

Confluence of Acculturations

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Summary

The confluence of acculturations has been the empirical foundation of human history and the basic principle of the history of languages and cultures in contact (and of linguistic change and language shift) within the acculturation of social groups. There were, therefore, no origins or deaths of languages, just as there was never a final generation of medieval Latin or a first generation of Romance languages, with social and cultural mixing and adaptation to a new sociocultural context. 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. The term acculturation was widely accepted among American anthropologists in the late 19th century to refer to the changes that occurred when social groups with different cultural traditions came together. The anthropological history of languages raises the need for a new history that takes as its starting point the positions adopted by diverse cultures. Our specific hypothesis regarding the Hispanic Romance languages posited a linguistic and cultural continuity, based on the confluence of various historical acculturations (Indo-European, Basque-Iberian, Phoenician -Punic-Greek, Roman, Christian, Germanic, Visigothic, Byzantine, Islamic, Catalan-Aragonese, medieval Castilian, Castilian, and Anglo-Saxon). Basque, Catalan, Galician, and Guarani, as current co-official languages with Spanish, confirm this undeniable anthropological basis, dating back more than twenty-five centuries, and represent the best example of the confluence of acculturations.

Keywords: Confluence of languages and cultures. Acculturation. Confluence of acculturations. *Liber Iudiciorum*. *Lingua franca*. Linguistic change. Language shift. Language planning. Emigration. Social and cultural mixing.

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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 behaviors in relation to the territory it occupied. In particular, 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.

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 E. Haugen, 1953/1969, 1973; 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; Y. Malkiel, 1976; B. J. Imhoff, 1999; F. Gimeno, 1979, 1988b, 2008b, 2019, 2025e).

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 simply one aspect of cultural contact, and language 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 Neogrammatic 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.

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 changes implied ongoing variation, then homogeneous models of linguistic change (Neogrammarian, 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).

2.1. 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. 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.

The confluence of acculturations has been a fundamental characteristic of human history. The first major sociolinguistic investigation into the succession of historical acculturations is now complemented by the confluence of acculturations as the basic principle of the history of languages and cultures in contact, within the acculturation of social groups.

There were, therefore, no origins or deaths of languages, just as there was never a final generation of medieval Latin, nor a first generation of Romance languages, with social and cultural mixing and adaptation to a new sociocultural context (see Y. Malkiel, 1976; H. Lüdtke, 1968, 2005:565-8). 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. The anthropological history of languages raises the need for a new history that takes as its starting point the positions adopted by the various cultures.

2.2. The specific hypothesis regarding Hispanic Romance languages assumed linguistic and cultural continuity, based on the confluence of various historical acculturations (Indo-European, Basque-Iberian, Phoenician-Punic-Greek, Roman, Christian, Germanic, Visigothic, Byzantine, Islamic, Catalan-Aragonese, medieval Castilian, Castilian, and Anglo-Saxon), with linguistic and cultural transfers (see F. Gimeno, 2025a, 2025b, 2026a, 2026b, 2026d). In this respect, this article offers an empirical analysis of three confluences of acculturations within the anthropological history of Spanish in three distinct sociocultural contexts:

- 1) Confluence of acculturations in the Middle Ages.
- 2) Confluence of acculturations in the Castilian language in the Indies.
- 3) Confluence of acculturations in the Spanish of America.

The Basque, Catalan, Galician and Guarani as current co-official languages with Spanish confirm this unquestionable anthropological basis, for more than twenty-five centuries, and represent the best example of the confluence of acculturations (see Y. Malkiel: 1985: 30-40; H. Lüdtke, 1968, 2005: 565-8).

Furthermore, there was no linguistic change 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.

During the second half of the last century, significant contributions were made to historical linguistics, contributions that went largely unrecognized by historians of languages. These contributions have led to major breakthroughs and technical applications in addressing previously decontextualized issues and unexplained phenomena. The only viable solution was the intrinsic relationship between language, society, and culture.

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. Moreover, 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, 1995: 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, 2008a, 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.

2.3. 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.

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 raised 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.

According to these foundations, it has surpassed the descriptive contributions of historical pragmatics, based on the functionalist analysis of stable discursive traditions of written texts (see B. Frank and J. Hartmann, 1997; D. Jacob and J. Kabatek, 2001).

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 various generational and social groups that coexisted in the speech community.

Only in this way could the social history of language be a genuine reality, with the necessary complementarity between homogeneity and heterogeneity. Moreover, both linguistic change and the change underway were neither mechanical nor solely phonologically determined.

2.4. Innovations were ongoing linguistic variations and changes that could only be fully understood and explained in relation to social and cultural factors, and not solely based on linguistic characteristics for their social and cultural justification. Languages were excellent instruments for expression and communication, reflecting the cognitive development of social groups within a speech community.

Linguistic change was never a problem, nor even a complex issue of oral or written traditions, but a process in which the successive generational replacement of different social groups and diverse cultures was directly involved, and the analysis and delimitation of the complex relationships between linguistic variables and

social and cultural factors, as well as the historical, sociological, cultural and legal determinants of the various Romance-speaking communities, was fundamental (see B. Malmberg, 1966: 207-22; H. López Morales, 1989; F. Gimeno, 1995: 27-53, 2019: 343-51).

Faced with a partial diachrony of the various linguistic levels (and even of all of them descriptively) of the Romance languages, we must now adopt an anthropological history of the communicative competencies of successive generations and social groups within the diverse Romance-speaking communities. Qualitative and autonomous descriptions of linguistic change based on the Latin compilation of early medieval Riojan glossaries prevented us from seeing and understanding the social multilingualism of hybrid manuscripts (as well as the implicit standardization of the Romance languages) through the regulation of multiple linguistic variables and factors (social and cultural), as well as the surface variants of the texts (see M. Alvar, 1996; C. García Turza, 2003a, 2003b).

In this sense, synchronic monolingual description techniques were insufficient and inadequate on their own for the analysis of linguistic variation in these manuscripts, and for the study of the sociological, cultural and legal changes that determined the written standardization of the Romance languages. Only in this way have we revised the hypotheses of historical and diachronic functionalist dialectology that prevailed throughout the last century, and we offer new research on the anthropological history of the formation of Hispanic Romance languages.

2.5. A major step forward was the recognition of the succession of diverse historical acculturations. Furthermore, evidence of the confluence of acculturations was an essential characteristic of human history, and the fundamental principle in the history of languages in contact and of linguistic change and replacement was the acculturation of social groups. Therefore, there were no origins or deaths of languages, just as there was never a final generation of medieval Latin or a first generation of Romance languages, with social and cultural mixing and adaptation to a new sociocultural context.

The linguistic awareness of Romance languages arose from Gallo-Romance-Frankish contact in the Frankish kingdom, beginning in the first half of the 8th century. This was fostered by the bilingual Gallo-Romance-Frankish consciousness of a multicultural Romance-Germanic community, less tied to the Latin-Roman tradition. In general, linguistic awareness was less clear and decisive in the Romance context than in the Germanic one, due to the lesser differentiation between Medieval Latin and the Romance languages. The Romance world emerged from Gallo-Romance-Frankish contact in northern Gaul.

The real reason for the transition from the relative unity of colloquial Latin to the plurality of Neo-Latin varieties, according to C. Tagliavini (1949/1969: 363-4), lay in the concomitant influence of the three factors cited by several authors (G. Gröber, C. Merlo and W. von Wartburg): a) the chronological discrepancy of the colonization of the various *provinciae* or regions; b) the difference of the pre-Roman languages, and c) the divergent influences exerted over the centuries by peoples who were superimposed on the different social groups of the Romance-speaking communities.

The formation of the Romance languages and their gradual differentiation were therefore due to multiple causes. As the bonds of unity weakened with the collapse of the Western Roman Empire, in the face of the Germanic peoples' advance, a struggle ensued between the old centripetal force and new centrifugal forces, giving rise to the new Neo-Latin world. Reconstructing the oral record (considerably different from the written record) of the various Romance languages during their early period was sometimes impossible.

The process of written standardization of Hispanic Romance languages responded to an implicit application of linguistic planning, and our working hypothesis proposed two stages (proto-Romance, and ancient and medieval) and five periods with disparate and discontinuous social situations (unstable and stable) (see F. Gimeno, 2019: 233-55, 364-419, 2024b: 74-8).

That is, it comprised a proto-Romance stage (8th century-second half of the 11th century) and two periods (3rd and 5th) of unstable situations with restrictions and revisions to the use of the Romance text, compared to another stage (ancient and medieval) (late 11th century-late 15th century) and two periods (2nd and 4th) of stable situations of normalization, favorable to the use of the Romance text, with the statistical analysis of the written normalization process of the Hispanic Romances

III. Confluence of acculturations in the Middle Ages

The first schools in the Middle Ages were monasteries. Monks were the teachers, and the schools were frequented by future monks and some young nobles. From the 12th century onward, cities took over from the monasteries. The encouragement of monasteries (as centers of colonization) by monarchs became a common historiographical theme, according to which kings had used the possibilities for territorial organization and population control that monasteries offered during the reconquest and repopulation process.

3.1. Between the 8th and 11th centuries, according to J. A. García de Cortázar (2004: 240-6), Visigoth influence and the preservation of Visigoth thought in politics and culture constituted one of the defining characteristics of the developing Hispanic-Christian society. Monasteries were the primary centers for the preservation and dissemination of this influence. In the eastern part of the Iberian Peninsula at the beginning of the 9th century, these centers became the focus of reform efforts by a monk of Visigothic origin, Benedict of Aniane, who had the support of Emperor Louis the Pious to establish the Rule in the monasteries of the Frankish Empire. Thus, Catalan monasteries (and to a lesser extent, Aragonese and Navarrese ones) were compelled to adopt the Rule of Saint Benedict from the 820s onward (see A. M. Barrero, 1993; A. M. Barrero and M. L. Alonso, 1989).

In Western Europe (especially around the Mediterranean), what remained alive in that culture was gradually incorporated into the service of the Church. Christianity, with its Scriptures and Hebrew tradition, its faith and liturgy, could not do without such a rich expression as the one it had received from antiquity, and the debate between the two positions (acceptance or rejection of a pagan culture) was resolved with the acceptance of the Greco-Roman tradition.

Meanwhile, in the western region (from Castile to the Atlantic), the Visigothic monastic rules remained in force. However, probably from the end of the 9th century, the monastic centers of Navarre and Aragon returned to the observance of those rules and to the liturgical practice of the Hispanic rite, as a further sign of their separation from the Carolingian Empire.

Thus, during the 10th century, except for the Catalan counties, the rest of the Iberian Peninsula remained faithful to the tradition established by Visigothic scholars. However, the surviving evidence of this sense of continuity was subject to the vicissitudes of history, resulting in discrepancies between different types of documents. Nevertheless, it was in the eastern territories and the border region between Castile and Navarre that the most explicit evidence of the Hispano-Christian desire to embrace the Hispano-Gothic tradition emerged.

The Albeldense and Emilianense codices were its culminating manifestation, in which the texts that constituted the legal foundations (both ecclesiastical and civil) of the Visigothic kingdom were copied together: the conciliar canons of the *Collectio Canonum* and the *Liber Iudiciorum*. Throughout the Iberian Peninsula, the 711 a850s were characterized by the political and cultural strengthening of the respective structures resulting from the Muslim invasion.

3.2. In early medieval society, although the oral formalization of some legal acts was possible, a written document was necessary to prove ownership of something (e.g., land ownership). Initially, while medieval Latin was the common language, documents were always written in that variety, but later, due to the difficulty of transcribing a spoken Romance language or in regions where another language (such as Basque) was spoken.

Education in the High Middle Ages was linked to the effort to gather and preserve the heritage of Roman antiquity, which found its cultural expression in the Carolingian Renaissance. In contrast to the meager and negative image presented by historical studies of the role of Hispanic culture in the development of European culture, J. García Turza (2000) highlighted the connection between Hispanic cultural transmission and the Carolingian Renaissance, asserting that the period of Visigothic Spain was a time of collecting ancient cultural traditions, as maintained by Visigothic bishops and Irish and Italian monks between the 5th and 8th centuries.

Visigothic Spain was one of the last and most valuable manifestations of ancient culture. The Visigoths experienced a gradual Romanization of their law, and from the religious unification under Catholicism at the Third Council of Toledo (589), Hispania achieved unity in canon law. Likewise, Byzantine influence on the ecclesiastical order should be noted, both directly in the territories occupied in the 6th century and conquered by the Visigothic monarchs, and indirectly through North Africa. From this period and throughout the Early Middle Ages, culture in general and law in particular were the exclusive domain of the Church, which kept the Roman legacy alive in the West through monastic centers.

In legal terms, this legacy owed much to the dissemination of the work of Isidore of Seville, who possessed a vast knowledge of Roman and canon law, as reflected in the *Etymologies* and the *Hispania*, and in his practice attested to at the Second Council of Seville (619). In particular, the *Etymologiae* constituted the most important encyclopedic compilation of ancient and medieval knowledge.

By around 800, it could be found in all the cultural centers of Western Europe, either as imitations or selections, as preserved copies, or simply as references to its presence in libraries (see J. García Turza, 1990, 2013; C. García Turza, 2013a, 2013b; C. García Turza and J. García Turza, 1997, 2000, 2002, 2004; F. Gimeno, 2019: 71-8).

Furthermore, the momentous legacy of Jerome (347-420), disciple of the Greek grammarian Donatus and author of the *Vulgate* (commissioned by Pope Damasus), with his revision of the ancient Greek translation of the *Vetus Latina*, based on the translation of the Hebrew text of the Bible, should be highlighted. On the threshold of the Middle Ages, his figure as a philologist and historian (as well as a hermit and cenobite) came to encapsulate what would become the history of Christian acculturation for the next thousand years: a history of monasteries and codices, texts and scribes, who translated, revised, and constructed a universe in which written standardization maintained a leading role (see J. A. García de Cortázar, 2016; F. Gimeno, 2019: 166-77).

3.3. However, from the second half of the 8th century until the middle of the 12th century, we find hybrid samples and texts (Romance and Medieval Latin), where there was a transition of the varieties involved, in a long process of written normalization of the Hispanic Romance languages.

We had to remember that it was a mere label of a clear process of linguistic transfer between the two varieties (Romance and Medieval Latin, not forgetting sometimes the non-Romance vernacular involved, Basque) that intervened in the multilingual competence of the scribe.

It is true that this research also involved necessary risks, and precautions and safeguards had to be at their maximum, but not to the point that the descriptive and autonomous discussions of linguistic change on the Latin compilation of the early medieval Riojan glossaries prevented us from seeing and understanding the social multilingualism of mixed manuscripts (as well as the implicit planning of the Romance language), through regulating the multiple variables (linguistic, social and cultural) and the superficial variants of the texts (see C. García Turza, 2011; F. Gimeno and C. García Turza, 2010).

The greater Romance tradition of glosses and legal texts and the appearance of the *Oaths of Strasbourg* (842) thus revealed the very antecedents of the acculturation of the history of law in the determination of the sociological and legal function of the Romance languages, which was not due to Christianity, but to the previous acculturation of Roman law, as well as to the existence of a multicultural Romance-Germanic community in the kingdom of the Franks.

3.4. Under King Euric (466-484), the Visigoths began to codify their legal institutions, as previously they had been governed by custom. Later, Leovigild thoroughly revised some of Euric's laws, correcting some, eliminating several superfluous ones, and adding many others that were missing. Leovigild's *Codex Revisus* (573-586) ushered in a new cycle similar to the previous one, with the official validity of a written law of royal origin, based on Roman acculturation. However, its updating became insufficient over time, to the point that a new compilation was necessary. Furthermore, the clear political intent behind the king's actions should be emphasized. Having consolidated his authority internally after the subjugation of Baetica and the Suebian kingdom, he sought to assert his kingdom against the imperial power of Byzantium, which was present in the southeastern Iberian Peninsula. Only two of the codes have survived to the present day, preserved in their entirety along with their corresponding promulgation laws. Therefore, in addition to their content, records have also been kept of their authorship, date, and the circumstances of their creation: the so-called *Lex Romana Visigothorum*, commonly known as *the Breviary of Alaric* (484-507), and the *Liber Iudiciorum* in its various versions.

Both the *Code of Euric* and the *Breviary of Alaric* compiled existing Roman law, but they bore no resemblance to each other in content. The former drew upon the law of practice (i.e., Vulgar Roman law), while the latter was a selection of official legal texts, generally accompanied by their interpretation. The mere difference in content did not seem sufficient reason to researchers to justify the successive creation of these legal texts (and within a relatively short period), nor to explain their possible simultaneous validity, leading to the formulation of various theories.

The new compilation, the *Liber Iudiciorum*, was promulgated by Recceswinth (654), after its revision by the Eighth Council of Toledo. It expressly and exclusively prohibited the application of the laws of other peoples (specifically Roman laws), and ordered judges to act in accordance with its provisions, and failing that, to appeal to the king for a ruling. The orientation of its content reflected the new circumstances of a society undergoing feudalization, in which the old public-based relationships were continually giving way to the emergence of private ties and particular solidarities.

Furthermore, Christianity had a body of doctrine made up of dogmatic and legal norms that bound its faithful, and its expansion experienced from the 4th century (as a result of the confessional freedom decreed by Emperor Constantine) forced it to la Iglesia face its inevitable organic and institutional development, through the establishment of its own legal system made up of provisions emanating from its highest authorities: pontiffs and bishops gathered in ecumenical and provincial councils.

National churches determined the formation of collections, which indiscriminately gathered the canons of one or more councils, along with papal epistles. The *Collectio Canonum*, commonly known as *the Hispana*, was compiled by Isidore of Seville between 633 and 636 and was considered the best of its time. Its significance was similar to the *Liber Iudiciorum* in the secular sphere, and its validity continued throughout the early Middle Ages.

3.5. J. A. García de Cortázar (1969: 119-36) applied his working hypothesis to the study of the monastery of San Millán de la Cogolla, and attributed to its border condition between the kingdom of Navarre and the county of Castile the abundant donations (both Navarrese and Castilian) that the monastery received during the 10th century, which would have served (among other things) to encourage the colonization process in La Rioja, recently occupied by the Christians.

Later, given the growing conviction that the colonizing effort had been developed earlier by peasant communities, J. A. García de Cortázar (1988: 17-54) defined the role of San Millán and other monasteries as that of feudal organizers of a territory that had previously been colonized by peasant communities (see F. García Andreva, 2010a, 2010b).

With regard to Basque-Iberian acculturation in Hispanic Romance languages and mainly in Riojan, the most important transfer was undoubtedly the substitution of the Latin-colloquial vowelism (according to the reconstruction for the late period of Latin) by the calque of the phonological variants of the penta-vocalic system, within the Basque-Romance bilingualism of the different Basque-speaking groups of their speech community, who did not know the oppositions of quantity (see F. Gimeno, 2024d, 2025a, 2025b).

The Basque glosses in the *Glosas Emilianenses* suggested that in a place near San Millán de la Cogolla, in addition to Basque and Riojan, Medieval Latin (as the language of Christian worship and official documents), Occitan (spoken by Frankish immigrants along with its distinct Gascon variety, both used in clearly differentiated official documents), Hebrew, and Mozarabic (spoken by immigrants from the south) coexisted. The Basque-Romance contact thus occurred within a multicultural context of social multilingualism, less tied to Roman acculturation, and the *Glosas Emilianenses* were the work of a single Basque-speaking author.

The Basque presence in the *Glosas Emilianenses* (through the glosses GLEmil [31] *izioqui dugu* and GLEmil [42] *guez ajutuezdugu*) supported the hypothesis of a greater prominence of the Basque language. In fact, the *Glosas Emilianenses* were interpreted as manifestations of Navarro-Aragonese Romance (R. Menéndez Pidal), Navarrese (F. González Ollé), Aragonese (H. J. Wolf), Castilian (M. Carrera de la Red and others), as well as its Riojan variety, because they presented features of all of them. However, the Basque glosses themselves are still inexplicable, and clearly indicative of the native language of the glossator of the *Glosas Emilianenses*.

3.6. Our specific working hypothesis assumed that the Castilian vowel system was a clear example of the confluence of several acculturations (Basque-Iberian, Roman, and Christian). The *Glosas Emilianenses* (950) and *Glosas Silenses* (second half of the 10th century, although Emilian in origin) stood out for their historical, cultural, social, and linguistic relevance, as a consequence of the confluence of Iberian in the vowel systems of Basque and Castilian, and as the first multilingual example of the Hispanic varieties (Basque-Iberian and Castilian Romance).

In the reconstruction of Basque, a system of five oral vowels with three degrees of openness had been observed, without any trace of quantitative opposition. The Riojan vowel system (as well as that of Aragonese and Asturian, which presented a system identical to that of Basque) therefore originated in the Basque-Romance bilingualism of the different social groups within the Basque-speaking community, and not in the vowel system of Hispanic Latin in the Pyrenean region and surrounding areas of Spain.

Furthermore, these Riojan-speaking groups consolidated the Romance diphthongization of the two open tonic vowels of colloquial Latin (*e* and *o*), although this diphthongization existed in other Romance languages, but in none of them did the diphthongs completely replace the two open vowels (see M. T. Echenique, 1983, 2013; F. Gimeno, 2019: 102-7).

However, within the remarkable philological and linguistic production of the Emilian monastery, the prayer (although of indirect modality and expressed with a deprecatory formula) of folio 72r of *Em 60* (misidentified as “glosa 89”) should occupy the center of attention and study of proto-Ibero-Romance

In order to analyze the exceptional role played by the scriptorium of the monastery of San Millán de la Cogolla in providing documents for the study of the processes of formation of the Hispanic Romance languages, C. García Turza (2003b) offered an extensive commentary on the text, which testified to a Riojan variety of the multilingual and multicultural speech community, and corresponded to a joint record of monk and parishioners in the liturgical practice of the Hispanic rite, among which constituted the diasystem of Castilian.

The first written text of the Riojan Romance language, which has been edited most often with considerable textual deficiencies, presented the following paleographic edition: “Cono alutorio. <de> nuest *r* <o> / dueno. dueno *christo*. dueno / salbatore. qual dueno / get ena honore. equal / duenno tienet. ela / mandatjone. cono / patre cono *spiritu sancto* / enos sieculos. delosiecu / los. facanos *deus omnipotens* / tal serbitjo fere. ke / denante ela sua face / gaudioso *segamus*. Amem ”.

It was not a lexical gloss, but a unified discourse (culminating in the prescribed acclamation *amem*, ratifying the prayer) used daily in the monastery. It was, therefore, the first evidence in which a clear intention was shown to reveal the three basic components of the language (syntactic, semantic, and phonological of the oral Romance register), entirely independent of Visigothic Latin.

The three elements that had to be taken into account were: a) The Romance text in its entirety, b) its location on folio 72r, between the end of a homily or discourse by Cesáreo de Arlés and the beginning of another by Saint Augustine, and c) the Latin text that contained that same page (see R. Menéndez Pidal, 1926/1950: 1-9; R. Lapesa, 1942/1981: 154-9; M. C. Díaz, 1978, 1979; S. García Larragueta, 1984; H. J. Wolf, 1991; C. García Turza, 2000, 2003a, 2013a; 2023; J. C. Martín-Iglesias, 2023, M. Pérez, 1985, 2023; M. Torreblanca, 2021; J. F. Domene, 2021; F. Gimeno, 2004, 2006a, 2021, 2024a, 2024b, 2024c, 2025c, 2026b).

IV. Confluence of acculturations of Castilian in the Indies

In his account of the Hispanization of America (from 1492 onward), A. Rosenblat (1963) wrote that the process of Castilian acculturation (begun on October 12, 1492) had not ended after four hundred and seventy years, but understanding the path traveled was important. The Indian or Castilian interpreter represented a first stage, that of approximation.

Undoubtedly, stable forms of coexistence were more important, and of these, three stood out above all: work, miscegenation, and catechization. However, the latter concerned the Admiral from the very beginning, as it appeared as a fundamental condition of Castilian's rights in the papal bulls of Alexander VI (1493), in the Treaty of Tordesillas (June 7, 1494), signed between the representatives of John II of Portugal and those of the Catholic Monarchs, and as the supreme objective in the Instructions of the Catholic Monarchs.

4.1. From his first letters (November 2nd and 12th), Christopher Columbus spoke of Christianization. On November 27th, he announced that he would have members of his household learn the language of the Indians and that efforts would be made to convert all the new settlements to Christianity. The Royal Instructions from the entire early period included the teaching of Castilian Spanish as part of the catechization process.

On Columbus's second voyage, the monarchs sent Friar Boyl, a man they trusted implicitly, for whom they had obtained a papal bull granting extraordinary powers. He was accompanied by other religious figures, tasked with transmitting the tenets of the Catholic faith to the indigenous people in Spanish, "striving to instruct them in it as best as possible."

The Royal Instruction of 1503 stipulated that the Indians be grouped into towns ("to be instructed as free persons, and not as servants") and that each town have a church and a chaplain. The chaplain was to instruct the children and teach them to read and write, to make the sign of the cross and to confess, and prayers were usually taught in Latin (the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary, the Creed, and the Salve Regina).

Castilian was the general instrument of catechization, and it was recorded that Friar Alonso del Espinar, upon returning to Hispaniola (Haiti) in 1512, carried 2,000 primers that had been provided to him by the House of Trade of the Indies.

The teaching of Castilian at that time implied the teaching of Latin: a Royal Decree of 1513 stipulated that the sons of the caciques of Hispaniola should receive instruction in *grammar* (that is, Latin language and literature) from the Bachelor Hernán Xuárez, and for this purpose, twenty copies of Nebrija's *Arte* were given to him. Through various means, a familiar relationship developed between Castilians and Indians, "with their languages mingling," as Peter Martyr said.

4.2. The Castilian acculturation of the Antilles islands was rapid, perhaps too rapid, and so profound that a mixed language did not emerge on any of the islands colonized by the Castilians. It is well known that the Antillean Indian population quickly died out under the new social conditions, decimated by epidemics and diseases against which it had no immunity, or absorbed by the dissolving effect of miscegenation.

In truth, contrary to popular belief, small (entirely Castilianized) indigenous communities still existed until the end of the last century in Cuba and the Dominican Republic, and it is not difficult today to recognize the indigenous heritage in a large part of the Caribbean population. Even in their Castilian, hundreds of words survived, many of which (*maíz, batata, ají, maní, cacique, canoa, piragua, hamaca, huracán, carey, tiburón, tabaco*) enriched the Castilian language. Nevertheless, Castilian acculturation ultimately meant the disappearance of the Caribbean Indian.

In general, the same thing happened along almost the entire American coast and in much of the interior. The impressive diversity of languages and cultures (the so-called linguistic atomization of America) favored the imposition of Castilian, the only truly universal language.

But where small groups of conquerors and Castilian settlers encountered dense indigenous populations with cultural, social, and political cohesion, the relationship between Castilian and indigenous languages was more complex, and the problems that arose in the early days have continued to this day.

Consider the plateau of Mexico and Central America, or that of Perú, Ecuador, and Bolivia. Or, in very special circumstances, the coexistence of Castilian and Guaraní in the lands of Paraguay and in the old Jesuit missions of the Río de la Plata.

The conquest would in fact entail Hispanization, through the political, economic, and legal institutions of the State, and it had to be a slow process. The colonial regime was superimposed on indigenous society, which generally continued to maintain its old structures (Royal Decrees, from 1512 onwards, upheld the privileges of the "natural lords").

But the conquest ultimately had only one religious justification, which always appeared, in all the Instructions, as the supreme goal: to eradicate idolatry, to convert the Indians to Christianity. And this task could not be conceived as a slow undertaking, unfolding over generations, but rather as an immediate and radical one. Conquest and Christianization would be one and the same enterprise.

4.3. However, there was no Hispanic American conquest, but an annexation by virtue of the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494), which in fact implied the confluence of languages and cultures (indigenous and Castilian), through the political, economic and legal institutions of the Crown of Castile.

Furthermore, the confluence of acculturations has been a primary characteristic of the history of Humanity. The first major sociolinguistic investigation into the succession of historical acculturations has now been completed with the confluence of acculturations, as the fundamental principle of the history of languages and cultures in contact (and of linguistic change and language shift), within the acculturation of social groups. Therefore, there were no origins or deaths of languages, but rather social and cultural mixing and adaptation to a new sociocultural context.

The founding of the Church in Hispanic American was undertaken by the mendicant orders. The missionaries understood that this situation could not continue, since it was not feasible to force the indigenous people to become Castilianized through violence, and even less so to wait for them to become Castilianized through the slow process of centuries. It was necessary to go to the mountains, and for the missionaries to learn the indigenous languages as quickly as possible in order to preach to them in their own tongues, hear their confessions and administer the sacraments in their own languages, and to instruct and elevate them to the Christian faith through these languages.

The Castilian language was not essential to being a Christian. Hence the missionary zeal in which Franciscans, Dominicans, and Augustinians (later joined by Jesuits and other orders) competed to learn the indigenous languages.

It was the essential condition for any effective evangelization, and the only way to win the minds and hearts of the Indians. The spiritual power to which the conqueror was thus subordinated generally disregarded the fate of the Castilian language, although it was not a linguistic issue, but a cultural and anthropological one.

4.4. From the very beginning, Friar Bartolomé de Olmedo delivered eloquent sermons, which interpreters translated for the Indians. Throughout this early period, preaching was done through interpreters or by sign language.

When the first Franciscans arrived in Tlaxcala in 1524 and encountered a large crowd of Indians on market day, Friar Mendieta recounted that, since they could not speak to them, "they pointed to the sky with signs (like the mute), wanting to convey that they had come to show them the treasures and wonders that were up there." Confession was necessarily done with the help of interpreters.

The missionaries dedicated themselves to learning indigenous languages as an extension of their religious apostolate. With the master key of language, they had to penetrate the mysterious world of the Indians, learn their customs, understand their mentality, decipher their feelings and thoughts, and describe their history and their lives. Not out of abstract scientific zeal (although a certain Renaissance aspiration for human knowledge could not be entirely ruled out), but to better understand the Indian, to facilitate his catechization, to combat his rites and superstitions and to discover if these were hidden discreetly behind an apparent Christianization.

To know their languages, to study the grammar of those languages, to translate into them the prayers, the sermons, the catechisms, the sacred texts, not for linguistic zeal, incomprehensible at the time, but as an indispensable instrument for the dissemination of the sacred word in new lands, in new souls.

The very early introduction of printing in Mexico (in 1539) by Bishop Fray Juan de Zumárraga, a Franciscan friar, responded to the same evangelizing need, and the oldest known Mexican printed work was indeed a *Breve y más enjundiosa doctrina christiana en lengua mexicana y castellana*.

The first printed work in Lima was also a trilingual doctrine, in Castilian, Quechua, and Aymara. The friars devoted themselves diligently to the linguistic work, which they saw as an urgent necessity.

They combined missionary work with teaching languages to other friars. To this end, they produced textbooks, vocabulary, doctrines, confessionals, and translated gospels, epistles, sermons, homilies, and lives of saints. Even parish registers and tribute books were written in indigenous languages.

4.5. Most of the monks in New Castilian learned Nahuatl. Others learned Mixtec, Zapotec, Huastec, Chontal, Otomi, Totonac, Tarascan, etc. The Dominicans dedicated themselves to this work, encouraged by their Pope Pius V. Among the Augustinians, the study of languages was obligatory, and the congregation practiced ten different languages in Mexico.

The Franciscans had a group of notable linguists. It is said that Friar Andrés de Olmos preached in ten languages (at least, he left grammars of Totonac, Tepehua, Huastec, and Nahuatl, the latter considered the best of its time). Speaking three languages was quite common.

The diversity of indigenous languages frustrated the religious orders, who saw it as an obstacle to their work. They quickly understood the need to adopt an auxiliary language, and between the Castilian of the colonists

(spoken by few) and the Nahuatl of the indigenous people (spoken by the majority), which had become a kind of *lingua franca* of the Aztec Empire, they chose Nahuatl.

On September 30, 1558, Viceroy Don Luis de Velasco addressed King Philip II, informing him that Friar Francisco de Toral, provincial of the Franciscans, who had just visited New Galicia, requested that a college be founded in Guadalajara to gather young people from different regions and teach Nahuatl to all the Indians.

The Augustinians, who initially used different languages (in church they gathered the Indians by language, and different friars delivered the sermon to them simultaneously), also tried to incorporate all the Indians into the dominant language, called from the beginning, with varying degrees of justification, "the general language." The same thing happened in Perú.

4.6. Philip II enshrined the term in his Royal Decree of September 19, 1580, and ordered that in the universities of Lima and Mexico and in the cities where there was a Royal Audiencia, chairs of the "general language of the Indians" be established, and that the prelates of the Indies should not ordain a priest or give a license to a cleric or religious who did not know "the general language" of the Indians of the province.

The monks devoted themselves so ardently to spreading "the general language" that by 1584 Nahuatl was spoken from Zacatecas to Nicaragua. Thus arose the paradoxical situation that under Castilian rule it achieved an expansion it had not seen during the height of the Aztec Empire, and this was thanks to the work of the Castilian missionaries.

Quechua also reached its greatest expansion and new laurels (theatrical and poetic) under Castilian rule. Aymara gradually lost its status as a "general language," and at its expense, and at the expense of other languages, Quechua spread throughout various parts of Perú. Similarly, missionaries propagated Cuzco Quechua, from the 16th century onward, throughout much of Ecuador, southern Colombia, and the Upper Amazon.

The same thing happened with the Muisca or Chibcha language of the Colombian plateau (in 1619, the *Gramática en la lengua general del Nuevo Reino llamado mosca*, by F. Bernardo de Lugo, was published in Madrid), and later with the Tupi-Guarani of the Jesuit missions, which became the general language of Paraguay, much of the Río de la Plata coast, Rio Grande do Sul, and much of Brazil.

4.7. There was a certain resistance on the part of the Indians, deliberate or unconscious, to learning the Castilian language. There was also a greater affinity between their language and the general indigenous language. But, above all, the Indians learned another indigenous language more easily because they learned it through direct contact with other Indians.

In any case, the common language brought the Indians out of the isolation of their tribes and incorporated them into a larger community, one more receptive to Castilian acculturation. However, it should not be assumed that the missionaries abandoned or neglected the indigenous languages, which continued to be cultivated until the 18th century.

Latin was being taught throughout the Americas as part of religious instruction. By the early 17th century, the Jesuits at the Caxica mission in New Granada had instructed more than forty boys who could read Romance languages and Latin, and who celebrated Mass, sang, and prayed in both Castilian and indigenous languages.

From the earliest times, there were eminent Indians who were incorporated into Castilian acculturation: Hernando de Alvarado Tezozómoc, descendant of the kings of Mexico (grandson of Moctezuma), author of a *Mexican Chronicle*, in a Castilian that was sometimes halting or incorrect, but always agile and colorful.

And in Perú, the Inca Titu Cusi Yupanqui, baptized with the name Diego de Castro, and others, were testaments to Castilian acculturation (perfect in some cases, imperfect in others) from the very beginning among privileged sectors. But most of the population retained their indigenous language.

4.8. However, there was something more important. Given the initial results on Hispaniola, the monarchs recommended to the authorities that the indigenous people be concentrated in villages or kept in their existing towns. This was a concern shared by missionaries throughout the continent, and they had the support of viceroys, captains general, and bishops.

The grouping in villages favored indoctrination, and material protection (agriculture and garden crops, livestock and poultry farming, artisan activity) and health care (creation of indigenous hospitals).

The legislation prohibited the entry of Castilians, Black people, mulattos, and mestizos into these communities, thus creating a barrier between Castilians and Indigenous people. The friars preferred to keep the Indigenous people in their communities and protect them from harmful and disintegrating contact with the rest of the population. And to defend them, they faced persecution, slander, hatred, and imprisonment.

This did not mean ignoring Castilian acculturation, and this concern was also widespread among the secular clergy in various parts of América. Among the reasons that motivated the Council of the Indies, the fear that indoctrination would fall into the hands of Creoles and mestizos (due to their greater fluency in the indigenous languages), who were not, in their view, the most suitable for this task, was not insignificant.

4.9. In this vein, the Council drafted the Royal Decree of July 3, 1596, which was incorporated into the *Recopilación de leyes de Indias* and became the doctrine of the Castilian monarchy until 1770 (a triumph of theologians over jurists). A series of documents and memorials proved that the results were meager. The missionaries were few and could not dedicate themselves to such a vast undertaking as teaching Castilian to the dispersed indigenous population.

The difficulties seemed insurmountable, and new times were approaching to confront them. The first sign was the expulsion of the Jesuits. They had begun their American journey at the end of the 16th century (1568-1572). The 17th century was one of broad Jesuit expansion, but in the 18th century, a new spirit, hostile to them, spread throughout Europe and burst into Spain with the Bourbon Kings.

Education was becoming secularized and transformed into a national enterprise, under the control of the State. There was talk of reforming teaching methods and promoting the Castilian language (even at the expense of Latin). Suddenly, in 1767, more than 2,600 members of the Society of Jesus were forcibly removed from their offices and schools throughout the American territories. This was the first major measure taken by the Castilian State against indigenous languages.

4.10. The reaction quickly took on a more specific character. The initiative came from Mexico, spearheaded by Archbishop F.A. Lorenzana, who later became Cardinal of Toledo and Inquisitor General of the Iberian Peninsula. On June 25, 1769, this archbishop addressed King Charles III, explaining the impossibility of teaching the natives Christian doctrine due to their lack of interest in learning the Castilian language. Had the Indians been taught our language from the beginning of the annexation, it would have become widespread in less than half a century.

He maintained that it was a mistake to think that parish priests should be fluent in the language of every indigenous group in the Americas, since the bishops, "the first shepherds," did not understand them. He argued that neither he nor his predecessors had considered giving preference in parishes to priests who knew foreign languages. And that if only Nahuatl were spoken in his diocese, it would be understandable to provide priests who spoke that language, but if there were also several other languages, it would create chaos.

The archbishop distinguished between the Castilian and indigenous clergy, and the latter, when he knew the native language, always spoke in it, looking down on Castilian. He taught doctrine in his own language, often with errors, "because it was very difficult or almost impossible to explain the dogmas of our holy Catholic faith well in another language."

And it so happened that a clergyman of lesser merit, of humble birth and perhaps of worse character, obtained, simply by knowing a language, a parish "that should have been the prize of a more distinguished individual." And that priests who spoke Spanish had managed in just a few years to get the Indians to confess and learn Christian doctrine in Castilian.

4.11. Undoubtedly, his arguments impressed Charles III, who ordered that all the background information on the matter be gathered. He also considered the letter from the Viceroy of México, the Marquis de Croix, dated June 27, 1769, and a report from the prosecutors of the Indies, dated February 17, 1770.

And he issued his famous Royal Decree of Aranjuez on May 10, 1770. He ordered all the royal and ecclesiastical authorities of his dominions in América and the Philippines "to ensure that the different languages used in these dominions are extinguished and only Castilian is spoken."

Absolutism, as represented by Philip II, had been liberal regarding language: "it did not seem appropriate to compel them to abandon their indigenous language." "Liberalism," as represented by Charles III, was absolutist regarding language: "let the different languages become extinct and only Castilian be spoken."

The ideals of the Enlightenment imposed the "enlightenment" of the Castilian language upon the indigenous people with absolute rigor. It was the triumph of jurists over theologians. The political imperatives of the State were gaining ground against the old missionary, catechizing approach. And they were presented as an aspiration for unity: one weight, one measure, one currency, one language.

The Royal Decree of Charles III, supplemented by another of November 5, 1782, addressed to the civil and ecclesiastical authorities of the Indies, for the provision of teachers to teach Castilian in the indigenous villages, was as illusory as its predecessors. Castilian power lacked the resources for such violent and radical Castilianization.

How could schools in the 18th century accomplish such a task? They did, however, manage to disrupt the teaching of Indigenous languages, prevent the printing of books in these languages, suppress Indigenous culture as a public activity, and relegate it to the shadows. Chairs of Indigenous languages disappeared from universities, and their reestablishment in our time has been a difficult process, requiring considerable effort and the emergence of new (anthropological and sociolinguistic) interests.

4.12. There were not a lack of opposing voices (that of Friar Pedro José Parras, in his *Gobierno de los regulares de América*, Madrid, 1733), who considered such a violent Castilianization impossible and even harmful (not even in the Peninsula had it been possible to get the Galicians, Biscayans, Catalans and Valencians to abandon their own language).

The colonial authorities (Audiencias, governors and cabildos) adopted repressive measures and tried to eradicate indigenous languages and even prohibit their use by the owners of haciendas and country houses, fathers and mothers and even children.

This did not achieve Castilianization. The independent republics inherited large segments of the population who lived on the margins of public life, and the vast majority of whom neither spoke nor understood the Castilian language.

In 1810, the Hispano-American territories comprised approximately three million white Castilians and Creoles, many of them of mixed ancestry, scattered throughout the continent, and about nine million Indigenous people, concentrated in large rural areas. In open reaction, the Creole authorities proclaimed the emancipation of the Indigenous population in manifestos printed in the Indigenous languages themselves.

Now we can ask ourselves if the missionary policy and linguistic liberalism of the Monarchy were a mistake, as the royal advisors themselves believed, as the jurists (Matienzo or Solórzano Pereira) maintained, as the Enlightenment believed and as many still believe today.

It is important to have a clear understanding of the problem. Cortés entered Mexico with 607 men, and with those who joined him, his force grew to 1,141, immersed in a population estimated at four and a half million inhabitants (some say ten or fifteen million). Was it possible to expect rapid Castilianization through schooling? Clearly, under those circumstances, schooling had to be slow, weak, and even illusory.

4.13. Undoubtedly, the Castilianizing effect of miscegenation was even more effective. The colonization of the vast American continent by small groups of settlers from the Iberian Peninsula would have been entirely impossible without the immediate formation of a dynamic generation of mestizos who participated in the annexation and settlement of new lands, formed the initial core of the new cities, and served as a bridge to the vast and sometimes distant indigenous population. Without them, Castilianization would not have been possible either.

In 1810, the indigenous population constituted, at least in México, Guatemala, Perú, Ecuador, and Bolivia, most of the population. When Castilian rule, which had ensured a constant influx of new Castilian contingents throughout the colonial period, came to an end, many believed (especially in the case of Mexico) that a gradual and widespread acculturation of the indigenous population would occur.

Analysis of the data over these 150 years revealed the opposite. In 1810, there were approximately 1,230,000 whites, 1,800,000 mestizos, and 3,700,000 indigenous people in México. By 1960, there were only three million speakers of indigenous languages in México (two million of whom were bilingual), out of a population of 35 million.

It was clear that Castilian acculturation was occurring not through the school system, which played a complementary role and had a far greater reach, but rather through the overwhelming force of demographic and social development. Castilian acculturation was thus both gradual and rapid.

4.14. The indigenous problem was not fundamentally a problem of language, but a serious social, cultural, and economic problem. The extent of their mixed heritage (in the mid-20th century) was determined by their acculturation with Castilian. In 1960, there were an estimated 15 million indigenous people throughout Hispano-American, and less than half of them spoke their indigenous languages, and certainly less than a third (five million) did not know Castilian.

Hispano-American was not a mosaic of languages and dialects, and its extreme fragmentation was fundamentally detrimental, except for the spread of Quechua (in Argentina, Bolivia, Perú, Ecuador, and as far south as Colombia) and Guaraní. Quechua was the most widely spoken indigenous language in Hispano-American, with some six million speakers, who were otherwise very culturally distinct, and of whom four million also spoke Castilian.

The current, and quite plausible, trend of educating Indians in their own language and teaching them to read in their indigenous language (started in Mexico and spread to the jungle of Perú), meant that the Indian learned to read in Castellano very early on and paradoxically favored his Castilian acculturation.

However, the Castilian language did not become dominant throughout Hispano-American, and there was no complete language shift of indigenous languages. Instead, there was a significant confluence of cultures resulting from social and cultural diffusion, with linguistic and cultural transfers that led to the social and cultural mixing of social groups. This also reflected the intrinsic relationship between language, society, and culture.

4.15. The case of Paraguay is unique in Hispano-American: the entire country speaks Guaraní. There are no longer any indigenous people (except for about 40,000 living in the jungle). Such an astonishing fact was attributed to

the work of the old Jesuit missions. The Jesuits won over the indigenous people by preaching in Guaraní: by 1750 they had 30 settlements (*reducciones*), with about 150,000 indigenous people.

It was a closed world (some even spoke of the Jesuit Kingdom of Paraguay), which was often in conflict, even waging bloody battles, with the authorities in Asunción. The missions lived like this for about 150 years, until 1767, peacefully governed by a small number of religious men (never reaching 500, including those who ran the houses and schools in the cities).

Civil authorities violently reproached them for keeping the Indians outside the bounds of Castilian law. Undoubtedly, the Jesuits contributed to the maintenance of the Guaraní language in Paraguay (although most of their missions and their indigenous people were under the jurisdiction of Buenos Aires, and a significant portion were also in Brazil and Santa Cruz de la Sierra).

But the spread of Guaraní throughout Paraguay (including Asunción, so hostile to the missions) was due to the unique nature of indigenous acculturation. This was also greatly aided by the country's near-complete isolation throughout the 19th and part of the 20th centuries, its location in the heart of the continent, and its very limited immigration.

However, that may be, today everyone speaks Guaraní, even the children of immigrants, a Guaraní that is quite influenced by Castilian. And almost everyone speaks a Castilian that is to some extent indigenous. Guaraní is the second official language, but Spanish prevails in school and university education and in public life. And it is undoubtedly the link that unites Paraguay with the community of Hispanic American countries.

4.16. The current world is part of an economic, social, cultural and political globalization, and for the 18 states that have Spanish as an official language and another 4 states as a co-official language, the relevance lies in being an active part of a linguistic community that has 630 million Spanish speakers, behind Hindi/Urdu, Chinese and global English (see F. Gimeno, 2023 b, 2023c, 2026c).

Castilian acculturation, once slow, is now occurring at a dizzying pace. The penetration of Castilian in recent generations had a depth that had astonished geographers and travelers, and was reflected in the indigenous languages themselves, showing a growing Castilianization.

However, since 1492, indigenous acculturation has incorporated a series of elements into the Spanish of the Americas: intonation, articulatory features, suffixes, names of flora and fauna and of material and spiritual life, as well as the fundamental chapter of its anthropological history. In bilingual regions, this event includes syntactic-semantic transfers.

Its study and analysis constitute one of the most fascinating chapters in Hispano-American linguistics. Nowhere in Hispano-American has a creole language emerged, like those that French has given rise to in Haiti, Portuguese to in Curaçao, or English to in Guyana. Not only is Hispano-American deeply Castilianized, but it is becoming today (in the case of Argentina and México) the most powerful field of Hispanization in the world.

V. Confluence of acculturations in the Spanish of América

According to the *Anuario del Instituto Cervantes* (2023), the United States will be the second largest Spanish-speaking country in the world by 2060, after México. 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.

5.1. Hispanics are by far the largest minority group in the United States. According to estimates by 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.

Over the past five decades, the Hispanic population has increased 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 relative weight after Hispanic.

Although the presence of the Hispanic population has been a constant in the history of the United States, especially in the southwest of the country, its growth was favored after the approval, in 1965, of the immigration and nationality act, which eliminated the quotas assigned to each country, and in practice favored a migratory flow from Latin America and the Caribbean.

However, the strong expansion experienced by the Hispanic community since 1970 was beginning 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 the largest relative increase of 74%, the period of greatest growth for this community. In fact, the growth rate of the Asian population since 2010 has been higher than that of the Hispanic population.

5.2. Another factor that has changed substantially since the 1970s is their geographic distribution. Although the largest Latino presence was still in the southwestern states, the last few decades have seen a progressive process of geographic dispersion that has been especially intense toward the northwest and the large cities on the east coast.

In absolute terms, the growth of this community was still most intense in states that already had a significant Hispanic population, such as Texas, California, and Florida, but in relative terms, it is currently greater in those 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 country's total 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 the number of those born outside the country.

According to the Census Bureau, in 2021, 55% of Spanish speakers were born in the United States, up from 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 status. Overall, 73.3% of Spanish speakers are full-fledged U.S. citizens.

5.3. 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 United States.

While being Hispanic does not automatically guarantee fluency in Spanish, the correlation between the two is very high. 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-speaking Americans were born in the country, has negatively impacted the rate of Spanish preservation from one generation to another, which nevertheless remains relatively high: 47% of third-generation Hispanics claim to speak 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 state that Spanish is their primary language, compared to 8% of second-generation adults, and 1% of third generation and subsequent generations.

However, this loss is much less pronounced if 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.

5.4. The economic power of Spanish lies in its figures. *El español en el mundo. Anuario del Instituto Cervantes (2023)* reports that some 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 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 will be studying Spanish as a foreign language in 2023. 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 business.

If we consider 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, it would be 9.77%, some \$13

trillion in 2022, and the per capita income of Spanish speakers would reach \$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 states in which languages are official, co-official, or majority languages. Thus, for example, Chinese is official in five countries or administrations. English, on the other hand, appears in 50 countries worldwide, while Spanish is official in more than 20 (see J. A. Alonso, J. C. Jiménez and J. L. García Delgado, 2022; F. Gimeno, 2023a, 2023b).

5.5. Furthermore, the *Anuario del Instituto Cervantes (2025)*, which examines the demographics of Spanish worldwide in 2025, indicates the consolidation of a potential speaker community of over 630 million, and the surpassing of 500 million native speakers for the first time in history. 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 Hispano-American countries remains above 90%, as it has in previous years. However, when considering 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.

From a demographic perspective, it is interesting to note how the current rate of population growth has been gradually decreasing. Across 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 experiencing a slowdown in population growth.

5.6. Economic globalization is not a new phenomenon in human history, as something similar occurred in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and its origins can be traced back to 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.

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

J. Maurais and M.A. Moris (2003) highlighted the importance of supranational (or supraregional) integration for the future of languages and suggested how comparisons 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, supraregionalism, and languages, but they also differed significantly in their linguistic dynamics. The European Union and MERCOSUR incorporated language policies 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 the spread of English, by the technological resources of machine translation, or by the mandatory teaching of two foreign languages, has nothing to do with reality. It is a fallacy. Neither utopian universal multilingualism nor the monolingualism of the hegemonic world can satisfy our needs for social communication and cultural identities.

5.7. Based on both economic and demographic evolution, as well as the potential for language replacement. D. Graddol (1997: 59) offered a report sponsored by the British Council on the hierarchy of languages in the year 2050, and established the following classification: a) Major languages (Chinese, Hindi/Urdu, English, Spanish and Arabic); b) regional languages of the major trading blocs (Arabic, Malay, Chinese, English, Russian and Spanish); c) national languages (around 90 languages used by more than 220 nation-states); and d) local languages (the remaining 1000 or so 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 replacements of languages, 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 substitution and acculturation) offered a special contribution, since both the history of language substitution and linguistic change were part of acculturation, stemming from social and cultural diffusion, with social and cultural mixing. Thus, for example, "Spanglish" is a clear example of Anglo-Saxon acculturation, and not of the replacement of the vernacular Spanish of Hispanic immigrants in the United States (mainly Mexicans from the Southwest and Puerto Ricans from New York) by American Standard English (see H. López Morales, 1983, 1989, 1998, 2008, 2012, (coord.) (2008); 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 preservation 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 entity most sensitive to linguistic diversity and the only public body that has adopted the principle of comprehensive multilingualism) has recommended that the governments of the member states provide minority languages with an appropriate legal status, integrating the fields of education, culture, justice and public administration, social media, toponymy and other sectors of public and cultural life.

5.8. 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 accounts for 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 would not obscure the reality of internal acculturation between the predominant national languages and the subordinate indigenous languages, as the most important 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 the strengthening of indigenous languages in Latin America (through literacy 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, 2025b).

VI. Conclusions

1. The confluence of acculturations has been a fundamental characteristic of human history. The first major sociolinguistic investigation into the succession of historical acculturations is now complemented by the confluence of acculturations as the basic principle of the history of languages and cultures in contact (and of linguistic change and language shift) within the acculturation of social groups. There were, therefore, no origins

or deaths of languages, just as there was never a final generation of medieval Latin or a first generation of Romance languages, with social and cultural mixing and adaptation to a new sociocultural context. The anthropological history of languages raises the need for a new history that takes as its starting point the positions adopted by diverse cultures.

2. Our specific hypothesis regarding Hispanic Romance languages assumed a linguistic and cultural continuity, based on the confluence of various historical acculturations (Indo-European, Basque-Iberian, Phoenician-Punic-Greek, Roman, Christian, Germanic, Visigothic, Byzantine, Islamic, Catalan-Aragonese, medieval Castilian, Castilian, and Anglo-Saxon). In this respect, this article offers an empirical analysis of three confluences of acculturations within the anthropological history of Spanish in three distinct sociocultural contexts: a) the confluence of acculturations in the Middle Ages; b) the confluence of acculturations of Castilian in the Indies; and c) the confluence of acculturations in the Spanish of the Americas. Basque, Catalan, Galician, and Guarani, as current co-official languages with Spanish, confirm this undeniable anthropological basis, dating back more than twenty-five centuries, and represent the best example of the confluence of acculturations.

3. Visigothic Spain was one of the last and most valuable manifestations of ancient culture. The Visigoths experienced a gradual Romanization of their law, and from the religious unification under Catholicism at the Third Council of Toledo (589), Hispania achieved unity in canon law. Likewise, in legal matters, this legacy owed much to the dissemination of the work of Isidore of Seville. His *Etymologiae* constituted the most important encyclopedic compilation of ancient and medieval knowledge. By around 800, copies could be found in all the cultural centers of Western Europe. Furthermore, the transcendental legacy of Jerome (347-420) should be highlighted. On the threshold of the Middle Ages, his figure as a philologist and historian (as well as a hermit and cenobite) came to summarize what would be the history of Christian acculturation for the next thousand years: a history of monasteries and codices, texts and copyists, who translated, revised and built a universe in which written standardization permanently maintained a leading role.

4. The profound impact of Roman acculturation was well known, as it shaped the Italic group (within the Indo-European family) and formed the basis of the Romance languages. While the model was not Classical Latin and the written register, but rather the oral register, this influence manifested itself in both vocabulary and surface structure (morphological and phonological). The term *Lengua románica* was the literal translation of the Latin term *lingua romana*, which appeared in the second paragraph of Canon 17 of the Council of Tours (813). This canon recommended that priests preach in the oral register (the vernacular Romance language) so that they could be understood by the faithful. However, this was not the "birth certificate" of the Romance languages. Rather, the Church became bilingual, and it was the bearer of literary Latin as well as the vernacular Romance languages. The clergy who committed their sermons to writing in the vernacular gave these vernacular languages their first standardization.

5. The annexation of Hispano-American by virtue of the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494) effectively entailed Castilian acculturation through the political, economic, and legal institutions of the State, and this process was slow. The need to adapt the State's principles and norms to a different reality led to the formation of a distinct legal system for the Indies, to regulate the many situations not covered by the existing treaty. The anthropological history of Castilian in the Indies raises the need for a new history that takes as its starting point the positions adopted by the diverse cultures. Our specific working hypothesis assumed that the confluence of languages in the Indies was a clear example of the various acculturations (indigenous and Castilian).

6. There was no linguistic replacement of indigenous languages, but rather a confluence of acculturations (indigenous and Castilian), with social and cultural mixing. Guarani, as a current co-official language with Spanish in Paraguay, represents the best example of this confluence of acculturations and has confirmed the working hypothesis. The incidental nature of the incorporation of the Indies into the Crown of Castile, by virtue of the donation from Pope Alexander VI to the Catholic Monarchs and their successors in the kingdoms of León and Castile of the lands discovered and yet to be discovered, determined that their legal configuration and organization were not carried out through the creation of a new legal system, but rather through the transplantation of the Castilian legal system. The need to adapt the principles and norms of this system to a different reality gave rise to the formation of a specific law for the Indies (*el indiano*), for the regulation of the many situations not covered by the former.

7. Modern Caribbean Spanish (after five centuries of adaptations, adoptions, and influences) exhibited dialectal characteristics that allowed it to be described as an insular Caribbean variety, with an Andalusian-Canarian base, spoken in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico. Although the historical trajectory of these three territories has differed since the 20th century, and despite Puerto Rico's special political situation, Spanish is the mother tongue in all three countries, conditioned by the indigenous acculturation specific to each, and without having produced the development of any creole language, in the manner of French-based *creoles* (Haiti, Martinique) or Anglo-Saxon-based creoles (English-speaking Virgin Islands).

8. The missionaries dedicated themselves to learning indigenous languages as an extension of their religious apostolate. With the master key of language, they had to penetrate indigenous acculturation, learn their

customs, understand their mentality, decipher their feelings and thoughts, and describe their history and their lives. This was not driven by an abstract scientific zeal, but rather by the desire to better understand the indigenous people, to facilitate their catechization, to combat their rites and superstitions, and to discover if these were subtly concealed behind an apparent Christianization. The very early introduction of printing to Mexico (in 1539) by Bishop Fray Juan de Zumárraga, a Franciscan friar, responded to the same evangelizing need, and the oldest known Mexican printed work was indeed a *Breve y más enjundiosa doctrina christiana en lengua mexicana y castellana*.

9. Hispano-American was not a mosaic of languages and dialects, and its extreme fragmentation was fundamentally detrimental, except for the spread of Quechua (in Argentina, Bolivia, Perú, Ecuador, and as far south as Colombia) and Guaraní. Quechua was the most widely spoken indigenous language in Hispano-American, with some six million speakers, who were also highly differentiated dialectally, and of whom four million also spoke Spanish. The current, and quite commendable, trend of educating indigenous people in their own languages and teaching them to read in their native tongues (a trend that began in México and spread to the Peruvian jungle) meant that indigenous people learned to read Castilian very early on, paradoxically facilitating their acculturation to Castilian.

10. The case of Paraguay is unique in Latin America, since the entire country speaks Guaraní. There are no longer any indigenous people (except for some 40,000 living in the jungle). This astonishing fact was attributed to the work of the old Jesuit missions. The Jesuits won over the indigenous people by preaching to them in Guaraní: by 1750, they had 30 towns with some 150,000 indigenous inhabitants. It was a closed world (some even spoke of the Jesuit Kingdom of Paraguay), which was often in conflict, even engaging in bloody battles, with the authorities in Asunción. The missions operated in this way for about 150 years, until 1767, peacefully governed by a small number of religious figures. Guaraní is the second official language, but Spanish prevails in schools and universities and in public life. And it is undoubtedly the link that unites Paraguay with the community of Hispano-American countries. The world today is moving towards universality, and for the 18 states that have Spanish as an official language and another 4 states as a co-official language, universality consists of being an active part of a linguistic community that has 630 million speakers.

11. Hispanics are the largest minority group in the United States. According to estimates by 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.

12. 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 México, 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 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%).

13. The economic power of Spanish lies in its figures. The *Anuario del Instituto Cervantes* (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 their relative share 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.

14. 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 business. If we consider all Spanish speakers, they represent slightly more than 6% of the world's population, but this group has a purchasing power of around 10% of global GDP. Specifically, it would be 9.77%, some 13 trillion dollars in 2022, and the per capita income of Spanish speakers would amount to 22,481 dollars, 131% higher than the world average.

15. Approximately 395 million speakers have internet access, and around 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 consider the number of countries where 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, is official in 50 countries worldwide, while Spanish is official in more than 20.

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