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## U.S. Spanish in the Spotlight

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Francisco Moreno-Fernández (ed.)

Topic: U.S. Spanish

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**Keywords:** Spanish language, United States, loan words, Spanglish, representation, languages in contact

## Introduction

**Francisco Moreno-Fernández [FMF].** The aim of this roundtable is to discuss Spanish in the United States, the Spanish of the United States, U.S. Spanish. We're going to try to make this roundtable as dynamic and agile as possible, so there are three questions that I'll ask during the discussion, which we will use as points of reference. Since we have so many panelists, they'll be able to choose which questions merit more time and attention. Naturally, the questions relate to the current and future state of the Spanish language in the United States.

But before we begin with the questions, let's make the obligatory introductions. I'm going to introduce all the panelists first, so that afterwards our conversation can be more fluid. I'm going to introduce everyone in alphabetical order by last name, so that no one feels more or less important than anyone else. It's as close as we can get to introducing everyone in a truly random order. Then, later, everyone can respond in whatever order they feel is best.

Starting with the letter "C," we have Jorge Ignacio Covarrubias, Secretary of the North American Academy of the Spanish Language. He is a journalist by training and a former editor at the Associated Press's Latin American Desk in New York. He has published several studies on journalism, including a report on Spanish-language journalism in the United States that was published by the Observatory, and several audiobooks. His works include *Manual de técnicas de redacción periodística*, *Los personajes del periodismo*, and *Inmigración y ciudadanía en*

*Estados Unidos*, to name just a few. He is also coeditor and coauthor of *Gabriela Mistral en los Estados Unidos*. He's going to talk to us about the Spanish language, mainly from his perspective as a journalist, though he's obviously welcome to contribute to the conversation in other ways as well.

Moving on to the letter "D," we have Professor Domnita Dumitrescu, who has a Ph.D. in Spanish from the University of Southern California. She is Professor Emerita at California State University, Los Angeles. She has been a visiting professor and given countless lectures at universities around the world, including in Spanish-speaking countries such as Argentina, Uruguay, Costa Rica, and Spain. She is the author of over one hundred academic publications, the most influential of which deal with pragmatics. Her best-known works include *Aspects of Spanish Pragmatics* and *El español en los Estados Unidos: E Pluribus Unum? Enfoques multidisciplinares*, co-edited with Gerardo Piña-Rosales and published by the North American Academy of the Spanish Language, of which she is a full member. She will talk to us about the Spanish language from her perspective as a specialist in pragmatics.

Under "L," we have Professor Andrew Lynch from the University of Miami, who will talk to us through the lens of sociolinguistics, which has been the topic of most of his work. He specializes in sociolinguistics, bilingualism, and the teaching of Spanish as a heritage language. All of his publications are in these fields. These include the book *El español en contacto con otras lenguas*, which he co-authored

with Carol Klee, and several articles, including “A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Final /s/ in Miami Cuban Spanish,” “The Social Diffusion of English-Based Lexical Innovations in Miami Cuban Spanish,” and “Key Concepts for Theorizing Spanish as a Heritage Language.”

Moving right along to “O,” we have Ricardo Otheguy, Professor of Linguistics at the CUNY Graduate Center. He has written on theoretical linguistics, Spanish linguistics, and Spanish in the United States. He's going to talk from the point of view of contact between different varieties of the same language. He is the founding director of the Research Institute for the Study of Language in Urban Society (RISLUS), which is part of the CUNY Graduate Center. A few projects and publications from his extensive bibliography include the book *Spanish in New York* and several studies on dialects of Spanish that are in contact in classrooms in New York.

Two of our esteemed panelists fall under the letter “P.” First is María Luisa Parra Velasco, a professor at Harvard University. She’s going to offer her perspective chiefly as a specialist in Spanish as it is viewed in communities of heritage speakers, with which she has special experience.

She has a Ph.D. in Hispanic Linguistics from the Colegio de México and a B.A. in Psychology from the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. Her broad experience includes work with Hispanic communities and communities of Spanish

heritage speakers. Most of her published work has been in this vein and addresses theoretical reflections and practical approaches to teaching Spanish as a heritage language.

The writer and philologist Gerardo Piña-Rosales also has a last name starting with “P.” He is a professor at the CUNY Graduate Center and the author of a diverse range of publications, and since 2008, he has been the director of the North American Academy of the Spanish Language. In addition to being a scholar of language and literature, he is an author and creative writer. His most important publications include *Escritores españoles en los Estados Unidos*, *Hispanos en los Estados Unidos: tercer pilar de la hispanidad*, and *España en las Américas*. His latest book of short stories is called *El secreto de Artemisa*, which I strongly recommend. He’s going to speak from his perspective as a creative writer, and also from his perspective as the director of the North American Academy of the Spanish Language.

And finally, under “S” we have two panelists. First is Carmen Silva-Corvalán, who, in the world of sociolinguistics and general linguistics, needs no introduction. She is Professor Emerita at the University of Southern California. Her bibliography on bilingualism and languages in contact is very extensive and has had a major impact on all researchers who, in one way or another, work in these fields, including those of us who address questions of semantics, syntax, and discourse. Her best-known publications include her book-length sociolinguistic study *Language Contact and*

*Change: Spanish in Los Angeles*, a classic in sociolinguistics from 1994, and her book *Bilingual Language Acquisition*, which was published relatively recently, in 2014. Her most recent book is *Sociolingüística y pragmática del español*, which she co-authored with Andrés Enrique, who is also here with us. She's going to talk about Spanish vis-à-vis her perspective on languages in contact and bilingualism, or from whatever perspective she might wish to offer, given her broad expertise.

As you can see, we have a very appetizing bill of fare for you today. The only thing missing is the dessert, which you all will have to provide through your comments, after our panelists have presented. Not to mention that we're quite fortunate, because as part of our dessert, we'll have—or we might have, if these people are willing to share with us—contributions from individuals so invaluable and preeminent that they could very well be on this side of the table, such as Professor Paola Bentivoglio, Venezuela's most renowned linguist, and Professor Andrés Enrique, who, besides his current collaboration with the Observatory, has a long track record in the field of Spanish in the United States.

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## Concept

So, I'm going to wrap up this introduction, which I'm afraid has been quite lengthy because of the number of panelists, and get things going with the first question. The first question that I want to pose—and please answer this in whatever order you all see fit—comes from a conceptual point of view: How would you define or explain Spanish in the United States or U.S. Spanish, in its own right and as it

relates to other varieties of Spanish? Who is brave enough to start? I think that Professor Dumitrescu will probably be the one.

**Domnita Dumitrescu [DD].** To start with, I'm very grateful to our host for the invitation to sit on this roundtable, and I am honored to find myself in such illustrious company. I hope you'll all forgive me for reading—it stops me from going off on tangents and helps me keep from talking for longer than I should. I should also apologize in advance, because I'm going to be citing Francisco Moreno-Fernández quite a bit. He's a very modest person and I know that's going to bother him. So, sorry, Francisco.

I'm going to start by talking about his opening speech at the North American Academy of the Spanish Language, where he presented Spanish as one side of a quadrilateral made up of what he called a “double-nested diglossia,” that is, a diglossia in which English is the high language and Spanish is the low language. “Low language” means that it is acquired and used mainly at home. And each of these varieties has a subvariety: there's high English, which is what's considered standard in the U.S., and then there's low English, which is the regional subvariety. Spanish's two subvarieties aren't opposing; in fact, they form a continuum: there's U.S. Spanish, which is acquired—I'm quoting here—“through the family, though it is also used at school and in broader, more general community contexts, and in national professional communications; although it is predominantly oral, it is also sometimes written, with more or less substantial English influence.” The other subvariety, the low subvariety, is used in local community contexts, for family

communication and among work crews. The low subvariety of Spanish is mainly used in speech, where English influence is the clearest in the form of language alternation, loan words, and intensive use of calques. This is what is commonly called “Spanglish,” which many mistakenly consider the only viable manifestation of Spanish in the United States.

According to Francisco Moreno-Fernández, the three main characteristics of so-called U.S. Spanish, in its two subvarieties, are 1) the influence of English, with all of the consequences that language contact entails, 2) the convergence or interdialectalization of varieties of Spanish spoken by people from different regions of the Spanish-speaking world, and 3) regionalization due to historic and sociological factors. In my opinion—which I believe many of you share—the first factor, the influence of English, is key, though it isn’t exclusive to U.S. Spanish, since we know that English also influences other varieties of Spanish, the difference being that here the influence is due to direct contact, not just cultural contact.

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In this talk, I'm not going to refer to constant code switching or to crude, adapted loan words, such as *brecas*, *rufo*, and *liquear*, nor am I going to talk about oft-mocked phraseological calques, such as *vacunar la carpeta*, *correr para oficina*, *estar embarazado*, and *tomar un viaje redondo*, which are considered typical of the so-called (and frequently criticized) Spanglish spoken among less educated Hispanics.

Instead, I'm going to talk about a series of loan words and semantic and phraseological calques that, as I see it, and in my experience, are commonly used by most Hispanics in the United States across all social strata and on all educational levels, and which I therefore propose are or should be considered part of general U.S. Spanish, in the high subvariety I described earlier. For example, there are direct loan words whose pronunciation is sometimes slightly adapted, such as *van*, *baby shower*, *flu*, *downtown*, *teenager*, *green card*, *transcript*, *valet parking*, *nursing home*, and *email*. There are also semantic extensions: *realizar* instead of *darse cuenta*, *parada* instead of *desfile*, *posición* instead of *cargo*, *balance* instead of *saldo*, *aplicar* (famously) instead of *solicitar*, *aplicación* and *registración* instead of *matrícula* or *inscripción*, *introducir* instead of *presentar*, *mandatorio* instead of *obligatorio*, *grado* instead of *nota* or *calificación*, *hospicio* instead of *establecimiento para enfermos terminales* (and not to mean an orphanage), *principal de una escuela* instead of *director*, *felonía* instead of *delito mayor*, *facilidades* instead of *instalaciones*, *colegio* instead of *institución de enseñanza superior*, *santuario*—a word that's had a resurgence recently— instead of *refugio*, *dormitorio* instead of *residencia estudiantil*. Phraseological calques: *fecha de expiración* instead of *fecha de caducidad*, *escribir un cheque* instead of *extender un cheque*, *condición preexistente* instead of *antecedentes médicos*, *calificar para algo* instead of *ser elegible*, *centro de cuidado diurno* instead of *guardería infantil* (thanks to Ricardo Otheguy for this example), *vida en prisión* or *prisión por vida* instead of *cadena perpetua*. There are also terms derived from or built on an English base, such as *suplementar* instead of *augmentar* or *agregar*,

*enforzar la ley* instead of *aplicar la ley*, the famous *aseguranza* instead of *seguros*, and *podiatría* instead of *podología* (thanks to Gerardo Piña-Rosales for this example).

I think that these terms should appear in academic dictionaries as *estadounidismos*, that is, terms from or used in the United States, precisely because they can sometimes create confusion among speakers of other varieties of Spanish, as is the case with *billón* and *trillón*, or *hospicio* in certain translations. I also recently learned, when reading the latest Observatory Report, that certain states prohibit official documents from translating *notary public* as *notario público* because the two trades are very different in the U.S. and Latin America. I do wonder when this term is going to be accepted as an *estadounidismo* with the meaning it has in this country, as has happened with *billón* and *trillón*, which also have very different meanings among Spanish speakers outside of the U.S., and which are among the five *estadounidismos* that have been included in the latest edition of the academic dictionary (2014). So, those are some ideas to get the conversation going.

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[FMF]. Who would like to reply to that?

**Carmen Silva-Corvalán [CSC].** I've spent some time thinking about Spanish in the U.S., and a lot of the time I think, okay, I speak Spanish here in the U.S., but I wouldn't say I come close to representing U.S. Spanish. What Spanish would we

call U.S. Spanish? It's an important question, but it's a terribly difficult one to answer. There are so many variations between the East and West Coasts, between the South and the North!

So, sometimes I think that maybe we should say that U.S. Spanish is the Spanish that's spoken or written by people who were born in the U.S., the people we call second-generation speakers or Group 2. This is the group that Ricardo Otheguy and Ana Celia Zentella studied in New York. I can say that when you hear the speech of the Group 2 that I studied in Los Angeles, you immediately say to yourself: "Yes, this is someone who speaks what I would call U.S. Spanish!" But I don't know if it's the same in other states. I think that Group 2 is really critical for us. A lot of the loan words that Domnita mentioned arise in this population. Everything Domnita said struck me as extraordinarily interesting. The only thing that bothered me a bit was the word "crude," this idea that these loan words are somehow crude. I'm not quite sure what she means by that. For me, something "crude" is something vulgar, something you want to avoid. What makes it crude? I don't think that the word *acelga* is crude, and *acelga* is a word we took from Arabic. The same goes for *zanahoria*. What I mean is that I would never call these words "crude." That's the only thing I take issue with in your comments, which I thought were very interesting. The bit about *vacunar la carpeta* and all that, it's something that's cited as typical. I think it's actually closer to stereotypical. I've never heard it in my life. Those kinds of things are stereotypes.

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I've never heard it, though I believe that somewhere someone does say it. I don't know; I've put some other things there [on the slides], because my head hasn't been doing so hot recently. They tell me the hard drive is nearly full. So, on these slides, I put some ideas about which Spanish we could say is representative of the U.S., of U.S. Spanish. There's a really important question. Is U.S. Spanish written Spanish? Is it the Spanish of at least second-generation Spanish speakers in the U.S.? Is it the Spanish of those who live in a barrio where Spanish is the main language that is spoken, or the Spanish of people who have lived in this sort of barrio until they were at least 17 years old? Because my Spanish isn't U.S. Spanish, and neither is Paola Bentivoglio's or Cristiana Bentivoglio's, even though we've lived here for many years. So that's my question, and I don't know how to answer it. It's the Spanish of people who speak Spanish with a certain amount of fluency, who have spoken it for a certain length of time, and who aren't Spanish teachers. It's hard. It's a very important question, but a hard one to answer. Those are my thoughts.

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**Gerardo Piña-Rosales [GPR].** I think I disagree, I think that that Spanish, your Spanish, is U.S. Spanish. I'm Andalusian. I've been living in New York for 40 years, and whenever I go back home, they say: "You don't talk like we do anymore." So, what does "not talking like us" consist of? That's what I wonder. I think that in that sense, what Domnita said is essential; I think that it's the enormous, enormous importance that's attributed to the lexical point of view that's less important.

I'm a writer; I'm not a linguist. I mainly occupy myself with literature. Granted, maybe in literature things are more homogenous. It's obviously quite a bit more formal, we can at least say that. But I think that we can talk about a U.S. Spanish precisely because of those characteristics that come from the influence of English, which, as Domnita pointed out, is different from the kind of influence English has on other countries' Spanish. Otheguy has also talked and written a lot about this. The most important thing to remember here is that translation is essential. Obviously, you can't just translate literally. What we always have to look for—and this is part of U.S. Spanish—are cultural references that Hispanics or Hispanic-Americans in the U.S. will understand. That means that, for example, in this case, it doesn't make sense to talk about a *ministerio* here; we now accept the word *agencia*. These are small details, but taken together, they end up distinguishing and describing the Spanish that we speak, the Spanish of the United States. Of course, there are huge variations, but we all understand each other. That's the really amazing thing. In Los Angeles, in New York, and in Miami, we all understand your Spanish, no matter how you speak it. I think that's a really incredible thing.

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**María Luisa Parra [MLP].** I'd like to add something from my perspective as someone who teaches Spanish for a living. This is a really crucial issue, because the students I work with are second-generation heritage speakers. And there's this assumption that their communities don't speak Spanish, since a lot of the ways that they speak are either mocked or stigmatized. There's still this idea of a standard, this notion that there is such a thing as standard Spanish. In class, we're always wrestling with

and debating the Spanish Royal Academy's motto, *limpia, fija y da esplendor*, "to cleanse, to settle, and to cast splendor." What is it talking about, specifically? As Carmen, pointed out, Spanish has never been settled or pure. What are those characteristics? It's very interesting to be in a classroom full of students who have all come with their own ways of speaking and, as instructors, to decide what we should do with those ways of speaking. To validate it, to recognize it. To validate it as U.S. Spanish. That said, as a Spanish instructor coming from Mexico, I'm not familiar with all the possibilities that exist within U.S. Spanish. And students assume that because their Spanish has been in contact with English, it's not necessarily Spanish. Right? It's a fascinating issue on a sociolinguistic level. We have to be in constant dialogue with our students, who are always asking what's right and what's wrong, and we have to help them redefine their own notions about Spanish and the ways it's spoken. But even then, when they leave the classroom, they encounter all these messages that make it difficult to solidify their way of speaking Spanish. Even today.

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**CSC.** I think that this is an excellent way to kill off Spanish in the U.S. What do I mean? Well, let me tell you about La Puente, in Los Angeles. La Puente is a neighborhood, a barrio, a small town in Los Angeles County. Right now, it's about 70 percent Hispanic. I'm basing this on an article I just read by Ochoa. I have the citation, but I can't remember the name just now. Anyway, Ochoa describes the situation when new immigrants arrive in La Puente from Mexico and talk to people who I would describe as second-generation Spanish speakers. What happens? The

speakers from Mexico start making fun of the second-generation speakers' Spanish, which is U.S. Spanish. (Forgive me for not saying "my Spanish," but I believe my Spanish is still Chilean, even though every once in a while I might say "aseguranza." That's just a matter of words, not syntactic structure or shared phonology or anything like that.) So, what happens? They make fun of the second-generation speakers. And what do the second-generation speakers do? They stop speaking Spanish. They start only talking to the new arrivals in English, and then they turn the tables and make fun of them, because they can't speak English. So there ends up being a culture clash within the same group of Hispanics from Mexico.

Because, like María Luisa said, students show up with this feeling that they speak poorly, that what they speak isn't Spanish. When I started teaching at the University of Southern California, one student told me: "Sorry, Professor, I just don't speak good Spanish." And I said to her: "Were you born in the U.S.?" "No, I'm from Nicaragua. I was raised in Nicaragua. I'm Nicaraguan." "Then why do you think you don't speak Spanish? You speak Nicaraguan Spanish. If you don't use the same words as I do, it's because we're from different regions that have different vocabularies. But, as Professor Piña-Rosales said, we understand each other."

You just have to get used to it. You can figure out what words mean from the context, even if they're very different words. When I came here, it didn't take me long to see that I had to say *elote* and not *choclo*. When I go to Chile, I ask: "Do we all speak 'Quechuañol' because there are lots of words from Quechua that we use

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every day when speaking Spanish in Chile?” Of course not. We speak Chilean Spanish. U.S. Spanish has lots of words from English. Domnita gave us some examples of English words that have been incorporated into everyday Spanish, but that attitude about speaking incorrectly even extends to speakers from other countries. So, I think that we have to say, as Domnita said when she was citing Professor Moreno, that language exists on different levels.

**MLP.** Of course. I totally agree. They bring this feeling with them that the Spanish they speak, the Spanish from their communities, still hasn't been validated as a way of speaking Spanish.

**CSC.** That attitude has to change.

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**MLP.** I couldn't agree more. That's the message I try to reverse in the classroom.

**FMF.** Ricardo Otheguy has experience from New York, from both an educational and a sociolinguistic point of view.

**Ricardo Otheguy [RO].** Of course. I would say that, when we talk about the influence of English on U.S. Spanish, we often run the risk of not making the classic linguistic distinction between the language and the way that the language is used. When people proffer all these examples of the influence of English on U.S. Spanish, a lot of the time, the first thing they talk about is people switching between English and

Spanish when they speak. But it should be pretty obvious that going back and forth between English and Spanish doesn't mean that the English is influencing the Spanish; it's using one language in one moment and another language the next. It isn't an example of English influencing Spanish at all. And then, in their lists of influences, they include anything people say in the U.S., or in some parts of the U.S., that they don't say in Latin America or Spain, even though Spanish speakers in Latin America and Spain are allowed to make any innovation they please.

They can take any words from the language and use them to create new phrases to describe any new thing that arises. When liberation theology was developed, someone called it *teología de la liberación*. Nobody had ever said that before. But nobody thought that they were changing the Spanish language. The Spanish language didn't have anything to do with it. It had to do with society, religion, politics, and so on. But, watch out, because if someone in the U.S. says something they don't say in Latin America—*centro de cuidado diurno*, for example—sorry, that's the influence of English.

But can you show me where the English influence is? “Centro,” “diurno,” “cuidado,” “de,” the word order—it's all Spanish. What I think happens, what I've always said, is that Spanish speakers in the U.S. say different things. They have different messages to communicate. They're not saying that same things as people are saying in Latin America and in Spain. And that's what people are actually laughing at: a lot of the time, the things we're saying in the U.S. are things they've never heard before. They don't say those things in Latin America. There are plenty

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of examples. One that I've always liked is the term for "answering machine." Do you remember those? Here we never called it a *contestador automático*, we called it a *máquina de contestar*. *Máquina de contestar* was always held up as an example of English influence. It seems pretty straightforward, right? From *answering machine*, you get *máquina de contestar*. Except it isn't straightforward English influence at all. Your answering machine is a *máquina de contestar* just like your typewriter is a *máquina de escribir*, just like a *máquina de* anything. It's not the influence of English, it's the influence of what North Americans say. Point being, I think that we need to be very clear about that distinction. If we're going to talk about the influence of English, let's talk about the influence of English, and not what people say in the U.S., which is what's driving the influence.

**FMF.** And what's it like in Miami? That's also a place where there's an experience of coexisting languages, of mutual influence.

**Andrew Lynch [AL].** Yes, it is, and, most of all, it's a place that's undergoing an experience like the one Carmen described, where new arrivals make fun of the second-generation speakers. I think that lots of people hold up Miami as the great example of a Spanish-speaking city in the U.S., where everyone speaks Spanish and nobody understands English, and all that. And, of course, we know perfectly well that isn't true. English still prevails, especially on an institutional level, in what I guess we could call official domains. And first-generation immigrations often mock the ways that people who were born and raised in Miami speak Spanish. It's a

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sociocultural, sociopsychological phenomenon that worries me a great deal, because it embarrasses and inhibits second-generation speakers to the point that, by the third generation, they can't or won't speak Spanish. With a more simplified grammar—to use the term Carmen coined in her 1994 analysis, the one Francisco mentioned earlier—we end up witnessing this phenomenon that I call “the discontinuance of Spanish” to avoid the terms “displacement” and “language loss,” which I don't like very much. Generational discontinuance of Spanish in the U.S. worries me.

Another thing that Carmen brought up that I'd like to address is the issue of representation in U.S. Spanish. Personally, I don't like the term or concept of “U.S. Spanish,” precisely because of this question of representation that Carmen raised. For me—and I'll pause to acknowledge that maybe this is just a personal hang-up—whenever the term “U.S. Spanish” comes up, I wonder what voice it's referring to. What I mean is that there is no anonymous Spanish voice in the U.S., that I know of. At least, there isn't one in Miami.

Speaking Spanish entails being or having a voice from another country: Cuban, though maybe second-generation Cuban; Chilean, though maybe second-generation Chilean; Colombian, though maybe third-generation Colombian. If a Cuban goes to Argentina and opens his mouth, everyone goes: “Oh hey! He's Cuban.” If an Argentinian goes to Peru and opens her mouth, they say: “Look, an Argentinian.”

But what happens if a second-generation Cuban American from Miami goes to Chile and opens his mouth? Are they going to say: “Look at the guy speaking U.S. Spanish”? There is no recognized anonymous voice, in the sociolinguistic sense. The Spanish-speaking voice in or from the U.S. is what Kathryn Woollard would call “always authentic.” What that means is that it has to be from some specific place; it has to belong to a specific determined identity and that identity typically isn't U.S. American. It's typically an identity that has been transplanted, in a certain sense, from somewhere else: from Cuba, from Chile, from Columbia, etc. So, those are my reactions to the comments we've heard thus far.

**FMF.** Jorge Covarrubias had asked me if he could respond earlier. Should we move on to the next question, or do you have something to add?

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**RO.** Can I say one more thing?

**FMF.** Yes, of course.

**RO.** I would just add that the problem that Carmen has raised, and that Andrew has raised, is a problem of representation. What does “U.S. Spanish” mean? Who are we talking about? We would probably run into the same problem if we tried to answer this question about Mexican Spanish or Colombian Spanish. What I mean is that this approach is a trap into which we can fall very easily, and then afterwards we'll say: “I have to talk about U.S. Spanish, what even is that?” That problem

comes up regardless of the place that we're talking about, because the idea that languages can be neatly divided into dialects is already a difficult one. Not to mention something that's probably even worse conceptually, which is the notion that those subdivisions can be broken down by country. So, I would add that this problem we're addressing is a problem that anyone thinking about this issue would have, not just those of us thinking about it in terms of the U.S. I think that this issue would come up anywhere.

**AL** But the different varieties of Spanish that exist in the geopolitical space of Mexico are recognized or perceived as Mexican varieties of Spanish. When people hear varieties of Spanish in the U.S., they think, "Ah, she's Cuban!" or "Oh, he's Colombian!" That's what it's like in Miami, anyway. I don't know about elsewhere.

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**CSC.** Look, I hadn't met my colleague Jorge Covarrubias until today, and the minute I heard him speak five words, I said: "Oh, you're Argentinian!" So, you realize that there is something that makes us recognize where a certain variety is from. I don't know if you could tell I was from Chile or not.

**RO.** It's not that you recognize where a variety is from, but that you recognize a certain specific characteristic that functions as Chilean.

**CSC.** Exactly.

**RO.** But that's because we have created the Chilean variety of Spanish. We have constructed these notions of Chilean and Mexican because the concept of the nation carries so much weight. But if we didn't have those nations, then as linguists and philologists, I don't think we would have been able to invent those subdivisions.

**CSC.** I agree. But we do have them. These nations exist as concepts, and they exist as concepts because there are divisions, which are often based on geographic or natural boundaries. We have the Andes mountains, the northern desert that separates us from Peru, that separates us from Argentina. And there are certain characteristics that are common to all Chileans. I think that there are certain characteristics that unify us, and certain characteristics that differentiate us.

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**DD.** Beyond pronunciation.

**CSC.** Beyond pronunciation.

**FMF.** Let's see if Jorge Covarrubias will finally join in the conversation, seeing as he's already been referenced a few times.

**Jorge Covarrubias [JC].** Well, first of all, I'd like to thank Moreno-Fernández for the kind invitation to speak at this event, and for heading the Observatory, which just celebrated its fifth anniversary and which has published 33 reports on all the

diverse varieties of Spanish in the U.S., which have been published in Spanish and in English; it's a magnificent body of work, and anyone can download it for free online. I'd also like to acknowledge the presence at this roundtable of the North American Academy of the Spanish Language, which is represented here by its director, its board, its members, and its collaborators. And I am grateful to our other distinguished colleagues who have joined us here. To be honest, they're so distinguished that I was a little overwhelmed when I received my own invitation. It would be like if you told me: "You're going to be playing a game of soccer, and your teammates are going to be Messi, Cristiano Ronaldo, Neymar, Chicharito Hernández... and all of that lot."

**CSC.** And Alexis Sánchez.

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**JC.** And Alexis Sánchez, who was also on my team in Argentina. So, I was asking myself "What could my role possibly be on this all-star lineup?" But now you all have given me somewhere to start. As you know, I am a journalist. After a foray into psychology, like my colleague Parra, I earned a degree in the humanities in Buenos Aires, with the Jesuits at the Universidad del Salvador, and then here. But I've spent my entire career working in journalism; first I worked in industrial journalism and then I started working in actual journalism: newspapers, magazines, radio, and, most importantly, at the Associated Press.

So, I was thinking: “What could I possibly contribute to a roundtable with so many esteemed specialists?” Because I certainly am not a specialist. I am not a linguist. But you have given me a few things to talk about. For example, we’re going to talk about Spanish in the U.S. and the phenomenon of the *estadounidismos* that have just been added to the 2014 print edition of the Royal Spanish Academy’s dictionary. Gerardo Piña-Rosales, the director of my Academy, talked about translations and the presence of *estadounidismos* in the press. Ricardo Otheguy has talked about how, when journalists in the U.S. write in Spanish for a North American audience, they use what they call the “conceptual convergence.” Here we don’t talk about the *Ministro de relaciones exteriores*, but about the *Secretario de estado*. We talk about the president of the *Reserva Federal*, not the *Banco Central*. He says that we apply a North American conceptualization to those concepts, and that, in the press and in translations, we often encounter unitary elements, but that these are not enough to erase differences between our original dialects. Moreno-Fernández, too, has highlighted the need for some sort of standard that educators, journalists, and translators can adhere to. He talks about the need for those references known as manuals of style that we create and distribute. And Andrew Lynch has talked about the importance of the media in the evolution of Spanish. I think it was my colleague Domnita Dumitrescu who talked about the importance, before establishing standards, of clearing up the myth that equates *estadounidismos* with Spanglish.

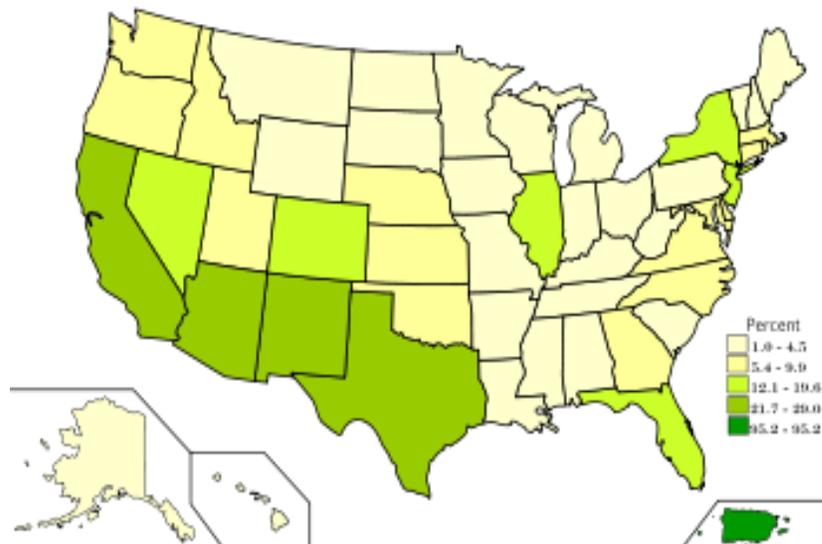
So, I think that, with that in mind, I can contribute from the point of view of journalism, not just journalism plain and simple, but journalism as it pertains to educators, journalists, and translators. Because in my career as a journalist, I've written and researched my own articles on different kinds of assignments. I've been a translator for the Associated Press, where you have to translate and write in other languages, which, in my case, was 99% English. And I've also been a teacher, because I've led classes, lectures, workshops, and classes in Spanish in various countries. So, I think that I can contribute somewhat in that vein, as Moreno-Fernández said, from a journalist's point of view. I don't expect to score any goals in this all-star game, but I do hope to give the occasional assist to my honorable colleagues.

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## The present

**FMF.** I think that is the perfect transition into the second question that I'd like to pose, which concerns the current status of Spanish in the U.S. We've already talked about clashes within communities between new arrivals and people who are already settled in the U.S. We have talked about education, communities, and heritage speakers... But in general, from a more sociological point of view, or, if you like, a more political, socioeconomic, or sociolinguistic one: What is the current situation of Spanish in the U.S.? Apart from linguistic concepts and questions, where is Spanish in the U.S. at this moment? We're going to ask Carmen [CSC] to start, because she has prepared a few images.

**Figure 1.** Hispanic population by percentage. Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2015).



**CSC.** This map of the U.S. represents the percentage of Spanish speakers in the U.S. in shades of green. The darker the green, the higher the percentage of Spanish speakers. As you can see, Puerto Rico is the darkest, with 95% of the population speaking Spanish. But in terms of the continental U.S., we might as well be talking about the Spanish of the Southwest, since you can see that Spanish is extremely prevalent in California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas, with between 20% and 30% of the total population speaking Spanish.

**Table 1.** Hispanics and Spanish speakers in California. Absolute frequencies (speakers ages five and older) and relative frequencies (over total population). Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2015).

	2010 Census	2015 (Estimated population)
California	37,253,956	38,421,464
Total Hispanics	14,013,719 (37.6%)	14,750,686 (38.4%)
Total Spanish speakers	9,706,949 (26.1%)	10,329,154 (26.9%)
Los Angeles County	9,818,605	10,038,388
Total Hispanics	4,687,889 (47.7%)	4,842,319 (48.2%)
Total Spanish speakers	3,868,530 (39.4%)	3,703,685 (36.9%)
City of Los Angeles	3,792,621	3,900,794
Total Hispanics	1,838,822 (48.5%)	1,899,641 (48.7%)
Total Spanish speakers	1,515,409 (47.5%)	1,563,479 (42.8%)

The moment Spanish is experiencing right now is—give me a lovely adjective—it’s lovely. Spanish is having a lovely moment. In California, as you can see, these are estimated figures from 2015, based on the 2010 census. There are over 38 million people in California, and nearly 15 million of them—38.4%—are Hispanic, and 27% of the population speaks Spanish. It’s a very high number. Honestly, I can go all around L.A. speaking Spanish, because even the people who don’t speak Spanish know a few phrases and can more or less respond. Obviously, the City of Los Angeles is farther down, there, where it says “City of Los Angeles.” L.A. has the highest percentage of Spanish speakers, with 42.8% in 2015. It actually went down a little between 2010 and 2015. The thinking is that fewer Hispanics are migrating to the City or County of Los Angeles, because the current population has reached critical mass and there isn’t as much work for them anymore, so they’re going to other states.

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Because, truth be told, as we saw on the previous map, there are Hispanics and Spanish speakers everywhere in the U.S. Every state has at least a little green. The states with the smallest Spanish-speaking population are North and South Dakota, over there, but even they have a green tinge. Today, Spanish can be heard in every state. In fact, 14% of the total population of the U.S. speaks Spanish. It's a very high percentage. That adds up to millions of people, because the current U.S. population is 350 million; if 14% speak Spanish, that means there are around 40 million Spanish speakers. And that's not to mention many people who weren't counted. There are a lot of us here. In L.A., you speak Spanish, kind of like in Miami. But it isn't as if it were official; that is, there's still a sort of diglossia at play. However, the mayor of L.A., Garcetti—he has an Italian last name—speaks Spanish and he's always speaking Spanish on TV. So the future is bright.

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**FMF.** We're going to talk about the future later.

**JC.** My apologies. In terms of figures, according to the U.S. census, the U.S. is going to have the world's second most Spanish speakers by the middle of this century. Sometimes people get confused and think that it's going to have the most, because of demographic projections, but they forget to also project for Mexico's demographic growth. When the U.S. has between 100 and 130 million Hispanics—that's Hispanics, not Spanish speakers—Mexico is going to have 150, so we'll still be a little behind them. And if we extend the projection, it's possible that we might

surpass them before the century is through. But projections so far into the future are not very reliable.

**Table 2.** Hispanics born in California. Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2015).

Ethnicity	2013	2014	2015
Hispanic	238,496 (48.2%)	237,539 (47.2%)	234,237 (47.6%)
Total births in California	494,705	502,879	491,748

**CSC.** There's also the question of births. I believe that in the year 2015, over 47% of children born were Hispanic. This image indicates the number of births in California in 2015 based on the mother's ethnicity. Hispanic newborns accounted for 47% of all births, meaning that all other ethnicities split the remaining 52.4%. In other words, Hispanics are the most numerous, most compact group, and with the birth rates the way they are, that number is only going to keep growing.

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**JC.** It's interesting, because besides the fact that Hispanics currently make up between 14% and 17% of the population, if you look at children younger than 10, it's 25%.

**CSC.** It does seem that we're a bit like rabbits.

**RO.** Congratulations, Hispanic mothers.

DD. I do want to make a small distinction between Hispanics and Spanish speakers, because not all Hispanics speak Spanish. The most interesting thing about this demographic explosion is that it has more to do with the birth rate among Hispanics in the United States than it has to do with immigration. That is, the increase in the percent of Hispanics born in the U.S. is the main driver of Hispanic population growth. I have the data here, drawn from reports published by the Observatory. In 2014, there were almost twice as many Hispanics born in the U.S., 36 million, as there were Hispanics born abroad, just 19 million. And immigration is on the decline.

Many second-generation Hispanics are bilingual and have a good command of Spanish, but we do know that fluency declines with the generations. That said, third-generation Hispanics lose the language less than the third generation of other ethnic groups. That's also from the Observatory Reports: even in the third generation, the rate of bilingualism among Hispanics remains higher than among other ethnic groups. For example, 72% of third-generation Hispanics are monolingual in English—that is, they've lost their Spanish—as compared with 92% of Asians. According to census data, as I said, there is this slight decline through the generations. The percentage of Hispanics born in the U.S. who speak Spanish at home has gone from 67% of the total in 1980 to 60% in 2013. The total percentage of Hispanics who speak Spanish at home decreased from 78% in 2000 to 73% in 2013. But despite this, as the percentage of Hispanics born abroad who speak Spanish remains high, today—and I think Carmen already shared this figure—

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there are 37.6 million Hispanics who speak Spanish at home. If we add undocumented speakers, we reach 50 million. And those 50 million are the users of U.S. Spanish in its many forms (be they more or less highbrow or lowbrow), which, as we discussed, are influenced by English and in turn contribute to that linguistic leveling we talked about.

Professor Otheguy did a well-known study on what's happening with this leveling in New York. I was also thinking about Claudia Parodi's studies on Mexican-based vernacular Spanish in Los Angeles, where young Central Americans stop using the *vos* form specifically in order to adapt, in order to level out. I think this would seem to strengthen the idea that there is a U.S. Spanish with its own profile, with a critical mass of speakers that we shouldn't be too quick to minimize. To the contrary, we should study and support it so that it's incorporated into the linguistic mosaic of the varieties of Spanish that are spoken around the world.

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**GPR.** That's all very good. I am very optimistic. I've also seen how Spanish in New York, where I've lived and still live, and where I'll probably die, has clearly been growing. I'm not going to talk about whether it's better or worse, because I know that's a bit of a thorny problem. The numbers are great, there are more and more of us. But I think that the important thing isn't for them to count us, but for us to count. Until Hispanics have real representation in Washington, we're going to remain stuck with Newt Gingrich's perception, for example. What does Gingrich have to say? He says Spanish is the language of the ghetto. And I think that is

precisely what we have to combat. In any case, if in the future we have the great misfortune of two or three more Trumps, Spanish is going to suffer. It has to. Just like it suffered in the eighties with the English Only movement. Right?

And I'm not saying we should lose sleep over it, but I do believe that we need to keep that in mind. As long as young Hispanics have access to education, without any sort of problem, in English and in Spanish, then Spanish will most certainly continue growing. And here I've come upon the same point again, it'll continue improving if they so desire. And then we might hope to be rid of this image that we have, not just here, but in Spain, too. I'm sick of saying the same thing every time they call me for an interview. "Well, we already know that the way you all speak Spanish over there is quite poor." No, it isn't. Obviously I always have to talk to them about the influence of English, and so on, and so on. Go read *El País*; it's pitiful. In that case, that is, if we're talking about a standard, about highbrow Spanish, then here we have to do exactly the same thing. I think that is important, the sociopolitical question, so that young Hispanics can have access to education, so that they can go to college and continue learning. That's when we'll really count.

**RO.** Well, something I've always enjoyed is being the wet blanket. So, in the midst of this celebration of our numbers and our abundantly fertile mothers and all that, I'd like to make a negative comment: though there are many Spanish speakers in the U.S., psychologically speaking, in the mind of most, or perhaps all speakers, Spanish remains somewhat secondary and dependent; it is always viewed through

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the prism of Latin American or Iberian Spanish. I think that there is very little perception of Spanish in the U.S. as a variant in its own right, with the right to create its own expressions and say its own things. There was a time in the history of Spanish when they tried to teach children in Argentina to use the *tú* form. There's none of that anymore. Argentinians are proud to use the *vos* form. You can find it in writing everywhere you look.

That sort of development, that sort of change where the way a country speaks is reaffirmed and recognized, and where the speakers in that country feel like—and, as Andrew says, they currently don't feel this way—like they are from the U.S., and as such are U.S. Latinos. I think that, linguistically speaking, we are very far from achieving that. Not to mention, this conversation itself comes from an outsider's perspective. And until we manage to change that perspective, I think that even though there is definitely plenty to be happy about, things aren't going to go so well, unless we achieve that change. That's how it seems to me.

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**CSC.** We need an attitude change.

**RO.** An attitude change, exactly.

**MLP.** I think that this is where the question of education becomes fundamental, because what I see in students is that, for them, it's not a question of a standard so much as a question of identity integration, where they themselves reclaim and

understand what the Spanish they already speak means to them. And, once they've reclaimed it, they can incorporate the fact that they are a generation that was raised here, a generation that can integrate both cultures: the family culture and the social culture. I think that will be the turning point where we'll begin to see retaining Spanish as a possibility, as something that can be passed on to future generations and continue being validated and used, though it'll be a slow process. I think that if education steps in at that point with a perspective that is informed by sociolinguistics and psychopedagogy, young people will be able to have a far better understanding of who they are and what Spanish means in their lives, and they'll be able to move forward from there. I'm not saying it's going to be easy.

I think that there are lots of sociopolitical pressures that are working against us, and that we're all swimming against the current a little, but I also think it would be very sad if we stopped trying. There's also the issue of demographics: we're starting to see kids who are growing up and going to high school and college. Here at the Observatory, we have seminars and workshops where we try to see how we can do more to involve these young people in our language classes; we've even opened new courses specifically for them. So they're starting to arrive and to push, and it's up to us, as professors, to find a way to create infrastructure so that they have a space where they can try to integrate their identities. That's what we're working on, anyway.

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**FMF.** And how does the present look for Spanish-language journalism? [to JC]

**JC.** Right now, there are a lot of economic problems. They're closing newspapers. It's a problem; it's been a huge struggle, ever since online newspapers started popping up. There's a huge economic problem. They're closing newspapers. There are people who want to hire journalists to work for free. And the journalists are leaving. Magazines are practically disappearing. Or rather, the landscape is very bad from an economic point of view. Not to mention there are plenty of small newspapers and publications showing up online, and utterly unprofessional blogs written by people who are just interested in expressing themselves. It's all thrown together helter-skelter, without any fact checking, without the least bit of the precision that a good piece of journalism has; the language is careless and it's full of conspiracy theories. Don't get me wrong, it's all a very interesting, passionate hodgepodge, but from the perspective of serious journalism, it's criminal. The landscape has become very poor in that sense.

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Now, I did a report on Spanish-language journalism, which the Observatory published. It was very representative: 140 journalists from 44 states and D.C. participated, and you have no idea how hard it was for me to get journalists from 44 states! While most of them said that the Spanish language was a concern for them, some said that all they cared about was making money. They just wanted to speak in the language of their audiences, or of the people they thought were their audiences. Interestingly, several of them were very opposed to Spanglish. One of them, Prieto Sarta from North Carolina, said that we have to accept *estadounidismos* because that's how people talk in the U.S. He said: "I'm asking

the North American Academy to make a list of *estadounidismos* so that they can be added to the dictionary.” And that’s precisely what the Academy is doing, that’s what you [FMF] are doing, with your wonderful corpus of *estadounidismos*.

**FMF.** Shall we round out the circle with Andrew Lynch? What is the present situation of Spanish in Florida and in the U.S.?

**AL.** I think that Miami is a very specific case. But I do believe that it’s worth commenting on what I suppose we should call the ideological evolution of how people perceive the political-ideological situation of Spanish between seventies-eighties and the nineties-aughts.

In the seventies and eighties, Spanish was perceived as the language of a certain area, such as a city, a barrio, and so on. Then, in the nineties, Spanish became a marketing tool. José del Valle has talked about this, too: the phenomenon of language commodification. The evolution of a global economy, what we call globalization. I’m from a small town. I’m from the U.S.; I’m not a native Spanish speaker or anything like it. I’m from a small town in the North Carolina mountains. In the seventies and eighties, when I was growing up, there wasn’t a soul around who spoke Spanish. Then in the nineties, Mexican migrants began arriving. I remember that by that point I was living in Minneapolis, but I went back to visit my family in 94-95. I went to the only bank on the main street of my hometown of around 2,000 people, there in North Carolina, in ‘94, and on the ATM, I had to

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choose either English or Spanish. And let me tell you, I went nuts. It was wild that in this small town of 2,000 people in the mountains, Spanish would be an option on the ATM.

With this phenomenon of Spanish becoming a concept on the global market, suddenly people started seeing Hispanics as a segment of the market who you could sell things to. I think that this is very important because for people like my grandparents or my parents, who are from another generation, that lent a certain legitimacy to Spanish. Spanish now has a presence that goes beyond the barrio, beyond the home, and so on. That is very important. Despite the fact that Spanish enjoys less transmission or generational continuity here in the U.S. I think that in the nineties, we experienced an important turning point, to borrow María Luisa's phrase. I think that we may be witnessing the start of a shift in the ideological perception of Spanish that may become important in the next 50, 100, or 200 years, after Miami is underwater. What do I know. But I do believe that it's an important topic right now, and that it's important to observe it.

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## The future

**FMF.** You've pointed us right toward the future, which is the last topic I'll ask this panel about before turning it over to our distinguished audience. Let's talk about the future of Spanish in the U.S.

**CSC.** Even though the opinion that Ricardo [RO] offered isn't especially optimistic, I tend to agree with him. I think that the fact there's been an increase in the Hispanic population is important, even though it hasn't corresponded to an increase in the percentage of Spanish speakers, because what's happened is that lots of Hispanics are arriving, and then when you see some other people speaking Spanish, that pushes you and everyone else to speak it, too.

And more and more, you're seeing all these institutions that give you the choice of English or Spanish; you see it everywhere: "*Se habla español*," that little sign is out front, even if it's a Korean store, they have that little sign, "*Se habla español*." Even if it's a Chinese store, "*Se habla español*." This says a lot about the future, I think. You see, beginning in 1980 and until 2008, the percentage of Spanish speakers in the Southwest has remained constant: in Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas.

**Table 3.** Percentage of Spanish speakers among the Southwest Hispanic population (1998-2008) Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2015).

	1980	1990	2000	2008
<b>United States</b>				
<b>Total Population</b>	226,545,805	248,709,873	281,421,906	304,059,728
<b>Hispanics</b>	14,608,673 (6.45%)	22,354,059 (9.0%)	35,305,818 (12.5%)	40,352,970 (13.3%)
<b>Spanish Speakers</b>	Unavailable	17,345,064 (77.6%)	24,636,215 (69.8%)	31,097,735 (77.1%)
<b>Arizona</b>				
<b>Total Population</b>	2,718,215	3,665,228	5,130,632	6,500,180
<b>Hispanics</b>	385,938 (14.2%)	680,628 (18.6%)	1,295,617 (25.3%)	1,648,774 (25.4%)
<b>Spanish Speakers</b>	331,038 (85.8%)	478,234 (70.3%)	927,395 (71.6%)	1,192,382 (72.3%)
<b>California</b>				
<b>Total Population</b>	23,667,902	29,760,021	33,871,648	36,756,666

	1980	1990	2000	2008
<b>Hispanics</b>	3,993,913 (16.9%)	6,703,197 (22.5%)	10,966,556 (32.4%)	11,763,433 (32%)
<b>Spanish Speakers</b>	3,132,690 (78.4%)	5,478,712 (81.7%)	8,105,505 (73.9%)	9,099,624 (77.4%)
<b>Colorado</b>				
<b>Total Population</b>	2,889,964	3,294,394	4,301,261	4,939,456
<b>Hispanics</b>	302,696 (10.5%)	374,445 (11.4%)	735,601 (17.1%)	850,083 (17.2%)
<b>Spanish Speakers</b>	179,607 (59.3%)	203,896 (54.5%)	421,670 (57.3%)	482,283 (56.7%)
<b>New Mexico</b>				
<b>Total Population</b>	1,302,894	1,515,069	1,819,046	1,984,356
<b>Hispanics</b>	425,829 (32.7%)	519,939 (34.3%)	765,386 (42.1%)	792,272 (39.9%)
<b>Spanish Speakers</b>	352,488 (82.8%)	398,186 (76.6%)	485,681 (63.5%)	483,736 (61.1%)
<b>Texas</b>				
<b>Total Population</b>	14,229,191	16,986,510	20,851,820	24,326,974
<b>Hispanics</b>	2,629,045 (18.5%)	3,830,894 (22.6%)	6,669,666 (32.0%)	7,586,956 (31.2%)
<b>Spanish Speakers</b>	2,484,188 (94.5%)	3,443,106 (89.9%)	5,195,182 (77.9%)	6,009,415 (79.2%)

In Texas in 2008, 78% spoke Spanish; that's a very high rate in Texas. In New Mexico, 61%. In Colorado, 56.7%. The average for all of California is 77.4%. In Arizona, 72%. This was in 2008. Since the eighties, it's been holding steady. There have been highs and lows, but I think it's going to remain unchanged moving forward. There will be spikes and dips, but it'll never stop being a language with a very important social role. That is, it has an important role in U.S. society.

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**FMF.** Is that how you see it, Ricardo Otheguy, after hearing Carmen Silva's comments?

**RO.** I think it will all depend on the attitude taken by the people who can have an influence on these processes. The problem of a second-generation speaker who

was born here being ridiculed by his teachers in school or his professors in college because he speaks poor Spanish is an age-old problem. It's been around for at least 40 years, in my memory. As long as that keeps happening, as long as whenever a speaker says "*Yo te llamo cuando llego*" and someone says "No, no, no, you should say '*Yo te llamo cuando llegue,*'" as long as every time someone speaks Spanish in a way that is syntactically different from Spanish in Latin America or Spain, people say "You don't speak Spanish and here I have... That's why, because you don't know how to speak," as long as that attitude remains dominant, I think that the future of Spanish in the U.S. is going to be in bad shape, because we're always going to be the red-headed stepchild of the family, no matter how many of us there are.

I think that if the people who wield any sort of influence over these processes start being sufficiently aware of the situation to recognize that U.S. Spanish is on the same footing as Argentinian or Mexican or Cuban Spanish, with the same right to have its own idiosyncrasies, then, if these people change, I think the future of Spanish is... culminating. But I don't know if they will change, because the prevailing attitude is still that U.S. Spanish is something viewed from the outside rather than from within.

**FMF.** Do you agree, María Luisa Parra?

**MLP.** Yes, I think that the issue of attitudes is essential and I think that the problem goes beyond educational circles to society in general, and to how Latinos are perceived beyond language. I think that the stigmatization of those ways of speaking is brutal in our countries of origin, like Mexico. But, in terms of these questions of vocabulary, when I go to Mexico, because I come and go pretty often, I've started hearing more and more words like *aplicación* and *introducir*; once, when I was at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, someone said: “*Voy a introducir a la profesora Parra.*” And I responded: “Shouldn't it be *presentar*, not *introducir*?” And she said: “Oh yes, of course you're right, but now we say *introducir.*” And last summer, I was walking down the street and I saw an ad for Uber that said: “*Cuando quiero estar más tiempo con mi hijo, tome un Uber.*” “*Cuando quiero*” or “*quiera*”? That is, there was a use of the subjunctive that wasn't the canonical use that you would expect in Latin America. I took a photo of it, because I thought “This is incredible.” It's happening in Mexico, too. And here in the U.S., we stigmatize people for no longer using the subjunctive. But it seems like it's already on its way out in other contexts, too. I think it's very important for our classes to incorporate the topic of linguistic changes and how they come and go and come back again, so that we can continue raising awareness of the language's dynamism. So I think that yes, the future of Spanish depends on our attitudes toward linguistic change, and our attitude toward young Latinos in ways that go beyond language. We need to... I don't know the word, we talk about “empowerment” a lot in Mexico these days... We need to empower them in their own ways of using language.

DD. I totally agree, because it's also important to educate the educators. That is, we need to train Spanish instructors who have a sociolinguistic understanding, so that they don't just repeat those negative attitudes, and also so that they understand these possible lexical innovations. I was very surprised that last time I was in Mexico, when they told me that the *secretario* was going to speak. I didn't know that they meant the *ministro*. For me, a *secretario* is someone who does clerical work; a *secretario* isn't a *ministro*. And in Mexico that's what they say to refer to dignitaries. So in reality, a lot of the words that we think we only use here are actually used elsewhere.

Another aspect of this question about the long-term preservation of Spanish—and here, again, I'm going to embarrass you, Francisco, forgive me, I promise it'll be the last time—is the one that Moreno-Fernández presented: the need to normalize or standardize this Spanish. That is, we need to do more than just honor it and try to promote an attitude change; we must also give it rules. We must standardize U.S. Spanish so that we can use it in formal contexts without shame or prejudice. Through a joint effort at linguistic planning and circulation at schools and in the media. I'm going to read: "It would mean distributing a model of U.S. General Spanish from school, based on its own characteristics, and on traits shared with other prestigious Hispanic varieties. These characteristics themselves not only make it possible to achieve all the social functions necessary for social life, but also make possible popular identification with a specific means of expression, capable of entering into a stylistic range that would connect it to the stratum of

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Spanglish. On the other hand, the shared characteristics would make external communication possible, and take maximal advantage of the language in the fields of international relations, be they commercial, political, or cultural ones.” This quote is from Francisco Moreno-Fernández, and I think it’s an appropriate place to close my comments.

**JC.** I also think that, if we are going to establish a set of rules, it would be interesting to take a look at the manuals of style that are published here in the U.S. I was involved in the production of two of them, one for the National Association of Hispanic Journalists and later the *Manual de estilo online de la Associated Press*, where we did accept a number of *estadounidismos* because we believed that they were part of the lexicon and correct, with a few exceptions. Or at least one. We couldn’t ever accept the classic *billón* as standard in a manual of style, because that would open the door, in journalism and in translation, to making mistakes by a factor of one thousand.

**GPR.** And not just that. I think, certainly, that attitude is essential, but we’ve talked about education. Imagine, for example, students studying literature in college. It’s great that they study Latin American and Spanish literature: García Márquez, Cervantes, and so on. But why don’t we place an emphasis on Spanish writing from the U.S.? These young people could be introduced to Tomás Rivera, for example. Or one of the most illustrious members among our ranks, Rolando Hinojosa-Smith, who writes in both English and Spanish. I think it’s also important for students to

know that here there already is a truly important body of literature that they should be proud of.

**MLP.** Not to mention, it belongs to a literature that speaks to their own experiences as a group of people who are second-generation, transnational, between cultures, and between languages. It's a very important model.

**FMF.** Andrew [AL], is there anything you want to say before we open it up to the audience?

**AL.** I'd just like to again highlight the importance of a formal education in Spanish and bilingual programs. Miami may be the great bilingual model in the United States, but even there, there are very few bilingual education programs. The overwhelming majority of public education options in Miami, and also private options, teach entirely in English. I think that's a shame. It seems absurd to me. We have to focus on promoting education—formal education—in Spanish. We don't necessarily have to correct the Anglicisms and linguistic accuracy. But we have to promote the use of Spanish and encourage the second and third and fourth generations to acquire a foundation, a formal context that will enable them to move forward, acquiring and using Spanish as adults. For me, that's the most important thing. That is the key to the future of Spanish in the U.S. Without that, you can forget about it.

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**RO.** I think Gerardo made an excellent point that we would do well to remember. If there is a literature class where these authors aren't taught, the question is: Why not? I think that's because those professors think their job is to teach Spanish. And Spanish, after all, is the language of Latin America and Spain. And, consequently, they never think to teach something that was written in the U.S. So, I think that is a major symptom of this problem, which I think will be a difficult one to grapple with in the future.

## Discussion

**FMF.** [To the audience] You can see that our roundtable is not only a chorus, but a polyphonic chorus at that. And with panelists from the U.S., Argentina, Romania, Spain, Chile, Cuba, and Mexico, greater variety would have been nearly impossible. But we do have a few minutes for you to share your own questions and thoughts. Anyone? Andrés Enrique.

**Andrés Enrique-Arias.** I just wanted to comment on a couple of things. The first is this problem that you've raised about Group 2 speakers, second-generation speakers, who were born here and have linguistic insecurity; they have complexes and think that they speak poorly. And, of course, there are classes for heritage speakers. What's their focus?

I've had some experience with this. As a professor at Cal State, I taught the class on Spanish for Spanish speakers in the U.S. And I wanted to be as open as possible,

so that people would value their own varieties of Spanish, and not view them as somehow inferior, and all that. But that's not what students are looking for. They're looking for an answer. They want me to explain what the standard is.

**DD.** They want to know which form is correct.

**Andrés Enrique-Arias.** And, really, we can't grant privileges to U.S. Spanish that we wouldn't grant to any other variety of Spanish. That is, in every variety of Spanish, in Spain or Mexico or wherever, there are uses that we consider to be more prestigious and normative, and others that aren't so prestigious and normative. So what I mean is, it's not like we should be able to say anything goes in the U.S. I don't think there's any variety where anything goes. In the academic sphere, there always has to be some sort of guide and help for uncertain speakers. And obviously I understand that many of these speakers learned Spanish informally. They didn't receive schooling in Spanish and now they're looking for answers. So we shouldn't stigmatize the way they speak, obviously. We have to explain the problems of standard and usage, and all that. But I'm also not opposed to the idea of some sort of guide, some sort of standardization.

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In any case, the problem that Spanish in the U.S. has is that lots of things are working against it. First off, when we talk about Spanish in Mexico or in Spain or anywhere else, we're talking about varieties that have a territory. They're associated with a region, and with political institutions and history and other things that are far more diffuse in the U.S. The population here is much more dispersed,

and it doesn't have a territory. It has to share the space with another language, English, which has tremendous strength, power, and prestige.

And it also strikes me as paradoxical that—well, even here we can see it, with the people who are attending this event and the members of this roundtable—in my experience, at many institutions in the U.S. where I've been a Spanish professor, there are practically no professors who come from these communities. What I mean is that the overwhelming majority of people teaching Spanish at the university level in the U.S. come from Latin America or from Spain, or they're native English speakers with a formal education in Spanish. Really, there are very few members of this community in positions to teach Spanish to the community. And I think that has a bit of a negative effect, too. My point is that we haven't yet been able to create an academic, intellectual class from these communities. And I think that's another task on our plate.

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**FMF.** Thank you. Any other comments? Are there are other questions or comments?

**Audience** I'm from Mexico. I work in Mexico, where I teach sociolinguistics, and right now I'm preparing syllabi not so much for the second generation, but for what's being called "Generation 1.5," possible return immigrants, who might go back to their home countries. So, this issue that you've brought up about being derided and the necessity of navigating different registers is something that I'm working on.

I think what you say about educating the educators is very important. From our work with young people who have already gone back to their home countries, we know that it's the high school and junior high teachers who make them feel disheartened with the way they speak the language, along with the mockery they get from other students. But what our colleague has mentioned is also important: we need to teach not that anything goes, but that everything is valuable. And I think that's true, I think that everything is valuable. Every person has a place to show in which moment, in which situation, in which context each different thing is appropriate. And I think we should give students tools so that they can navigate these different registers, based on what they're saying.

**FMF.** Thank you. Any other comments?

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**Audience.** I just wanted to say something. I used to teach Spanish and I do research on intercultural communication. I live in Germany and I teach Spanish in Germany, where things are a little different. It's more structured there because the syllabi are standardized by the European Union. And what I can see here is that, as a mother of young children and also as an educator, the adoption of terms, the use of *estadounidismos*, is very important. We could say that it's a living language, because languages are alive. We adopt new terms. It's something I've seen in California, and in Chicago, and Boston. There's also one issue that has a lot to do with education and with the use of Spanish, and right now, I think that the topic of education, which many of you brought up, is very important. Because most of the

people who suddenly feel like they don't speak Spanish properly basically learned it on the street or at home.

It's a socioeconomic issue. Their parents normally didn't have much time; they spoke to them very little, so it's the little bit that they hear on the street. And then when they hear Spanish, of course it's extremely varied, because the Latin American identity is very different in the U.S. It's like putting everyone in the same bag; the same political category. How do we reconcile Cuba with Mexico, for example? There needs to be standardization. It's important to insist on education for young people, for children, because it's not just the adoption of these terms, it's the way they use Spanish. And that's why they usually ask what's correct. Because intuitively, they start to see, somehow or another: "I'm not using this language correctly; maybe I can learn to use it another way." It's very important to insist on that usage, and maybe on standardization.

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**MLP.** But I think there's another important consideration—I'm an educator, this is what I do—and I think one of the most important parts of my work in education is considering individual differences. Every student reacts in a different way. You mentioned that you're a mother; I'm the mother to two teenagers. The older one could just learn the rules by heart. But here's how the younger one talks: "¿Adónde vas a *parquear*, mamá?" And you can tell from the way he says it that what he means is: "I know that you don't use the word *parquear* and that's exactly why I use it." So, how should I react to the forms of expression that he's choosing to use,

which are just another kind of word in Spanish that's different from the words I use? I just answer his question.

**CSC.** Your younger son is using language creatively.

**MLP.** Yes, he's very creative. And he says to me: "*Mamá, no quiero que haces esto.*" And I respond: "You mean '*que hagas esto.*'" And then he says "*No quiero que haces esto.*" And we carry on with our lives. So, they keep on reacting and keep on making their own decisions. And at the end of the day, they're also going to decide what they do and don't want to use, and how they want to be identified, and with which groups they want to be identified. And we should validate that, too. It would be hard to get everyone to react the exact same way to the exact same model.

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**JC.** I think that education really is essential, because freedom also has its limits, as does creativity. The other day the gardener came to my house and said: "*¿Quiere que le prunee los bushes?*"

**FMF.** And how did you respond?

**JC.** "*Sí, prunéelos.*" Every once in a while, I'll say "*los rociadores*" instead of "*los sprinklers.*" And he'll say: "Sure, *rociadores*, whatever you say." But in any case, he *pruneó* my bushes and they looked beautiful.

**Audience.** You have talked about this question of which Spanish is correct Spanish. The important thing here is to have an academic institution to refer to, which could instruct Spanish teachers in the U.S. as to which basic guidelines they should use to teach Spanish correctly. A standard Spanish, setting aside dialectical differences among Spanish speakers. In that respect, what role are the Royal Spanish Academy and the North American Academy of the Spanish Language playing? Are they doing a good job trying to straighten that out, so that teachers have a reference, or are they not yet on the right track?

**GPR.** So, that isn't the function of the Academy. That's what it has things like the Cervantes Institute for. The Cervantes Institute has several different levels of Spanish instruction, on how to teach Spanish. But our job is also to collaborate with the Royal Spanish Academy on its projects: the dictionary, grammar, spelling. That's also important, clearly. Not to mention, when we talk about an institution like the Academy, we should remember that it doesn't have many resources, especially because we're located in the U.S. All the language academies have the support of their governments, but we don't receive any sort of support.

**Audience.** I have a question about Spanish and its functions. You've talked about parents, who are a generation that is getting older, and they're in college. Do you think that has started promoting, or could promote, state or federal policies that support Spanish?

**CSC.** I can only speak to what happened less than a year ago in California. In California, in 1986, I think, or maybe in the nineties, bilingual education was banned. In 2016, they passed Proposition 58, which formally authorizes optional bilingual instruction. It didn't mandate bilingual education because when they banned it, they did it with Hispanic support, because parents protested that their children were getting a very poor education in Spanish. It wasn't working out well; the results were very bad. Now it's offered, optionally, in over 200 schools, known as dual language schools, where English and Spanish are taught from the start in California. And in Los Angeles, there are over 50. There are 56 dual language schools. Forty-seven of them are Spanish-English, and the rest are Mandarin-English and Korean-English; a very small minority. There are also dual language schools in Santa Monica and Culver City, which aren't part of the City of Los Angeles. My grandchildren went to school there, where they teach Spanish and English at the same time. So there's interest.

The problem, as I see it, is that we don't have teachers from Mexico. I think that in the Southwest U.S., we should take the conventions of Mexican Spanish as standard, because 90% of the Hispanics living in the Southwest have a Mexican background. We should take the textbooks that they're using in Mexico City or elsewhere in Mexico and adapt them. The situation must be different on the East Coast, because here there still isn't a Mexican majority, but in the Southwest the problem isn't as drastic because there is greater cohesion. It's essentially Mexican. We have a small Salvadoran and Nicaraguan population now, and also a few

Guatemalans, but they're a minority. It's a very small percentage. I think that there were around 350,000 Salvadorans in Los Angeles County. And millions of Mexicans. It's a huge difference. I think we could take Mexico as a model.

You [FMF] have asked for standardization of Spanish. Standardization will be difficult. Look at how many years Galicia has been trying to standardize their language, or how long Basque Country has been trying to standardize Basque, and those are much smaller languages with greater homogeneity. So imagine how hard it must be in the U.S. How would you standardize Spanish here?

**FMF.** I can think of many ways to go about standardizing. You can standardize by writing a textbook that's used in schools. Teachers' jobs involve standardizing on a daily basis. There has to be an attitude adjustment on every level. There doesn't need to be some authority on high that bequeaths general rules; we need a general attitude, along with a set of first-hand information on the sociolinguistic reality of each territory, so that we can use that information for those daily tasks, which is really where we need a reference point.

**CSC.** I should study what resources they use in dual language schools. What do they use to teach kids Spanish?

**MLP.** I can tell you, because my kids went to a dual language school here. It's an excellent program, but it's sad to see the inconsistent quality in the preparation, in

the training that the teachers have. Because it's not just a question of the curriculum and the attitude; there's also implementation and the way teachers relate to the students. It's not easy; teachers don't always have current training.

**RO.** María Luisa [MLP], is that situation of having poorly trained teachers unique to the U.S.?

**MLP.** No, not at all! I had to laugh when you said that we should use Mexico as a reference, because Mexico—and mind you, I love it with all my heart and I'm a product of its public education system—is going through a deeply concerning crisis in education. The Secretary of Education has just declared that Mexico is going to be a bilingual, English-Spanish country. As if it weren't already bilingual or multilingual with indigenous languages. So now we have to train teachers to be English instructors. I think it's a problem, a very far-reaching crisis.

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**RO.** I will say, I do think that the language that is supposedly correct or standard is different from the language that children and teenagers get in school. This is the situation everywhere, across the globe, and here, as we talk about correct language and about standards and all that, the conversation works. But if we were to talk about specific traits, everything would go to hell in a handbasket. For example, whenever I go to visit family in Madrid, I always ask them: "In Madrid, do they correct your kids when they use the *laísmo*? When they have double prepositions? When a kid says 'A Marta la dije que fuera por la carne a la tienda,' is that

considered standard? Or is that considered incorrect?” And the teachers that I’ve talked to—and maybe I’ve only talked to the dumb ones—say: “Wait, what’s the mistake? What’s wrong with that sentence?” So, when we start examining things trait by trait, everything starts to collapse, conceptually. The situation isn’t nearly as clear-cut as it seems.

**CSC.** Going back to the topic of bilingual education, I remember when one of my grandkids came home from school, and I said to him: “*Ponte un poco de arroz en el plato,*” with my normal Chilean accent. And he looked at me and said: “*No es ‘a-rros,’ es ‘a-rroz.’*” and he lisped the last letter at me like a Spaniard. “*No es ‘a-rros,’ es ‘a-rroz.’*” He was either in kindergarten or first grade, I don’t remember, but he had a teacher from Madrid. So of course he wanted to correct me.

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**RO.** That reminds me of a wonderful story, Carmen [CSC]. Nowadays lots of teachers from Spain are coming to the U.S., and we’re happy to have them! *¡Bienvenidos!* One of them was from León, and so she had that “defect” of lisping. That defect of distinguishing between s and z, so she’d say *difí[θ]il* and *fá[θ]il*. And she never had any problem with her students in New York. But then, one day, she was telling them about putting *a[θ]úcar* in her coffee and the kids all told her: “Oh no, *Maestra*, not *a[θ]úcar*. *Difí[θ]il*, yes; *difí[θ]il*, sure, but not *a[θ]úcar*, please.” That was taking it too far. That was too much. It is very clearly *a[s]úcar*. It has to be. Otherwise, it isn’t sweet.

**GPR.** That happens in Spain, too. I remember, when I was in high school, I had a teacher, Don Valentín García Yebra. Back then I lived in Morocco, in Tangier, but we were Andalusian. And he always tried to get me to call my watch a *re-lo[x]*. “¿Qué hora es en tu *re-lo[x]*?” It was absolute torture. *Re-lo[x]*. For me it’s a *reló*. *Reló*, *reló*.

**FMF.** As you can see, there’s a lot of ground that this roundtable could cover, and we promise that there is more to come. But I’m afraid that’s all for now. We’d like to extend our warmest thanks to Andrew Lynch, Jorge Covarrubias, Domnita Dumitrescu, Gerardo Piña-Rosales, Carmen Silva-Corvalán, Ricardo Otheguy, and María Luisa Parra for joining us.

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