



Hoja de transcripción y vocabulario

Episodio 2: Welcome to Mexico (Mexican greetings)

(A1-A2)

Transcripción

Hola, soy Esmeralda, but my students call me Esme, and this is MexMeSpanish Podcast, *helping you understand Mexican Spanish paso a pasito.*

In today's episode we're going to review greetings in Spanish specifically Mexican greetings and this may be a very common topic for beginners, but I believe that we should analyze it from the register perspective.

Especialmente porque we learn “**que onda**”, “**que tranza**”, “**que pedo**”, but we lack the proper use for those greetings, which ones are informal, which ones are considered vulgar, which ones are formal which ones are safe. So, today we're going to analyze some of these greetings so you can use them properly.

I once had a new student coming to my class and sharing his experience in his first trip to Mexico practicing Spanish. He knew how the basic greetings, **buenos días**, **mucho gusto**, **¿cómo está, usted?**, etc. He walked into the neighborhood cafe the next day, he greeted the employee and said buenos días.

He didn't expect that the girl would reply with **¡buenas!** Then, another employee from the cafe walked by and he said **¿Qué tal, joven?** And another person was leaving the cafe and said goodbye to the other employees and said **¡Ahí nos vemos, ahí luego!**

And then he shared and said, I do understand Spanish, but I am unfamiliar with these little micro expressions that Mexicans use with each other.

Today's question is simple. How do Mexicans actually greet each other? Of course we say, **hola**, but that's only the beginning, really. The real challenge is knowing which greeting fits each situation, depending on the person. And that's something that textbooks, of course, do not teach.

Here's something important. Mexicans do not use the same greeting for everyone. The way you greet your professor isn't the same as you would greet your best friend. And definitely it's not the same greeting you would use with your boss, with your grandmother, with the cashier, at your favorite taco stand.

Today we're going to organize greetings into four groups. Formal, neutral, informal, and of course, vulgar. Because sounding natural isn't about knowing the most slang. It's about choosing the right words for the right person in the right moment.

Let's start with the safest ones. If you're meeting someone new, you walk into a hotel, you're talking with the doctor, or speaking to someone who is older than you, these are perfect. **Buenos días, buenas tardes, buenas noches, ¿cómo está?, mucho gusto, encantado o encantada.**

These expressions show respect, they are polite, and appropriate almost everywhere. If you're ever unsure, choose one of these, you'll never sound rude. Here's something interesting. In many English-speaking countries, people often begin with hi.

In Mexico, it's much more common to acknowledge the time of the day. Even when you're entering a small convenience store, people usually say: ¡Buenos días!

Greeting people isn't just polite, it's expected. Walking into a business without greeting anyone can feel surprisingly cold. Now let's move on to the greetings you'll hear every single day. **Hola, buenas, ¿qué tal?, ¿cómo estás?**, these work almost everywhere.

One expression deserves special attention, **buenas**. That's it, just **buenas**. We love to shorten expressions, so instead of saying **buenos días**, **buenas tardes**, we'll just simply say **buenas**.

Now, things become much more interesting once people know each other. The greetings are going to change. Instead of asking, **¿cómo estás?**, you'll hear things like, **¿qué tal?**, **¿cómo andas?**, **¿cómo vas?**, **¿qué cuentas?**, **¿qué pasó?**, **¿qué onda?** So, let's check them out.

¿Qué tal?

It's informal without sounding too casual. You can use it with classmates, neighbors, co-workers, even with your teacher if you already know each other very well. It's flexible, it's safe, and extremely common.

¿Cómo andas?

Literally, it means, how are you walking? Of course, that's not what it really means. It's simply another way of asking, how have you been?

¿Qué cuentas?

Literally, what do you have to tell? In English, you might say, what's new? And notice that this greeting is often inviting a longer conversation.

¿Qué onda?

This one is the most iconic greeting in Mexican Spanish. If you spend one week in Mexico, I

guarantee you're gonna hear it. Friends say it, students say it, co-workers say it, brothers and sisters say it. Don't translate it literally, just think, what's up?

Here's an important lesson. Many students think if it's a slang, it must be vulgar. Not necessarily. Slang and vulgar language are completely different. Expressions like **¿Qué onda?** are just simply informal. They're friendly, but they're not rude. Now, let's talk about something you'll definitely hear, even if you're not planning to use it.

Among close friends, especially younger speakers, you might hear **¿Qué pedo? ¿Qué tranza? ¿Qué pex? ¿Qué show?** Some of these are playful, some of these sound rougher, some belong to particular generations or regions. The most important one is **¿Qué pedo?** Yes, the word “pedo” is considered vulgar. But between very close friends, the expression often loses its literal meaning. It simply becomes another way of saying, what's up? Does that mean you should use it? Probably not, or at least not yet.

And this is my advice. Understanding slang is much more than trying to imitate it. Native speakers don't sound natural because they know lots of slang. They sound natural because they know when not to use it.

Imagine this scenario. You meet your professor. **Buenos días, profesor.** Perfect. Five minutes later, your best friend arrives. **¿Qué onda?** Also perfect.

Then you go visit your grandmother. **Buenas tardes, abuelita.** Again, perfect. Fluency isn't speaking the same way to everyone. Now let's talk about goodbyes, because Mexicans, we don't simply say, **adiós.** As a matter of fact, you'll hear it less often than you might expect. So let's organize those two.

Formal. **Hasta luego. Que tenga buen día. Que esté muy bien. Fue un gusto conocerle.**

Neutral. **Nos vemos. Hasta luego. Cuídate. Que te vaya bien. Hasta mañana.**

Informal. **Ahí nos vemos, sale, sale pues, estamos, nos estamos viendo, te me cuidas, bye.**

And **bye**, yes, many Mexicans we just simply say **bye**, the English word. You might also hear playful expressions like “**nos vidrios**”. It's a funny way of saying nos vemos, “**ahí nos vidrios**”. It's just Mexican humor.

Today you learned that Mexican greetings aren't just vocabulary, they're social tools. Formal, neutral, informal, and vulgar.

Knowing the difference is much more valuable than memorizing the flashcards.

Let's do a mini quiz.

You walk into our neighborhood bakery. Would you say, **¿Qué pedo?** or **¿Buenas?** Exactly, **buenas**.

You're meeting your university professor. Should you say, **¿Qué onda?** or **¿Buenos días?** Exactly, **buenos días**.

Always go for the safe greetings.

Your best friend sends you a message. Can you reply, **¿Qué onda?** Yes, absolutely.

This week, watch a Mexican movie, a YouTube blog, or a Netflix series from Mexico. Even a telenovela works. Don't focus on the grammar. Instead, listen carefully to the greetings and ask yourself, Was it formal? Is it neutral? Is it informal? Or is it vulgar? You'll be surprised how quickly you begin to notice these patterns.

Thank you so much for listening to this episode of MexMeSpanish Podcast. If you'd like to

review today's vocabulary, read the full transcript, and practice with interactive exercises, please visit mexmespanish.com. We do have a lesson for greetings in Mexico, so that will be very interesting if you want to practice a bit more. If you think this episode was helpful understanding and navigating Mexican greetings, please share with somebody else that you may know that they are learning Spanish. Until next time, ¡ahí nos vemos! ¡Chaito!

Vocabulario clave

Palabra (word)	Definición/Traducción (definition/translation)	Formal/Informal/ Neutral/Vulgar	Saludo/Despedida (Greeting/Farewell)
¿Qué onda?	What wave? (literal) What's up? (equivalent)	Informal	Saludo (greeting)
¡Buenas!	Good! (literal) Morning!/Afternoon!/ Evening! (equivalent)	Neutral Informal	Saludo (greeting)
¡Ahí luego!	There later! (literal) Later! (equivalent)	Informal	Despedida (farewell)
¡Ahí nos vemos!	There later see you! (literal) See you later! (equivalent)	Informal	Despedida (farewell)
¿Qué tal?	What which? (literal) How is it going? (equivalent)	Neutral	Saludo (greeting)
¿Cómo andas?	How are you walking? (literal) How are you going? (equivalent)	Informal	Saludo (greeting)

¿Cómo vas?	How do you go? (literal) How are things? (equivalent)	Neutral	Saludo (greeting)
¿Qué cuentas?	What do you tell? (literal) What's new? (equivalent)	Informal	Saludo (greeting)
¿Qué pedo?	What a fart? (literal) What's up? (equivalent)	Vulgar	Saludo (greeting)

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