

## Language Misunderstandings

There is a lot of slang that in the beginning is pretty confusing for exchange students, because all we do is to translate what we hear, and all these expressions, or most of them, make no sense in Spanish.

In a while you get used to it; but there are some of them that you think you know what they mean because we use them in Spanish, and we don't know they have more uses in English. This is even harder to get used to and could cause a misunderstanding!!! It happened to me.

That was the first night when I came here. I was really tired because one night before I didn't sleep at all. I had spent my last night in Mexico with all my family and friends. So after having flown the whole day, my host sister invited me to hang out with her and her friends. I told her about how tired I was and why, so I wasn't sure if I should go.

While I was thinking about it, she said: "I don't care, you can go to sleep now."

I didn't say anything but I felt so bad because she was being mean to me, acting like I wasn't that important to her, it was the same to her if I went or if I didn't, or at least it seemed like that to me.

Several times in the first month she made me feel bad again when she said "I don't care" every time I asked her things like: "Can I have this...???" or "Can you drive me there??."

I don't exactly remember how, but later I found out that to say, "I don't care" in English is the same as saying "No problem" or "It's ok for me" in Spanish. I found it so funny how I was getting a wrong idea.

One day my sister and I were talking in a restaurant about stupid things and I told her about the first night I came here, and how bad she made me feel. I explained to her that in Spanish we use something like "it's ok" or "no problem" and that to say "I don't care" means like you get mad about something or that it is not too important for you like when you say "whatever!"

At first she started laughing. Then she was really sorry and she apologized about making me feel bad. Of course she didn't have to, because I now knew what she meant.

Now I know it's great when they say, "I don't care" because it means you can go ahead on what your asking!!! So that is now an expression that I use very often.

I heard about another girl who got up from a big family dinner to wash the dishes. While at the sink one joked "Look, the maid is doing our dishes!" They all laughed. She then left the room without showing her face, for them to not see her tears because she took it as an insult, not a joke. She stayed in her room the rest of the night.

A few days later the family called the office to report concerns that their student was staying in her room too much. The representative came and asked why she was not socializing anymore with the family.

She told about the dinner and how humiliated she felt that her family pretended that they loved her; but it must be a lie because they called her a maid, which is a really bad insult in her country, and then laughed at her.

The host mom then started to cry real hard. She hugged her and told her that in the USA people insult each other like that all the time as a joke but never take it seriously. After that they were a family again.

So be sure you know what people mean. Don't just think you do and be hurt.

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