

Anthropological History of Spanish of America

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Summary

Acculturation was an essential characteristic of the anthropological history of humankind. Acculturation encompassed all cultural phenomena resulting from the acquisition, modification, or reinterpretation of a culture, particularly the reception and assimilation of cultural elements from one social group by another. There were no origins or language shift, but rather confluences of languages, with social and cultural mixing. Basque, Catalan, Galician, and Guarani, as current co-official languages with Spanish, confirm this undeniable anthropological basis, over the past twenty-five centuries. The anthropological history of Spanish of America raises the need for a new history that takes as its starting point the positions adopted by the various cultures. Our specific working hypothesis posited that the confluence of languages was a clear example of the diverse acculturations (Hispanic and Anglo-Saxon). The real problems with language policy in the United States emerged in the last quarter of the 20th century with the so-called “English Only” movement, and were closely linked to an anti-immigrant attitude, which constituted one of the most serious political problems of the 20th and 21st centuries. Indeed, immigration had exceeded all expectations and restrictions and had been yet another chapter in economic globalization. The European Union and MERCOSUR included a language planning within a supranational integration, while the North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA) between Canada, the United States and Mexico did not.

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I. Introduction

The integration of anthropology into medieval history was one of the most significant historiographical developments of the last third of the 20th century. Indeed (since 1970), there has been an enrichment of perspectives and a deepening of our understanding of the configuration of society, and especially of its behavior in relation to the territory it occupied. The interest of geographers and economists in regional phenomena and analysis was strengthened in the field of medieval studies by the emergence of a series of notable French theses based on this type of framework (G. Fourquin, R. Fossier, P. Toubert, P. Bonnassie, and G. Bois).

The central idea of ecosystem and the key concept of acculturation were used by some Spanish historians to show a new perspective on the implications that the social organization of space had during the Middle Ages in the Crown of Castile. J. A. García de Cortázar (1985) proposed starting from the conception of society and space as elements of a system, whose evolution occurred through the complexity of its social organization, and established the close connection between the formulas of economic reproduction and the structures of domination and social cohesion, as well as the system of values (see J. A. García de Cortázar, 1973).

1.1. The introduction of anthropology (and medieval history) into the history of language was later and could be placed at the end of the last century. F. Gimeno, (1988a, 1990: 138-44, 1995) pointed out that sociolinguistics was born from an anthropological commitment that ultimately viewed linguistics as a chapter of social and cultural anthropology (and of the psychology of knowledge).

General sociolinguistics as an extension and revision of institutional disciplines (linguistics, sociology and anthropology) integrated a *sociology of language* and a *strict sociolinguistics*, as well as the *ethnography of communication* (see C. F. Hockett, 1958/1962; C. A. Ferguson, 1959; B. Malmberg, 1966; R. Jakobson, 1970; J. A. Fishman, 1964/1968, 1971; D. Hymes, 1971, 1974; F. Gimeno, 1979, 2019, 2025f).

Studies on linguistic and cultural contact in Europe were not widely coordinated, although the forerunners were European (W. Leopold, E. Haugen, and U. Weinreich). U. Weinreich (1953: 37-40) commented that for some anthropologists, linguistic contact was nothing more than an aspect of cultural contact, and linguistic transfer was a facet of social diffusion and acculturation.

However, despite the increased anthropological interest in contact problems, particularly in the United States of America after the First World War, studies on linguistic contact and cultural contact did not enjoy widespread coordination, nor had the relationship between the two fields of study been properly defined.

The most interesting problem in language transfer was the interaction of social and cultural factors that promoted or hindered such transfer. Anthropologists investigating acculturation were compelled to include linguistic evidence, while linguists needed the help of anthropology to describe and analyze those factors that governed language transfer and were truly within the realm of culture.

II. Historical Sociolinguistics

The hypothesis of the history of languages as a succession of paradigms was more suited to linguistic facts than to a mere replacement of models. One of the most consistently upheld principles in historical linguistics was the theory of the regularity of linguistic change. In the Neogrammatical model, phonological change and analogy constitute the two basic components of linguistic change. Phonological change operated independently of morphological, syntactic, and semantic function. Analogy dealt precisely with the relationship between phonological and morphological structure. In this sense, it was necessary to distinguish between two interpretations: a) An autonomous version based on the assumption of phonological regularity, and b) a grammatical version of linguistic change.

2.1. The hypothesis of the autonomy of linguistic levels was incompatible with the post-generative theory of grammatical change, but some European functionalists have not recognized this incompatibility. Furthermore, there was a twofold starting strategy in the investigation of linguistic change: 1) Homogeneity, and 2) structured heterogeneity. According to this interpretation, the following models of linguistic change emerged: a1) Neogrammatical; b1) dialectological; a2) functionalist; b2) pragmatic; a3) generative; and b3) historical sociolinguistic.

If all linguistic change implied ongoing variation, then homogeneous models of linguistic change (Neogrammatical, functionalist, and generative) were unrealistic and inadequate. One success of diachronic functionalism was the recognition that the formation of the various Romance languages from the same Latin system challenged the past simplification of hypotheses based solely on linguistic systems, but this insight was relegated from its objectives and methodology.

Syntactic, semantic, or phonological change implied a grammatical change in the communicative competences of successive generational groups from different social groups within the speech community, through the reorganization of the vernacular with generational change (see F. Gimeno, 2024a).

2.2. Within the broad sociocultural framework of languages in contact, U. Weinreich (1953: 236-43) described language shift as the displacement of the habitual use of one language by that of another. Language shift, which implies changes in the social and cultural functions of a language, should be distinguished from linguistic change, which refers to the process of transformation in the structure of the language over time, space, society, and situation (see F. Gimeno and M. V. Gimeno, 2003: 24-64, 101-35).

Regarding its main purpose, the *History of Humankind: Cultural and Scientific Development* (I, 7-9), sponsored by UNESCO (1963), alluded in its "Preface" to the need to overcome traditional approaches to the study of history that attributed decisive importance to political, economic, and military factors. A history was needed that sought to appreciate the meaning of events and took as its starting point and frame of reference the positions adopted by diverse cultures. The perspective opened by each culture on the universal in human beings was a projection of that culture's humanity within its own particular circumstances.

Acculturation has been the empirical foundation of the anthropological history of humanity, and it integrated the history of languages, societies, and cultures. The hypothesis of human history as a succession of acculturations was more appropriate to the linguistic, social, and cultural facts and to the very continuity of history. There were no origins or deaths of languages. There was never a final generation of medieval Latin, nor a first generation of Romance languages (see Y. Malkiel: 1985: 30-40; H. Lüdtke, 1968, 2005: 565-8).

Furthermore, linguistic change did not occur without languages in contact, and both the history of linguistic change and language shift were part of acculturation, stemming from social and cultural diffusion. It was not, therefore, merely a linguistic issue, but also a social and cultural one. The fundamental principle in the history of linguistic change and language shift was the acculturation of social groups, with its social and cultural mixing.

2.3. Our working hypothesis has been that within the anthropological history of the Spanish language there was linguistic and cultural continuity, based on confluence and diverse historical acculturations (Indo-European,

Basque-Iberian, Phoenician-Punic-Greek, Roman, Christian, Germanic, Visigoth, Byzantine, Islamic, Catalan-Aragones, medieval Castilian, Castilian, and Anglo-Saxon), with the linguistic and cultural transfers that implied the social and cultural mixing of these groups and their adaptation to a new sociocultural context.

The current co-official languages of Basque, Catalan, Galician, and Guarani with Spanish confirm this undeniable anthropological basis, over the past twenty-five centuries. Our specific working hypothesis assumed that the confluence of languages in the United States was a clear example of the various acculturations (Hispanic and Anglo-Saxon) (see F. Gimeno, 2025a, 2025b, 2025e).

During the second half of the last century, significant contributions to historical linguistics accumulated, contributions that were far from being recognized by historians of languages. These contributions have led to major breakthroughs and technical applications in addressing previously decontextualized and inexplicable phenomena. The only viable solution was the intrinsic relationship between language, society, and culture. Acculturation has been the empirical foundation of the anthropological history of humankind, and it has integrated the history of languages, societies, and cultures.

The association between structure and homogeneity was a false assumption, since linguistic structure included the ordered differentiation of social groups and registers, through rules that governed variation within the speech community. Furthermore, a “structured heterogeneity” of language was proposed, and native proficiency implied control over such heterogeneous structures (see U. Weinreich, W. Labov, and M. I. Herzog, 1968: 187–8; F. Gimeno, 1990: 79–87).

Variation and change were distinct dimensions of linguistic evolution, and ongoing variation should never be confused with linguistic change. While all changes implied ongoing variation, not all variation implied change (see F. Gimeno, 2008b, 2008c). Indeed, linguistic change based on discontinuous interaction between parents and children simplified the issue to generational variation, but the parents' grammar was the first component of the child's first grammar, ensuring acculturation and the continuity of family transmission.

2.4. Acculturation refers to all cultural phenomena resulting from the acquisition, modification, or reinterpretation of a culture, particularly the reception and assimilation of cultural elements from one social group by another, with adaptation to a new sociocultural context. The term *acculturation* was widely accepted among American anthropologists in the late 19th century to describe the changes that occurred when social groups with different cultural traditions came together, without distinguishing whether it should be applied to the results or the processes of cultural change.

Acculturation, therefore, encompassed those events resulting from direct and continuous contact between social groups with different cultures, with the corresponding changes and reinterpretations in the original culture of one or both groups. The terms “acceptance,” “adaptation,” and “reaction” referred to the assimilation of cultural elements and their reinterpretation within new groups, as well as the rejection of those elements. Gradually, the term *transculturation* has become less common than the more frequent acculturation. While the latter was used to refer to the change of one or both poles of contact, *transculturation* has generally been used in relation to a single society or group (see F. Gimeno, 2024b, 2025d).

An anthropological investigation of the history of language proposed the deduction of linguistic variables and social and cultural factors from the past, and empirically verified them in the present. Historical sociolinguistics recognized the need to materialize the most plausible working hypotheses on the historical, sociological, and cultural reconstruction of the processes of oral formation and written standardization of Romance languages, based on empirical principles for a grammatical theory of linguistic change. In accordance with these foundations, it has surpassed the descriptive contributions of historical pragmatics, based on the functionalist analysis of stable discursive traditions in written texts (see B. Frank and J. Hartmann, 1997; D. Jacob and J. Kabatek, 2001; B. Imhoff, 1999; F. Gimeno, 1988a, 1988b, 1995).

The autonomous version of linguistic change advocated by the Neogrammarians was inadmissible today, and the phonological rules of historical-comparative linguistics were simplifications of linguistic change. This was especially true when we considered the geographical and social differentiation of language within its own “structured heterogeneity,” and variability as part of the communicative competence of the diverse generational and social groups that coexisted in the speech community. Only in this way was it possible for the social history of language to be a genuine reality, with the necessary complementarity between homogeneity and heterogeneity. Moreover, both past and present linguistic change were neither mechanical nor solely phonologically determined.

III. Confluence of Acculturations

In the “Historical Presence of the Hispanic,” in his “Introduction” to the *Encyclopedia of Spanish in the United States*, H. López Morales (2008a: 31) wrote that the Hispanic acculturation in the territories that today constitute the United States dates back to the 16th century. It is true that many of these traces proved ephemeral, being

occasional incursions, such as Ponce de León's voyage in 1513, the date that marks the beginning of this early period. During this century and a good part of the next, Spanish soldiers set foot on numerous lands: from southern Florida to what would later be called New England, from Florida westward to Texas. To the other end of the country: from California to Alaska, and even longer journeys to travel from the Gulf Coast to Iowa, the Dakotas, and Nebraska.

3.1. But what really mattered were the settlements: the colony of San Miguel de Guadalupe, founded in 1526 by Lucas Vázquez de Ayllón, in the Carolinas; the Franciscan missions established in present-day Georgia, in 1565; the founding of St. Augustine in Florida that same year by Menéndez de Avilés, the Jesuit missions of Axacán in Virginia in 1561 and that of Chesapeake nine years later; the founding of the town of San Juan by Oñate, in 1598, refounded and moved a few years later with the name of Santa Fe, in New Mexico, the mission of El Paso, in 1682, and another located east of Texas in 1690 (see H. López Morales and C. Domínguez, 2008; J. A. Samper and C. E. Hernández, 2008; F. Gimeno, 2025c).

Later, H. López Morales (2012: 40-58) added that the current reality of Hispanics in the United States is the result of a series of historical processes. If we discount early settlements and a few isolated instances, true Hispanic acculturation began in the early 20th century, with Mexico leading the way, followed by Puerto Ricans and later Cubans. In recent decades, Dominicans, Central Americans, and others from various parts of South America have arrived. Spaniards have been and continue to be a significant minority. Due to the forced contact between Spanish and English resulting from immigration to the United States, a wide variety of situations have arisen.

In cases of gradual loss of native Spanish or the inadequate acquisition of the language by children of Spanish speakers, communication was generally possible because the immigrants learned enough English to understand each other. Spanish-English coexistence was responsible of the Anglo-Saxon acculturation of varying degrees. However, all indications suggest that the rates of gradual impoverishment of Spanish in favor of English and its total or partial language shift have significantly slowed. As employment and economic opportunities became increasingly intertwined (and increasingly so) with the use of Spanish, the loss of the immigrants' mother tongue has come to a notable and abrupt halt. The most attractive job offers required balanced bilingualism in English and Spanish.

However, it was not merely a linguistic issue, but also a social and cultural one. The fundamental principle in the history of linguistic change and language shift was the acculturation of social groups. It wasn't simply a matter of the forced contact between Spanish and English resulting from immigration to North America producing highly diverse situations. Nor was it that Spanish-English coexistence was responsible for linguistic hybridity of varying degrees. Both the history of linguistic change and language shift were part of acculturation, stemming from social and cultural diffusion and social and cultural mixing. "Spanglish" is a clear example of Anglo-Saxon acculturation. It was not, therefore, a simple matter of the language shift of the Spanish spoken by Hispanic immigrants.

3.2. According to H. López Morales (2012: 59-63), Florida (92% Spanish speakers) and New York (84% Spanish speakers) are the states with the highest percentage of Spanish speakers, followed closely by Illinois and Texas, and not far behind by California, Arizona, and New Mexico (69% Spanish speakers). The fact that Florida and New York top the list suggests that more recent immigrants are better at maintaining their native language. However, the most important factor is the use of Spanish in public settings. In this regard, Miami-Dade County (in Florida) leads the nation, due to its official bilingual and bicultural (English and Spanish) status.

In the mass media, not forgetting the advertising aspect, Spanish is highly favored. For example, in Miami there are 30 radio stations, all with programming entirely in Spanish, several television channels that broadcast entirely in Spanish, two daily newspapers with large circulations, and more than five weekly publications. New York and, to a lesser extent, Los Angeles replicate this pattern. Regarding the press, it should be noted that *Diario Las Américas* and, more recently, *El Nuevo Herald*, newspapers serving the Hispanic community of Miami, offer their readers articles on language issues, in which they criticize errors committed by both the media and the public.

There are other, more significant factors for the Hispanic acculturation that can function as a status symbol within the community. On the one hand, there is the role of Spanish as an element of local and international communicative cohesion, and on the other, its economic utility. And we must also note one final, growing factor: Hispanic political power. The presidential election campaigns in this country provided the most compelling example of this: from websites in Spanish to segments in Spanish within the candidates' public speeches.

Among the reasons that explain the current spread of Spanish are:

- a) The number of native speakers and students of Spanish as a foreign language.
- b) The relative linguistic homogeneity it enjoys.
- c) The undeniable prominence it holds in hundreds of universities, libraries, archives, dozens of internationally distributed newspapers, and powerful radio and television networks.
- d) The steady traffic is starting to get congested on the computer lanes.

3.3. Despite the lack of agreements among Latin American countries for jointly promoting and teaching Spanish as a foreign language, Spanish is studied in one hundred countries worldwide. According to H. López Morales (2012: 55), the teaching of Spanish in the United States is on the rise. In public secondary schools, foreign language enrollment is distributed as follows: Spanish (68.7%), French (18.3%), German (4.8%), Italian (1.2%), Japanese (0.8%), Russian (0.2%), and other languages (3.3%).

At American universities, enrollments for the study of Spanish have skyrocketed across the country at all levels, and it is the most studied language by an overwhelming majority: 850,000 enrollments in Spanish classes, compared to 210,000 for French, 198,000 for German, 92,000 who have selected sign language, 74,000 who learn Japanese, and 61,000 who study Chinese.

Regarding Hispanic acculturation on television, H. López (2012: 67-8) cites CNNenEspañol.com, CNN Mobile, Univision, the brand-new Telefuturo, Galavisión, Telemundo (now backed by NBC), Telemundo Internacional (aimed especially at Latin America), and Mund2 (bilingual and aimed at young people). Direct satellite television options include DirecTV, with 20 Spanish-language channels, Dish Latino, with another 20; and Spanish versions of other channels such as Discovery Channel and Music Television Español, Fox Sports World Spanish, ESPN Deportes, plus the SAP Service, which includes TBS Superstation, Braves, Cartoon Network and Boomerang Cartoon Networking.

Add to this acculturation Televisión Española Internacional and Antena 3. The former, which are frequently forced to translate from English, always (or mostly) seek a kind of general Spanish (misnamed neutral) for their productions, such as CNN en Español, ECO (when it existed), and Discovery Channel, among others. But both Televisión Española Internacional and Antena 3 broadcast all, or almost all, of their programming in what is called 'Español de España,' and there has never been the slightest complaint about this, as the Hispanic acculturation of these texts has always been excellent.

3.4. On the other hand; F. Moreno (2008a: 221), in a Hispanic dialectology in the United States, presented the situation of the United States as an overlap of dialects that was having consequences, on the one hand, the appearance of new varieties and uses (emerging varieties, such as New York Spanish), a product precisely of the Hispanic acculturation, and on the other hand, the decline of heritage speeches, which are being subsumed in the majority varieties formed by speakers of more recent immigration or which are simply being replaced by the Anglo-Saxon acculturation (see F. Moreno, 2008b).

The future of the Spanish language will be intimately linked to the social conditions in which its speakers live. The hypothesis of Anglo-Saxon acculturation would only be considered if there were a demographic and political decline in the Hispanic population. Conversely, if the Hispanic demographic weight and socioeconomic presence continue to grow at an accelerated pace, American society could soon face a debate about its Hispanic acculturation into a bilingual and bicultural society.

IV. Language And Culture

E. Lago (2008: 25-6) pointed out that the strength of Spanish is a direct consequence of the fact that it was the language of expression in some twenty American countries. The United States was experiencing a growing process of Hispanic acculturation, and the expansion of the language was an essential part of this phenomenon. The Hispanic community in the United States is a conglomerate resulting from the fusion of those who have been established in the country for a long time (some for more than a century and a half) with the immigrants who continue to arrive from the most diverse regions of the Caribbean, Central America, and South America. The different national cultures tend to relate to one another spontaneously, creating a Hispanic acculturation, clearly differentiated from that of the countries of origin.

4.1. This is a phenomenon still in progress, and it will take time to fully crystallize, but many signs of this new entity are already evident. Like what happens with culture, I posit that an indigenous variety of Spanish is being forged in the United States, resulting from the Hispanic acculturation of its different regional varieties. The need to find a form of Spanish with which all Hispanics feel comfortable is becoming noticeable in the media.

A good example is CNN en Español's broadcasts from Atlanta to the entire Spanish-speaking world, which employ a kind of Hispanic acculturation. Other examples include the register sought in certain sectors of the press (as is the case in New York), or the translations of works written by Hispanic authors whose native language is English, which aim to render them into a Spanish that transcends regional markers.

What is tangible is the existence of specific enclaves occupied by distinct communities: Mexican-Americans, Dominicans, Puerto Ricans, Colombians, Cubans, among others. Large areas of California, Texas, New Mexico, and Miami, as well as entire neighborhoods in Washington, Chicago, New York, and other cities, could be considered provinces or districts defined by porous borders, forming part of a Anglo-Saxon

acculturation. In all these areas, a nascent, cross-cutting movement of linguistic and cultural convergence is underway.

These regions can be considered zones of friction where, alongside linguistic unification, a process of Hispanic acculturation is underway. Just as one can speak of Spanish cinema, Chilean literature, or Argentine theater, one can speak of specifically Hispanic-American art, film, theater, music, and literature. In general, in all areas of artistic and cultural expression, indigenous movements are emerging, bearing the imprint of Hispanic culture.

In the United States, Hispanics can be considered a nation within a nation, a unit with its own Hispanic acculturation, integrated seamlessly and positively into the greater North American nation, to which they are proud to belong. The United States is increasingly a bilingual and bicultural country. Everything related to the Hispanic acculturation is an integral part of daily life, becoming ever more powerful and prestigious.

4.2. Furthermore, E. Lago (2008: 23-4) emphasized that, to a greater or lesser degree, a significant portion of Hispanics in the United States are bilingual, given the considerable fluctuation in their proficiency in English or Spanish. Within this context, what is striking is that at all points on the bilingualism scale (regardless of the level of proficiency in either language), there was a clear reinforcement toward a Hispanic acculturation. At the top of the scale, among fully bilingual individuals (a group comprised of professionals with advanced degrees), there is a reasonable concern for achieving a high level of proficiency in Spanish.

At the lowest point, that of newly arrived immigrants, the lack of knowledge of English has two beneficial effects for the Hispanic acculturation: on the one hand, they renew the vitality of the language within the Hispanic community, and on the other hand, they cause an increase in the demand for Spanish as a foreign language among the English-speaking population, who need to communicate with them in the workplace.

All this stems from a relatively recent phenomenon: the shift in Hispanics' attitudes toward their native language due to Hispanic acculturation. Between 1988 and 1998, Hispanics' attitudes toward acculturation in North American society underwent a dramatic change. Until recently, the tendency was to abandon Spanish as part of an urgent acculturation process to the dominant culture, a process that involved embracing English at the expense of the Hispanic acculturation.

This is becoming less the case, and it's not that anyone considers English unimportant. Such a situation doesn't exist, although there are regions in the United States, like Miami, where entire pockets of Hispanic population live in a parallel universe where English isn't necessary. What is noticeably happening, however, is a growing resistance to abandoning the language of their ancestors and the cultures it shaped.

In the United States, Spanish occupies a liminal status between the categories of native language and foreign language. In reality, it both is and is not both at the same time, and when it is one or the other, it is so in a highly peculiar way, because Spanish is not and has never been a foreign language in North America, as toponymy and history clearly demonstrate. A quick glance at a map is enough to confirm the unmistakable connection of names like Colorado, San Francisco, Nevada, or Los Angeles, to name just a few.

4.3. The first text ever written about any part of what is now U.S. territory was not written in English, but in Spanish. It was a description of Florida, by Gaspar Pérez de Villagrà (1610). Currently, Spanish is spoken in 12% of American households, making it the country's second most spoken native language. As a foreign language, Spanish's status is also quite unique, and the first point to emphasize is that the demand for its instruction far exceeds that of all other foreign languages. Both within and outside the educational system, and regardless of the level considered, the dominance of Spanish over other languages is so absolute that some in political and academic circles have expressed concern about a possible neglect of the teaching of other languages.

What makes the demand for Spanish so much higher than for other languages is that the reasons Americans study it are not the same as those typically associated with learning a foreign language. In fact, Americans still have the same curiosity for learning languages as ever. Their interest in Spanish is very real, but it doesn't stem from a desire to acquire a new language; rather, it arises from the pressing need among large segments of society to communicate with the vast number of Hispanics who don't speak English.

This urgent need has directly led to the creation of an industry dedicated to providing rapid instruction in basic Spanish. It is estimated that there are around one hundred companies whose objective is to equip qualified professionals with the minimum skills necessary to communicate at an elementary level with Hispanic workers who do not speak English. This type of instruction does not meet any quality academic standards. Its aim is to satisfy basic communication needs in the workplace, in sectors such as finance, healthcare, and legal or governmental bodies, among others.

4.4. Furthermore, A. Morales (1999: 263) referred to census data to understand the linguistic characteristics of Hispanics in the United States and to document the process of Anglo-Saxon acculturation among them. This data indicated that these speakers were experiencing the same three-generation language shift process observed in other

countries in similar situations. The third generation no longer spoke Spanish, and only a portion of the second generation did. Those born in the United States had very little chance of speaking it. According to the 1990 census, of the 22 million Hispanics, 22% were monolingual in English (approximately 5 million), and 40% were bilingual (9 million). This data coincided with the general interpretation that a third of the population no longer spoke Spanish.

Subsequently, H. López Morales (2012: 56-8) argued that the data provided up to that point on the proficiency of both languages among Hispanic immigrants revealed several behavioral differences. Those from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds saw the host country as the ideal destination (better salaries, greater housing availability, higher standard of living, better schooling for their children, etc.) and, consequently, comparisons with the conditions they experienced in their country of origin placed it on a much lower scale.

The successes achieved, however modest, often fostered very positive attitudes toward Anglo culture and could give rise to the process of Anglo-Saxon acculturation, sometimes openly encouraged. Available data on rates of Spanish language shift among immigrants and exiles in the United States indicated that 25% of them had lost their mother tongue (more than 7 million). When this overall percentage was analyzed by state, the spectrum ranged from Florida, where the Anglo-Saxon acculturation was only 8%, to Colorado, where it reached a staggering 52%.

4.5. R. Otheguy (2008) questioned the suitability of the term “Spanglish” as the popular variety of Spanish spoken by Hispanics in the United States, due to its hybrid nature, a structural mixture with English. Spanish in the United States has been exclusively the language of immigration, since very few families with long-standing settlements in the original Spanish territories of the western part of the country had preserved the language of their ancestors.

Spanish in North America (as a language of immigration) is only spoken regularly by the first and second generations in formal and informal contexts. With relatively few exceptions, these two generations fail to pass the language on to the third generation; instead, we find a limited use and reduced command of Spanish among the grandchildren. The two most notable syntactic processes in popular American Spanish are: a) the loss or disappearance of syntactic resources and mechanisms, especially in the second generation, and b) the expansion and acceleration in both generations of syntactic processes already existing in other parts of the Hispanic world.

This does not lead to the systematic mixing with English implied by the term “Spanglish,” but rather to a marked decrease in the use of Spanish in favor of English, either through code-switching or, more commonly, through a complete language shift of Spanish for most of its contexts of use. Whatever the reasons, they all relate to the bilingual environment in which Spanish speakers live in the United States, and the result is language shift, not (as the term “Spanglish” suggests) the structural shoring up of Spanish through additions, penetrations, and reinforcements from English.

If we wanted to calculate the proportion of unaltered elements of Spanish and that of English factors that coexist in the grammars with which these North American Spanish speakers generate utterances in Spanish, we would realize the Hispanic character of their language, and how ridiculous it is to characterize and name an enormous and very complex system (such as the structure of a language), with reference to two or three, or four or five, of its components.

Creole languages, the technical term for languages like Palenquero, Papiamentu, and Haitian Creole, have been studied extensively, both in their structure and their social context. None of them arose from situations of bilingualism like those of Hispanic Americans. Therefore, if so-called “Spanglish” were a new amalgam (L3) or a creole, it would represent a stunning discovery for creole theory and would break all previous precedents.

Moreover, a very notable part of this popular language of immigrants from the United States is also the enormous scope of the Hispanic syntactic embrace with which the second-generation speaker still gathers his lexicon, and thus produces discourses generated by a grammar with very predominantly Hispanic features.

V. Bilingual Education

In “The Use of Spanish in Education,” in the *Encyclopedia of Spanish in the United States*, O. García (2008: 417-22) commented that Spanish in the United States could be considered to have special rights, since it was spoken by those who arrived from the Iberian Peninsula and colonized the Southwest and other areas of what would later become the United States. However, instead of being considered the language of the original inhabitants and therefore having special rights to be used and developed in the educational system, Spanish has on the contrary, acquired an identity as the language of conquered and colonized peoples, thus becoming a mere instrument to facilitate Anglo-Saxon acculturation.

5.1. In 1848, as a consequence of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Mexico lost half of its territories (the present-day states of California, Arizona, Texas, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and parts of Colorado and

Wyoming). Since by then Spanish had largely replaced the indigenous languages spoken in those territories, the new authorities adopted it, albeit only as a temporary measure.

A good example of this was the case of New Mexico (which included the present-day state of Arizona): it joined the Union in 1850. In 1874, 70% of the schools in this territory still taught only in Spanish, 33% were bilingual in their instruction, and a mere 5% were monolingual in English. Fifteen years later, in 1889, 42% were monolingual in English, 28% used both languages, while only 30% received instruction in Spanish.

Two years later, a statute in New Mexico mandated that only English be used in education. Within thirty years, New Mexico transformed from a Spanish-speaking territory into an English-speaking state. The American school system played a crucial role in promoting the language shift toward English, which was required of any aspiring states.

The first half of the 20th century, marked by xenophobia that returned to the United States as a result of the growth of European immigration, stifled any efforts to use Spanish in education. In the second half of the 20th century, Spanish experienced a resurgence as a language of instruction in the United States, beginning around 1960. At least three factors contributed to this renewal: the growing interest in civil rights for all citizens, the increasing number of Spanish-speaking immigrants, and the persuasive power of the first wave of Cubans who arrived in Florida during that period.

5.2. The beginning of bilingual education in the United States occurred without any intervention from the Federal Government. From then until now, many Spanish-speaking groups continue to support the creation of private bilingual schools throughout the country. In 1974, the Federal Government provided a definition of bilingual education: instruction, conducted in English and with the study of that language, and (to the extent necessary for the child to progress adequately through the school system) in the native language of children who do not speak English well. This instruction was to be conducted with appreciation for the cultural heritage of those children.

At that time, only "transitional bilingual education" was supported, with no funding for programs that used Spanish for other purposes. The federal government's message was clear: Spanish for the transition to English, but not for its maintenance. In the last five years, as Spanish has gained global and local status in the United States, the word "bilingual" has been silenced and has disappeared. In its place, there has been a notable increase in interest in English acquisition for immigrants and for those who do not speak it. The transition program has aimed at Anglo-Saxon acculturation for Hispanic students and monolingual Spanish speakers.

One might ask why the United States is making this effort to limit its bilingualism, and especially its Spanish. Susan Wright offered some insight into this issue, stating that, even though the United States invented the concept of globalization, it opposes its own creation by increasingly limiting itself to the concept of 'one nation, one language,' which is indefensible in the 21st century. Another reason given has to do with the increasingly prominent role that Spanish is acquiring in the country, not only due to its larger population but also because of the renewed interest in 'Latinidad' (Latin identity) fostered by popular culture and encouraged by Spain's greater presence on the global stage.

This last observation is what has spurred the development of 'two-way bilingual education' in recent years. Despite the limited interest shown by educational authorities in bilingualism, English-speaking and Hispanic communities have opened another avenue through which their children can receive an education with the possibility of becoming bilingual. The two-way program aims to achieve bilingualism for both Hispanic and non-Hispanic students, as well as for bilingual and monolingual Spanish speakers and monolingual English speakers.

5.3. In "The Spanish Language and American Legislation", in the *Encyclopedia of Spanish in the United States*, L. A. de la Cuesta (2008) argued that the real problems of language planning in the United States arose in the last quarter of the last century with the movement called "English Only", and were closely linked to an anti-immigrant attitude, which constituted one of the most serious political problems of the 20th and 21st centuries.

Until 1965, the United States had not established a limit on the number of Hispanic immigrants who could settle in the country. The figure was then set at 120,000 per year. However, at the beginning of the 21st century, Spanish speakers became the country's largest minority, surpassing the Black minority. Furthermore, it was estimated that an additional 12 million undocumented immigrants resided in the country. This was not merely a demographic issue, as it involved two aspects (one cultural and the other economic) to which a political dimension had to be added.

In 1958, the city of Miami, founded in 1896, was a small, quintessentially Southern town with a population that swelled in winter and dwindled in summer. The massive influx of Cubans fleeing the communist regime and the equally massive aid from the United States government brought about a substantial change in the city, which quickly transformed into a major metropolis. This demographic growth, coupled with economic success, led to a breakdown of the old principle of Anglo-Saxon acculturation first, followed by economic success.

The Cubans of Miami in 1973, unlike other groups of Hispanic immigrants, were mostly white, urban, educated, and had successfully integrated themselves into the mechanisms of power without abandoning their language.

A year later, U.S. Senator Samuel I. Hayakawa, a Republican from California, introduced a bill to declare English the sole official language of the United States through an amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The proposal failed, but between 1981 and 1990, sixteen similar bills were submitted to Congress, some quite extensive and others barely four lines long.

Regarding legal texts, there is no declaration or prescription on the matter in the federal Constitution. The United States has never had a predetermined language planning, but rather ad hoc policies. However, the situation of constitutional legislation in the federated states is as follows: thirty proclaim English as an official language, and twenty do not. Hawaii is the only officially bilingual state. Spanish is already de facto the second language of the United States, and its being proclaimed as such or as co-official in the corresponding legal texts is something that could happen, but only in the long term.

VI. Spanish Demography and Geographic Mobility

VII.

According to the *Cervantes Institute Yearbook (2023)*, the United States will be the second largest Spanish-speaking country in the world by 2060, after Mexico. More than 62.5 million Americans, 18.9% of the country's total population, are of Hispanic origin. 67.6% of Hispanics use Spanish at home. The Hispanic community remains the largest demographic group in the United States, but its growth rate has slowed in recent decades. In the last five years, the number of native Spanish speakers born in the United States has surpassed the number of those born outside the country.

6.1. Hispanics are by far the largest minority group in the United States. According to estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau, the U.S. population of Hispanic origin exceeded 62.5 million in July 2022. This figure represents an increase of more than 12 million since 2010 and more than 53 million since 1970. In the last five decades, the Hispanic population has grown sevenfold and its relative weight has quadrupled. Currently, 18.9% of Americans identify ethnically as Hispanic, placing this community well above the Asian (6.1%) and African American (13.6%) communities, the largest minority group after Hispanics.

Although the Hispanic population has been a constant throughout U.S. history, particularly in the Southwest, its growth was boosted by the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, which eliminated quotas assigned to each country and, in practice, encouraged migration from Latin America and the Caribbean. However, the rapid expansion experienced by the Hispanic community since 1970 began to show signs of slowing: between 2010 and 2020, the Hispanic population increased by 23%, compared to 43% in the previous decade. The 1980s saw a 74% increase, the period of greatest relative growth for this community. In fact, the growth rate of the Asian population since 2010 has been higher than that of the Hispanic population.

6.2. Another factor that has changed substantially since the 1970s is its geographic distribution. Although the largest Latino presence was still in the southwestern states, the last few decades have seen a progressive process of geographic dispersal, particularly intense toward the Northwest and the major cities of the East Coast. In absolute terms, the growth of this community was still most concentrated in states that already had a significant Hispanic population, such as Texas, California, and Florida, but in relative terms, it is now greater in states with smaller Hispanic populations, such as North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, and New Hampshire. In California and Texas, Hispanics are now the majority ethnic group.

The geographic mobility observed in this community is also gradually altering its traditional pattern of concentration, which placed Hispanics of Mexican and Central American origin primarily in the states closest to Mexico, and those of Caribbean origin only in Florida, New York, or, in general, in the eastern states. Currently, it is easy to find Hispanics of diverse origins throughout the country. Although the primary country of origin remains Mexico (59.5% of the total), followed by Puerto Rico (9.3%), El Salvador (4%), Cuba (3.8%), and the Dominican Republic (3.8%).

Caribbean, Central American, and South American origins have experienced considerable growth since the beginning of the century, at the expense of Mexican origin, which shows a clear downward trend. Between 2010 and 2021 alone, the relative weight of Mexican origin within the Hispanic community registered an increase (1.9%), as did South American and Caribbean origins, which grew by 1.2%.

In 2021, 41,254,941 people over the age of five used Spanish at home, representing 13.2% of the total U.S. population. Over the past forty years, the Spanish-speaking community has nearly quadrupled in absolute terms and more than doubled in relative terms. In the last five years, the number of native Spanish speakers born in the United States has surpassed that of those born outside the country. According to the Census Bureau, in 2021, 55% of Spanish speakers were born in the United States, compared to 47% in 2015. Of those born outside the country, 41% (18.3%

of all Spanish speakers) have acquired U.S. citizenship, while the remaining 59% maintain foreign-born status. Overall, 73.3% of Spanish speakers are full-fledged U.S. citizens.

6.3. One of the keys to the growth of the Hispanic population in the United States is the widespread use of Spanish in the home. Of all Spanish speakers in the country, 95.4% (38.9 million) identify ethnically as Hispanic, making this group the primary driver of the growth in Spanish usage in the U.S. While being Hispanic does not automatically guarantee fluency in Spanish, the correlation between the two is very strong. 67.6% of Hispanic Americans use Spanish to some extent to communicate with their families, and only 32.4% report using only English.

On the other hand, the high level of Spanish proficiency observed across generations of Hispanics indicates that the Spanish-speaking community in the United States has reached a critical mass sufficient to survive independently of the dominant language. Nevertheless, the use of Spanish has clearly declined since the 1980s as Hispanics' English proficiency has increased, especially among those born in the country.

This circumstance, coupled with the fact that most Spanish speakers in the United States were born in the country, has negatively impacted the rate of Spanish maintenance from one generation to the next, which nevertheless remains relatively high: 47% of third-generation Hispanics report speaking Spanish "very well" or "quite well." The intergenerational loss of Spanish is more pronounced when these Hispanics are asked about their primary language. In that case, 61% of first-generation Hispanic adult's report Spanish as their primary language, compared to 8% of second-generation Hispanics, and 1% of third generation and subsequent generations.

However, this loss is much less pronounced if the 29% of third-generation Hispanics who consider themselves bilingual are included in the count. Finally, in addition to native or bilingual Spanish speakers, who represent 76% of the total Hispanic population over 18, there are also Americans with limited proficiency in the language.

6.4. Furthermore, the economic power of Spanish lies in its statistics. *The Cervantes Institute Yearbook (2023)* reports that approximately 500 million people have Spanish as their mother tongue (6.2% of the world's population). The group of potential Spanish users worldwide (a figure that includes native speakers, those with limited proficiency, and foreign language learners) exceeds 599 million (7.5% of the world's population). Spanish is the second most spoken native language in the world, after Chinese, and the fourth most spoken language overall, after Hindi/Urdu, Chinese, and English.

The number of Spanish speakers will continue to grow over the next five decades, but their relative share will gradually decline between now and the end of the century. By 2100, only 6.4% of the world's population will be able to communicate in Spanish. More than 23 million students studied Spanish as a foreign language in 2023. In Europe, Spanish benefits both from being a "local" language necessary for trading with adjacent or nearby countries (unlike Chinese), and from its role as a global language necessary for multinational business.

If we consider all speakers, they represent slightly more than 6% of the world's population, but this group has a purchasing power equivalent to around 10% of global GDP. Specifically, it would be 9.77%, some \$13 trillion in 2022, and the per capita income of Spanish speakers would amount to \$22,481, 131% higher than the world average. Some 395 million speakers have internet access, and about 273 million are Facebook users. It is the third most used language online, after Chinese and English, and the second most used on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and other social media platforms, as well as on the most popular digital platforms (YouTube, Netflix, and Wikipedia).

Furthermore, it is important to remember the number of countries where these languages are official, co-official, or majority languages. For example, Chinese is an official language in five countries or administrations. English, on the other hand, appears in 50 countries of the world, while Spanish is present in more than 20 (see J. A. Alonso, J. C. Jiménez and J. L. García Delgado, 2022; F. Gimeno, 2023a, 2023b).

6.5. Anyway, the *Cervantes Institute Yearbook (2025)*, which examines the demographics of Spanish worldwide, indicates the consolidation of a potential speaker community of over 630 million and, for the first time in history, the number of native speakers surpassing 500 million. The report includes several monographic analyses dedicated to different aspects of the international status, use, and dissemination of the Spanish language.

The proportion of native speakers across Latin American countries remains above 90%, as it has in previous years. Regarding the maintenance of native speaker proportions by 2025, Guatemala, Bolivia, Paraguay, and Equatorial Guinea continue to show percentages below 85% within this group, the lowest in the entire Hispanic world.

Demographically, it is interesting to note how the current rate of population growth has been gradually decreasing. In Latin America and the Caribbean as a whole, the growth rate has fallen from 1.5% in 2000 to 1.1% in 2012 and currently stands at 0.7%. For Spanish speakers, this rate is around 1%, a clear indicator that the Hispanic community is gradually experiencing a slowdown in a population growth.

VIII. Economic Globalization

Economic globalization is not a new phenomenon in human history, as something similar occurred in the late 19th and early 20th, and it originated in the 1960s. Since 1990, the total number of immigrants and displaced persons is estimated at 150 million, according to one source (220 million, according to another). The five main geographic regions receiving these populations have been: the United States (the leading country with over 39 million immigrants), the European Union, oil-producing countries, Japan, and Australia.

7.1. Of course, economic globalization is not a strictly economic phenomenon, but rather a broader one. However, the most recent globalization has different characteristics from previous iterations because it is based on a technological revolution (digital code, the internet age) and affects finance (more than any other sector)

J. Maurais y M. A. Moris (2003) highlighted the importance of supranational (or superregional) integration for the future of languages and suggested how comparison could contribute to a greater understanding. Comparative supranational integration has been recognized as an increasingly important dimension of a globalized world, but comparisons concerning its related linguistic dimension have been largely neglected (see F. Gimeno, 2008a: 251-9).

The European Union, North America, and South America offered a solid foundation for understanding the relationship between globalization, superregionals, and languages, but they also differed significantly in their linguistic dynamics. The European Union and MERCOSUR incorporated language planning within their supranational integration frameworks, while the North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA) between Canada, the United States, and Mexico did not.

In this regard, J. Maurais (2003) questioned whether we are moving towards a new linguistic order in the 21st century and offered some of the predictions put forward by various authors. The idea that the world's linguistic problems could be easily solved either by spreading English, by using machine translation technology, or by making two foreign languages mandatory is completely unrealistic. It's a fallacy. Neither utopian universal multilingualism nor the monolingualism of the dominant world can satisfy our needs for social communication and cultural identity.

7.2. Based on both economic and demographic evolution, as well as the potential for language shift, D. Graddol (1997: 59) offered a report sponsored by the British Council on the hierarchy of languages up to the year 2050, and established the following classification: a) Major languages (Chinese, Hindi/urdu, English, Spanish and Arabic); b) regional languages of in major trading blocs (Arabic, Malay, Chinese, English, Russian and Spanish); c) national languages (around 90 languages used by more than 220 nations-states), and d) local languages (the remainder of around 1000 languages with varying degrees of official recognition).

In the 21st century, no language will occupy the hegemonic position that English nearly achieved at the end of the last century. On the one hand, the current overcoming of English's monopoly by the oligopoly of several languages in the upper stratum will produce greater pluralism, but on the other hand, the significant loss of several thousand languages in the lower stratum will cause an immense loss of current diversity. Spanish will be one of the fastest-growing languages. The next rivals to English will be German, French, and Japanese, although they will grow much more slowly.

However, in any case, it is not only an economic issue, but a political one. Furthermore, there were no origins or language shift, but rather a confluence of languages, with social and cultural mixing. The fact that Basque, Catalan, Galician, and Guarani are currently co-official languages with Spanish confirms this undeniable anthropological basis.

The relationships and connections between both processes (language shift and acculturation) offered a special contribution, since both the history of language shift and linguistic change were part of acculturation, stemming from social and cultural diffusion and social and cultural mixing. Thus, for example, "Spanglish" is a clear example of Anglo-Saxon acculturation, and not of the language shift of the vernacular Spanish of Hispanic immigrants in the United States (mainly Mexicans from the Southwest and Puerto Ricans from New York) by Standard American English (see C. Silva-Corvalán, 2000; F. Gimeno, 2008a: 262-8).

On the other hand, in accordance with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (adopted in Nice, 2000), the European Union contributes to the maintenance and promotion of common values, while respecting the diversity of cultures and traditions of the peoples of Europe.

For its part, the European Parliament (the European institution most sensitive to linguistic diversity and the only public body to have adopted the principle of comprehensive multilingualism) has recommended that the governments of the Member States provide minority languages with appropriate legal status, integrating the fields of education, culture, justice and public administration, social media, toponymy, and other sectors of public and cultural life.

7.3. MERCOSUR is a regional economic community that includes some of the most important countries in South America (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay), along the main linguistic border between Spanish and Portuguese, where Brazil represents 71% of the GDP, 71% of the territory, and 78.7% of the population. The four countries signed a "Treaty for the Establishment of a Common Market" on March 26, 1991, which provided for internal trade free of tariff barriers and a unified trade policy with a common external tariff since 1995.

In June 1992, a three-year plan (renewed every three years) was approved, establishing three lines of action: a) fostering civic awareness favorable to integration; b) preparing human resources; and c) harmonizing educational systems. The plan included instruction (as second languages) in the two official languages of MERCOSUR: Spanish in Brazil and Portuguese in Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay, within their respective educational systems. In this sense, it considers cultural and educational integration a prerequisite for any economic and political integration.

Regarding the regional language policy of MERCOSUR and its possible constitution as a barrier against a historical phase of Anglo-Saxon acculturation, R. E. Hamel (2003) has argued that the main linguistic conflict in Ibero-America is undoubtedly represented by the relationship between English and national languages.

However, this fact does not obscure the reality of internal acculturation between dominant national languages and subordinate indigenous languages, which is the most significant form of acculturation in most countries, particularly in regional areas such as the Andes or Mesoamerica, with a high concentration of indigenous populations. There is no theoretical support or empirical evidence to suggest that strengthening indigenous languages in Latin America (through literacy programs and the teaching of related subjects) could threaten the position of Portuguese and Spanish as national and international languages.

Indigenous peoples who continue to speak their own languages can be found in virtually every Latin American country, except Uruguay. Their demographic weight ranges from 0.17% of the population in Brazil to 50% in Guatemala. According to the most optimistic estimates, there are approximately 13 million Indigenous people who speak one of the 1,000 native languages. Although some languages have been completely lost, most remain vibrant, and we lack data on the increase in the number of speakers.

From a geopolitical perspective, it should be emphasized that in all Ibero-American countries with indigenous populations, the recognition of native peoples and their political power have grown enormously in the past twenty years. This was reflected in legislative changes that recognized their rights and in bilingual education programs, which at least indicated the maintenance of their languages (see F. Gimeno, 2008a: 260-2).

VIII. Anglo-Saxon Acculturation

The analysis of Anglicisms in the Spanish of the Americas and Spain occupied the attention of many scholars and linguists in the 20th century. Anglo-Saxon lexical transfer was greater in Spanish-speaking America than in Spain, since the latter more strongly preserved the language tradition, while the sociological, economic, political, and social ties of Latin American countries with the major Anglo-Saxon powers determined greater sociocultural contact with English.

8.1. Beginning in the 1940s, studies began to appear dedicated to compiling Anglo-Saxon lexical transfers into the Spanish of the Americas, particularly in Puerto Rico and Panama. These studies expressed concern about differentiating between superfluous loanwords and neologisms that should be adopted to enrich the language. Lexicographers generally adopted a purist stance to draw Spanish speakers' attention to the danger of "corruption" posed by barbarisms. At other times, they limited themselves to the task of insatiably accumulating Anglicisms, without stopping to consider whether such words were part of the oral register or whether they were only occasional products (see H. López Morales, 1987; E. Lorenzo, 1966, 1996, 1999; C. Pratt, 1980; F. Rodríguez, 1999, 2023; F. Rodríguez (dir.) and A. Lillo, 1997; F. Gimeno and M. V. Gimeno, 2003: 137-58).

Numerous American sociolinguists focused their research on the spoken Spanish register of the United States, although only a few researchers showed interest in the written register, and few studies considered the importation of written Anglo-Saxon lexical information. In the 1990s, some analyses of American Spanish adopted a broader perspective on the linguistic changes occurring both in the linguistic system of bilingual Hispanic communities and in the sociocultural aspects that assessed situations of linguistic conservation or language shift (see O. García *et al.*, 1985; A. Morales, 1992; C. Silva-Corvalán, 1994; F. Gimeno and M. V. Gimeno, 2003: 159-200).

8.2. Studies of social multilingualism focused on certain coordinates (linguistic, sociological, or formal) of languages in contact, which were influenced by the contributions of U. Weinreich (1953), E. Haugen (1953/1969), C. A. Ferguson (1959), and W. Labov (1969). In a report on research in the United States between 1956 and 1970, E. Haugen (1973: 521) restricted the term *interference* to the "simultaneous superimposition of

two linguistic norms on the same element,” because of the inability or indifference of bilinguals to keep the codes entirely separate.

He therefore attempted to limit interference to bilingual performance and to establish the various intermediate systems of fusion (*bilingual dialects*) that existed between the two codes. From this point, if any individual deviation from a linguistic norm was repeated and accepted by the community, it demonstrated a certain degree of acceptance and could be said to have been integrated, thus ceasing to be a case of interference. The criteria of phonology and morphology were therefore fundamental for resolving the question of integration or non-integration within the speech community.

On the other hand, he insisted on a distinction between “borrowing” (as the process of code-superimposition) and “code-switching” (as a process of code-maintenance), since the languages did not overlap, but rather one followed the other. In this sense, he proposed the term *code-switching* to describe the alternative use of two languages, from the introduction of a non-assimilated word to one or more sentences, within the context of the other language. The problem, then, lay in the delimitation and differentiation of interference, since this process required transcending static consideration. Thus, strict “interference” was reserved for a certain weak degree of constancy, and when it operated at an unconscious level, while “code-switching” was limited to a more constant and conscious degree.

8.3. The sociocultural situations of language contact presented three processes (convergence, non-convergence, and divergence), revealing that different social groups continually modified their variety to reduce, maintain, or accentuate linguistic differences, depending on the broad framework of their sociocultural identity. (See D. Hymes, 1971; J. J. Gumperz and A. Bennett, 1980). The literature on linguistic convergence was the most abundant, and the sociocultural situations of languages in contact favored this convergence of different groups and social and cultural mixing within the various speech communities.

In general terms, the covariation of two or more (sub)systems in the linguistic repertoire of different social groups within a speech community could be categorized into two areas (linguistic transfer and cultural transfer), which involved the social and cultural mixing of multilingual and multicultural peoples. Specifically, linguistic and cultural transfer were related and manifested in two dynamics (*acculturation* and *language shift*), and the connections between these two processes offered a unique contribution, since both the history of language shift and language change were part of acculturation, stemming from social and cultural diffusion with social and cultural mixing.

Most researchers who have dealt with the process of Anglo-Saxon lexical transfer have not clearly separated the initial act of lexical transfer and the final acceptance of the already integrated loanword, because of the lack of delimitation between the sociolinguistic process of lexical transfer and the lexicographical discussion about the ultimate or immediate origin of the loanword.

Furthermore, it was necessary to consider the clear distinction between Anglo-Saxon lexical importation (e.g., clown), which has been lexicographically termed “raw Anglicism” or “overt Anglicism,” and integrated borrowing (e.g., *cederrón* ‘CD-ROM’), even though both originated from English. It is well known that integrated borrowing (linguistically and socially) has become part of the receiving language. That is, as Spanish social groups socially adopted Anglo-Saxon lexical transfers and adapted them linguistically, the terms ceased to be Anglo-Saxon and became integrated into the Spanish lexicon (see W. Labov, 1972, 1982; J. A. Fishman, 1964/1968, 1971; H. López Morales, 1983, 1989; S. Poplack , 1988; S. Poplack and D. Sankoff, 1988; C. Silva-Corvalán 1988/2001, 1994; F. Gimeno and M. V. Gimeno, 2003: 72-84).

IX. Conclusions

1. Acculturation was an essential feature of the history of languages. Acculturation encompassed all cultural phenomena resulting from the acquisition, modification, or reinterpretation of a culture, particularly the reception and assimilation of cultural elements from one social group by another, with adaptation to a new sociocultural context. The term acculturation was widely accepted among American anthropologists at the end of the 19th century to refer to the changes that occurred when social groups with different cultural traditions came together.

2. The entry of anthropology into history was one of the most significant historiographical developments at the end of the last century. The central idea of the ecosystem and the key concept of acculturation were used by some Spanish historians, who proposed starting from the conception of society and space as elements of a system whose evolution occurred through the complexity of its social organization. They established the close connection between the formulas of economic reproduction and the structures of domination and social cohesion, as well as the system of values.

3. Within the anthropological history of the Hispanic Romance languages, there was linguistic and cultural continuity, resulting from confluence and diverse historical acculturations (Indo-European, Basque-Iberian, Phoenician-Punic—Greek, Roman, Christian, Germanic, Visigothic, Byzantine, Islamic, Catalan-Aragonese, medieval Castilian, Castilian, and Anglo-Saxon), with the linguistic and cultural transfers that implied the social and cultural mixing of these groups. There were no origins or language shifts, but rather confluences of languages, with social and cultural mixing.

4. Basque, Catalan, Galician, and Guarani, as current co-official languages with Spanish, confirm this unquestionable anthropological basis, over the past twenty-five centuries. The anthropological history of Spanish of America raises the need for a new history that takes as its starting point the positions adopted by the various cultures. The immigration had exceeded all expectations and restrictions and had been yet another chapter in economic globalization. The European Union and MERCOSUR included a language planning within a supranational integration, while the North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA) between Canada, the United States and Mexico did not. Our working hypothesis is confirmed once again.

5. The current reality of Hispanics in the United States is the result of a series of historical processes. If we discount early settlements and a few isolated instances, true Hispanic acculturation began in the early 20th century, with Mexico leading the way, followed by Puerto Ricans and later Cubans. In recent decades, Dominicans, Central Americans, and others from various parts of South America have arrived. Spaniards have been and continue to be a significant minority.

6. However, this was not merely a linguistic issue, but also a social and cultural one. The fundamental principle in the history of linguistic change and language shift was the acculturation of social groups. It was not simply that the forced contact between Spanish and English, resulting from immigration to North America, produced very diverse situations, nor was it that the coexistence of Spanish and English was responsible for a linguistic hybridization of varying degrees. Both the history of linguistic change and language shift were part of acculturation, stemming from social and cultural diffusion with social and cultural mixing. “Spanglish” is a clear example of Anglo-Saxon acculturation. It was not, therefore, a language shift of the vernacular Spanish of Hispanic immigrants in the United States (mainly Mexicans from the Southwest and Puerto Ricans from New York) with Standard American English

7. The real problems of language planning in the United States arose in the last quarter of the 20th century with the so-called “English Only” movement, and were closely linked to an anti-immigrant attitude, which constituted one of the most serious political problems of the 20th and 21st centuries. Until 1965, the United States had not established a limit on the number of Hispanic immigrants who could settle in the country. The figure was then set at 120,000 per year. However, at the beginning of the 21st century, Spanish speakers became the country's largest minority, surpassing the Black minority. Furthermore, it was claimed that some 12 million uncounted Spanish speakers resided illegally. This was not merely a demographic fact but rather involved two issues (one cultural and the other economic) to which a political dimension had to be added.

8. Hispanics are by far the largest minority group in the United States. According to estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau, the U.S. population of Hispanic origin exceeded 62.5 million in July 2022. This figure represents an increase of more than 12 million since 2010 and more than 53 million since 1970. In the last five decades, the Hispanic population has grown sevenfold and its relative weight has quadrupled. Currently, 18.9% of Americans identify ethnically as Hispanic, placing this community well above the Asian (6.1%) and African American (13.6%) populations.

9. The geographic mobility observed in this community is also gradually altering its traditional pattern of concentration, which placed Hispanics of Mexican and Central American origin primarily in the states closest to Mexico, while those of Caribbean origin were concentrated only in Florida, New York, or, in general, in the eastern states. Currently, it is easy to find Hispanics of diverse origins throughout the country. Although Mexico remains the primary country of origin (59.5% of the total), followed by Puerto Rico (9.3%), El Salvador (4%), Cuba (3.8%), and the Dominican Republic (3.8%).

10. The economic power of Spanish lies in its figures. The *Cervantes Institute Yearbook (2025)* reports the consolidation of a community of potential speakers of more than 630 million, and the surpassing of 500 million native speakers for the first time in history. Spanish is the third most spoken native language in the world, after Hindi/Urdu, and Chinese, and the fourth most spoken language overall, after Hindi/Urdu, Chinese, and English.

The number of Spanish speakers will continue to grow over the next five decades, but its relative weight will gradually decrease between now and the end of the century. By 2100, only 6.4% of the world's population will be able to communicate in Spanish. More than 23 million students were studying Spanish as a foreign language in 2023.

11. In Europe, Spanish benefits both from being a "local" language necessary for trade with neighboring or nearby countries (unlike Chinese) and from its role as a global language essential for multinational businesses. Considering all Spanish speakers, they represent just over 6% of the world's population, but this group has a purchasing power equivalent to around 10% of global GDP. Specifically, this would be 9.77%, or about \$13 trillion in 2022, and the per capita income of Spanish speakers would reach \$22,481, 131% higher than the world average.

12. Some 395 million speakers have internet access, and about 273 million are Facebook users. It is the third most used language online, after Chinese and English, and the second most used on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and other social media platforms, as well as on the most popular digital platforms (YouTube, Netflix, and Wikipedia). Furthermore, it is important to remember the number of states in which languages are official, co-official, or majority languages. For example, Chinese is official in five countries or administrations. English, on the other hand, is official in 50 countries worldwide, while Spanish is official in more than 20.

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