LEARN ARGENTINE SPANISH – LANGUAGE, CULTURE AND CULINARY ROOTS

In today's lesson, we will learn about Argentina, the way we speak, our slang and some fun facts.

When thinking about Argentina, many people will immediately relate it with soccer (football as we call it), tango, "don't cry for me Argentina", and barbecue. These stereotypes are right; however, there are a couple of more things that bonds us as a nation, and some of them you may not even know.

Tango: despite what people may think about it, it is not a popular dance. Tango is not easy to learn, and it is danced in couples. Although it represents us as a reference to our country and Uruguay, tango is not a dance that everyone will know at a family gathering. We normally dance cumbia, we have many popular national rock bands and cumbia bands, and in the later years salsa, bachata and reggaeton, as well as Brazilian music, have taken over the discos and fitness centers where we normally go to learn these rhythms. There are tango academies, mostly in the main cities.

Asado: our barbecue is normally done on a concrete and brick grill built in the backyards of our houses or at recreational parks. Nowadays, with the increase in apartment buildings, some have grills and some don't, which leads people to buy outdoor grills in some regions called **"chulengos"**. We use coal and wood for the barbecue and a special sauce called chimichurri. It is popular on Sundays, special events or friends/family gatherings for any reason. We also grill burgers and pizzas.

Dulce de leche: is sweet with a texture similar to caramel, and it expands in all of Latin America. For us, it is very popular, as it is used in alfajores and different cakes and desserts that will be found in absolutely every restaurant in the country and bakeries.

Fútbol: also known as soccer in the USA, forms part of pretty much every family, as we will gather to watch football matches or go to bars for this. We will always have someone who is a football fan of a local team, and it is a very popular sport at school, for adults, and just for fun. We have indoor and outdoor football courts where you can play with 5 players called football 5. And of course, we have important football teams, tournaments throughout the year, World Cups earned, and several trophies in competitions in Latin America. We also have famous football players in teams in France, Spain, and Portugal,

among others.

Mate: Last but not least, mate. The mate is a very characteristic drink (infusion) mostly in the North of our country. This culture brought from the Guaraníes and popularized by the gauchos resulted in about 98% of Argentinean homes consuming it. The mate is a special cup made of a plant called porongo, pumpkin, wood, silver, or plastic (the adaptations of the modern world as well as silicon); it is filled with yerba which is a special plant whose leaves are chopped and mixed with herbs and is drunk with a silver straw specially designed not to burn your mouth. The mate (cup) is filled up with yerba, with a straw inside and we pour hot water from a thermos. This last action is called cebar. There might be a person assigned for this in a gathering called cebador, who is responsible for pouring the water and passing it to people. Yes, we all drink from the same straw. We normally drink it in the mornings, afternoons, with friends, for hang-outs, and we have a summer variation called tereré that instead of hot water is served with juice and ice (some provinces use just cold water).

Argentinian Voseo & Pronunciation

Voseo

Argentina as well as other countries in Latin America uses a special pronominal form to speak and to refer to the second person tú as vos. We normally use it all the time for everyday conversations and may switch to usted for formal reasons, but except for a couple of provinces like Jujuy that get the influence of the nearby countries, none of the citizens will use the form tú. This voseo is used in the simple present tense, in the imperative and subjunctive mood, but as the following chart explains, it doesn't apply in other tenses.

For example:

- Esta noche **(vos)** cant**á**s en el teatro. *(Arg)* – Esta noche *(tú) cantas* en el teatro.
- **Traéme**las zapatillas. *(Arg, imperative)* – *Trae* las zapatillas.

Although some verbs will change to a reflexive, what matters is understanding why we decide to add that extra stress to the word, which generally is at the end instead of the beginning (**ca**ntas vs cant**ás**). This transforms the word from **grave** to **aguda** (stress on the penultimate syllable and stress on the last syllable); however, we have a special class to talk about stress and tildes.

[1] Alternan en el uso con las formas de tuteo **cantaste, comiste, viviste,** únicas aceptadas en la norma culta.

[2] Alternan en el uso con las formas de tuteo **cantes, comas, vivas,** únicas aceptadas en la norma culta.

These two notes say that the lines with the numbers modify the way the **tú** is used, and this form is the only one accepted in the educated standard. This will really depend on the family you were raised in, and in some families, these two forms of **voseo** are not accepted, sometimes even banned as they are not considered "educated".

Some more examples related to our popular expressions:

- **Vivís** en un termo. (you live in a thermos, referring to you never finding out what's going on in the outside world).
- **¿Tenés** ganas de tomar unos mates? (do you want to drink some mates?)

Pronunciation

Most of the provinces in Argentina except for some in the north and some in the very south of the country will use the following general modification when it is needed to pronounce a word with y, or ll. Of course, keep in mind that Argentina is a huge country and there are several variations of vocabulary within the country, slang, and pronunciation. This is one of the most popular characteristics that will identify Argentinians and is different from the rest of Latin America.

Most Spanish speakers will pronounce the y as **io** and double l as **io**.

Let me be more clear with some examples:

- Mi mamá come **pollo** (poio) > Argentine pronunciation: **posho**
- **Yo** tengo un hermano que se **llama** Juan (io, iama) > Arg pronunciation **(sho, shama)**

This particular pronunciation is like a *key* to identifying an Argentinean abroad. All the rest of our Latin American friends will probably make jokes about it, and we kind of like it. It is a wrong pronunciation, but it is so installed in society, there is no way back to it.

Argentinian Slang

Hey there. Welcome.

I'm Antonella Lusardi - and I wrote this article.

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Let's go to the funny part of our language. Talking about slang could be a topic of several hours, but here I have gathered some expressions you may hear when visiting the country. Some may be a bit informal, but they are frequently used, and it is important you are aware of them.

Dale: Ok. The word dale can refer to ok, I agree, and is also used in a sort of imperative way to tell a person to hurry up or in a doubting way as "I don't believe you". Some examples: *¿Querés venir a casa esta noche?* **Dale**. (Do you want to come home tonight? **Sure!**) **Dale** *apuráte que se nos va a hacer tarde.* (**Come on**! Hurry up, or we're going to be late.).

Che: Hey. This word is like a *hey* you, and it's like an interjection we may use in an informal environment. For example: **Che**, *te cuento una cosa*. (Hey, let me tell you something.). We sometimes add another word that has been incorporated into the colloquial language with no means of offense, on the contrary, we use it to talk to our friends which is **"boludo"**. A boludo (literally is a person/thing with big balls or is also referred to as an idiot, but actually used as "dude") is normally our close friend, so instead of saying: hey Mary, do you want to do something this weekend, we would say: "*che boluda*, el finde hacemos algo?" replacing the proper name. Of course, it's informal, but don't feel bad if someone calls you like this (except when they are using the verb to be: sos (you are)).

Pedo: Literally translated as fart can be used as a bad word, or actually, it can replace mostly all our moods. We use it so much we don't even realize it, and sometimes this makes it the key to why foreigners struggle to understand us. We speak with plenty of expressions and idioms. It is quite informal and of course, you should not use this colloquial language in a meeting, although even then sometimes we do.

- Se salvó de **pedo**: he/she was **saved** by the bell.
- Ni en **pedo** lo hago: I wouldn't do that, not even **drunk**.
- Estar en **pedo**: get **drunk**
- Tiene un **pedo** en la cabeza: that person is **crazy**.
- Estoy al **pedo** hoy, ¿querés hacer algo?: I'm doing **nothing** today, do you wanna hang out?
- Es al **pedo** seguir llamando para pedir turno, mejor voy personalmente: it's a **waste of time** to keep calling to ask for an appointment, I better go personally.
- Estoy a los **pedos**, más tarde escucho tu audio: I'm super busy doing things, I listen to your audio later.

Pibe/piba/Chabón/chabona: are both used in different areas of Argentina to refer to boy/girl/guy/chick.

Quilombo: drama. This word can be found to talk about conflict or some drama in different expressions such as:

- **Qué quilombo**: what a drama.
- **Hay quilombo** a la salida de la cancha: there are some problems outside the football court.
- No sabés **el quilombo** que tengo en la cabeza: I'm so confused.
- Llegué tarde a casa y **el quilombo** que tuve: I came home late, and I had a big problem.

TV Shows and Movies

Some Movies:

- El secreto de sus ojos 2009
- La historia oficial 1985
- Evita 1996

Some TV Shows:

- Casados con hijos
- Epitafio
- Chiquititas

Popular Argentinians Around the World

Messi: Lionel Messi is considered to be one of the best football players in the history of this sport, and he was born in Rosario, Argentina, but in his youth, he moved to Spain to pursue his career. Nowadays and after 20 years playing in BFC (Barcelona football club), he is playing in France, in Paris Saint-Germain Football Club. Messi is always sharing selfies on his IG account, drinking **mates** with his family.

The Queen of the Netherlands: Máxima Zorreguieta was born in Buenos Aires and married Willem-Alexander in 2002. They became king and queen in 2013. She comes from a politician family and has always been bonded to Argentinian culture, in fact, one of her favorite alfajores are called **"alfajores de maicena"**, which are made of cornstarch and **dulce de leche**.

The Pope: Francis became the head of the Catholic Church in the Vatican City State after being a cardinal in Buenos Aires. He became quite popular in the modern times as he encouraged the role of women, made some modifications in the Catholic Church and changed the views towards the LGBT community. Francis enjoys drinking mate and Argentinean wine.

Some other popular figures of Argentina worldwide have been:

- **Eva Perón**: who, to summarize, was an important First Lady dedicated to fighting for women's rights, creating non-profits organizations and being an icon of the time which was portrayed in the movie Evita starring Madonna and Antonio Banderas.
- **Maradona**: considered the best football (soccer) player in the world, he brought a World Cup to the country and was not only popular for his excellent career as a professional, but also for his personal life which, although money brought some disadvantages, he was able to overcome poverty.

Some fun facts of popular folks:

- **Viggo Mortensen** lived in Argentina during his early childhood, and he is a fan of football and mate.
- **Matt Daemon** has been married to an Argentinian since 2005, and he has been interviewed drinking mate and singing cumbia.
- **Anya Taylor** Joy also lived in Argentina with her family during her youth. She always speaks very well about her experience being raised here, and she is a fan of some traditional dishes such as empanadas, churros and pizzas.

In this lesson, I have covered most of the main topics about Argentina, which is a country that has many stories to tell and a fascinating accent. If you wish to learn more, feel free to contact any of our lovely Argentinian teachers on the platform!!

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