guy is **flirting** with me).
- Compré la crema porque **me metió labia** (I bought the lotion because **he persuaded me**).

Estar encamotado: when you are so in love with someone, we don't usually say "estás enamorado" (you are in love), we use this creative phrase.

- La man **está encamotada** (that girl is **so in love**).

"Ya no jalo": this is an expression to say that you are too tired and you cannot continue to do an activity. It could also be applied when you are full and cannot continue to eat. We would conjugate the verb "jalar" with any pronouns and tense.

- Estaba caminando pero **ya no jalé** (I was walking, but **I couldn't continue**).
- Acaba la sopa –**Ya no jalo** (Finish your soup! –**I cannot!**).

Ir a pata: we use this to say that we have to go on foot and instead of using "ir a pie", we use the word "pata".

- **Voy a pata** porque el centro comercial está cerca (I **go on foot** because the shopping mall is close).

Quedarse ruco: when Ecuadorian people fall asleep, we use this expression.

- Mi papá se **quedó ruco** (My dad **fell asleep**).

Dar/pedir la yapa: when you go to buy groceries in a market, you have to "pedir la yapa", or the trader has to "darte la yapa". When you "pides la yapa" it means you are asking for an extra thing, for example, if you bought some apples, oranges, and a watermelon, maybe la "yapa" will be a couple of bananas (for free, of course). It not only applies when you go grocery shopping, but it could also happen when you buy souvenirs, clothes, and more. Be careful! You will only "pedir la yapa" in an informal market.

- ¿Qué me va a **dar de yapa?** (what **extra thing** will you give me?).

¡De una!: a different way to answer when we want to say "of course" or "with no doubt". It could be considered another synonym of "simón", but "de una" has a slightly more

excited and closeness tone.

- ¿Nos vemos este viernes? – **¡De una!** (are we seeing this Friday? – **Of course!**).

¡De ley!: similar to "simón", this phrase expresses affirmation when an idea is suggested or said.

- ¿Hiciste tu tarea? – **¡De ley!** (did you do your homework? – **Of course!**).

¡Chulla vida!: a phrase that justifies bad decisions in some cases. "Chulla" is a Kichwa word that means "single". When Ecuadorian people say "chulla vida", it means that there is no other life to live, and we have to make the most of it. No matter what!

- No he dormido bien pero **¡chulla vida!** (I haven't slept well, but **"life is only one"**).

De chiripa: we use this expression when we consider someone did something or achieved something by luck.

- Ganaste el partido **de chiripa** (you won the match **by luck**).

"Irse a volver": a fun and ironic expression if we analyze it because if we go out (irse), we, of course, expect to come back (volver). We use it when we ask about a person who is not at home, and another one can say "se fue a volver" (this person went out for a while, but he or she will come back soon).

- ¿Dónde está tu mami? -Se **fue a volver** (Where is your mom? – She went out for a while).

La chicha: a phrase used when a person has bought something (new). "Chicha" is a drink prepared with fermented maize and it is given when there are ancestral celebrations or festivities. When we say "la chicha", we refer to the joy that it brings when people buy something.

- ¿Te compraste un carro? **¡La chicha!** (did you buy a car? –**What a joy!**).

Con ñeque: "ñeque" is a word that expresses strength, effort, and bravery to do something. It is an inspiring phrase so that someone can achieve something.

- Ya acabas, ¡dale **con ñeque!** (you are about to finish it, do it with **effort!**).

Ser arrecho: different from the verb "arrecharse", "arrecho" is a word that means

"brave" or "daring" so it is used to describe a person.

- Ese man es **arrecho** (that guy is **daring**).

Dar una mucha: "mucha" besides meaning "a lot" (feminine and singular), it also means "a kiss" in Ecuadorian slang. It would mean "to give a kiss".

- Dame **una mucha** (give me **a kiss**).
- Le **di una mucha** ayer (**I kissed her** yesterday).

Hablar puras huevadas: when a person starts to talk nonsensical words, we use this expression for sure. Sometimes, it doesn't mean the person is bananas and that is why he or she talks nonsense, it can mean that the other person doesn't agree with what is being said and that is why this expression is used. The word "puras" could be omitted.

- Ya empezaste a **hablar huevadas**. (you already started to talk **nonsensical words**).

Sacarse la madre: in this phrase, "madre" doesn't refer to "mother", it means that you will make a big effort to achieve something. You will do your best and everything possible to accomplish a goal or a simple activity.

- **Te sacaste la madre**, pero lo lograste (**you made a big effort**, but you made it).

Estar salado: expression used to say that someone is really unlucky.

- Creo que **estoy salado** porque no me sale nada bien (I think I **am unlucky** because nothing goes well).

Jalar dedo: in some other countries this expression is known as "ir a dedo", but Ecuadorian people use the verb "jalar". In English, this would be "hitchhike".

- **Jalemos dedo** porque no tengo dinero para un bus (Let's hitchhike because I don't have any money to get a bus)

Hacer la foca: in this case, "foca" (seal) doesn't refer to the animal. This expression is used when someone is embarrassed or looks ridiculous in a situation.

- Me caí e **hice la foca** (I fell down, and I was **embarrassed**).

Un pite: "pite" means "a little", or "a tiny portion". In some cases, we use the diminutive word which would be "**pitico**":

- ¿Quieres más postre? –**Un pite** (Do you want more dessert? – **A little**) o Estoy **un pite** cansado (I am **a little** tired).

Ecuadorian Sayings

Aquisito no más, a la vueltita: when someone asks for an address, and it is supposed to be close (just after the corner) we use this expression, but it is never close. Here we use diminutives with the word "aquí – aquicsito" (here) and "vuelta – vueltita" to express that it is really close (apparently).

- ¿Dónde está la farmacia? – **A la vueltita** (Where is the pharmacy? -Just **after the corner**)

No seas malito: we use this expression when we ask someone for a favor, and we want to persuade this person to say yes. We would use this instead of "please" (only when we are asking for a big favor). It would literally be "don't be mean". We use the diminutive "malito" so that the other person can say yes.

- Préstame dinero, **no seas malito** (Lend me some money, **please**).

Dame haciendo, dame pasando, dame trayendo, dame viendo: Ecuadorian people usually use a double verb to ask someone for something, for example, instead of directly saying "bring me that, please", we say "dame trayendo" (give – bring). We use it to soften what we are saying so that it doesn't sound like an order. The first verb will be "to give" and any indirect objects (dame, dale, danos…), and the next verb will be in present progressive.

- **Dame pasando** un papel higiénico por favor (**give me** a toilet paper, please).

Guagua que no llora, no mama: we saw before that "guagua" means "baby". This expression says that a person who doesn't say what he or she wants, won't get it. Literally, when you are a baby, you cry so that your mom knows you have to be fed (mamar means "be breastfed").

- Tienes que decir lo que quieres. **Guagua que no llora, no mama** (you have to say what you want. **If you don't say it, you won't get it**).

No entender ni papa: this phrase is used when we don't understand something at all. Of course, it could be considered hyperbole.

- No me gustan las matemáticas porque **no entiendo ni papa** (I don't like Math because **I don't understand anything at all**).

Ser camarón: it is used when a person doesn't drive well.

- Tú **eres** muy **camarón**, mejor manejo yo (you **drive badly**, it's better if I drive).

Andar / estar chiro: people use this phrase when they want to express that they have no money (maybe at that moment or maybe for a longer period).

- No puedo salir, **ando chiro** (I can't go out, **I have no money**).

Hablar serio: when a person is talking and maybe he or she is joking, we use this phrase to express "stop joking and tell me the truth" or "be serious!"

- Ya deja de hablar huevadas y **habla serio** (stop talking nonsense and **say the truth**).

Parar bola: this phrase is used when we want someone to pay attention. We could use an indirect object to emphasize who we want to pay attention to. It also refers to a person who shows no interest in another.

- Oye **párame bola** (hey, **pay attention to me!**) o Debes **parar bola** a lo que te digo (you must **pay attention** to what I tell you) o Esa man **no me para bola** (that girl is **not interested** in me).

Dios le pague: taking into account that most of the population is Catholic, we use this phrase to say "I thank you so much". It literally means "may God pay you". It is a nice way to say that I thank you for what you did for me and I hope may God reward you.

- La sopa estuvo deliciosa. **¡Dios le pague!** (the soup was delicious. **Thank you so much!**).

Chimborazo de arroz: some Ecuadorian people love eating rice, but they not only eat a portion, they eat a lot. Chimborazo is the highest mountain in Ecuador, so when we say "chimborazo de arroz", it means that people eat a big amount of rice. Once again, it could be considered hyperbole.

- Estás gordo porque comes un **chimborazo de arroz** en el desayuno y la merienda (you are fat because you eat **a lot of rice** for breakfast and dinner).

Cuál vos: "vos" is a pronoun that was used before in our country. Over time, fewer people use it and in some cases, it is even considered disrespectful. When we say "cuál vos" it means that someone else used the pronoun "vos" instead of "tú" or "usted", and it is a nice and even fun way to mention that maybe a person is starting to be disrespectful but not to the point to get mad at him or her. Some people even laugh a lot when situations like this happen.

- Vos tienes que limpiar la cocina – ¿**Cuál vos**? (you "vos" have to clean the kitchen – **I'm sorry!!**).

Greetings

Before explaining some of the most common Ecuadorian greetings, people here use the word "ve" a lot. It doesn't mean we are saying "you look" or we want you to look at something. In most cases, we use it to catch your attention and say "hey!". It is pretty informal, and we would only use it with people we know well.

Hey there. Welcome.

I'm Thalía Pánchez - and I wrote this article.

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- **¿Qué mas ve?:** a possible translation could be "what's up?", but of course, we add the word "ve" (hey you, what's up).
- **¿Qué fue ve?:** how's it going?
- **¿Qué te cuentas?:** literally, it means "what can you tell me"? and when we ask this, we are saying, "how have you been doing? What is the news?"
- **Ahí te ves:** this is an expression to say goodbye. It would be "see you later", but in a very informal way. Actually, we would pronounce the first word as "ay" instead of

"ahí".