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### Embracing Diversity for the Sake of Unity: Linguistic Hegemony and the Pursuit of Total Spanish

José del Valle  
*CUNY Graduate Center*

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# **Discourses of Endangerment**

**Ideology and Interest in the  
Defence of Languages**

**Edited by Alexandre Duchêne and  
Monica Heller**



continuum

# 12 Embracing diversity for the sake of unity: Linguistic hegemony and the pursuit of total Spanish

José del Valle

'Hay que preservar la unidad del español porque corre peligro'  
['We must protect the unity of Spanish because it is in danger']  
(Santiago de Mora-Figueroa, Marquis of Tamarón and Director of  
the Cervantes Institute between 1996 and 1999, quoted in EL PAÍS,  
24 May 1996).

## Introduction

A brief survey of academic discussions and public debates on language in the Spanish-speaking world reveals that endangerment and diversity have been and continue to be prominent linguistic themes (Rama 1982; Caballero Wanguemert 1989; del Valle and Gabriel-Stheeman 2002a, 2002b). On the one hand, especially in recent decades, we find voices that present Spanish as a powerful homogenizing force that threatens to erase linguistic and cultural diversity<sup>1</sup>; on the other, we also come across discourses of endangerment in which, conversely, it is the quality, status and, as the epigraph to this essay indicates, unity of Spanish that is felt to be under threat (e.g. Grijelmo 1998; Lodaes 2000).

Deborah Cameron has argued that verbal hygiene – the impulse to 'meddle in matters of language' (1995: vii), by defining its nature, by suggesting ways of cleaning or improving it, and by attempting to regulate and control it – is a natural component of the linguistic life of any human society, and it is often deployed as a response to not only linguistic but also, and most importantly, non-linguistic concerns. Consequently, we are not surprised to find that a territory as vast as

the Spanish-speaking world – that such a varied assembly of cultural, social and economic concerns – has yielded an equally complex set of discourses on language in which the notions of endangerment and diversity are variously defined and forms of verbal hygiene differently instrumentalized (Kroskrity 2000: 12).

In this chapter, I will focus on a particular kind of discourse that, emerging from within Spain's language policy agencies and in response to concerns about the possible fragmentation of Spanish, espouses not the elimination but the enthusiastic embrace of intralingual diversity. On the basis of previous research on the topic (del Valle and Gabriel-Stheeman 2002a, 2002b, 2004; del Valle 2005; del Valle and Villa forthcoming), I will approach these fears of fragmentation, affirmations of unity and celebrations of internal diversity as discursive sites where anxieties over Spain's desire to build a privileged economic and political relationship with Latin America are worked out. While these desires and anxieties are not new (they can in fact be traced back to the period following the independence of most of Spain's American colonies after 1810 and Cuba and Puerto Rico's in 1898), here I will concentrate on their most recent manifestation after the 1990s, in the context of Spain's economic take-off and the subsequent landing of Spain-based corporations in Latin America (Bonet and de Gregorio 1999; Casilda Béjar 2001). Under these new conditions, Spanish governments in collaboration with the business sector (e.g. Telefónica, PRISA, Iberdrola, Banco de Santander, Repsol) and with the complicity of certain sectors of Latin America's societies have mobilized cultural and linguistic institutions (the Spanish Royal Academy and the Cervantes Institute)<sup>2</sup> in order to promote a conceptualization of the Spanish-speaking community that will secure it as a market where the presence of Spanish capital is felt to be both natural and legitimate.

Against this cultural and economic *land-guage-scape*, in this chapter I will analyse the ideological bases of the Spanish Royal Academy's main policy lines in the contemporary construction of the *hispanofonía*: first, the pursuit of a pan-hispanic policy through the creation of a seemingly consensual discursive space in which all Spanish-speaking nations supposedly converge on equal terms, and second, the embrace of intralingual diversity as the political and theoretical foundation of linguistic and cultural unity. In my analysis, I will rely mainly on three theoretical concepts whose relevance will be justified in due course: Jürgen Habermas' notion of public sphere (Habermas 1991), Richard Watts' analysis of discourse communities (Watts 1999), and Antonio Gramsci's elaboration of hegemony (Williams 1977; Gramsci 1991).

## Hispanofonía and its discontents

As mentioned above, Spain's efforts to engage in post-colonial community-building with Latin America can actually be traced back to the nineteenth century and to the development of *hispanismo*. While this cultural trend was mostly discursive, it also materialized in the form of a number of cultural initiatives that included congresses and symposia (such as the Ibero-American congresses of 1892 and 1900 organized by the *Unión Ibero-Americana*) as well as journals (such as *La Ilustración Ibérica*, *La Revista Española de Ambos Mundos*, and *La Ilustración Española y Americana*) (Fogelquist 1968; Pike 1971). *Hispanismo* was grounded in the belief that a common Spanish culture embodied in the Spanish language existed on both sides of the Atlantic and was the basis for an economically and politically operative entity, for a true *hispanofonía*. In my use of the term, *hispanofonía* is not an objective fact, a group of nations, a network of interaction threaded by a shared communicative code; it is rather, following Anderson's (1983) notion, an imagined community grounded in a common language, itself imagined, that ties together in an emotional bond those who feel they possess it and those who have a sense of loyalty to it (del Valle 2005). It is, therefore, according to Gal and Woolard's definition of the term (2001), a language ideology, a historically situated conception of Spanish as an enactment of a collective order in which Spain performs a central role.

The explicit defence of unity that constitutes the core of *hispanismo* emerged in part as a response to a number of centrifugal forces that challenged Spain's own nation-building demands: on the one hand, the threat posed to Spain's integrity by nationalist movements emerging in the Basque Country, Catalonia and Galicia; and on the other, its loss of prestige and influence in Latin America (especially after Spain's defeat in the Spanish-American war of 1898), where the former colonies were now engaged in their own nation-building projects, managing the linguistic, cultural and social specificity of their territory and facing the North American colossus' moves towards regional hegemony. Thus, against these fragmentationist challenges, *hispanismo* offered, first, a proud affirmation and embrace of the national signs of identity which towards the end of the 1900s some Basque, Catalan and Galicians began to deny, and second, a strategy to build a unified cultural field that would allow Spain to retain some of the privileges of empire without actually having one.

The scope and purpose of this section does not allow us to trace the complex history of Spain and Latin America's post-colonial relations (but see for example Fogelquist 1968; Pike 1971; Rama 1982;

Sepúlveda 2005). However, as background to my analysis of Spain's contemporary language policies, it seems appropriate to underline, first, the fact that *hispanismo* has provided us with one of the most powerful narratives (though certainly not the only one) for imagining Spain and the pan-hispanic community; and second, the fact that *hispanismo* has tended to express itself through profoundly colonialist discourses.

One of the first journals to embrace this ideology was *La Revista Española de Ambos Mundos* ['The Spanish Journal from Both Worlds'] which in its first issue (1853) stated:

Destinada a España y América, pondremos particular esmero en estrechar sus relaciones. La Providencia no une a los pueblos con los lazos de un mismo origen, religión, costumbres e idioma para que se miren con desvío y se vuelvan las espaldas así en la próspera como en la adversa fortuna. Felizmente han desaparecido las causas que nos llevaron a la arena del combate, y hoy el pueblo americano y el ibero no son, ni deben ser, más que miembros de una misma familia; la gran familia española, que Dios arrojó del otro lado del océano para que, con la sangre de sus venas, con su valor e inteligencia, conquistase a la civilización un nuevo mundo. (quoted in Fogelquist 1968: 13–14; all translations throughout the chapter are mine, JdV)

*The journal is meant for both Spain and [Latin] America, and we will make a particularly careful effort to help tighten the relationship between the two. Providence does not bind two different peoples with the bond of a common origin, religion, customs, and language so that, whether in prosperous or adverse times, they look at each other in suspicion or turn their backs on each other. Fortunately the reasons that brought us to the field of battle have now disappeared, and today the [Latin] American and Iberian people are nothing but—should be nothing but—members of one and the same family, the great Spanish family, which God sent across the ocean so that, with their blood, courage and intelligence, they would conquer a new world for civilization.*

This type of colonialist rhetoric has in fact continued to be one of the central impediments to building pan-hispanic solidarity and earning loyalty to the *hispanofonía*. A perfect example of the problem posed by the persistence of imperial impulses was the polemic between Colombian philologist Rufino José Cuervo (1844–1911) and Spanish writer and essayist Juan Valera (1824–1905). In 1899, Cuervo, drawing an analogy between Latin and Spanish, expressed his concern over the still distant and unfortunate but likely development of new languages from the dialectal remains of Spanish. Fragmentation would be,

according to Cuervo, a consequence of dialectal diversity, low communication among Latin Americans, and the absence of a common cultural beacon for all Hispanic nations as a result of Spain's decadence. In response to these claims, Valera published an article on 24 September 1900 in a Madrid daily in which he rejected Cuervo's prediction and, undoubtedly injured by the Colombian's pessimistic view of Spain's intellectual life, called on men of letters to protect unity by serving as models not only through their linguistic practices but also through their exemplarily optimistic attitudes towards Spanish (see del Valle 2002 for a fuller analysis of the polemic). This exchange had a telling ending. In a 1903 article, Cuervo put aside all linguistic argumentation for a moment and wrote:

[Valera] pretende que las naciones hispanoamericanas sean colonias literarias de España, aunque para abastecerlas sea menester tomar productos de países extranjeros, y, figurándose tener aún el imprescindible derecho a la represión violenta de las insurgentes, no puede sufrir que un americano ponga en duda el que las circunstancias actuales consientan tales ilusiones: esto le hace perder los estribos y la serenidad clásica. Hasta aquí llega el fraternal afecto. (Cuervo 1950: 332)

[Valera] wants Latin American nations to be literary colonies of Spain, even if, in order to supply them, he has to resort to foreign products; and, thinking that he still has the inalienable right to violent repression of the insurgent colonies, he is unable to tolerate that an American question such a possibility given the present circumstances: this makes him lose his temper and his customary serenity. Here ends the fraternal love.

Thus, for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Spain's ability to satisfy its hegemonic desires was limited: on one hand, as we just saw, the egalitarian proclamations of *hispanismo*, enveloped as they were in colonialist rhetoric, were naturally received with profound skepticism; on the other, the material circumstances of Spain's political life and economic development limited the intensity of its efforts and constrained its ability to commit the necessary resources to such a mission. However, in the late 1980s and the 1990s Spain's profile drastically changed under new cultural and economic conditions that included the consolidation of democracy, membership in NATO and the European Union, economic growth and the spread of Spain-based corporations throughout Latin America.

Interestingly, even in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century the spectre of empire continues to haunt the *hispanofonia*. In 1991, Manuel Alvar (1923–2001), distinguished Spanish philologist

and dialectologist and Director of the Spanish Royal Academy between 1988 and 1991, still echoed the view of colonialism as a *mission civilisatrice*:

México sabía mejor que nadie el valor de tener una lengua que unifique y que libere de la miseria y del atraso a las comunidades indígenas ... Salvar al indio, redimir al indio, incorporación del indio, como entonces gritaban, no es otra cosa que desindianizar al indio. Incorporarlo a la idea de un estado moderno, para su utilización en unas empresas de solidaridad nacional y para que reciba los beneficios de esa misma sociedad ... El camino hacia la libertad transita por la hispanización. (Alvar 1991: 17–18)

*Mexico knew better than anybody else the value of having a language that unifies, that liberates the indigenous communities from their backwardness and misery ... Saving the Indian, the redemption of the Indian, the incorporation of the Indian, as they used to say, is nothing but de-indianizing the Indian, incorporating him into the idea of the modern State, in order to use him in projects of national solidarity, and in order to extend to him the benefits of belonging to that same society ... The path to freedom runs through hispanization.*

More recently, emotive narratives of Spain's 'new' role and commercial enterprises in Latin America have been equally coloured by colonialist imagery:

Un siglo después del repliegue definitivo de España al perder Cuba, se vuelve a un continente que de ninguna manera a nadie nos es ajeno: Iberoamérica. Ahora con otras ideas, perspectivas e ilusiones que nos confieren las nuevas armas: las empresas españolas, que se han expandido con los nuevos vientos de la globalización. (Casilda Béjar 2001)

*One century after Spain's definitive withdrawal after losing Cuba, we return to a continent that in no way is alien to us: Iberoamerica. Now with other ideas, perspectives, and hopes provided to us by the new weapons: Spanish corporations, which have spread with the new winds of globalization.*

Yet, things have changed. Now even the very same economic actors who engage in colonialist discourse are well aware of its dangers. Casilda Béjar – an economist and guest speaker at the II International Conference on the Spanish Language (see below) – stated in his speech:

[l]a transferencia de la propiedad de empresas importantes de manos nacionales [i.e. Latin American] a manos extranjeras [i.e.

Spanish] puede verse como un hecho que socava la soberanía nacional y que es equiparable a una 'recolonización'. (2001)

*transferring the property of important companies from national [i.e. Latin American] to foreign [i.e. Spanish] hands may be perceived as a process that undermines national sovereignty and that can be equated with a 're-colonization'.<sup>3</sup>*

But this concern, in his view, could be alleviated:

adviértase que la extraordinaria posición alcanzada [por España] en este continente, ha sido posible gracias a nuestro extraordinario aliado: el idioma, causa y efecto de nuestra afinidad cultural, psicológica y afectiva. (Casilda Béjar 2001)

*notice that the extraordinary position reached [by Spain] in this continent has been made possible by our extraordinary ally: the language, cause and effect of our emotional, psychological, and cultural affinity*

This emotional, psychological, and cultural affinity grounded in a common language is nothing but the *hispanofonía*, a community that sits on an ideological fault line and therefore needs constant reinforcement. It is in this context that Spanish governments and business leaders, under new and more favourable conditions, have strategically mobilized linguistic and cultural institutions in order to assure that the presence of Spain's economic actors in Latin America be perceived not as a high-modern version of the old colonial relationship but as 'natural' and 'legitimate':

Iberoamérica es un área de expansión *natural* para las entidades y empresas españolas, porque las raíces culturales y el idioma común facilitan el acceso a los mercados y la clientela. (Casilda Béjar 2001, emphasis added)

*Iberoamerica is a natural area for the expansion of Spain's institutions and companies, because the common cultural roots and language facilitate access to markets and clients.*

Iberoamérica es un objetivo político, económico y empresarial *legítimo* para los españoles ... Estamos mucho menos lejos de América Latina de lo que nadie puede pensar. (Jesús de Polanco, President of the Spanish media conglomerate PRISA, quoted in EL PAÍS, 24 July 1995, emphasis added)

*Iberoamerica is a legitimate political, economic, and business objective for Spaniards ... We are a lot less far from Latin America than anyone might think.*

### The Spanish Royal Academy's verbal hygiene: moderate prescriptivism

The Spanish Royal Academy (henceforth RAE, the acronym for *Real Academia Española*) has existed since 1713, when it was created under the inspiration offered by the *Accademia della Crusca* (Italy) and the *Académie Française*. Throughout its history, the Academy's mission has been defined by three codification projects – a dictionary, a grammar and an orthography – and, not surprisingly, by an essentially puristic and Eurocentric ideology that seriously damaged its prestige in Latin America and its ability to contribute to the *hispanismo* movement. In the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, corpus planning remains the responsibility of the RAE which, as mentioned, through intense activity and support from a number of political and economic actors, has modernized its image and strengthened the Association of Academies of the Spanish Language (henceforth AALE, acronym for *Asociación de Academias de la Lengua Española*).<sup>4</sup> Among the many objectives of the new RAE, two are of special interest for the present chapter since they clearly illustrate Spain's efforts to erase the memories of empire and overcome the colonialist rhetoric of the old *hispanismo*: the definition of Spanish as a pluricentric language and of their policy as pan-hispanic.

It is appropriate to begin our analysis of the RAE's new discourse on language with a quotation from a brief but representative text: *The New Pan-hispanic Language Policy* (henceforth *NPLP*), a mission statement of sorts signed by the AALE and published by the RAE in 2004:

Las funciones atribuidas tradicionalmente a las Academias de la Lengua consistían en la elaboración, difusión y actualización de los tres grandes códigos normativos en los que se concentra la esencia y el funcionamiento de cualquier lengua y que aseguran su unidad: la *Ortografía*, el *Diccionario* y la *Gramática*. Hasta hace algunos años, el modo de alcanzar esos objetivos se planteaba desde el deseo de mantener una lengua 'pura', basada en los hábitos lingüísticos de una parte reducida de sus hablantes, una lengua no contaminada por los extranjerismos ni alterada por el resultado de la propia evolución interna. En nuestros días, las Academias, en una orientación más adecuada y también más realista, se han fijado como tarea común la de garantizar el mantenimiento de la unidad básica del idioma, que es, en definitiva, lo que permite hablar de la comunidad hispanohablante, haciendo compatible la unidad del idioma con el reconocimiento de sus variedades internas. (AALE 2004: 3)

*Traditionally, the tasks associated with Language Academies were the creation, promotion, and elaboration of the three main*

normative codes that represent the essence and inner workings of the language and that safeguard its unity: the **Orthography**, the **Dictionary**, and the **Grammar**. Until a few years ago, the strategies advanced to reach these objectives were grounded in a desire to keep the language 'pure' – based on the model of the linguistic practices of a small group of its speakers – and to protect it against contamination from foreign words and changes that might result from the language's internal evolution. In our days, the Academies, with a more adequate and realistic orientation, have established as their common task the protection of the language's basic unity, which is, ultimately, what allows us to speak of a Spanish-speaking community, making the unity of the language compatible with the recognition of its internal varieties and evolution.

While the RAE unquestionably engages, by its very nature, in verbal hygiene, the *NPLP* document displays a moderate, almost inconspicuous, form of prescriptivism. In elaborating the concept of verbal hygiene, Cameron was careful to separate it from prescriptivism, insisting that it may actually represent a wide range of positions with respect to language: it may, for example, promote change in the name of progress (as in the case of efforts to eradicate practices felt to be sexist or racist) or it may oppose it as a sign of decaying intellectual standards (as in the multiple manifestations of what Milroy and Milroy (1999) have called the complaint tradition); it may embrace diversity (as in the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights) or it may reject it as a threat to social order (as in the English Only movement in the United States).

While authoritarian, elitist and purist forms of verbal hygiene are alive and well, the RAE, as the *NPLP* document shows, has distanced itself from the rhetoric of linguistic conservatism and embraced instead a more 'adequate and realistic' view of language: protecting the purity of Spanish is no longer its goal, and variation and change are now accepted as facts of language that do not interfere with its value.

This new permissiveness, however, is not to be mistaken for an 'anything goes' approach to verbal hygiene. While in general the RAE has steered clear of extreme forms of prescriptivism, it still retains and publicly declares a moderately prescriptive responsibility:

El conocimiento de las características que presenta actualmente nuestra lengua en todos los países que integran el mundo hispánico permite llevar a cabo una auténtica política panhispánica, que recoge lo consolidado por el uso y, en los casos necesarios, se adelanta a proponer las opciones que parecen más aconsejables en aquellos puntos en los que el sistema muestra vacilación. (AALE 2004: 4, emphasis added)

Knowledge of the features characteristic of our language in all the countries that make up the Hispanic world allows us to implement a truly panhispanic policy that collects what has already been consolidated by actual usage and that, whenever necessary, takes the initiative to propose more appropriate choices in those points in which the system hesitates.

Teams of 'experts' carefully study the language, focusing mostly on new forms and singling out those that have not yet been consolidated by usage in order to intervene and provide speakers with 'appropriate' guidance. It was precisely this moderately prescriptive attitude that triggered the publication in 2005 of the *Pan-hispanic Dictionary of Doubts* (henceforth *DPD*, for *Diccionario Panhispánico de Dudas*), a volume in which the academies have collected frequently asked questions about the correctness of specific aspects of Spanish grammar, lexicon and orthography. During its highly publicized presentation, the Madrid daily *EL PAÍS* reported:

De la Concha no ha ocultado su 'enorme satisfacción' ante la publicación de esta obra, de 880 páginas y 7.250 entradas que recogen, en un lenguaje de fácil comprensión y accesible a los no especializados, las dudas más habituales que asaltan cotidianamente a quienes desean hablar y escribir correctamente español. (*EL PAÍS*, 10 November 2005, emphasis added)

De la Concha [the RAE's Director] did not hide his 'great satisfaction' over the publication of this 880-page, 7250-item work that collects, in a style easily accessible to non-specialists, the most frequent questions faced by those who want to speak and write Spanish correctly.

### The new RAE: modern, popular and pan-hispanic

Like all institutions with normative responsibilities, the RAE is deeply concerned with legitimacy and profoundly aware of the impact that its public image may have on its authority. Consequently, since the early 1990s, it has taken careful steps towards cleansing the old image of a conservative, elitist and Eurocentric institution. First, as we just saw, against the old accusations of conservative purism, the RAE now acknowledges the inevitability of change and emphasizes its modernity and commitment to technological progress.

Second, against the accusation of elitism, the RAE now claims to speak for the people. We already saw that the *NPLP* document, in contrast with the previous approach, which selected the classics of the Spanish Golden Age as the principal linguistic model, declares actual usage as the main criterion in deciding on correctness. The public

presentation of the *DPD* offered a perfect opportunity to project this down-to-earth image: 'Lo único que hemos hecho es estar atentos a lo que oímos en la calle, hacerlo nuestro y devolvérselo a los hablantes en forma de norma' [*The only thing we did was pay attention to what we hear in the street, make it ours, and send it back to speakers in the shape of a linguistic norm*] (García de la Concha quoted in *EL PAÍS*, 10 November 2005). Of course, no reference was made (literal or metaphorical) to the specific neighbourhoods whose streets the academicians walked in their search for the language of the people. What is clearly stated, though, and from the very title of the dictionary, is that, in the streets selected for the elaboration of the new linguistic norm, all Spanish-speaking countries are represented.

Therefore, third, against the old accusation of Eurocentrism, the RAE now commits to a pan-hispanic approach both to language and to language policy. In fact, the *NPLP* document is itself a declaration of principles that, first, defines Spanish as an internally variable language and, second, places agency and responsibility for language policy not in the hands of Spain but in those of the pan-hispanic community.

Esta orientación panhispánica, promovida por la Real Academia Española y que las Academias han aplicado sistemáticamente y se plasma en la coautoría de todas las obras publicadas desde la edición de la *Ortografía* en 1999, procede de la voluntad política de actuar en una determinada dirección. (AALE 2004: 3)

*This panhispanic orientation – promoted by the Spanish Royal Academy, systematically applied by the Academies, and manifest in the co-authorship of all works published since the Orthography in 1999 – comes from the political will to act in a specific direction.*

At a meeting of the AALE held in Salamanca, Spain, in September 2005, its President, García de la Concha (who – as the reader may have noticed – is also the Director of the RAE), stated that

La esencia de todo lo que estamos haciendo es la unidad de lo que llamamos política lingüística panhispánica ... [lo cual] consiste en que los tres grandes códigos en que se sustenta y expresa la lengua española ... sean obra no sólo de la Academia Española, sino del conjunto de las academias. (*EL PAÍS*, 15 September 2005)

\* *The essence of everything we are doing is the unity of what we call panhispanic language policy ... [which] means that the three main codes that support and express the Spanish language ... are the work not only of the Spanish Academy, but of the academies as a whole.*

A few weeks after the Salamanca meeting, the presentation of the *DPD* (again, in another Spanish city, Madrid) offered yet another opportunity to showcase the spirit of pan-hispanic cooperation that the RAE so enthusiastically upholds. *EL PAÍS*'s coverage of the event highlighted the authorship by the 22 academies and the completion of the work as the result of an agreement, as a political alliance of sorts: 'Las 22 academias de la Lengua presentan el *Diccionario panhispánico de dudas*' [*The 22 academies of the language launch the Panhispanic Dictionary of Doubts*] (*EL PAÍS*, 10 November 2005); 'El gran acuerdo para la unidad del idioma' [*The great agreement for the unity of the language*] (*EL PAÍS*, 10 November 2005). One aspect of the newspaper's coverage is notable in that it cues us in to the political nature and specific ideological roots not only of the event but also of the pan-hispanic policy as a whole: the almost frantic repetition of the word *consensus*:

No ha sido difícil de hacer, gracias al gran consenso [*it hasn't been difficult, thanks to the great consensus*] (*EL PAÍS*, 10 November 2005); no estaba claro si sería posible *consensuar* [*it was not clear if it would be possible to reach consensus*] (*EL PAÍS*, 10 November 2005); primer trabajo de consenso América-España. Un hito [*First America-Spain work that reaches consensus. Quite a landmark*] (*EL PAÍS*, 10 November 2005); resultado de un consenso que consolida ... [*the result of consensus that consolidates ...*] (*EL PAÍS*, 11 November 2005); Y se ha llegado a esto, dicen, por *consenso* [*and they have reached this goal, they say, through consensus*] (*EL PAÍS*, 11 November 2005); La ministra de Educación destacó la voluntad de *consenso* [*the Education Minister highlighted the willingness to reach consensus*] (*EL PAÍS*, 11 November 2005) (all emphases added).

### Consensus and the constitution of a linguistic public sphere

By promoting the strategic alliance and permanent collaboration among the 22 academies, the RAE can claim to foster what I will refer to – using, somewhat liberally, Habermas' (1991) notion – as a linguistic public sphere: a series of real or virtual places of encounter and channels of communication through which members of the academies allegedly openly, rationally and democratically discuss linguistic issues of common concern and design and implement policy through consensus. Habermas' notion captures the idea of 'private people com[ing] together as a public' and claiming an active role in the 'debate over the general rules governing' social and economic

relations (1991: 27). These debates, which take place through the medium of 'people's public use of their reason' (*ibid.*), may become the 'authoritative bases for political action' (Calhoun 1992: 1) and for the legitimate exercise of formal democracy. The democratic adequacy of the public sphere depends, according to Calhoun, 'upon both quality of discourse and quantity of participation' (1992: 2).

The notion of a public sphere is illuminating in the analysis of Spain's language policy inasmuch as the RAE carefully projects an image of itself and its operations that formally complies with the protocols of a legitimate democracy grounded in open and rational debate: quality of discourse is protected by the careful watch of language 'experts' – the RAE is careful to recruit institutionally sanctioned linguists and philologists – and quantity of participation is pursued through a permanent 'dialogue' with the people and representative social institutions.

The 'debates' fostered by the RAE actually materialize in a variety of forms: in the conferences that regularly bring together all the academies of the Spanish language, in the interacademic committees created for specific projects, or in the fellowship programme, developed by Spain's Agency for International Cooperation, to sponsor Latin Americans while they collaborate with the Academy in their respective countries. But, in order to project an image of openness and democracy and consolidate its widespread legitimacy, the RAE must go beyond interacademic exchanges by creating a credible connection with the people whose linguistic loyalty is their target. In this quest for popularity, the RAE builds a down-to-earth image in a number of ways: first, as we saw above, by claiming to produce a norm that directly emerges from the people; second, by using the Internet as a channel of communication with speakers:

Desde que, en 1998, la Real Academia Española abrió en su página electrónica el servicio de consultas lingüísticas ... no ha dejado de crecer el número de personas que se dirigen a esta institución en busca de una respuesta autorizada a las dudas que a diario plantea el uso del idioma. Actualmente se recibe una media de 300 consultas diarias, procedentes de todas las partes del mundo. (AALE 2004: 8)

Since, in November 1998, the Spanish Royal Academy initiated on its web page a service to answer linguistic questions ... the number of people coming to this institution in search of an authorized response to the questions raised by daily language use has not stopped growing. Currently we receive an average of 300 questions a day from all over the world.

And, finally, by justifying its very existence as a response to popular demand: 'Es verdad que hay buenos libros de estilo en los medios de comunicación, pero los hispanohablantes quieren oír la voz de las academias' ['It is true that the media have good style manuals, but Spanish-speakers want to hear the voice of the academies'] (García de la Concha quoted in EL PAÍS, 10 November 2005, emphasis added).

The reference to the media is neither sporadic nor coincidental: the RAE, in its effort to broaden the social base of the linguistic public sphere, has carefully cultivated its relationship with them. In the 1990s, two distinguished journalists and media entrepreneurs became members of the RAE: in 1997, Juan Luis Cebrián, founder and editor of the centre-left Madrid daily *EL PAÍS*; and one year later, Luis María Anson Oliart, former editor of the rightwing newspaper *ABC* and founder of the even more conservative *La Razón*. The relationship between the RAE and the media seems to be more than just symbolic: not only was the *DPD* conceived as a response to questions of linguistic correctness posed by speakers; it was developed, we were told, in close consultation with the press: 'El diccionario se ha elaborado con su ayuda, sus críticas y sus aportaciones' ['The dictionary has been elaborated with their help, their critiques, and their contributions'] (García de la Concha quoted in EL PAÍS, 10 November 2005).

Perhaps the most inclusive and spectacular materializations of the linguistic public sphere have been the international conferences on the Spanish language, jointly organized by the RAE, the Cervantes Institute and other private and public institutions.<sup>5</sup> These conferences bring together prominent political figures, business people and experts from a wide range of fields, and the proceedings are made public through the Institute's website:

El Centro Virtual Cervantes se complace en publicar ... cientos de estudios que analizan, desde las más diversas perspectivas y con rigor científico, el pasado, el presente y el futuro del español ... Los congresos constituyen significativos foros de reflexión acerca de la situación, los problemas y los retos del idioma español ... Participan de los Congresos de la Lengua Española personas de todos los países de habla hispana: escritores, artistas, especialistas y profesionales de los más diversos campos del quehacer cultural. (<http://cvc.cervantes.es/obref/congresos/>)

The Cervantes Virtual Center is pleased to publish ... hundreds of studies that analyze, from different perspectives and with scientific rigor, the past, present, and future of Spanish. ... The conferences are important forums for reflection on the situation, problems, and challenges of the Spanish language. ... People from all

*Spanish-speaking countries participate in the conferences: writers, artists, experts, and professionals from the most diverse fields of cultural production.*

In sum, the RAE, in collaboration with the AALE and the Cervantes Institute, strives to constitute a network of interaction that it can present as a truly representative linguistic public sphere: it welcomes the people and the experts, journalists and politicians, writers and businessmen, and, in all cases, careful attention is paid to the necessary presence of the Spanish-speaking world as a whole. It is this alleged convergence of all in an open and reasoned dialogue that, the RAE hopes, will certify it as a democratic institution and consequently invest it with the legitimacy and authority that it so covets (Gal and Woolard 2001).<sup>6</sup>

### **The discourse community and the linguistic public sphere**

The linguistic public sphere promoted by the RAE has produced a significant corpus of texts dealing with language: the conference proceedings I just discussed, the annual reports (*Anuarios*) on the status of the language sponsored by the Cervantes Institute, press coverage of linguistic events, etc. In previous work (del Valle and Gabriel-Stheeman 2004; del Valle 2005; del Valle and Villa forthcoming), I have analysed different components of this corpus, concluding that one of Spain's main language policy strategies has been the projection of a meticulously crafted image of the language: first, Spanish is promoted as a language of encounter, that is, as an instrument for the expression of multiple cultures and a symbol of the spirit of democratic harmony; second, Spanish is a global language, one that is successfully spreading beyond the Spanish-speaking world; third, as a result of being the common language of many nations, Spanish is a symbol of universalism that overpowers the dangers of ethnic and national loyalties; and finally, Spanish is a useful and profitable language and knowledge of it may constitute a valuable economic asset, a source of cultural capital – to use Bourdieu's (1991) term – for those who possess it. From a language policy perspective, it is hoped that this image will further the acceptance of Spanish, first, as Spain's common language – against the constant questioning of its status by Basque, Catalan and Galician nationalists – second, as a prestigious and valuable international language, and third (the most relevant here), as the fundamental building block of the *hispanofonía*.

Thus, what the analysis shows so far is a group of individuals and institutions converging into a common set of metalinguistic

practices, and producing a coordinated and, at times, highly choreographed discourse of verbal hygiene that defines and hopes to control the nature of Spanish. The internal consistency of this discourse and the frequency with which it is reproduced in a series of well-defined institutional settings suggests that we are dealing with what Watts has called a discourse community:

a set of individuals who can be interpreted as constituting a community on the basis of the ways in which their oral or written discourse practices reveal common interests, goals and beliefs, i.e. on the degree of institutionalization that their discourse displays. (Watts 1999: 43)

One aspect of Watts' proposal is of particular interest to the present analysis: discourse communities are defined not only by producing common discursive practices but also by representing socially situated interests. Because of this social specificity, the view of language produced by the community is necessarily partial and, therefore, always contestable. Consequently, discourse communities that hope to become or remain dominant must constantly renovate their sources of legitimacy.

Antonio Gramsci's notion of hegemony (Ives 2004) offers a view of domination that may help elucidate the mechanisms through which the discourse community that has formed around the RAE secures its power. Hegemony is a form of domination based not on coercion but on control and naturalization of a specific system of values:

It is a whole body of practices and expectations, over the whole of living ... It thus constitutes a sense of reality for most people in the society, a sense of absolute because experienced reality beyond which it is very difficult for most members of the society to move. (Williams 1977: 110)

What better way of naturalizing the discourse community than presenting it not as a socially situated and interested group that projects a specific point of view but as a linguistic public sphere where all converge to produce a common vision of language through consensus? The total dominance of a community, its hegemonic power, will rest on its ability to absorb dissent and ideologically merge with the linguistic public sphere:

Any hegemonic process must be especially alert and responsive to the alternatives and opposition which question or threaten its dominance ... to the extent that they are significant the decisive hegemonic function is to control or transform or even incorporate them. (Williams 1977: 113)

By absorbing dissent, the discourse community erases (Irvine and Gal 2000) its social roots and grounds its views not in specific interests but in consensus, in an open and democratic debate, in an anonymous public. If it successfully merges with the linguistic public sphere – if it manages to be perceived by all as *being* the public sphere – the hegemonic vision of language that it produces will be a vision from nowhere, a perspective paradoxically assumed to contain all points of view (Gal and Woolard 2001).

Within this theoretical framework, for the power of a discourse community to be truly hegemonic, dissent must be negotiated internally and in compliance with the community's institutionalized practices. In other words, alternatives and opposition must not threaten the ultimate (extralinguistic) social order represented by the discourse community. While Spain's linguistic agencies have striven (with great success, we must say) to create an appearance of openness and democracy, our survey of the recent history of Spain's language policy finds a number of incidents that expose the imperfect fit between the dominant discourse community and the linguistic public sphere.

Perhaps the most strident happened on 23 May 2001. At a literary award ceremony, King Juan Carlos I of Spain stated:

Nunca fue la nuestra lengua de imposición, sino de encuentro; a nadie se le obligó nunca a hablar en castellano: fueron los pueblos más diversos quienes hicieron suyo por voluntad libérrima, el idioma de Cervantes.

*Ours has never been a language of imposition; instead, it has been a language of encounter. No one has ever been forced to speak Castilian; different peoples, through their free will, have chosen to make the language of Cervantes their own.*<sup>7</sup>

These words, of course, triggered the immediate and angry protest, within Spain, of Basque, Catalan and Galician nationalists; to which the Royal House quickly (and clumsily) responded: the King was referring to America!<sup>8</sup> The episode offers a perfect example of an excessively conspicuous erasure: an ideological deletion so extreme that it ends up revealing precisely the object whose erasure was intended (Irvine and Gal 2000). In an effort to affirm the pan-hispanic community by rooting it in an unproblematic shared language, the King and his speech writers take the 'encounter' metaphor – widely used within the discourse community to which they all belong – too far. The fumbled sleight of hand exposes the traumatic historical experiences and profound inequalities that brought about the *hispanofonía* and, thus, reveals the constructed (interested) nature of the image.

A second incident took place in Zacatecas, Mexico, in 1997, during the First Conference on the Spanish Language. One of the keynote speakers was the renowned Colombian novelist and Nobel Prize winner Gabriel García Márquez. In a lecture mischievously entitled '*Message in a bottle for the god of all words*' ['*Botella al mar para el dios de las palabras*'] he called for orthographic reform:

Jubilemos la ortografía, terror del ser humano desde la cuna: enterremos las haches rupestres, firmemos un tratado de límites entre la ge y jota ... Y qué de nuestra be de burro y nuestra ve de vaca, que los abuelos españoles nos trajeron como si fueran dos y siempre sobra una?

*Let's retire the orthography, that monster that haunts humans from the cradle: let's bury the old h, let's sign a border agreement between g and j, ... and what about b as in burro and v as in vaca, brought by our Spanish grandparents as if they were two when actually there is always one too many?*<sup>9</sup>

García Márquez's speech made a splash whose ripples were felt all over the Spanish-speaking world. He had been invited to celebrate the language and lend legitimacy to the event with his enormous symbolic capital; and instead he unexpectedly opened the can of worms of orthographic reform. After the initial upheaval, and once the conference was over, the discussion slowly faded ... until 1999, when the RAE and the rest of the language academies published the *Orthography*, 'el fruto de un consenso alcanzado tras largas negociaciones entre las 22 academias [que] despejan definitivamente cualquier temor sobre una fragmentación del español' ['*the result of a consensus reached after long negotiations by all 22 academies [that] finally removed any concerns about the possible fragmentation of Spanish*'] (EL PAÍS, 9 October 1999). The anonymous prologue contains a few paragraphs devoted to 'dealing with' orthographic mavericks:

[S]on muchos los arbitristas de la Ortografía que acuden a esta Institución o salen a la palestra, con mejor intención que acierto, pidiendo u ofreciendo radicales soluciones a los problemas ortográficos o cebándose con fáciles diatribas en el sistema establecido ... A todos estos entusiastas debería recordárseles que ya Nebrija ... advirtió que 'en aquello que es como ley consentida por todos es cosa dura hacer novedad'. (Real Academia Española 1999: xv)

*There are many eccentric utopians that come to this Institution or appear in public (with good intentions but poor judgment) asking for or offering radical solutions to orthographic problems or attacking the established system with simplistic diatribes. ... Those enthusiasts should be reminded of Nebrija's warning ...:*

*'in matters of law that have been agreed upon by all it is hard to introduce things that are new'.*

Thus, without naming names, García Márquez and other orthographic idealists were guided as to 'correct' procedure within the discourse community. Interestingly, this direct admonition was not the most severe warning against eccentric initiatives. The most threatening caution actually came in the form of a history lesson:

En 1843, una autotitulada *Academia Literaria y Científica de Profesores de Instrucción Primaria* de Madrid se había propuesto una reforma radical, con supresión de *h*, *v* y *q*, entre otras estridencias, y había empezado a aplicarla en las escuelas. El asunto era demasiado serio y de ahí la inmediata oficialización de la ortografía académica, que nunca antes se había estimado necesaria. Sin esa irrupción de espontáneos reformadores con responsabilidad pedagógica, es muy posible que la Corporación española hubiera dado un par de pasos más, que tenía anunciados y que la hubieran emparejado con la corriente americana, es decir, con las directrices de Bello. (Real Academia Española 1999: xv)<sup>10</sup>

*In 1843, a self-proclaimed Scientific and Literary Academy of Teachers of Primary Education in Madrid proposed a radical reform that included the elimination of h, v, and q among other eccentricities, and began to use it in schools. The matter was too important and triggered the immediate officialization of the Academy's orthography, which had never until then been considered necessary. Without this irruption by spontaneous reformers with pedagogical responsibilities, it is quite likely that the Spanish Academy would have taken a couple of the already announced extra steps that would have brought it closer to the American trend, that is, to Bello's norms.*

In this passage, the anonymous author/s of the Prologue remind the readers, through an old linguistic episode, of the fragmentation debates, of a time when several orthographic models circulated, both in Spain and Latin America, threatening the unity of the language. It is remarkable how gently the Prologue treats Andrés Bello (1781–1865) – proponent of the most successful alternative orthography in the Spanish-speaking world, but a highly respected (especially in Latin America) grammarian and man of letters – and how harshly, in contrast, it portrays the Madrid teachers as dangerous mavericks ('self-proclaimed', 'spontaneous reformers with pedagogical responsibilities'). It is the teachers – their independence and autonomous actions – who are actually blamed for the Spanish government's 'emergency' decision to exercise its linguistic authority and make the RAE's orthography official before reaching an agreement – the

coveted consensus – with Bello's Latin America. Regardless of how things actually played out in 1843 (an interesting topic in its own right), the present context highlights the strategic use of the episode as a deterrent to anyone tempted to engage in verbal hygiene outside the jurisdiction of the RAE's discourse community. The indirect threat of coercion contained in the Prologue reveals the imperfect match between the interests of the discourse community and the true openness that would define the ideal public sphere. Open and democratic debate is possible as long as the linguistic/social order represented by the dominant discourse community is not placed under threat.

### **Diversity: theoretical imperative and political necessity**

The episode recalled by the RAE brings us back to the times when fears of linguistic fragmentation and the consequent breakdown of communication were a significant concern in public discussions of language. While the fetish of communication (Cameron 1995: 24) is still present in the RAE's contemporary discourse of verbal hygiene (i.e. Spanish must be cared for in order to preserve its communicative transparency), the fragmentation prophesies have been notoriously absent from linguistic debates for decades now. Academicians no longer feel that dialectal variation threatens the unity of Spanish and can therefore celebrate unity while simultaneously embracing internal diversity. They also seem aware that selection is a delicate process in language planning and that strict prescriptivism and the pursuit of homogeneity would in all likelihood severely damage the image of openness and modernity that they so carefully cultivate.

The *NPLP* document is clear in this regard: the academies must make the defence of unity compatible with the recognition of the language's internal varieties. Interestingly, this favourable attitude towards variation has gone well beyond tolerance and the old fragmentation argument has now been turned on its head: in the image of Spanish being projected by the dominant language agencies, diversity is embraced as an asset, as the best protection against atomization. Spain's King Juan Carlos I unequivocally subscribes to this view: 'el arraigo de la lengua española ... tiene en su diversidad su más firme garantía de unidad' [*The roots of the Spanish language ... have in their diversity the strongest guarantee of unity*] (quoted in *EL PAÍS*, 11 May 2005).

Most importantly, this ideology – that pronounces the unifying power of diversity – has actually informed the RAE's normative activity. When the publication of the new grammar of Spanish was

announced, García de la Concha stated: '[Será] la primera no peninsular, descriptiva del español en todas sus variantes, una norma policéntrica' [*It will be the first non-peninsular descriptive grammar of all varieties of Spanish; a pluricentric norm*] (EL PAÍS, 15 October 2005). Not only is Spanish embraced as a diverse language from which the norm is extracted; the norm itself – the synecdoche, to use Joseph's (1987: 58) concept – is pluricentric. Thus, the pan-hispanic policy is two-sided: on one hand, design and implementation are overseen by all Spanish-speaking nations; on the other, the norm itself represents them all. Like the makers of that old map of China in Jorge Luis Borges' story (1972), so concerned with accuracy that they created a map that literally covered the whole territory, the writers of the normative Spanish grammar exhibit a similar desire for totality and hope to cover the language in all its diversity: 'se busca que "se reflejen y expresen no sólo el español peninsular, sino el español total"' [*we want to "reflect and express not just Peninsular Spanish, but total Spanish"*] (García de la Concha quoted in EL PAÍS, 15 September 2005).

In view of such confidence, it is intriguing that the RAE would adopt precisely the defence of unity as its main objective and that language policy agents would feel compelled to affirm unity over and over again as they do. Repetition is, of course, a strategy through which culturally constructed categories become naturalized: public celebrations of the language (such as conferences) and the normative monuments that represent it (such as grammars and dictionaries) are the very acts that constitute it; and similarly, apparently descriptive statements of its unity are in fact performative acts that create it. However, the perseverance in the assertion of unity and the centrality given to the topic by the RAE's discourse community reveal the presence of a (mostly latent but at times loudly voiced) fragmentation anxiety. Santiago de Mora-Figueroa, Marquis of Tamarón and Director of the Cervantes Institute in the 1990s, said shortly after taking office: 'Hay que preservar la unidad del español porque corre peligro' [*We must protect the unity of Spanish because it is in danger*] (quoted in EL PAÍS, 24 May 1996). Voicing similar concerns, a few years later, an editorial in which EL PAÍS celebrated the publication of the *DPD* also warned against excessive optimism: 'la formidable expansión de nuestra lengua en el mundo ... no por ello menos sometida al peligro de atomización [*the international spread of Spanish ... does not mean that it is less vulnerable to the danger of atomization*]' (EL PAÍS, 11 November 2005).

Obviously, some fears of disintegration still linger. But, if dialectal diversity has been ruled out as the possible cause of a linguistic breakup, then what exactly is the source of this fragmentation anxiety?

Not dialectal but ideological diversity: a conflicting view of Spanish that might gain support, a possible fracture in the discourse community that would disrupt the prevailing linguistic order and expose the socio-political roots of the dominant linguistic ideology. New forms of verbal hygiene claiming their right to participate in the linguistic public sphere on their own terms, that is, outside the carefully guarded boundaries of the discourse community, would threaten the latter's hegemonic power and jeopardize the social order that it supports.

I have argued in previous work that Spain's contemporary language policies and the image of Spanish that they project play a major part in controlling the political instrumentalization of the *hispanofonía*. As we have seen, Spanish 'is, ultimately, what allows us to speak of a Spanish-speaking community' (AALE 2004: 3), a *hispanofonía* that, since the 1990s, has acquired great economic significance for Spain-based corporations and their partners (wherever in the globe they may come from). But, like Ernest Renan's nation (1996), this multinational community is a daily plebiscite, a permanent campaign against those who might choose to imagine it differently. This constant threat posed by possible ideological dissidence, by alternative views of Spanish – of what it is, what it represents and who has the authority to settle linguistic disputes – is confronted by the RAE through the production of a powerful image that now more than ever must include the enthusiastic embrace of diversity. In order for the RAE's discourse community to become truly hegemonic it must present its vision of Spanish as emerging, not from an interested socio-economic position, but from the open, rational and democratic debates of a public sphere, from the consensus reached by an anonymous and aperspectival public that represents all because it represents no one in particular (Gal and Woolard 2001). There is no legitimacy without democracy, no democracy without consensus, and no consensus without diversity. In sum, in the contemporary construction of a hegemonic *hispanofonía*, diversity has become a theoretical imperative as well as a political necessity:

La variedad ... es una garantía para la democracia [*Diversity ... is the guarantee of democracy*]. (Pedro Luis Barcia, Director of the Argentinean language academy, quoted in EL PAÍS, 11 November 2005)

## Conclusion

In the present chapter, I have argued that, in the wake of Spain's recent economic take-off, Spanish governments have mobilized cultural and linguistic institutions in order to strengthen and legitimize their influence

in Latin America and facilitate the operation of Spain-based corporations in that continent. Faced with the possibility that this scenario be perceived as neocolonial, these institutions have striven to conceptualize and publicly portray Spain's presence in its former colonies as both 'natural' and 'legitimate' and have unequivocally promoted the notion of a fraternal community of Spanish-speaking nations – a construct that I have chosen to call *hispanofonía*. In this process, the Spanish Royal Academy has been a central actor, designing and promoting images of itself and of Spanish that would function as iconic representations of the idealized egalitarian and democratic pan-hispanic community.

In my studies of Spain's contemporary language policies and ideologies, current discourses of endangerment surrounding Spanish have emerged as sites where anxieties over Spain's struggles to achieve relative prominence within the international arena are worked out. Thus, present worries about linguistic fragmentation do not only or necessarily reflect concerns about the purely 'linguistic' integrity of the language. Instead, I contend, they mirror fears of an 'ideological' fracture that would expose inequality and dissent and thus hamper the consolidation of the *hispanofonía*. In response to the potentially dangerous identification of Spain as a privileged and interested player within the fraternal language community, I suggest that the Spanish Royal Academy has structured its activity around a linguistic public sphere, an open space where, allegedly, representatives from all Spanish-speaking nations converge in order to 'democratically' decide on the future of the language. In this ideological context, the language itself must necessarily reflect the egalitarianism that allegedly characterizes the *hispanofonía*: consequently, intralingual diversity is now embraced and, thus, its meaning, its subversive potential, controlled.

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## Notes

- 1 Many are related to the emergence of nationalist movements in parts of northern Spain after the late nineteenth century; others appear in Latin America, especially after the 1960s, in connection with efforts to empower indigenous cultures and revitalize their languages.
- 2 The Spanish Royal Academy, founded in 1713, is the main Spanish institution in charge of the codification of the language (see below and [www.rae.es](http://www.rae.es)). The Cervantes Institute is a public institution created by Spain in 1991 in order to promote and teach Spanish and to spread Spanish and

- Spanish American culture'. It was originally created under the umbrella of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and is currently also overseen by the Ministry of Culture. ([www.cervantes.es/seg\\_nivel/institucion/Marcos\\_institucionprincipal.jsp](http://www.cervantes.es/seg_nivel/institucion/Marcos_institucionprincipal.jsp)).
- 3 A number of labour disputes involving Spain-based corporations in Latin America have in fact been codified as neocolonial conflicts (see del Valle 2005). An excellent example of this perception is *The New Conquistadors* [*Los nuevos conquistadores*] by two Argentinean journalists: Cecchini and Zicolillo (2002).
  - 4 All Spanish-speaking countries (including the USA) have a Spanish language academy. They all come together, under the leadership of the *Española*, in the Association. More information at [www.rae.es](http://www.rae.es).
  - 5 The first was held in 1997 in Zacatecas, Mexico, and organized by the Cervantes Institute in collaboration with this country's Office of Public Education; the second took place in 2001 in Valladolid, Spain, and was organized then by both the Cervantes and the RAE; the third, held in Rosario, Argentina, in 2004, was planned by the Spanish institutions in collaboration with the Argentinean Academy of Letters and an executive committee representing the host country.
  - 6 My purpose in this chapter is to analyse the mechanisms through which the RAE responds to endangerment through the embrace of diversity and how in the process it creates an image of itself and of Spanish. While my immediate goal in this particular chapter is not to expose specific distortions, it is worth noting a couple of flagrant glitches in the image of representativeness, democracy and egalitarianism. Out of 40 current members of the RAE, only three are women. The veteran among the women is Ana María Matute, who joined the institution in 1998. Since then, there have been thirteen additional appointments out of which two went to women and eleven to men. In the corpus of texts that I have analysed, I have encountered references (some quoted above) to Latin America as a space where Spain's presence is 'natural' and 'legitimate'. However, in the same texts, I have not found any references to Spain as a 'natural' and 'legitimate' space for, say, Ecuadorian or Dominican workers.
  - 7 The speech can be read at [www.casareal.es/casareal/home](http://www.casareal.es/casareal/home) – Discursos y Mensajes: 23/4/01.
  - 8 More details on the incident and its aftermath in Chapter 10 of del Valle and Gabriel-Stheeman 2004.
  - 9 The speech can be read at <http://cvc.cervantes.es/obref/congresos/zacatecas/voces/>. It is also available at numerous websites.
  - 10 In that period, the University of Chile was engaged in a well-known controversy which resulted in the relative generalization of Andrés Bello's orthographic proposal. In Spain, around the same time, and as the Prologue relates, an organization of teachers also put forth a new spelling project. See Velleman 2004 for more information on these nineteenth-century orthographic debates.