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The Economic Value of Spanish in the United States: Opportunities and Challenges for the Future

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Abstract: Bilingualism has undeniable benefits at the personal and cognitive level, but it also represents an important economic asset for individuals and society. This paper explores some of the key principles for better understanding and appreciating the economic opportunities created by the growth of Spanish-English bilingualism in the United States, as well as some of the challenges it may pose. We explore some of the direct benefits that individuals can expect (e.g., better job prospects), as well as the potential indirect benefits or externalities that accrue to U.S. society as a whole when barriers to trade, investment, the exchange of ideas, etc. are reduced.

Keywords: bilingualism, Spanish in the United States, economic value of Spanish, job market, international trade, wage premium, purchasing power.

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1. Introduction

As José Luís García Delgado, a research professor at Universidad Nebrija (Spain), argues, Spanish has become the Spanish-speaking world's most widely exported international product, not only due to the global number of speakers, but the cultural richness of the language and its role in "supporting economic activities that transcend national borders" (Delgado, Alonso & Jiménez, 2012, p. 9). This fact is gaining increasing international traction: the number of students enrolling in Spanish as a second language (L2) or foreign language (FL)² classes continues to grow yearly, while the number of companies looking for specialists capable of working simultaneously in Spanish and other languages, including English, is also increasing. The number of bilateral economic exchanges between international consumers and suppliers that take place in Spanish also continues to grow, in no small part due to the advantages of establishing economic ties in a language spoken by more than 591 million people worldwide, as either a first, second, or foreign language (Delgado, Alonso & Jiménez, 2012; Instituto Cervantes, 2021).

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The value of Spanish as a lingua franca in the world of trade and commerce continues to grow, especially in the United States (U.S.),³ where Spanish is the most widely spoken language after English (American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2017; Martínez-García et al., 2021a; 2021b). This study specifically explores the

² According to Santos Gargallo (1999, pp. 22), an L2 describes a language that is learned in a given linguistic community because it fulfills a social and institutional function, while an FL is learned in a context without this social or institutional function. For example, French in Canada would be considered an L2 for non-native learners, because it is spoken by the country's francophone communities, while in Spain it would generally be considered an FL, since it is typically only spoken in schools and language centers where it is studied.

³ Unless otherwise stated, when we speak of the 'United States' or 'the U.S.', we are referring to the 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia. That is, we are not including Puerto Rico, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands or other U.S. dependent territories where, as of 2020, nearly three million additional Spanish speakers currently reside.

question of the economic value of Spanish in the U.S., focusing on the current status of Spanish in the country, and discussing the employment and business opportunities for individuals and companies that operate fluently in both English and Spanish. We also review the main challenges faced by the U.S. in utilizing the potential of a population that is becoming increasingly Spanish-English bilingual.

The U.S. is a special case when it comes to studying the value of Spanish, as it is becoming increasingly clear that the language constitutes an important intangible asset for the country. Not only do Spanish-speaking communities represent a steadily increasing demographic and economic footprint in the U.S., but their purchasing power is also growing more evident, and knowledge of Spanish already represents a wage premium that, while modest, increases one's value when seeking employment (Jiménez, 2019). Speaking Spanish not only benefits the Spanish-English bilingual population economically, it generates positive, socially-advantageous economic externalities by promoting both domestic and international economic activity (Martínez-García et al., 2021a; 2021b). Our research builds on and reinforces such conclusions about the role of Spanish in the U.S. by examining evidence provided by several U.S. statistical sources.

2. Spanish in the U.S.: Foundations of Growth

2.1. Basic Data

As we note in the introduction, Spanish has become an important intangible asset for the U.S., in large part due to the demographic growth of Hispanic and Spanish-speaking communities, which now constitute the country's largest minority population. According to the most recent data from the U.S. Census Bureau (2022), in 2020 there were 62.1 million Hispanics in the U.S. That is, 18.7% of the U.S.

population identifies as Hispanic. In contrast, as shown in Table 1, census data shows that only 4.5% of the population, or 9.1 million people, identified as Hispanic in 1970. In other words, the Hispanic population in the U.S. has increased nearly seven-fold over the past 50 years.

While these data reflect strong growth in the number of people who identify as Hispanic, this does not necessarily equate to a greater use of the Spanish language. Just because someone identifies as Hispanic on the census does not necessarily mean they speak Spanish and, conversely, just because someone indicates that they are not Hispanic on the census does not necessarily mean they do not speak Spanish. To understand the value of Spanish in the U.S., it is necessary to examine this census data in more detail, as well as to complement this data with other sources that reveal more about actual language usage: the number of people who can speak it with a certain degree of proficiency, the contexts in which it is spoken, etc.

United States Census Bureau (2022) data provides significant insight into the prevalence of Spanish in the country. In the last 50 years, the U.S. has witnessed a roughly 533% growth in the population of people over the age of five who speak Spanish. As we can see in Table 1, this means that the number of U.S. Spanish speakers aged five and over has gone from close to 6.7 million in 1970 to roughly 42.6 million in 2020. In other words, the number of Spanish-speakers over the age of five has grown from 3.6% of the total U.S. population in 1970 to 13.7% in 2020.

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
Population of the U.S. (in millions)						
< 5 years	17,2	16,3	18,4	19,2	20,2	19,8
≥ 5 years	186,0	210,2	230,4	262,2	288,5	311,7
Total	203,2	226,5	248,7	281,4	308,7	331,4
Hispanic population of the U.S. (in millions)						
< 5 years	1,1	1,7	2,4	3,7	5,1	5,2
≥ 5 years	8,0	12,9	20,0	31,6	45,6	56,9
Total	9,1	14,6	22,4	35,3	50,7	62,1
Spanish-speaking population of the U.S. (in millions)						
< 5 years	1,1	1,5	2,2	3,4	4,5	4,4
≥ 5 years	6,7	11,1	17,3	28,1	37,0	42,6
Total	7,8	12,7	19,6	31,5	41,5	47,0
Population of limited-proficiency Spanish speakers in the U.S. (in millions)						
Total	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	7,6	9,3

Table 1. Growth of the Hispanic and Spanish-speaking population of the U.S.⁴

These figures are significant, and reflect the fact that Spanish is by far the second most widely spoken language in the U.S. (the third is Chinese, which includes both Mandarin and Cantonese, and is only spoken by about 3.5 million people over the age of five; U.S. Census Bureau, 2022). However, the rapid growth of Spanish and its expansion throughout the United States has not been constant over the past 50 years. Comparing data on the evolution of the U.S. Hispanic population with census data on the use of Spanish over the past five decades, we can see that in the decade between 2010 and 2020, the growth of the U.S. Spanish-speaking

⁴ Source: United States Census Bureau (2022); authors' calculations.

These data have been compiled using information obtained from the corresponding decennial censuses, as well as from the American Community Survey. Totals may not equal 100 due to rounding.

population, as a proportion of the total U.S. population, has slowed more significantly than has the Hispanic population generally (see Figure 1). The number of Spanish-speakers over the age of 5 grew by 15.5% between 2010 and 2020, while during the previous decade, that number grew by 31.3%.

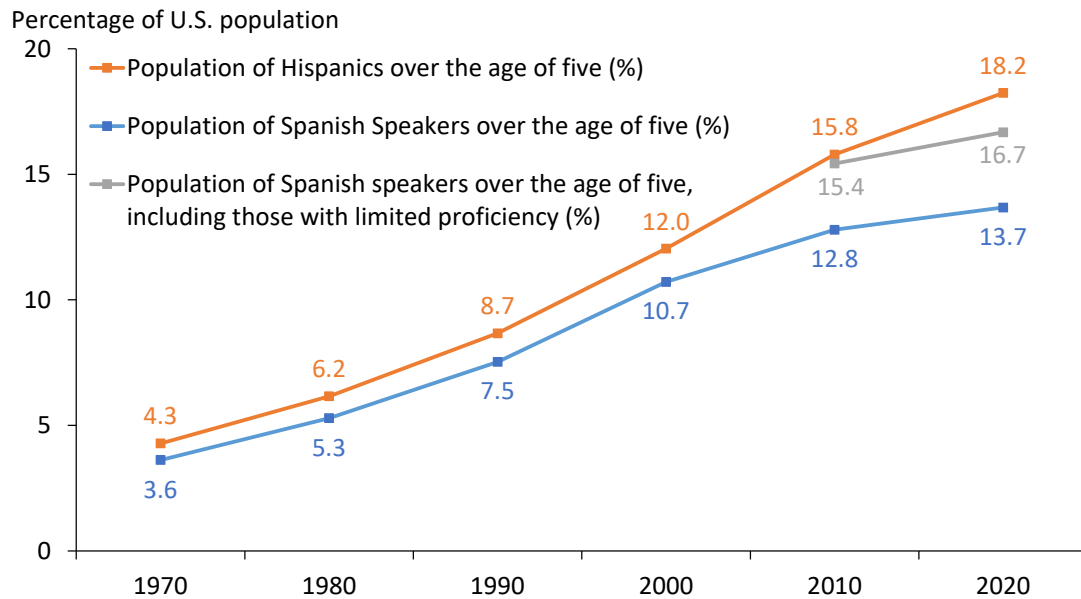


Figura 1. Hispanics and Spanish-speakers over the age of 5 as a percentage of total U.S. population.⁵

The population of people over the age of five who registered as native Spanish-speakers in the U.S. census grew to 13.7% in 2020, but this statistic offers only a partial indication of Spanish’s influence in the U.S., as it excludes anyone under the age of five who lives in a Spanish-speaking household, as well as those who indicated on the census questionnaire that Spanish is spoken in their household but is not their primary language; that is, the census does not include individuals who have limited proficiency in Spanish, or who are heritage speakers. The data on Spanish speakers with limited or heritage proficiency, as enumerated and illustrated

⁵ Source: United States Census Bureau (2022); authors’ calculations. See note from Table 1 for more information on data sources.

in Table 1 and Figure 1, respectively, point to the fact that this group is quite large, and has grown markedly in the decade spanning from 2010 to 2020. According to our calculations, this means that the number of limited-proficiency Spanish speakers in the U.S. reached 9.3 million in 2020, representing 2.8% of the total U.S. population. Thus, by 2020, the total number of native or heritage Spanish-speakers was already 16.7% of the population.

The growing number of Hispanics under the age of five residing in the U.S., who in 2020 already represented 26.4% of all U.S. residents under the age of five, is a clear indication of the trend among Hispanic Americans of consolidating and even increasing their demographic significance. It is predicted that by 2060, the Hispanic population of the U.S. will be almost double the 2020 number of 62.1 million, growing to 111.2 million, or 27.5% of the total population (Vespa, Medina & Armstrong, 2020, pp. 7).

The growth in the population of children under the age of five living in Spanish-speaking households has also been quite notable, increasing to 22.2% in 2020 (Figure 2). This demographic decreased by 2.4% between 2010 and 2020, after growing at a rate of 30.4% between 2000 and 2010. In contrast, the population of Hispanic children under the age of five continued to grow between 2010 and 2020, albeit at a historically slower rate of only 2.1%.

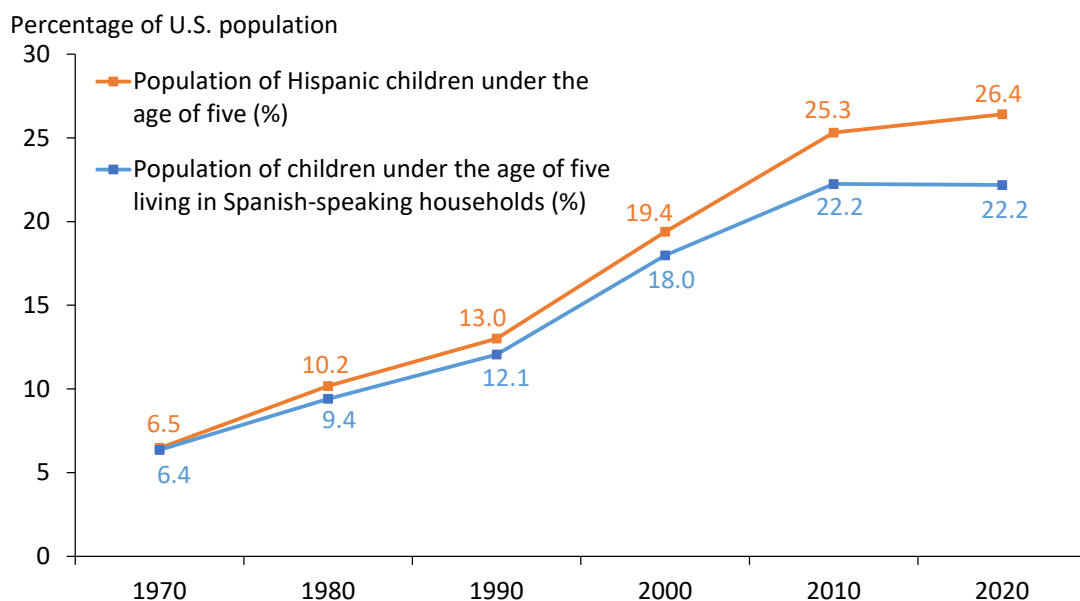


Figure 2. Hispanics and Spanish-speakers under the age of five as a percentage of total U.S. population.⁶

2.1.1. Demographic and sociological characteristics of Spanish in the U.S.

In principle, the recent evidence documented above can be interpreted as symptomatic of a slowdown or exhaustion in the otherwise rapid growth of Spanish over the past 50 years. In particular, note the growing disparity between the Hispanic population and the population that describes itself as Spanish-speaking (regardless of language proficiency level). While Hispanic identity and Spanish usage remain intimately interlinked, the last decade in particular seems to have accentuated the differentiation between the two.

⁶ Source: United States Census Bureau (2022); authors' calculations. See note from Table 1 for more information on data sources.

Of course, these changes are likely the result of multiple and diverse factors, some of which we examine in more detail below. On the one hand, we might attribute this increasing differentiation to the growing number of heritage speakers in the country – that is, people who, in the U.S. context, have grown up in a Spanish-speaking household and can speak or at least understand some Spanish, and are thus still, to some extent, Spanish speakers (Valdés, 2001). It is quite possible that these individuals, who have, or believe themselves to have, only a limited command of Spanish, choose the census option indicating that they “speak English” even if they also speak some Spanish at home, because they feel they can communicate more effectively in the former. In other words, certain individuals may have a conservative perception of their own Spanish proficiency, and may believe their command of the language to be less than “perfect,” thus leading them to indicate in the census that they are part of the limited proficiency group, or even to be registered as monolingual speakers of English or some other language(s).

On the other hand, the slower rate of growth of Spanish could also be attributed to changes in migratory flows and other socioeconomic factors such as cultural assimilation or mixed marriages (mixed in the sense that the parents do not share the same language). Cultural assimilation is generally understood as the process through which ethno-cultural groups integrate into a dominant community, and it typically occurs when immigrants and minority ethnic groups seek to integrate into a society in which the majority population shares a different language and/or culture (Aquino Moreschi, 2021, pp. 16-17). In the case of Spanish speakers in the U.S., some might be inclined to assimilate because they believe that, being Americans, they should speak English, and may thus sacrifice their knowledge of Spanish to reinforce their commitment and loyalty to the U.S. In mixed marriages, dynamics in the home may also provide an explanation for this slowed growth, as some Spanish-speakers, for personal, family reasons, may choose not to speak Spanish at home. This can happen in households, for example, where one partner

does not have a good command of the language and prefers to speak English, or some other language, and so rather than speak Spanish, they use English or whatever language facilitates easy communication and understanding among everyone in the family.

2.1.1.a. Geographic dispersion of Spanish in the U.S.

In addition to the aggregate data for the entire country (Table 1 and Figures 1 and 2), we can also see that the use of Spanish in Spanish-speaking communities has changed over the last 50 years by looking at the language's increased geographic dispersion. Traditionally, Spanish speakers have always had a greater presence in the country's southwestern states, such as California, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, as well as some southeastern states, including Florida, and in certain large metropolitan cities. However, this has changed significantly over time. The presence of Spanish is no longer limited, or no longer limited to the same extent, to these geographic areas, but instead has continued to spread throughout the rest of the country – to the Northwest, for example, and to large cities on the East Coast and in the Midwest (Figure 3). In other words, Spanish is no longer only prominent in the southern border region but is becoming more and more established country-wide (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022). Thus, Spanish is no longer only a regional language spoken in some parts of the U.S. but has become the second most spoken language nationally.

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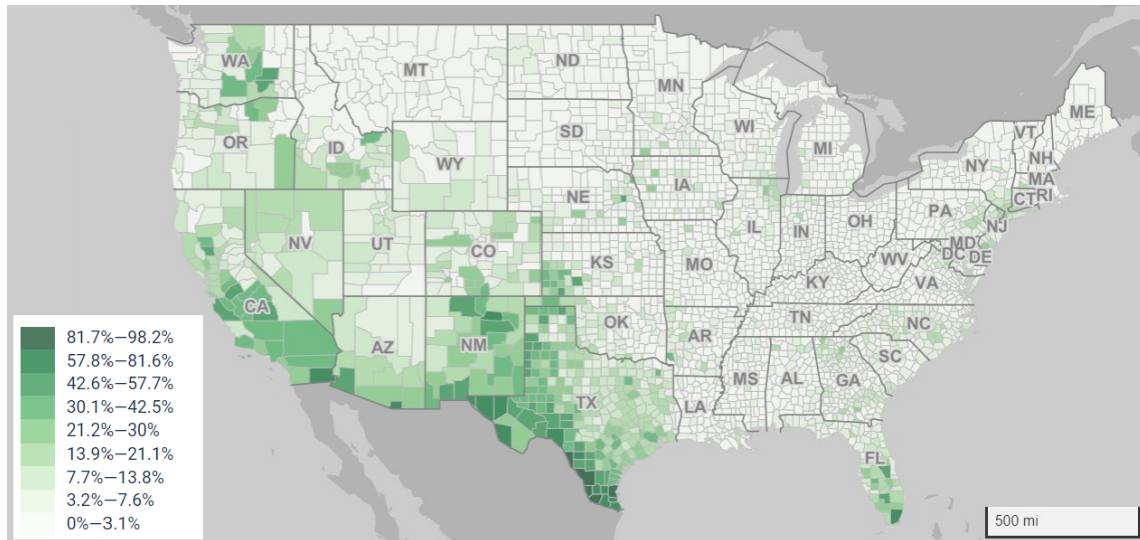


Figure 3. Geographic dispersion of Spanish in the U.S. in 2020⁷

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2.1.1.b. The rising global status of U.S. Spanish

As Table 1 suggests, the population of native Spanish speakers in the U.S. surpassed 47 million in 2020, a figure that includes 42.6 million people over the age of five and 4.4 million children under the age of five. Add to this the approximately 9.3 million Spanish speakers with limited proficiency, and the total number of speakers, when we include all levels of proficiency available on the 2020 census, is 56.4 million (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022). Comparing this total to the population of Spanish speakers in other countries around the world, we can see that, as of 2020, Mexico is the only country to surpass the U.S. in Spanish-speaking population, with 126 million speakers, a figure that likewise includes individuals with limited proficiency.

⁷ Source: United States Census Bureau (2022); authors' calculations.
Percentage of native Spanish speakers (not including heritage speakers) over the age of five by U.S. county, according to the 2020 American Community Survey's five-year average for 2016-2020.

2.1.1.c. The importance of Spanish-English bilingualism in the U.S.

By analyzing the United States Census Bureau data (2022) in a more disaggregated manner, Table 2 shows us that approximately 68.3% of 2020 census participants over the age of five who self-identified as native Spanish speakers, or as having at least a limited level of proficiency, also identified as speaking English or having a very good level of English, for a combined population of 35.5 million out of the total 52 million. This group constituted 62.9% of the population in 2010, but has grown notably in the last decade to 68.3% in 2020. Bilingualism, or the ability to communicate in both languages while maintaining a full command of the country's majority language, English, is something that Spanish speakers in the U.S. appear to consider beneficial. There is a clear trend toward bilingualism in the U.S., at least among the country's Spanish-speaking community, and this has only become more pronounced over the past decade.

The growth in the number of bilingual Spanish speakers, or speakers with a full command of English but limited proficiency in Spanish, contrasts with a stagnation in the number of Spanish speakers who consider themselves to have limited proficiency in English, which remained at around 16.5 million during the decade spanning 2010 to 2020. The proportion of U.S. Spanish speakers with limited English proficiency, in other words, fell from 37.1% in 2010 to 31.7% in 2020.

2.1.1.d. Evolution of Spanish and Hispanic identity

As Table 2 shows, the data suggest a growing dissociation between Hispanic and Spanish-speaking communities. In 2010, there were 50.7 million Hispanics in the U.S., of whom 45.6 million were over the age of five. That same year, the Spanish-speaking population, including speakers with limited proficiency, reached 49.1 million (4.5 million were under the age of five, 20.4 million spoke Spanish with a high level of English proficiency, 16.6 million had limited English proficiency, and 7.6 million were heritage Spanish speakers).

Indeed, as we show in Table 2, of the 50.7 million Hispanics residing in the U.S. in 2010, 9 million, or 17.8%, spoke English or other languages, but not Spanish (1 million were children under the age of five living in English-speaking households and 0.1 million lived in households where languages other than Spanish or English were spoken; 7.4 million Hispanics over the age of five spoke English, while another 0.8 million spoke other languages). Conversely, about 7.5 million people who did not self-identify as Hispanic indicated that they spoke at least a limited amount of Spanish. In other words, the Spanish-speaking but non-Hispanic population largely made up for the substantial number of Hispanics who had switched to English or other languages. In 2020, the number of non-Hispanic Spanish speakers was about 7.3 million, while the non-Spanish-speaking Hispanic population had already reached 13 million, or 20.9% of the total Hispanic population.

2010								
	Population ≥ 5 years (in millions)					Population < 5 years (in millions)		
	Other languages	English	English, Spanish LP	Spanish, English proficiency	Spanish, English LP	Other languages	English	Spanish
Not Hispanic	--	--	4,2	2,2	0,5	--	--	0,5
Hispanic	0,6	7,4	3,4	18,2	16,0	0,1	1,0	4,0
Total	--	--	7,6	20,4	16,6	--	--	4,5
2020								
	Population ≥ 5 years (in millions)					Population < 5 years (in millions)		
	Other languages	English	English, Spanish LP	Spanish, English proficiency	Spanish, English LP	Other languages	English	Spanish
Not Hispanic	--	--	4,2	2,1	0,4	--	--	0,4
Hispanic	1,0	10,7	5,1	24,0	16,0	0,1	1,2	4,0
Total	--	--	9,3	26,2	16,5	--	--	4,4

Table 2. Recent trends in Spanish usage in the U.S.⁸

⁸ Source: United States Census Bureau (2022); authors' calculations.

Note: See note from Table 1 for more information on data sources. "LP" indicates limited proficiency.

2.2. Language Learning and the Future of Spanish in the U.S.

The U.S. has the second largest number of Spanish speakers in the world, with a total of 56.4 million Spanish-speaking individuals of all ages at varying levels of proficiency. To this population of native or heritage Spanish speakers we should also add all those who are learning, or have already learned, Spanish as an L2 or FL. In the following section we review some of the limited data on Spanish language learning, which suggest that this population of L2 or FL speakers is probably very significant as well.

2.2.1. Limited data on L2 and FL Spanish in the U.S.

First, it is important to understand that Hispanics and Spanish speakers only tell part of the story of Spanish in the U.S., as census data only account for native Spanish speakers or people who live in Spanish-speaking households. This data, therefore, does not include other people who may speak Spanish, but for whatever reason do not speak it at home – interpreters, for example. An interpreter is typically someone with a native or near-native command of two languages (someone who speaks Spanish as an L2 and English as their native language, for example), but while they may use one language every day at work, they never, or rarely, speak that language at home, because it is not a language their family understands or uses. In filling out the census, such a person would likely indicate that their language at home is English and would therefore not be counted as a Spanish-speaker in the data we have analyzed thus far, despite the fact that they are.

Unfortunately, data on the use of Spanish as an L2 or FL at the national level is scarce, making it difficult to quantify the significance of this population group. What we can say is that the census figures, while impressive in their own right, provide what is likely an underestimate of the impact and prevalence of Spanish in the U.S.

2.2.2. The teaching of Spanish in the U.S.

According to the latest data provided by Looney and Lusin (2019, p. 26), there were more than 700 thousand college students in the U.S. studying Spanish in 2016. And, according to information compiled by the American Councils for International Education (2017), during the 2014-2015 academic year there were roughly 7.4 million K-12 Spanish language learners across the country. These data, together with the data presented in the previous section, point to the consolidation of Spanish as a dominant L2 in the U.S., as its teaching is not limited to native Spanish speakers or to heritage speakers with limited proficiency, but also includes a large number of people who speak the language as an L2, or who have learned it, or are in the process of learning it, as an FL.

This group of L2 and FL Spanish language learners, then, would include people who speak Spanish but for various reasons do not use the language at home, as well as people who studied Spanish in primary or secondary school, or in college, and thus have some degree of proficiency in it. According to the latest data from the Instituto Cervantes (2021), Spanish is the most studied second language in the U.S., in both primary, secondary, and post-secondary educational institutions (from preschool to higher education). In fact, 60% of U.S. students enrolled in language courses at the elementary school level choose Spanish as their language of study. This means that the number of early learners studying Spanish is at least three times that of those studying any other language.

This trend, then, is not just limited to primary or secondary education, but carries on through higher education as well. Since 1995, when the Instituto Cervantes launched its U.S. branch, Spanish has remained the most popular

language in universities throughout the country (Hernández, 2018, p. 15; Mateo, Arias & Bovea-Pascual, 2021, p. 7). These data show, once again, that Spanish is by far the most widely studied language among all available modern languages.⁹

By calculating the total number of students who enrolled in Spanish classes at U.S. universities over the past 30 years, we estimate that around five million college students have studied some Spanish and, therefore, have acquired at least some proficiency in the language. As the Instituto Cervantes notes in its annual assessment of the Spanish language, or *Anuario* (2021), motivations vary among students. Many of the reasons students give for choosing to learn Spanish have to do with the language's perceived economic value. They view Spanish not only as an effective way to promote themselves professionally, but as an avenue toward expanding their international job opportunities and distinguishing themselves from other workers with whom they will have to compete. That is, they view the ability to speak Spanish as a skill that can help them stand out among other potential candidates applying for the same job. Moreover, not only do they consider Spanish an asset when it comes to building their résumé, they are also aware that more and more jobs have a wage premium associated with knowledge of Spanish (Saiz & Zoido, 2005, pp. 523). In many workplaces, this wage premium will mean higher salaries and more opportunities for professional advancement within the company – enticing prospects for many students.

One direct consequence of the growing demand for Spanish classes is that there is also a growing demand for Spanish teachers – a demand that has yet to be fully met (Brown & Thompson, 2018). Indeed, between 1987 and 2008, the availability of Spanish classes in the U.S. increased by 20% in primary schools, to

⁹ Anecdotally, the demand for Spanish among students at U.S. universities is not only prevalent within the U.S., but also on U.S. campuses located in other countries. Institutions like the University of Utah or George Mason University, for example, offer Spanish classes to their students at their respective campuses in Asia. For these students, who are mainly South Korean, speaking Korean, English and Spanish can open up better job and career opportunities in Spanish-speaking countries, as well as in countries like the U.S., where businesses place increasing value on Spanish-English bilingualism.

88% of all schools, and nearly 10% in secondary schools, to a total of 93% of all schools (Instituto Cervantes, 2021, pp. 162-163). Along with this increase, there has been a growing demand for Spanish teachers as well, which cannot always be satisfied with native Spanish-speaking instructors, as schools are seeking not only Spanish language instructors, but teachers who can teach other subjects and classes in Spanish.¹⁰ In fact, data compiled by the American Councils for International Education (2021) show that during the 2021-2022 academic year there were at least 2,936 Spanish-English dual language immersion programs available in public schools across the U.S., or 80.5% of the total dual language programs offered.

As a result of this increase in demand for Spanish classes and the shortage of qualified teachers, there are many job opportunities available for both native as well as L2 and FL Spanish speakers. However, the prospect of a good job or a wage premium are not the only economic advantages that come with the ability to speak Spanish, as we shall see below.

3. Economic Advantages of Spanish-English Bilingualism in the U.S.

The evolution of Spanish and the growth of the Spanish-speaking population in the U.S. pose questions not only regarding the factors underlying these trends, but also concerning the true scope of Spanish's economic influence in the U.S. We have already mentioned some of these underlying factors, but it is important that we understand a bit more about the census data presented thus far.

¹⁰ We can get a sense of this increase in potential demand for Spanish-language educators in the U.S. by noting that during 2014-15, the population of Spanish-speakers between the ages of five and eighteen grew to 12.4 million (9.2 million native Spanish speakers and 3.2 million heritage speakers).

The Census Bureau's motivation for asking what languages people speak at home —and about the English proficiency of people in the U.S. who speak other languages — is not primarily linguistic in nature. While language was occasionally a topic of inquiry in pre-1970 censuses, this category of data only gained practical relevance with the implementation of Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which mandates meaningful, nondiscriminatory access to public services (such as health care or legal representation) for those with limited English proficiency (see Department of Justice, 2022). Thus, public institutions sought more information about residents with limited English proficiency in order to make policy adjustments to comply with Title VI. As a result, care providers, suppliers, and businesses now offer more documentation and services in multiple languages (including Spanish), which then qualifies them to be eligible for federal assistance programs, such as Medicare.

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The main motivation for systematically including specific questions about language, then, is to quantify the population with limited English proficiency and determine what languages they speak. Thus, while census data on language is quite detailed, it is not designed for understanding the ways different languages are used and, therefore, does not provide all the information necessary to completely understand the role of Spanish in the U.S. Some of the shortcomings of the census have already been mentioned in previous sections, including the fact that it only provides respondents' subjective assessments of their own English proficiency and use of Spanish in the home, and does not offer an objective way to assess the extent to which these subjective assessments correspond to an individual's actual knowledge of the language. Moreover, the census does not include individuals who speak Spanish as an L2 but do not speak it at home, and is also unable to clearly distinguish native Spanish speakers who speak the language at home from native speakers of another language who can communicate effectively in Spanish as an L2

or FL. And it is precisely this subgroup — those who use Spanish as an L2 or FL — that provides the most support for our argument that census data underestimate the true magnitude of Spanish in the U.S.

3.1. Empirical Sources

In order to paint a more complete picture of the economic value of Spanish in the U.S., we draw on two complementary sources: the American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022), which we have already mentioned, and a regional survey by a team from the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, conducted in Texas, southern New Mexico and northern Louisiana (Martínez-García et al., 2021a; 2021b). Using these two sources, we aim to quantify the economic impact of Spanish in the U.S.

This first data source we examine is the American Community Survey (ACS), an ongoing study that gathers annual socioeconomic information about the U.S. and its population. The survey is conducted by the United States Census Bureau (2022) and, in addition to including the same questions about language as the census itself, provides additional details on topics such as level of education, country of origin, ethnicity, income and earnings, etc. Around 3.5 million people participate in the survey each year. This source provides us with the information we need to calculate the potential wage premium associated with learning Spanish, and to estimate the purchasing power of Spanish speakers in the U.S.

Our other data source is a self-reporting questionnaire on Spanish usage conducted by the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas in late September of 2020. This was a remote online survey that involved a total of 400 participants, including native Spanish speakers, heritage speakers who reported limited proficiency, students learning Spanish as an L2 or FL, and individuals who had studied Spanish and were now using it as an L2 or FL. In interpreting the results of this survey, it is important to

point out two of its potential limitations. First, it was conducted online and in Spanish, meaning that only participants with sufficient knowledge of the language could complete it (which suggests that individuals with limited proficiency, but who still speak some Spanish at home, may not have been included in the final results). Second, the survey was conducted within a limited geographic area known as the Eleventh District of the Federal Reserve (an area that includes all of Texas and parts of southern New Mexico and northern Louisiana). This region is to some extent representative of the larger U.S., but the size and influence of the area's Hispanic and Spanish-speaking population (notably higher than in other parts of the country) sets it apart from the rest of the country to a certain degree as well.

Despite the survey's potential limitations, it nevertheless allows us to examine in more detail issues such as the intergenerational transmission of Spanish and its use in business and corporate settings – crucial topics when talking about the true value of Spanish in the U.S.

3.2. *The Economic Value of Spanish*

3.2.1. Resilience in the transmission of Spanish in the U.S.

Responses to the survey conducted by the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas indicate a strong connection between the use of Spanish in family settings and its transmission from one generation to another – that is to say, its resilience. Figure 4 presents data on the dominant language of parents and on the responses those parents gave about their children's attitudes concerning the use of Spanish. The column on the far left shows the total results for all respondents, while the other three columns show results for respondents whose dominant language is English, for Spanish-English bilinguals, and for those whose dominant language is Spanish.

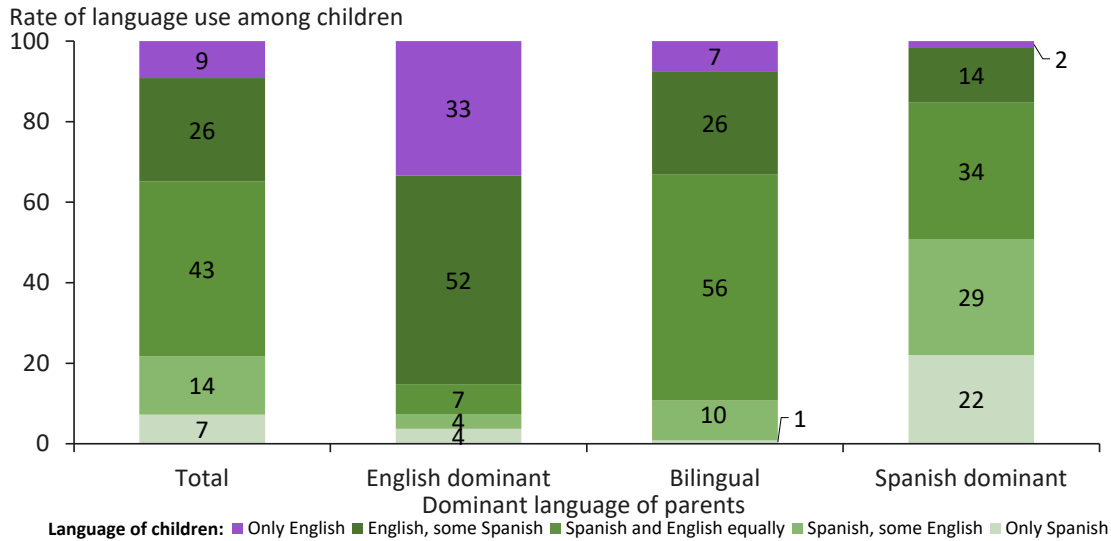


Figure 4. Trends in language transmission among Spanish-speaking families in Texas, southern New Mexico and northern Louisiana ¹¹

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In this context, we understand ‘bilinguals’ to be individuals who indicate that they are able to use both Spanish and English interchangeably, and with the same degree of fluency, both for speaking and reading. That is, they have a similar proficiency in both languages and use them both frequently. Individuals who indicate English dominance are those who prefer to speak and write in English, while those who are Spanish dominant prefer to speak and read in Spanish. In Figure 4, the purple segments represent the percentage of individuals who indicate that their children either no longer use Spanish and only use English, or barely use Spanish at all and, at best, have limited proficiency in the language. The different shades of green represent children who use both Spanish and English, but with varying frequency.

¹¹ Source: Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas Spanish usage survey (2020); authors’ calculations. People who are Spanish/English dominant are those who predominantly speak that language at home, and who can read it, but who also may use the other language for both speaking and reading. Bilinguals are people who are fluent in both Spanish and English, though they may use one language more for reading and the other more for speaking. Totals may not equal 100 due to rounding.

Figure 4 shows that 9% of all survey respondents have children who speak little or no Spanish, but among children whose parents indicate they are more fluent in English than Spanish, that percentage increases to 33%. In other words, if parents are more dominant in English than in Spanish, it is much more likely that their children will end up not speaking Spanish, either inside or outside the home. The main implication of this finding is that Spanish language dominance among parents is crucial for the successful transmission of the language to their children. If parents do not routinely speak Spanish at home, or do not speak it with their children, it is very likely that those children will end up only using English, independent of any external language assistance they may receive (at school, church, cultural gatherings, etc.). This finding is supported by the data on bilingual or Spanish-dominant children, who experience a relatively lower level of Spanish language loss. In fact, there seems to be a clear preference toward bilingualism among both of these groups. Underlying this data is a tendency among parents to prefer that their children not only speak Spanish, but that they speak it as well and as often as English.

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Family plays a critical role in the transmission of language, of course, but there can be other influential factors as well, which are not included in Figure 4. We know from results obtained in the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas survey that being part of cultural or sports associations, maintaining connections with one's country of origin, using Spanish in mass and, above all, having access to Spanish language media can all have a strong influence on the continued use of Spanish and its generational transmission. When survey participants were asked how they access news and information in Spanish, and what type of media and which outlets they prefer when accessing this information, it should come as no surprise that most respondents indicated that television and social media were their main sources of information. Even among those who prefer to interact primarily in English, or who have limited Spanish proficiency, television and social media, in addition to family, represent their main point of contact and habitual connection with Spanish.

Spanish education — including, increasingly, bilingual education in other subjects, where material is presented in both English and Spanish — is also playing an increasingly important role in the transmission of the language. This is not only because it offers people who do not speak the language at home an opportunity to learn it, but also because it allows people who live in Spanish-speaking households, and who speak the language with limited proficiency, to improve the quality of their usage. It is important to emphasize that the demand for Spanish education is not only limited to non-native speakers; there is also a significant pent up demand among the native Spanish-speaking population previously mentioned (see also Martínez-García et al., 2021b).

Other studies, such as the Pew Research Center’s 2011 National Survey of Latinos, have also identified a pattern of language resilience across generations in the U.S. (Taylor et al., 2012). Reflecting results similar to ours, Taylor et al. (2012, p. 25) found that 47% of third-generation Hispanics in the U.S. still claim to speak Spanish either very well or fairly well. While this may not seem like a high percentage, when compared to patterns of transmission of other languages, it is quite significant. In fact, for languages other than English, the typical pattern of transmission is that the language practically disappears by the third generation. The fact that 50% of third-generation Hispanics not only speak Spanish, but speak it very well or fairly well, is a remarkable indication of the language’s resilience.

The study conducted by Taylor et al. (2012, pp. 2) also found that 87% of Hispanics believe that Hispanic immigrants need to learn English to succeed in the U.S. But, at the same time, nearly all Hispanic adults (95%) believe that it is important for future generations of Hispanics in the U.S. to maintain their ability to speak Spanish.

All of this is key to understanding the economic value of Spanish in the U.S., given that the data show that, in contrast to many other languages spoken in the country, the demographic of Spanish speakers has reached a critical mass large enough that their use of the language is not exclusively limited to the home. Thus, the high degree of intergenerational transmissibility of Spanish comes precisely from the momentum generated by its use externally (outside the home) in cultural, social, athletic or other community activities as well as, of course, from its use in the world of work and business. This widespread use is reflected in our data, and is what attracts so many people to Spanish classrooms in schools, universities, and institutes around the country, including to the Instituto Cervantes itself.

3.2.2. The impact of Spanish on U.S. labor relations.

As previously mentioned, Spanish use is common across media, including the press and television, and is used in religious ceremonies, cultural activities, and a variety of social interactions, including work and business relations, where it has become especially important. Figures 5 and 6 illustrate our data on the habitual use of Spanish in the workplace. Similar to Figure 4, the column on the left represents total responses for all survey participants. The subsequent four columns in Figure 5 represent the answers provided by respondents who indicated they were employees, managers, executives, and owners, respectively. Similarly, the three columns to the right of the total column in Figure 6 represent the dominant language of all employed participants, i.e., whether they self-identified as English-dominant, bilingual, or Spanish-dominant.

As with Figure 4, the purple color in Figures 5 and 6 represents the proportion of respondents who indicated that they use little or no Spanish at work. This was the case for 10% of total respondents, meaning that 90% of Spanish-speaking survey participants routinely use the language in their workplace. Figure 5 suggests that

executives tend to use Spanish the least, with 20% indicating that they do routinely use only English. Figure 6 shows, unsurprisingly, that respondents who were English-dominant were also the least likely to use Spanish at work (39% of the total). Even so, the majority (61%) of those who self-identified as English-dominant indicated that they also use Spanish at work.



Figure 5. Tendency among Spanish speakers in Texas, southern New Mexico, and northern Louisiana to use Spanish at work, by occupation status¹²

¹² Source: Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas Spanish usage survey (2020); authors' calculations. See note from Figure 4 for more information on the data.

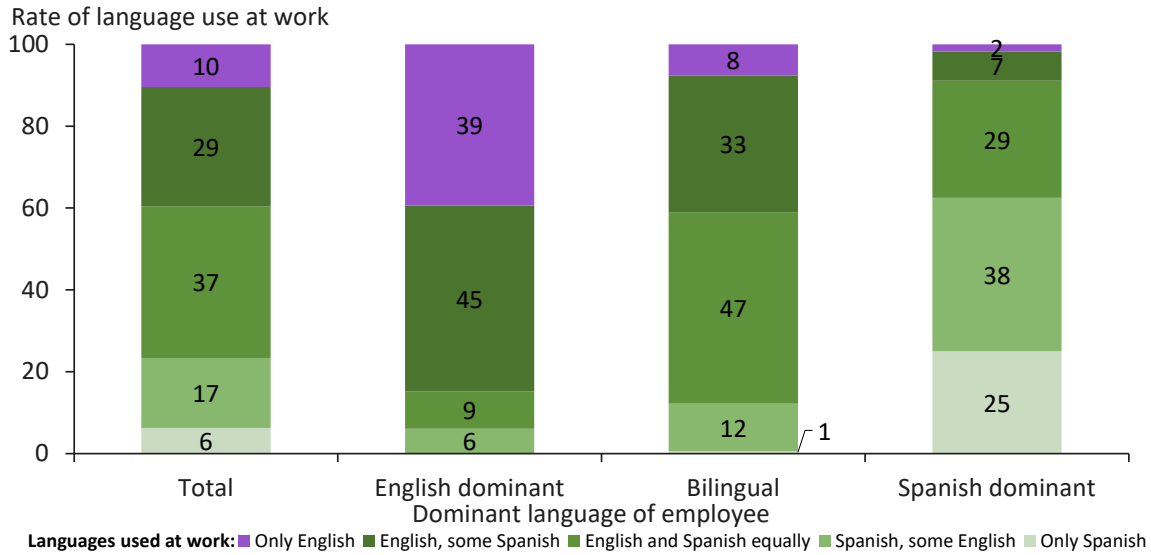


Figure 6. Tendency among Spanish speakers in Texas, southern New Mexico, and northern Louisiana to use Spanish at work, in relation to language proficiency¹³

The results presented in Figures 5 and 6 suggest two main conclusions worthy of discussion. First, that employees who can communicate in Spanish will have an easier time interacting and building relationships with coworkers, managers, and even owners and shareholders (especially important in workplaces where the owner is also a Spanish speaker). Second, companies with a large number of Spanish-speaking consumers or suppliers will also benefit from the ability to establish relationships and conduct business in Spanish. This is important not only considering the size of the Spanish-speaking population in the U.S., but also due to the significant opportunities that come with the ability to conduct business with a community of 591 million Spanish speakers spread out across the globe who generate their own demand, which in turn creates important business opportunities for the U.S.

¹³ Source: Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas Spanish usage survey (2020); authors' calculations. See note from Figure 4 for more information about the data.

A recent report from the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (2019) offers additional evidence to support these claims. Based on a survey conducted by Ipsos Public Affairs in 2018, the report shows that nine out of every 10 U.S. companies have a need for employees who speak languages other than English. Demand for languages like Spanish has grown significantly in the last five years, and is expected to continue to grow in the future. The sectors most likely to see an increase in this demand are health care and social services (64%), followed by retail (59%), education (57%), professional and technical services (55%), and construction (54%).

The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages report (2019) also reveals that 97% of businesses utilize the non-English-language abilities of their workforce in national markets, while only 54% use them in international markets. The most sought-after language is Spanish, with 85% of companies reporting a need for Spanish-speaking employees. Moreover, 42% of companies that already employ Spanish-speaking workers indicate they are currently searching for more employees with proficiency in the language. Concerning the demand for Spanish, there is no major difference between companies that focus on domestic markets and those that focus on international markets. In contrast, other languages with notable demand, such as Chinese, French, Japanese and German, are more sought after among companies focused on exporting and importing than among companies that primarily serve the domestic U.S. market.

3.2.3. The purchasing power of Spanish speakers in the U.S.

One economic factor that bears emphasizing is the growing importance of the demand for Spanish speakers in the U.S., that is, the domestic demand associated with Spanish. The number of Spanish-speaking clients who require services in Spanish grows larger by the day, especially, of course, in areas with a high concentration of Spanish speakers. It is becoming increasingly easy to access

bilingual and multilingual websites, as well as Spanish-language customer service. Online forms and information are commonly available in Spanish. You can go to the bank, visit the doctor, go shopping (online or in person), and you will almost certainly have the option of communicating in Spanish. There is some regional variation to this accessibility, of course, but it nonetheless represents an important national trend.

The demand for Spanish speakers in the U.S. is growing, not only due to the growth in the Spanish-speaking population, but also due to the increase in the average income of U.S. Spanish speakers. As a result, companies interested in capturing a growing Spanish-speaking market have a strong motivation to seek out and prioritize employees who can communicate effectively in Spanish. Thus, the ability to speak Spanish is increasingly becoming an important asset not only for employees, but also for companies.

In hopes of providing the most objective information possible regarding the purchasing power of Spanish speakers in the U.S., we draw on data from the American Community Survey to estimate the personal income, as defined by the Bureau of Economic Analysis (2022), of Spanish-speakers in the U.S. As Figure 7 shows, the personal income of the Spanish-speaking population has nearly doubled in the last 15 years, driven primarily by the segment of this population that identifies as bilingual or highly proficient in English.

Personal income data give us a sense of the purchasing power of the U.S. Spanish-speaking population, but this does not include the income and earnings that are generated annually by corporate and other legal entities, public institutions, or non-profit organizations. To paint a more complete picture of the economic impact that the Spanish-speaking population has on U.S. gross domestic product (GDP), we take the American Community Survey data and, like Jiménez (2019), extrapolate the estimated contribution of Spanish speakers in terms of the added value (or GDP) generated by the U.S. economy in 2019.

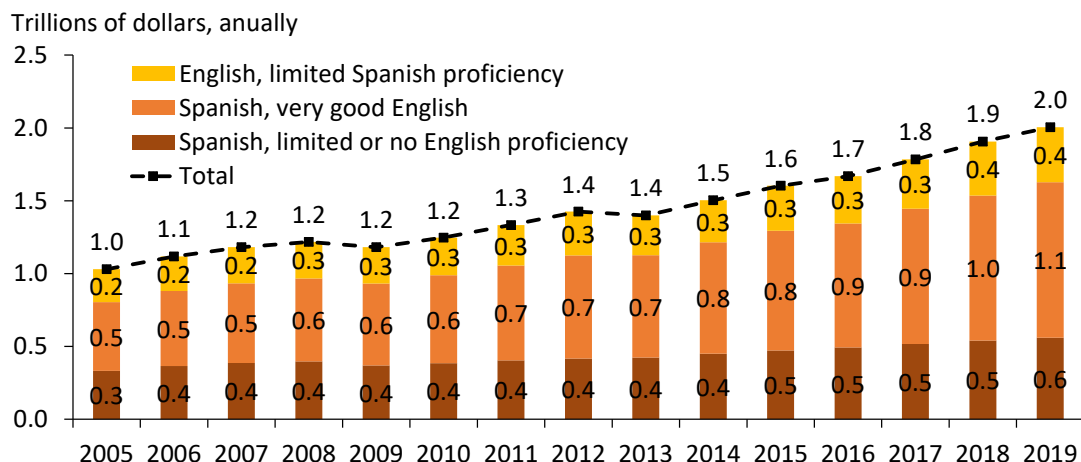


Figure 7. Trends in income and earnings among native Spanish speakers, in relation to language dominance¹⁴

According to our estimates, the contribution of Spanish speakers to the U.S. economy in terms of nominal GDP was roughly 2.3 trillion dollars in 2019 – a figure that exceeds the nominal GDP, expressed in current dollars, of any country with a predominantly Spanish-speaking population (Figure 8). This figure also exceeds the nominal GDP of Brazil and the Philippines, two countries that we include in our comparison due to the fact that, for reasons of cultural, historical and geographic proximity, Spanish plays a significant role there, despite not being the most widely spoken language. Thus, we can conservatively estimate that in current dollars, the size of the U.S. Spanish-speaking community's economy in 2019 exceeded that of the economies of Spain and Mexico, and was roughly as large or more in magnitude as the size of the Brazilian economy.

¹⁴ Source: United States Census Bureau (2022); Bureau of Economic Analysis of the United States Department of Commerce (2022); authors' calculations. Data for the U.S. is based on the 2019 American Community Survey (ACS) of fluent or heritage Spanish-speakers in the U.S. (2005-2019). This source tends to underestimate personal income as reported by the Bureau of Economic Analysis, as the data are based on respondents' recollections rather than documented records. This underestimate is more pronounced for non-wage income such as public assistance, interest, dividends, and rents. The ACS data also do not include capital gains; money received from the sale of property (unless the property was tied to the respondent's business); food stamps, public housing subsidies, medical assistance, etc. Thus, this figure presents an approximation of personal income levels, which we infer from the ACS data and corresponding data from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis.

The growing economic influence of Spanish-speakers in the U.S. translates to higher living standards. For example, the Spanish-speaking population of the U.S. is less than half of the total population of Mexico, but its economic contribution to the U.S. GDP was substantially higher than the total GDP of Mexico in 2019, as expressed in current U.S. dollars. Thus, in terms of per capita GDP, the living standard of the average Spanish speaker in the U.S. was much higher in 2019 than that of the average Mexican. Moreover, not only does the U.S. have a larger Spanish-speaking population than Spain, but Spanish speakers in the U.S. also have a comparatively higher per capita standard of living, in current dollars.¹⁵

At the same time, Spanish speakers in the U.S. have significant influence over the language's global economic prospects. The combined nominal GDP of all Spanish-speaking countries listed in Figure 8, including the corresponding share of GDP attributed to U.S. Spanish-speakers, would total 7.2 trillion in 2019 U.S. dollars, or 9.4 trillion if we add Brazil and the Philippines. This figure is comparable to the 2019 nominal GDP of Germany, the United Kingdom and France combined (9.5 trillion), and far surpasses the GDP of Japan (5.1 trillion) and India (2.8 billion). It is also equivalent to more than half the GDP of China (14.3 billion).

¹⁵ Using GDP data in current dollars, we can calculate the average per capita GDP for U.S. Spanish speakers (Graph 8), which reached \$42,239 in 2019. We can then compare this number to the corresponding nominal GDP and population data from Mexico or Spain. However, it is generally considered more appropriate, when comparing average standards of living, to adjust these figures to account for differences in the composition of each country's basket of consumption goods. Using data from the International Monetary Fund (2022), adjusted for purchasing power parity, we can say that the equivalent 2019 per capita GDP was \$20,767 in Mexico and \$42,600 in Spain. Using this adjusted metric, the average living standard of Spanish speakers in the U.S. is thus double that of Mexico and comparable to that of Spain.

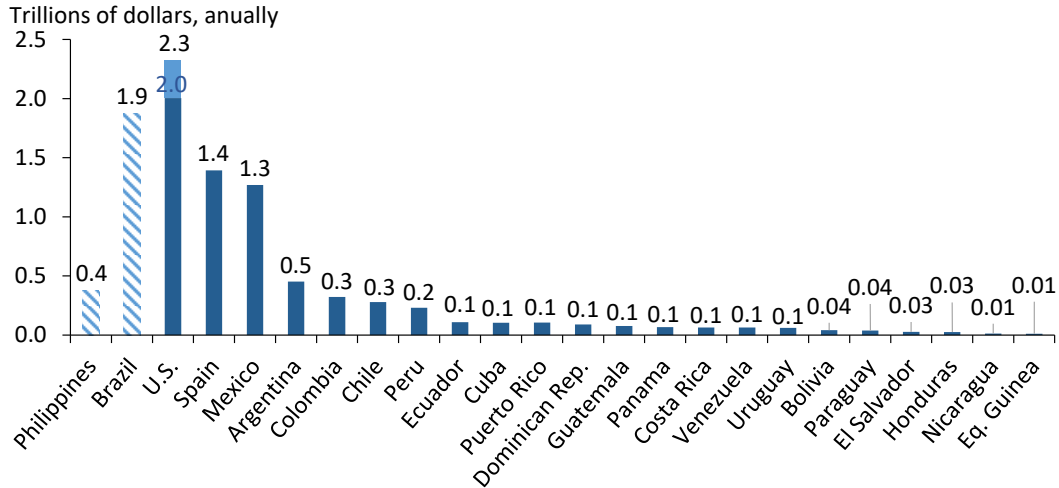


Figure 8. Economic impact of Spanish-speaking households in the U.S. compared to other countries with significant Spanish-speaking populations ¹⁶

The growing purchasing power of Spanish-speaking populations, and its importance for U.S. domestic and foreign markets, are two factors currently exercising decisive influence over the progressive evolution of U.S. economic structures towards an increasingly bilingual economic model, in which Spanish and English are used as a matter of course.

3.2.4. The link between Spanish-language skills and wage premium in the U.S.

The ability to speak Spanish is beneficial not only because it can help facilitate communication between different members of the workforce, or because it allows companies to offer clients more personalized services in the language they speak,

¹⁶ Source: United States Census Bureau (2022); U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (2022); International Monetary Fund (2022); World Bank (2022); authors' calculations.

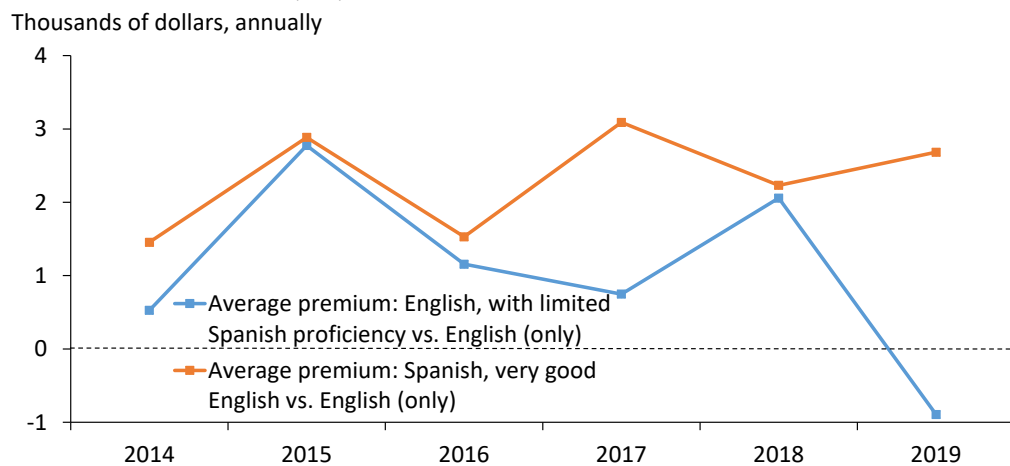
Note: Data for the U.S. is based on the 2019 American Community Survey (ACS) of fluent or heritage Spanish-speakers in the U.S. Total U.S. earnings, according to the ACS, were close to \$12 trillion, lower than the \$18.4 trillion in nominal personal income and the \$21.3 trillion of nominal U.S. GDP, per the Bureau of Economic Analysis. We estimate, using ACS data, that Spanish-speaking personal income was roughly \$2 billion, representing about \$2.3 trillion of U.S. nominal GDP in 2019. Data on 2019 nominal GDP for all other countries comes from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

but also because there is a direct economic advantage for owners and employees who are able to communicate in Spanish. The American Community Survey offers data that enable us to infer a proxy indicator for assessing the connection between wage premium and Spanish. To accomplish this, we focus on pay disparities within the sample of survey participants who do not speak Spanish as a native language (meaning, for our purposes here, non-Hispanic respondents) by comparing the average pay of individuals who speak Spanish with the average pay of non-Hispanic monolingual English speakers; that is, we estimate the likely potential wage benefits of learning Spanish as an L2 or FL.

While the American Community Survey has its limits in this respect, it nonetheless allows us to make a reasonable approximation based on the employment experience of more than 7 million U.S. residents who self-identified as non-Hispanic, but who speak Spanish on a regular basis. Figure 9 shows the wage premium associated with Spanish, using as an indicator the difference between average earnings (salaries and other income) of Spanish speakers in relation to their level of Spanish proficiency, as well as the average earnings of monolingual English speakers, for the period 2014 to 2019. While the data represented in Figure 9 do not correspond exactly to the average wage premium for individuals who learned Spanish as an L2 or FL – since there are native Spanish speakers who do not self-identify as Hispanic – the figures nonetheless provide us with a general idea of what the potential premium earnings for this group of language learners might be.

In Figure 9, the orange line represents the average premium for individuals who speak Spanish and have a high level of English proficiency (Spanish-English bilinguals), while the blue line represents speakers who are English dominant but have some degree of Spanish proficiency. As we can see, the difference between having limited Spanish proficiency and being a bilingual speaker of Spanish and English, in terms of average wage premium, has grown more significant over time. As the premium for limited-proficiency Spanish speakers has eroded over the six-year

period between 2014 and 2019, the difference in average pay between English monolinguals and Spanish-English bilinguals has remained stable at around \$2,000 to \$3,000 per year. This means that Spanish-English bilinguals enjoy an average wage premium equivalent to 3.3% of the average pay of English monolinguals.



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Figure 9. Average wage premium for the non-Hispanic population in relation to Spanish and English language dominance ¹⁷

As we can see in Figure 9, this wage premium has existed since at least 2014. In other words, the economic value of Spanish is nothing new, and has been appreciating for some time. Another important conclusion these results suggest is that achieving limited proficiency in Spanish is not ‘sufficient’ – that is, if one wants

¹⁷ Source: United States Census Bureau (2022); authors’ calculations. Data are from the American Community Survey (2014-2019) for the non-Hispanic English-speaking, or Spanish and English proficient, population with full-time, year-round private sector employment. These figures represent the differential in average annual pay in current dollars for the population that speaks both English and limited-proficiency Spanish (blue line) and the population that speaks Spanish and high-proficiency English (orange line), relative to the average annual pay in current dollars for the population of monolingual English speakers. Not included are those individuals who speak Spanish with limited or no English proficiency, whose average compensation for the same period is lower than that of English monolinguals.

to access the economic benefits we have discussed thus far, and take advantage of bilingualism's potential wage premium, one should aim at achieving a high level of proficiency in both Spanish and English.

In short, what these results seem to indicate is that people who speak or learn to speak Spanish, in addition to English, will have better job opportunities, and will be more desirable to companies and employers, who will in turn be inclined to pay them higher wages.

3.2.5. The role of Spanish in U.S. international trade.

Thus far, we have focused on the effect that Spanish-English bilingualism (or proficiency) has on the strength of the U.S. domestic market, as well as the labor market. Another important feature of the language, however – and one that makes it an important asset in U.S. international economic relations – is that widespread Spanish proficiency in the U.S. also facilitates bilateral trade relations with Spanish-speaking countries (Martínez-García & Martínez-García, 2021). Figure 10 (originally published in Martínez-García et al., 2021a) explores the intensity of economic relations, in terms of exports, between the U.S. and its trading partners around the world. The blue dots represent countries where the dominant language is Spanish (or another Ibero-Romance language), and the black and red dots represent other U.S. trading partners where the dominant spoken language is not Spanish. The dotted lines represent the predictions of a basic model used in measuring international trade relations known as the 'gravity equation,' which compares the volume of trade between different countries, taking into account the distance of each trading partner from, in this case, the U.S., as well as the size of its economy.

Comparing this predictive modeling (dotted lines) for trade relations with Spanish-speaking countries (blue) and non-Spanish-speaking countries (black) shown in Figure 10, we can see that the line representing Spanish-speaking countries is

above the line representing non-Spanish-speaking countries. This graph thus gives us a measure of Spanish's role in facilitating increased U.S. international trade and exports. The results suggest that U.S. exports to Spanish-speaking countries could be as much as \$160 billion more than they would be if Spanish were not the common or contact language of those importing countries.

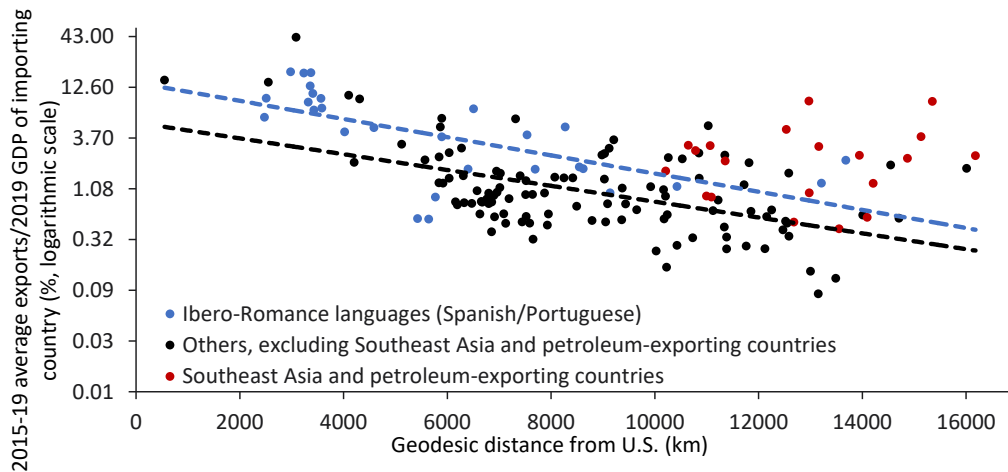


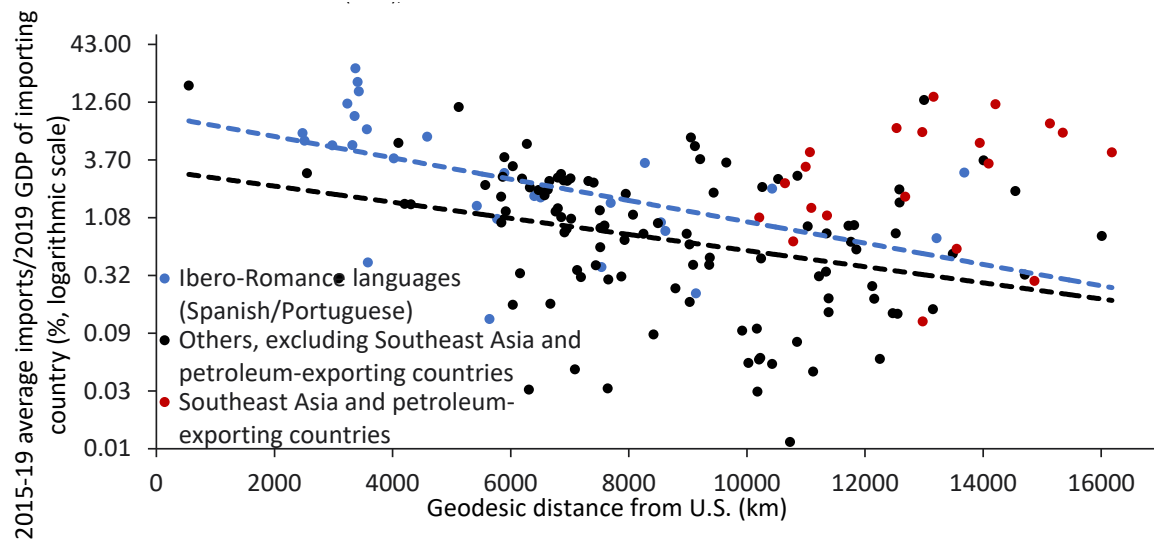
Figure 10. U.S. exports in relation to size of economy, distance, and language of each trading partner¹⁸

We can make this same comparison by measuring U.S. imports from Spanish-speaking countries (or from countries where Ibero-Romance languages dominate), as shown in Figure 11. In this case, the data show that the benefit is bilateral, as Spanish-speaking countries also profit from trade relationships consolidated via a common spoken language, i.e., Spanish. The results in Figure 11 suggest that

¹⁸ Source: International Monetary Fund (2022); authors' calculations.

The dotted lines represent the estimated ratio of exports, adjusted for the size of the importing country, in relation to the geodesic distance (as calculated using the gravity equation in international trade). The blue dotted line represents trade with countries with a predominantly native-Spanish-speaking population, or where Spanish has a significant presence due to linguistic similarity, or as a heritage or preferred second language (as is especially the case in countries where other Ibero-Romance languages are spoken). The black dotted line represents all other countries, with the exception of petroleum-exporting countries and Southeast Asia.

exports from Spanish-speaking countries to the U.S. are more than \$100 billion higher than they would be if these trading partners did not share Spanish as a common language with the U.S.



Gráfica 11. U.S. imports in relation to size of economy, distance, and language of each trading partner¹⁹

These data shed light on the economic importance Spanish has acquired in the U.S. Not only is the domestic Spanish-speaking economy growing, but there are also clear international commercial and economic benefits to sharing a common language with a community of more than 591 million Spanish speakers globally (Instituto Cervantes Yearbook, 2021, p. 28).

¹⁹ Source: International Monetary Fund (2022); authors' calculations.
 Note: See note from Figure 10, substituting imports for exports.

4. Final Considerations

Bilingualism offers cognitive benefits to the individual and can help build bridges between disparate social and cultural groups (American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2017; Martínez-García et al., 2021a). In the case of the U.S. in particular, Spanish-English bilingualism not only confers advantages on speakers themselves, but has important positive economic impacts on the country as a whole. Today, there are increasingly numerous job opportunities associated with knowledge of the language. This is especially apparent in the education sector, where there is a growing demand for Spanish teachers country-wide, including for teachers who can teach other classes (history, science, math, art, etc.) in Spanish. These benefits, moreover, are not limited to the education sector, but can be seen throughout the U.S. economy, as the country increasingly adopts what we have termed a “bilingual economy” — a development that confers benefits not only on bilingual individuals, but on the country as a whole. The consolidation of the domestic Spanish-speaking market and the growing purchasing power and disposable income of Spanish speakers have meant that not only is this demographic becoming an increasingly important source of economic demand, but that being a native Spanish speaker, or learning Spanish as an L2 (of FL) — as long as one is also proficient in English — are increasingly rewarded with significant economic advantages.

Against this backdrop, what are some of the future challenges faced by Spanish-speakers in the U.S.? From our point of view, the main challenge for the future — apart from promoting and strengthening the teaching of Spanish in the country, and increasing and improving its use — is to capitalize on the benefits of the bilingual economy. Perhaps the most difficult part of this challenge is deciding how best to go about tackling it. On the one hand, we must keep in mind that working toward such a goal involves recognizing the crucial role of bilingual individuals, not

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only in the realms of culture and society, but also in the economy. Secondly, we must address some of the barriers that still exist, such as the lack of Spanish teachers in the school system, in order to leverage the enormous opportunities that the presence and influence of Spanish in the U.S. represents.

Much of the U.S. population – including many Spanish-speakers – may not be fully aware of the economic benefits that speaking the language can confer, either on the individual or on U.S. society at large, which means it is even more important that we make these benefits clear to the public. In conclusion, the Spanish language is an important intangible asset and positive externality for the U.S. economy, in part because it encourages and strengthens trade relations, the flow of information, investments, and international relations, but also because it stimulates and energizes the U.S. domestic economy and labor market.

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APPENDIX

Selected survey questions on the use of Spanish in Texas, southern New Mexico, and northern Louisiana²⁰

Number of participants: 400 Spanish-speaking adult residents

Sampling area: The Eleventh Federal Reserve District (Texas, southern New Mexico, northern Louisiana).

The questionnaire was conducted online and only in Spanish, between September 21 and 29, 2020.

Thank you for participating in this brief survey. Your answers will be kept confidential. Please do not attempt to go back and change your answers, as this may invalidate your survey. Click NEXT to begin.

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QA. What state do you live in?

- 1 Nuevo México (Continue)
- 2 Luisiana (Continue)
- 3 Oklahoma (Thank you, you are now done with the survey)
- 4 Texas (Continue)
- 5 Otro (Thank you, you are now done with the survey)

QB. What county do you live in?

B1. What is your gender?

- 1 Male
- 2 Female
- 3 Non-binary / third gender
- 4 I prefer not to answer

²⁰ The survey has been translated for this English version of the study.

B2. Do you consider yourself of Hispanic or Latino descent, such as Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban or another Central American or Latin American origin?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

B3. What language do you read in?

- 1 Only in Spanish (Continue)
- 2 Mainly in Spanish, but a little in English (Continue)
- 3 Equally in Spanish and English (Continue)
- 4 Mainly in English, but a little in Spanish (Continue)
- 5 Only in English (Thank you, you are now done with the survey)

B4. What language do you speak at home?

- 1 Always Spanish (Continue)
- 2 Spanish more than English (Continue)
- 3 Equally in Spanish and English (Continue)
- 4 English more than Spanish (Continue)
- 5 Always in English (Thank you, you are now done with the survey)

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1. What is your employment status?

- 1 Employed full-time
- 2 Employed part-time
- 3 Retired
- 4 Unpaid work
- 5 Currently unemployed

2. IF YOU ARE EMPLOYED FULL-TIME OR PART-TIME: Approximately how many people work at your place of employment?

3. IF YOU ARE EMPLOYED FULL-TIME OR PART-TIME: Which of the following BEST describes your job title?

- 1 Employee
- 2 Manager
- 3 Executive
- 4 Owner
- 5 Other (Please specify: _____)

4. IF YOU ARE EMPLOYED FULL-TIME OR PART-TIME: What language do you speak at work?

- 1 Always Spanish
- 2 Spanish more than English
- 3 Spanish and English equally
- 4 In English more than Spanish
- 5 Always in English

5. For each of the options below, please indicate the language which you primarily read, watch or listen in.

Mostly In Spanish	Mostly in English	In Spanish and English	Neither	
1	2	3	4	B. Radio/Podcasts
1	2	3	4	C. Internet news
1	2	3	4	D. Social media
1	2	3	4	E. Print publications
1	2	3	4	F. E-newsletters
1	2	3	4	G. Websites

6. In what language do you prefer to READ information you are most interested in?

- 1 Spanish
- 2 English

7. In what language do you prefer to LISTEN to information you are most interested in?

- 1 Spanish
- 2 English

Now we need to ask you a few more questions to make sure we have a representative sample.

D1. What year were you born?

— — — —

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D2. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- 1 Did not graduated high school
- 2 High school / vocational school graduate
- 3 University graduate
- 4 Graduate degree (master's degree or higher)

D4. Please select the race you most identify with.

- 1 Anglo/white
- 2 African American/Black
- 3 Asian
- 4 Hispanic/Latino
- 5 American Indian
- 6 Other
- 7 I'm not sure
- 8 I prefer not to answer

D5. We will be classifying survey participants by income bracket. What was your total household income last year, before taxes?

- 1 Less than \$35,000
- 2 More than \$35,000 but less than \$70,000
- 3 More than \$70,000 but less than \$100,000
- 4 More than \$100,000 but less than \$150,000
- 5 \$150,000 or more
- 6 I'm not sure
- 7 I prefer not to answer

D6. Do you have any children 18 years old or younger?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 3 I prefer not to answer

D7.a IF YOU HAVE CHILDREN: Please indicate what language your children speak.

- 1 They always speak Spanish
- 2 They speak Spanish more than English
- 3 They speak Spanish and English equally
- 4 They speak English more than Spanish
- 5 They always speak Spanish

D7.b IF YOU HAVE CHILDREN: Please indicate what language your children speak AT HOME.

- 1 They always speak Spanish
- 2 They speak Spanish more than English
- 3 They speak Spanish and English equally
- 4 They speak English more than Spanish
- 5 They always speak Spanish

END

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