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## The Politics of Normativity and Globalization: Which Spanish in the Classroom?

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In this article, I introduce the debate on dialect choice in the teaching of Spanish. I first present an early 20th-century proposal by Spanish philologist Ramón Menéndez Pidal (1918) and then move to two recent discussions: one within the Instituto Cervantes in the context of the international promotion of Spanish, and another in the context provided by the growth of the teaching of Spanish to heritage speakers in the United States. After considering the MLA (2007, 2009) reports on the role of languages in higher education, I conclude by embracing pedagogical options where, regardless of the choice of one particular norm, discussion of the development and operation of linguistic regimes becomes central in language instruction from the very early stages of the language program's curricular structure.

*Keywords:* standardization of Spanish; Spanish for native speakers; linguistic regimes; language ideologies; critical pedagogy

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IT IS ENCOURAGING, AND NOT AT ALL surprising, to find that the question of which variety of Spanish to teach has been prominent in the United States education system at least from the time when teaching Spanish became a highly institutionalized professional practice. As will be further explained, the matter was addressed immediately after the creation of the American Association of Teachers of Spanish in 1917 and has persisted until the present as evidenced by, for example, John Lipski's (2009) tackling of the matter in a recent article entitled *Which Spanish(es) to teach?* The existence of this question is encouraging because it shows the persistent presence of an ethically imperative self-reflexive gesture within our profession. It is not surprising

because variation is inherent to all dimensions of language, and choices—at different levels of awareness—are constantly made.

Even a cursory and partial view of the history of this dilemma—which will be presented in the first part of this article—shows a multiplicity of answers, which, upon careful scrutiny, reveal in turn much about the socio-political conditions that frame our pedagogical practice, the questions that we as a field pose, and the answers that we provide. In what follows, we will find, for example, that the Castilian variety of Spanish has at times been advanced, though in different ways and through different arguments depending on the specific historical settings of each choice. We will also find that some scholars have militantly embraced local community varieties of Spanish in the United States, again, in close and even explicit connection with very precise socio-political contexts.

The position of this article, however, goes beyond this particular choice. We take it for

granted that in each pedagogical scenario, with its ideological tensions and institutional constraints, a different choice in all likelihood will be made. But a crucial pedagogical threshold will be crossed not when we find the perfect solution to the *which Spanish* dilemma—which we will not—but when we incorporate the choice and its political ramifications as course content. In other words, it does not matter which variety of Spanish we choose as long as we make our students critically aware that a choice was made.

#### CASTILE AT THE CENTER: TEACHING A CENTRIPETAL LINGUISTIC REGIME IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY

A few months after its creation in 1917, the American Association of Teachers of Spanish (AATS) launched the journal *Hispania*, which soon became—and remains—one of the association's main forums for interaction among members and one of its most recognized signs of identity (in 1944, it added Portuguese to its mission and thus became AATSP; for a history of the association, see Leavitt, 1967, and Wilkins, 1927). The lead article in the journal's first issue was authored by Ramón Menéndez Pidal (1918), arguably Spain's most prominent philologist. Not only was Menéndez Pidal in possession of significant symbolic capital as a result of his profuse and groundbreaking scholarship, his power was also anchored in Spain's cultural and scientific institutions. He was the director of the influential, government-sponsored *Centro de Estudios Históricos* [Center for Historical Studies] and a distinguished member of Spain's language academy, the *Real Academia Española* [Spanish Royal Academy], whose director he became in 1925 (see Hess, 1982, for a concise yet lucid biography). The article, entitled *La lengua española* [The Spanish language] and framed as a letter addressed to two of the AATS's founders (Aurelio M. Espinosa and Lawrence A. Wilkins), was organized around a pair of related questions:

1. How significant are the differences between Spain's and Spanish America's Spanish?
2. Which variety should be selected in teaching Spanish in the United States?

In developing an answer to the first question, he began by distinguishing between popular speech ("el habla popular") and the educated variety of the language ("la lengua culta"), stating that the greatest distance between European and American Spanish would be found in the former. He added, however, that such distance was, in any

event, minimal: "Spanish American forms of popular speech do not represent an unusual deviation with respect to Castilian speech, neither in the number nor in the nature of the features that define them" (Menéndez Pidal, 1918, p. 2, all translations are mine). He then directed his focus to the educated varieties of Spanish in Spain and Spanish America and, after acknowledging the existence of differences, proceeded to explain them away, minimizing their fragmentationist potential through a series of historical and linguistic arguments. First, he described Spanish as a cultural historical product that originated mainly in the medieval dialects of Castile and that developed through the subsequent elaboration of these dialects by men of action as well as by notable men of letters in the context of the northern Iberian Christian kingdoms' conquest of Al-Andalus, Spain's national unification, and its colonial enterprise in America. He closed his foray into the question of origins by stating that "the language planted there [in America] was a strictly Castilian language" (p. 4).

Second, Menéndez Pidal reviewed three factors that might have caused or might cause in the future a linguistic split between Spain and Spanish America: the influence of indigenous languages, the particular conditions that the colonial setting created for linguistic evolution, and national projects that, after the independence of most American colonies between 1810 and 1820, might have actively promoted dialectal local features and the eventual crystallization of new languages (a process that, according to some 19th-century grammarians, such as Andrés Bello [1951/1847] and Rufino J. Cuervo [1899], would parallel the fragmentation of Latin). The possible impact of the indigenous factor was summarily dismissed: "[Their] influence in the phonetics of Spanish can be said to be negligible; (. . .) The barbarism of indigenous languages as well as their huge number and degree of fragmentation are not conducive to syntactic features from these languages being transferred and acquiring a significant status and extension within Spanish" (p. 4). The creation of national languages out of dialectal forms was also discarded as a fruitless pursuit localized in Argentina in the context of bitter postindependence struggles: "The idea of a national language is dead and buried seven strata underground" (p. 8).

Having discarded indigenous influence and Spanish American nationalism, Menéndez Pidal did acknowledge that the unique conditions under which Spanish existed in colonial Spanish America had resulted in a certain degree of

differentiation even at the level of the educated variety. On one hand, he argued that varieties spoken in the 16th century in the southern part of the kingdom of Castile (i.e., Andalusia, the Canary Islands, and Extremadura) had been demographically dominant during the early stages of colonization; on the other, the social structure of the colonial territories had been such that lower classes had been abundant, and contact with more educated social groups scarce. Thus, in Spain, the speech of the lower classes would have resulted from socially structured contact with the educated who, in turn, would have developed their literary language under the inspiration of those popular varieties: "Popular entails the mutual understanding between the educated and the people in general" (Menéndez Pidal, 1918, p. 5). In Spanish America, however, due to a weaker intellectual life, the lower classes received little influence (linguistic and otherwise) from the educated: "[V]ulgar entails greater initiative by uneducated people. Now, this shade of vulgarity is not exclusive of language but also of literature and of life as a whole" (p. 5). Therefore, continued Menéndez Pidal, when the Spanish American men of letters strove to create a literary language, in seeking inspiration from the people, they drew from the more vulgar forms of speech that had developed under the described set of sociolinguistic circumstances created by the structure of colonial society: "If we look at its most prominent features, the speech of educated people in Spanish America is the educated speech of Andalusia tainted with some vulgarisms" (p. 6).

This was Menéndez Pidal's answer to the question of the relative uniformity between Peninsular and American Spanish. It was a carefully crafted response whose conclusion seamlessly led to tackling the second question: which Spanish to teach in the United States. The essential unity of Peninsular and transatlantic Spanish, as he called it, and the historical and social preeminence of Castilian varieties offered him a clear basis on which to ground his answer:

The teaching of the language must tend to promote a broad knowledge of literary Spanish, considered as an elevated whole. And, as an accessory, it should explain the minor variations that educated speech exhibits in Spain and Spanish America, highlighting the essential unity of all within the literary canon (. . .). Considering the specific case of teaching Spanish to foreigners, I do not think we should hesitate to impose the pronunciation of Castilian regions, since it reflects with more precision than any other the age-old orthography used in literature. (p. 11)

In principle, Menéndez Pidal's choice seems simple: When teaching Spanish, the norm should be the literary language and, for oral production, Castilian speech. However, we must not overlook two crucial aspects of his pedagogic outlook. First, his choice is justified through a complex set of cultural, historical, political, and social arguments (the higher value granted to the selected variety originates in human will, men of action, and notable men of letters). Second, in teaching Spanish, the metalinguistic component of course content must go beyond grammatical categories and combinatory rules and aim at raising students' awareness of variation in a way that highlights the language's not only formal but also—and most important—conceptual unity. It is clear that Menéndez Pidal was determined to represent Spanish as a set of dialects that constitute a highly unified language, and that he saw unity guaranteed by the fact that heterogeneity is minimal, hierarchically organized, and equally valued by all members of the community that speak the language.

In sum, the director of Madrid's *Centro de Estudios Históricos* and distinguished member of the *Real Academia Española* was encouraging teachers of Spanish in the United States through the AATS and their journal *Hispania* to bring to the classroom not only one particular variety but also a specific representation of the language as a set of historically constituted and hierarchically organized dialects.

The challenge for us, of course, is to determine the historical specificity of the linguistic regime constructed by Menéndez Pidal and advanced as the basis for determining how to teach Spanish in the United States. Our task is to identify and analyze the image of Spanish that he discursively drew by invoking a series of linguistic ideologies and by embedding the language in specific cultural, historical, political, and social narratives (Joseph & Taylor, 1990; Kroskrity, 2000; Schieffelin, Woolard, & Kroskrity, 1998). The conceptual framework within which this type of analysis must proceed pictures language as a complex plurilectal repertoire (Blommaert, 2005; Zentella, 1997) deployed in interactional events in which social identities are performed by the interlocutors (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985). Communities are viewed as networks of human interaction constituted by cultural, political, and social relations. The position that individuals occupy, their mobility along the network or their ability to negotiate their role (to modify how they perceive themselves and how others perceive them) will explain their predisposition to act in

certain ways and to pass certain types of judgment on their own actions and those of others—what Bourdieu (1991) calls *habitus*. Thus, individuals will be more or less able and more or less inclined to use particular linguistic repertoires and to evaluate others' use of particular linguistic repertoires depending on their position, mobility, and capacity for negotiation within the network. We will refer to the always contested set of norms that assigns value to different elements of the linguistic repertoire in connection with different positions in the network as *linguistic regime* (see Kroskrity, 2000).

The studying of a community's linguistic regime (or regimes) must include the identification of specific sites where representations of language are produced and the analysis of these representations' ideological function. The sites of production of metalanguage are multiple (laws and regulations directly linked to language planning; dictionaries, grammars, and style manuals; opinion pieces in print or online publications; filmic representations of local or social dialects; comedians' engagement with cultural stereotypes through accent imitation; linguists' statements about what languages are or are not) and researchers must, of course, fine tune methods that allow them to produce credibly representative objects that are coherent with their project's epistemological goals. Within the conceptual landscape that we are drawing, metalanguage must be tackled from an ideological perspective; that is, with the assumption that linguistic representations are inextricably linked to cultural, political, and social arrangements (on the theoretical elaboration of metalanguage, see Jaworski, Coupland, & Galasiński, 2004). Since the early 1990s, *linguistic ideologies* emerged as a valuable theoretical category through which various groups of language scholars attempt to grasp this idea and build a consistent research agenda. In previous work, I advanced the following operative definition:

[Linguistic ideologies are] systems of ideas that articulate notions of language, languages, speech and/or communication with specific cultural, political and/or social formations. Although they belong to the realm of ideas and may be conceived as cognitive frameworks that coherently link language with some extralinguistic order—naturalizing it and normalizing it—, it is necessary to state that they are produced and reproduced in the material realm of linguistic and metalinguistic practices, among which those that exhibit a high level of institutionalization are of special interest to us. (Del Valle, 2007, p. 20)

If we now look at Menéndez Pidal's (1918) *La lengua española* from this theoretical perspective, we discern a representation of Spanish as a highly unified set of linguistic varieties (popular, vulgar, and educated; European and transatlantic; oral and literary), where each is discursively attached to different cultural, political, and social functions. The linguistic history of, first, Spain, second, the Spanish empire and, finally, the (postcolonial) panhispanic community, is told as a steady march toward the development of a minimally variable educated register and the creation of a single literary standard (Milroy & Milroy, 1991). In Menéndez Pidal's language-ideological system, this particular materialization of what James and Lesley Milroy (1991) have termed the ideology of standardization runs parallel to the ideology of linguistic modernization. Menéndez Pidal links the crystallization of a standard to

the activities of men of action and the brilliance of the most effective intellects who are loyal to the same tongue. Adventurers, merchants, magistrates, captains, tribunes, thinkers (. . .) anyone who wants to give life to a beautiful and useful idea beyond the place where it was born tries to create and preserve that more powerfully virtuous language, whose ultimate goal is to be understood even in the remotest confines where the related dialects are spoken and by future generations, securing the greatest reach in space and time. From the joint effort of these cultivated spirits and from all notable men of letters who have passed on, from its beginnings until now, the most general Romance of Spain, emerges this cultural historical product called par excellence the Spanish language. (Menéndez Pidal, 1918, p. 2)

Second, this portrayal of Spanish and of the literary corpus to which it is inextricably attached is constitutive of the ideology of panhispanism (Del Valle, 2011), a system of ideas that states the existence and encourages the promotion of a cultural community, anchored in the language, between Spain and its former colonies. We already saw how dialectal and sociolectal diversity are explained away as a normal state of affairs that in no way threatens the symbolic unity of a Spanish language whose Castilian varieties are placed at the top of the pyramid. The same applies, says Menéndez Pidal, to the emergence of literary traditions on both sides of the Atlantic: "It is clear that [the teaching of] literature must also cover the Spanish and Spanish American whole (. . .). The best practice will be to always consider Spanish literature from the old and new continent as a whole whose base is the classical and medieval tradition" (pp. 12–13).

Menéndez Pidal's particular rendering of the Spanish language exhibits the traces of its instrumental participation in modern nationalism, a remorseless civilizing imperialism, and a hopeful postcolonial panhispanic existence that will secure Spain's prominent place on a global stage. Spanish—again, his rendering of it—is modernity itself. His pedagogical recommendations to teachers of Spanish in the United States should be taken neither as purely technical choices—in what would be a flat interpretation—nor as preferences resulting from Menéndez Pidal's Eurocentric bias—in what would be a simplistic and simplifying reading. He was bringing to the pedagogic stage a whole set of language ideologies constituting the linguistic regime that informed his position on the question of normativity in the Spanish classroom in the United States.

#### DE-CENTERED SPANISH: NEW LINGUISTIC REGIMES IN TIMES OF GLOBALIZATION

As we approach the one hundredth anniversary of the AATSP, it seems appropriate to assess how discursive constructions of Spanish and the conditions under which it is taught in the United States have changed. While a detailed assessment falls outside the scope of this article, I will focus on two transformations that offer an illuminating contrast with the historical period when the AATS was founded and with Menéndez Pidal's (1918) imaginings of Spanish. First, while in the early 20th century the institutionalization of the teaching of Spanish in the United States targeted almost exclusively monolingual English speakers, in the early 21st century, the teaching of Spanish to native (or heritage) speakers has grown exponentially and has become of great interest to the profession (a testament to its crystallization is the generalization of the acronym SNS—Spanish for native speakers—in the literature). Second, while some hundred years ago Menéndez Pidal forged a pyramidal image of Spanish at whose top he placed Castilian varieties, Spanish linguistic agencies such as the *Real Academia Española* or the *Instituto Cervantes* (see following discussion) now embrace, at least discursively, a pluricentric view of the language explicitly distanced from any claims to the Castilian variety's superiority.

#### *A New Panhispanic Linguistic Regime*

As we saw in the previous section, Menéndez Pidal was profoundly committed to the ideology

of panhispanism (Pike, 1971; Sepúlveda, 2005; Van Aken, 1959). He insisted on and celebrated the cultural unity between Spain and its former colonies and pictured this panhispanic culture as grounded in Spain's central region, Castile. Panhispanism had actually emerged a few years before Menéndez Pidal's birth. In the middle of the 19th century, Spanish society (at least those who were in a position to care about this sort of thing) began to accept that the wars against the insurgent American colonies had been fought and lost by the 1820s. Except for Cuba and Puerto Rico (which would remain Spanish until the 1898 Spanish-American War), the rest were gone for good. In this new geopolitical scenario, some began to insist that Spain could still retain some level of preeminence over the new American nations with appropriate cultural policies that took advantage of and further cultivated the common cultural and linguistic Spanish heritage. This privileged relation with America's Spanish-speaking nations was thought to be strategically crucial to Spain's status in the international arena.

Panhispanism developed slowly; first, through periodical publications in which people linked to commerce, politics, and letters celebrated the shared culture, affirmed the familial bond, and exchanged views on how to strengthen it (*La América, Crónica Hispano-Americana, La Ilustración Española y Americana, Revista Hispano-Americana, El Correo Español, La Revista Española de Ambos Mundos*). In 1885, the *Unión Ibero-Americana* was founded to promote easier relations, to encourage the development of trade agreements, and to promote coordination in matters such as criminal and civil law or intellectual property law (*Unión Ibero-Americana*, 1893).

In spite of these efforts, panhispanism had only moderate success. On one hand, Spanish governments were rarely receptive enough to the demands of panhispanists to commit resources to the cause. On the other, panhispanist ideology had a built-in flaw that seriously jeopardized its possible acceptance in Spanish America: In its understanding of culture and language (as we clearly saw when discussing Menéndez Pidal's representation of Spanish), it reproduced cultural hierarchies constructed in colonial times (for disputes surrounding these linguistic ideologies, see Del Valle & Gabriel-Stheeman, 2002).

However, the tide would turn for panhispanism in the 1980s and 1990s. Political reforms undertaken after Generalísimo Francisco Franco's death in 1975 led to a parliamentary democracy that brought Spain in line with the forms of political organization preferred by the United

States and western Europe. Throughout the 1980s, the country joined ongoing processes of regional integration by becoming a member of NATO in 1982 and of the European Union in 1986. Processes of business expansion were underway and came to be supported by a series of privatizations of public companies. This strategy led to the development, throughout the decade and into the early 1990s, of several corporations (in sectors such as communications, energy, finances, and publishing) that planned their future growth in international markets (Cecchini & Zicolillo, 2002; Malló, 2011; Noya, 2009).

Spain had entered the global stage, and sectors of its ruling class became acutely aware of the extraordinary geopolitical value that the historically neglected panhispanist ideology could have for the country under these new conditions. Two aspects of Spain's global venture are of interest for the purposes of the present article. First, processes of regional integration as well as the global circulation of capital, information, and labor deeply transform international linguistic ecology. Spanish, spoken by 400 million people in some 60 countries, is seen as having tremendous potential to become a coveted resource in the global market; Spain is mobilizing to organize and control a linguistic industry that will produce and distribute it. Second, the Spanish-speaking world, and Spanish America in particular, is perceived as a potential market in which Spain may aspire to occupy a privileged position if it properly manages the construction of a language-based panhispanic community. The key, as panhispanism historically claimed, is to reinforce the idea of familial community in order to counter the possible perception of Spain's renewed interest in Spanish America as a neocolonial move.

Thus, in order to promote Spanish in the international linguistic market, the Spanish government created the Instituto Cervantes in 1991 (to a great extent modeled after the British Council and the Alliance Française). Its main goal is to be a central player in the business of producing and selling the linguistic commodity known as Spanish. The institute creates its own teaching materials and language schools, develops its own system of proficiency certification (known as *Diploma de Español Lengua Extrajera* [Spanish as a Foreign Language Diploma] or DELE), signs collaboration agreements with universities and various cultural agencies, and offers testing and assessment services to educational institutions, businesses, and governments. The institute also plays a significant role within

Spanish cultural diplomacy and repeatedly states its commitment to promoting Spain as a brand name and securing the country's soft power (Mar-Molinero, 2006; Noya, 2009; Sanhuesa Carvajal, 2003).

The Instituto's position with respect to the normative question (which Spanish to teach?) is meticulously and clearly described in its master plan for curriculum design (*Plan curricular del Instituto Cervantes. Niveles de referencia para el español* [Cervantes Institute's Curricular Plan. Reference Standards for Spanish]). First developed in 1994, it was updated in 2007 on the basis of levels of proficiency grounded in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) that the Council of Europe had endorsed in 2001. The introduction to the plan ("Preliminares") includes a section entitled "Norma lingüística y variedades del español" [Linguistic norm and varieties of Spanish] that directly tackles the pedagogical challenge posed by variation and by the need to standardize the treatment of normativity in a highly structured institutional setting such as the language schools and the proficiency tests run by the Instituto Cervantes. Ultimately, this choice does not differ formally from Menéndez Pidal's, made almost one hundred years earlier. Just like the philologist, the *Plan curricular* highlights Spanish's complexity, although the 2007 text describes the language as pluricentric given the existence of several geographically distributed educated norms. Within this complexity, the selection of linguistic materials will give preference to "la norma culta de la variedad centro-norte peninsular española" [the educated norm of the Spanish peninsular center-north variety] (Instituto Cervantes, 2007). While "Castile" and "literature" are conspicuously absent from the present text (absorbed, respectively, by "peninsular center-north" and the broader "educated norm"), the choice is ultimately the same.

There are some significant differences, however. As we just saw, the Instituto defines Spanish as pluricentric, a significant change with respect to the image produced by Menéndez Pidal. Also, it claims no superiority, either inherent or historical, for the chosen variety: "Spanish [has] several educated norms each from different geographic locations; the Spanish peninsular center-north norm is just one of them" (Instituto Cervantes, 2007). For Menéndez Pidal, the choice was based on the language's pyramidal structure, which in turn resulted from the cultural and political superiority of Castile throughout Spanish and Hispanic history. In contrast, the Instituto's choice is justified on the basis of eminently

practical criteria. Two criteria focus on the commonalities between the chosen norm and the other educated varieties as well as on its prestige throughout the Hispanic community. One—the most evident—openly locates the document and the policies of which it is a part in a particular national space: The Spanish peninsular center–north norm is explicitly chosen because the Instituto Cervantes is an agency of the Spanish government.

In sum, the Instituto's engagement in the teaching of Spanish is bound to a linguistic regime informed by ideologies of linguistic commodification, as well as by ideologies of standardization and pluricentricity. The linguistic needs of the European process of regional integration, addressed in part through the CEFR, and the responsibility to work on behalf of Spain's interests frame the Instituto's curricular planning and normative choices. However, in spite of the agency's Spanish and European anchorage, it clearly exhibits ambitions of global projection: Brazil and the United States are constantly referred to as privileged stages for the activity of the Instituto Cervantes. This coveted projection in global linguistic markets ends up imposing a double and paradoxical challenge: A high degree of standardization is required as much as flexibility to adapt to the conditions of local markets. Companies such as Starbucks and McDonald's have proven to be skillful in the resolution of this dilemma; so has the Instituto Cervantes in developing a view of normativity consistent with an appropriate linguistic regime: The selection of a highly focalized norm speaks to the needs for a standardized product and the inclusion of pluricentricity as well as intercultural attitudes and skills in the contents of their curriculum provides tools for adjustment to local needs.

As we saw above, Spain's entrance to the hallways of globalization also entailed the projection of its corporations throughout Spanish America. There were instances in which Spain's economic penetration was labeled as neocolonial (Del Valle, 2007), which confirmed the need to resort to panhispanism, that is, to the consolidation of a sense of community grounded in the common language that would naturalize and legitimize Spain's presence in Spanish America. Therefore, in order to tackle the intricacies of this diplomatic front, Spain's language academy, the *Real Academia Española* (RAE), was mobilized to resurrect the dormant panhispanic project.

The RAE was founded in 1713 at an important crossroads in Spain's history. A war of succession

(1701–1714) had resulted in the Spanish Crown being turned over to the Bourbons—the Habsburgs had held it for centuries—and the consequent influence of France's political culture. In Bourbon Spain, Spanish became an instrument in the new process of political centralization. It thus required a robust standardizing effort that could be channeled through a language academy (Medina, 2013). Modeled after France's *Académie Française* and Italy's *Accademia della Crusca*, the RAE undertook as its most pressing task the elaboration of a dictionary, a lexicographic monument that would bring Spanish the honor that had been granted to French and Italian by those nations' great lexicographers. The dictionary was indeed published between 1726 and 1739 and was followed by an orthography in 1741 and, finally, a grammar in 1771 (see Zamora Vicente, 1999, for a history of the institution).

The RAE's relation with America does not seem to have been worthy of much discussion among academicians until a couple of decades after most Spanish colonies became independent. In 1847, Andrés Bello published what would become a classic text in Spanish America's intellectual history: *Gramática de la lengua castellana para uso de los Americanos* [Grammar of Spanish for Spanish Americans]: a grammar of Spanish (here called Castilian, which was not uncommon then, nor is it now) written by a Spanish American explicitly for Spanish Americans. Bello, born in Caracas but residing in Chile since 1829, was one of the subcontinent's most distinguished men of letters (see Jaksic, 2007, for a biography). Not only was he notable for his grammatical and philological erudition, but also for his literary work and for his contribution to the development of a specifically Spanish American legal system (his centrality in the elaboration of Chile's civil code, which would be the model for many others after, is worth mentioning in this regard). The fact is that Bello's grammar was a wake-up call for the RAE: Spanish Americans seemed to be ready to assume control over the language without any need for the Spaniards' approval.

While Spanish academicians' reaction was slow, they did eventually—in 1870, to be precise—move toward creating a network of subsidiary academies in America that, while securing Spain's preeminence, would also make Spanish Americans feel included in the management of the language. The network developed at different speeds in different countries and crystallized in the form of the *Asociación de Academias de la Lengua Española* [Association of Academies of the Spanish Language] or ASALE, after a conference held in



Mexico in 1951 (Del Valle, 2013). However, the political significance of both RAE and ASALE remained low until successive Spanish governments as well as Spain-based corporations with global ambitions saw their potential to help constitute the panhispanic community: a panhispanic community—as well as a market—that, first, would legitimize the free movement of Spanish capital and corporations and, second, would anchor the extraordinary value of the Spanish language in global linguistic markets. The efforts to construct this community, in this particular historical context and from within the institutional framework of language academies, resulted in a profound reconceptualization of the Spanish language, of which three aspects are salient:

1. A great effort is made to present every normative text not as resulting from the RAE's work but as a product of a collective undertaking in which all academies of the Spanish language participate.
2. Spanish is defined—and here there is consistency between the academies and the Instituto Cervantes—as a pluricentric language in which no single educated norm should stand over the others.
3. The academies minimize their prescriptive role and claim to be mere guardians of a normative system that directly emerges from the speakers.

One paragraph from an online document that was designed to publicize the *Nueva Gramática de la Lengua Española* (signed jointly by RAE and ASALE in 2010) will help to understand the complex type of norm that emerges from the new linguistic regime of panhispanism and globalization:

**To describe the grammatical constructions of general Spanish**, and to properly document those phonological, morphological and syntactic variants that each community may regard as belonging to the educated variety, even when they do not fully coincide with choices favored in other areas. To document non-standard **conversational variants** found in the Hispanic world, as long as they are well documented and relevant to the description of morphological or syntactic structures (. . .) a **detailed**, even meticulous, oeuvre that takes into account differences established on the basis of dialectal areas, levels of language, and registers (. . .). It pays special attention to the **description of the main** phonological, morphological, and syntactic **variants** from all Spanish-speaking areas, as well as to **small differences in meaning and conditions of use**. (ASALE, 2010, emphasis in original)

The first striking aspect of this image of the grammar that points in the direction of a new linguistic regime is its inclusiveness. In contrast with the conventional prescriptive practices associated with language academies, the point of departure is not said to be a selection, but rather a meticulous account of the language in its totality: It is said to include dialectal areas, levels of language, registers, conditions of usage, general Spanish, educated Spanish, and conversational varieties. The language is presented—in keeping with the principles of variationist sociolinguistics—as a complex linguistic system in which variables and varieties correlate with contextual and social factors, and the academies' task as describing, representing, and registering the system. Thus the grammar text—according to the self-portrait drawn in the introduction—comes across as essentially descriptive. However, while openly prescriptive discourse, let alone purism, is by and large abandoned, normativity is not. There are right and wrong forms; there are appropriate and inappropriate ways of speaking. But it is not the academies, we are told, that determine the value of different forms; they themselves insist that the normative system is negotiated by speakers themselves, and that it is, therefore, inherent to the social life of the language (see Del Valle, 2009, for a fuller analysis of the grammar).

It seems clear that the RAE's leadership understood how globalization had changed the economic and political role that the institution could play. On one hand, openly purist and Eurocentric ideologies of language would severely impair the institution's ability to perform its panhispanic community-building task. On the other, rigid management of the language—an excessively zealous embrace of the ideology of standardization—might have the undesired effect of rendering it less valuable not just as a source of panhispanic identity but as a highly coveted linguistic asset on the global stage.

#### *Teaching Spanish in the United States: Old and New Linguistic Regimes*

Among the many demographic changes experienced by the United States at the end of the 20th century, the growth of its Latino/a population is of special interest for our purposes. Figures from the U.S. Census (2008 and 2010) showing this trend are readily available online but these facts will highlight the proportions of the demographic phenomenon: By 1970, there were approximately 9.6 million Latino/as making up 4.7% of the

population and by 2010 they had reached 50 million, or 16% of the nation's population. In 2008, the U.S. Census Bureau predicted that by 2050, Latino/as will reach 102 million and 24% of the population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008 and 2010).

There is yet another phenomenon relevant to the points being made in the present article that unfolds within approximately the same period. At the postsecondary level, while there was an overall increase in enrollment in languages other than English or LOTEs (excluding Greek and Latin) between 1960 and 2009 (from 608,749 to 1,629,326), the growth in the proportion of these enrollments that belong to Spanish must be singled out: If in 1960 there were 178,689 enrollments in Spanish and 430,060 in all other LOTEs (except Greek and Latin), by 2009 enrollment in Spanish reached 864,986 while all other LOTEs (minus Greek and Latin) amounted to 764,340 (Furman, Goldberg, & Lusin, 2010).

The presentation of these data is intended to front the fact that the Spanish language has reached an unprecedented level of prominence in many dimensions of U.S. society. This prominence is testament to the highly dynamic socio-cultural fabric of the United States and indexes—if somewhat loosely—its profound implication in global networks through phenomena such as migration, regional integration, global trade (e.g., NAFTA), and military intervention.

One discursive and institutional site (though certainly not the only one) in which the demographic growth of Latino/as and educational prominence of Spanish converge is the teaching of Spanish to native speakers (SNS). The scholars who have surveyed the SNS field (such as Leeman, 2005; Leeman & Martínez, 2007; Martínez, 2003; Villa, 1996) point at an early stage that embraced pedagogical practices focused on the eradication of the varieties of Spanish brought by students to the classroom. These varieties were associated either with regional and marginal social positions or with the unacceptable influence of English (or with both). Marie Esman Barker's (1972) textbook entitled *Español para el bilingüe* [Spanish for bilinguals] is often mentioned as a good example of this approach, best represented by the *appendix probè*-style grammar of *se dice/no se dice* ['we say. . . /we do not say. . .']. After the 1970s, however, the explicit embrace of what could be called the replacement paradigm faded. While many of us still hear in the hallways of our departments occasional statements about our Latino/a students' need to *desaprender* [unlearn] what they

know, few dare take such a stand publicly today within the academic field.

A new climate of opinion that acknowledged the value of popular culture and subaltern ethnic identities—brought about, at least in part, by the civil rights movement—and developments in social dialectology—in which variationist sociolinguistics played a central role—resulted in the emergence of new conceptualizations of Spanish in the United States and different foundations for an SNS pedagogy. While the existence of a standard was not questioned, the sociolinguistic stratification of Spanish in the United States was framed in a kinder narrative and, while teaching the standard remained a central goal, awareness and appreciation of different varieties with the appropriate contexts of usage for each were also promoted (Valdés, 1981; Valdés & Fallis, 1976, 1978). From quite early, however, the concept of a standard began to be, if not questioned, at least problematized: Margarita Hidalgo (1987) spoke of the existence of multiple standards, the difficulty of adopting one in the context of SNS in the United States, and the consequent need to construct those standards carefully and pragmatically.

Later, Daniel J. Villa's (1996, 2002) provocative work on the topic would force scholars in the field to ponder exactly to what degree the appropriateness paradigm had actually superseded the replacement paradigm. Villa's work is provocative not just because of its likely polemical nature—a good thing in my view of intellectual exchange—but also and especially because it identified the normative question, and therefore social stratification, as essentially political. Villa sees the linguistic regime embraced by his predecessors (the one that gives social meaning to the appropriateness paradigm) as reproducing historically constituted hierarchies: first, by colonization, placing Spanish varieties at the top of the linguistic pyramid (cf. Menéndez Pidal, 1918); and, second, by postcolonial discriminatory social practices that, even when they shed Castilian dominance, do not redistribute capital (linguistic or otherwise). The main thrust of his argument is that the choice of which standard to adopt in SNS curricular planning must not be uncritical. It must not be made on the basis of spuriously objective linguistic criteria but on an open discussion of the specific goals being pursued and on the recognition of the political grounds in which each choice is rooted. He proposes that, in SNS curricular planning, the standard/nonstandard dichotomy be abandoned and replaced with the oral/written language pair, that the students' community

varieties be used as the basis for the expansion of their oral skills, and that classroom interaction focus on developing the students' ability to negotiate meaning across dialects. He also claims that his choice to use the community varieties will not only promote students' appreciation of their identity but also provide them with a valuable economic resource, as these varieties of Spanish are highly valued in certain sectors of the U.S. economy (such as health care, banking, education, social services, or the court system, Villa, 1996). In other words, Villa is making normative and pedagogical choices consistent with a linguistic regime in which the varieties spoken in Latino/a students' communities are applied to functions traditionally performed by varieties constructed by institutions such as language academies representing the interests of socioeconomically privileged groups. In his explicitly political pedagogical choice, he is bringing widespread linguistic ideologies—linking, for example, language to identity and resorting to a commodified view of language—to the construction of an openly transgressive linguistic regime.

The literature on normativity in SNS is, as one would expect, of oceanic proportions. But suffice these three briefly presented positions to advance the point that significant demographic changes in the United States—linked to a great extent to migration and associated with growing diversity within traditionally more homogeneous institutions such as universities—have led to the emergence of new linguistic regimes and, therefore, to a spirited discussion of pedagogical practices. Let us not lose sight of the fact that these social changes have in fact transformed the conditions under which the teaching of Spanish occurs not just to heritage speakers but also to nonheritage speakers, who actually make up the vast majority of students in our classrooms. While I chose the example of the field of SNS teaching due to the intensity of the debates that it has generated and for expository purposes, the following discussion on the role of normativity in the classroom is pertinent to Spanish teaching in general.

#### GLOBALIZATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES: NEW DIRECTIONS FOR MODERN LANGUAGES?

In order to assess the full implications of the language-ideological debates triggered by the *which Spanish* dilemma (Blommaert, 1999), we should consider them in the context of the profound transformations affecting U.S. universities. In particular, we should discuss their rele-

vance in relation to the processes of self-reflection that the modern languages profession has felt compelled to undergo. Two reports sponsored by the Modern Language Association (MLA) in recent years offer us a concrete framework through which to define this critical period: *Foreign languages and higher education: New structures for a changed world* (MLA, 2007) and *Report to the Teagle Foundation on the undergraduate major in language and literature* (MLA, 2009).

"Foreign Languages" (MLA, 2007) is justified by its authors with an argument grounded in the deep geopolitical changes of the turn of the century: the end of the Cold War and the terrorist attacks perpetrated in the United States on September 11, 2001. This new world stage—especially as a result of the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq and other post-September 11 military actions undertaken by the United States—brought about the perception of a linguistic crisis in the North American country, an awareness of the communicative limitations faced by U.S. military agents in responding to the challenges posed by the new defense and security requirements. Thus, faced with the possibility that the study of foreign cultures and languages would be structured around the defense and security objectives of the post-September 11 period, the MLA launched a process of self-analysis that would result in new curricular structures led by professionals from within the field.

The "Report to the Teagle Foundation" (MLA, 2009), although less explicit about its geopolitical justification, linked with its predecessor by placing curricular planning against the backdrop of globalization: the ubiquity of the market and its logic; the erosion of national sovereignty and of the nation as a referential framework for the deployment and interpretation of cultural practices; the development of information technologies toward the fast and massive distribution of texts and images; and the proliferation and growth of networks of interaction that constantly bring individuals and communities face to face with alterity.

The changes affecting the humanities were also present, though somewhat latently, in both reports. They show awareness of the new relationship between the university and society, and of the growing pressure on the former to better prepare students to enter the labor market; of the shift in the revenue sources of public universities from the state to tuition and partnerships with the private sector; and of the greater dominance of the pursuit of profit over the pursuit of the common good. In sum, the university, ever more corporate

in its operations, demands that the humanities make their value explicit, and the conditions that globalization imposes on cultural practices are taken as an appropriate context for meeting that demand. Consequently, the MLA (2007) report endorses an approach to language teaching that overcomes the idea of learning language as internalizing a grammar and embraces instead the acquisition of the translingual and transcultural competences needed in the complex environments created by globalizing processes. It also encourages departments of foreign languages to embrace as their mission the preparation of students who can competently decodify cultural narratives: “ability to comprehend and analyze the cultural narratives that appear in every kind of expressive form—from essays, fiction, poetry, drama, journalism, humor, advertising, political rhetoric, and legal documents to performance, visual forms, and music” (p. 4).

The MLA (2009) report points in the same direction: “The group concluded that the arts of language and the tools of literacy are key qualifications for full participation in the social, political, economic, literary, and cultural life of the twenty-first century” (MLA, 2009, Executive summary, no page indication). The report is structured through an illuminating play on words built around the intertwining etymological routes of *literature* and *literacy*. The study of languages and literatures—both understood as cultural practices and artifacts—is the basis from which to build the acquisition of a series of literacies—communicative, analytic, technological—that must be, first, aware of their own historicity and, second, operative in transcultural contexts. The goal must be the attainment of forms of literacy that enable abstract thinking, that allow for the decodification of literary objects in which structure, texture, and narrative techniques reveal layers of signification, and that promote an understanding of the dynamic nature of languages as artifacts that are inseparable from the historical contexts in which they operate. The humanities originate in the classical liberal arts—knowledge that enables the free citizen—and their current destiny depends on our ability to affirm that tradition and turn it into the basis for the creation of a both national and global citizenship.

#### LINGUISTIC REGIMES AT THE CENTER: LANGUAGE TEACHING, HIGHER EDUCATION, AND GLOBAL IMPERATIVES

If Villa (1996, 2002) has proposed a radical transformation of SNS teaching practices through

the embrace of an alternative and socially transgressive linguistic regime and a more interculturally oriented understanding of classroom interaction, Jennifer Leeman and Glenn Martínez (Leeman, 2005; Leeman & Martínez, 2007; Martínez, 2003) have also contributed to the critical assessment of the SNS field and have forcefully espoused (mainly Leeman, 2005) the adoption of critical pedagogies that focus not only on students’ acquisition of a grammar but also of a sensitivity (they would in all likelihood say *critical understanding*) toward the intricate sociocultural hierarchies to which languages are inextricably attached. In other words, they espouse an approach to SNS teaching (inspired by critical applied linguistics; see Pennycook, 2001) in which the object of pedagogic exchange is not simply a linguistic norm—a reified representation of the language—but the linguistic regime in which it is inscribed.

As has been demonstrated in this article, raising the students’ language awareness has always been an explicit goal in proposals for how to teach Spanish in the United States (and not just to heritage speakers). Menéndez Pidal (1918) advised the AATS to teach the literary variety and, for oral production, Castilian pronunciation. However, he also insisted that the existing variation be conveyed to students within a narrative that emphasized linguistic unity as well as the unitary nature (hierarchically unitary, that is) of the literary production on both sides of the Atlantic. Almost one century later, the Instituto Cervantes (2006)—whose mission involves the production of teaching materials and the teaching of Spanish (in countries including the United States)—acknowledges its pragmatic preference for Spain’s norm, but also encourages curricular plans that state the contingent nature of their choice, describe the language as democratically pluricentric, and promote interdialectal communication. Language awareness, as we saw, is also central in discussions of the teaching of SNS in the United States. Whether it is awareness that we say X but we do not say Y, that the variety spoken at home is inappropriate in formal contexts, or that the community variety has been historically stigmatized and must now be embraced in an emancipatory spirit, metalanguage is claimed as a central curricular component. Of course, the key distinction among the different schools of thought is the type of awareness to which various forms of metalanguage will lead. Will the narratives that present the chosen norm aim at naturalizing the choice or will they stimulate the students’ understanding of the choice’s political inscription?

Martínez (2003)—in a line of thinking that in many points crosses Villa's (1996, 2002) views—embraces a classroom-based dialect awareness that, while acknowledging its debt to Walt Wolfram and his collaborators (Wolfram, 1999; Wolfram, Adger, & Christian, 1999), focuses on developing the students' understanding of the power differentials associated with dialectal diversity from the early stages of the learning process. The following lines eloquently convey both the nature of his approach and its emancipating spirit: "If our students walk into the class saying *haiga* [an equivalently stigmatized form in English could be 'I don't know nothing,'] and walk out saying *haya* ['I don't know anything,'], there has been, in my estimation, no value added. However, if they walk in saying *haiga* and walk out saying either *haya* or *haiga* **and** having the ability to defend their use of *haiga* if and when **they** see fit, then there has been value added" (Martínez, 2003, p. 10, original emphasis). Similarly, Leeman (2005), after deconstructing the appropriateness paradigm and arguing that it ultimately reproduces the same social hierarchies of more puristic models, explicitly embraces a critical pedagogy (grounded in authors such as Canagarajah, 1999, Fairclough, 2001, and Pennycook, 2001) that focuses students' attention on the political nature of language:

I argue that in order to help students critically understand their own lives and worlds, develop agency in making their own language choices, and participate in the building of a more democratic society, educators must make the relationship between language and sociopolitical issues explicit, provide opportunities for students to examine and interrogate dominant linguistic practices and hierarchies, and encourage students to explore the ways language can be used to perform a wide range of social functions and identity work. (Leeman, 2005, p. 36)

Thus, the work of scholars such as Leeman, Martínez, and Villa has revealed the limitations, both in scope and ideology, of traditional approaches to SNS and advanced proposals for a profound reform of how the SNS curriculum is planned. Their work has an admirably militant thrust—inherent to the critical perspective that they explicitly take—and is grounded in a spirit of advocacy for the rights of Latino/as in the United States. It is in fact explicitly constitutive of a new linguistic regime. But we must not lose sight of the much broader implications of their critiques and proposals. Two of these are of special interest to the purposes of the present article:

1. They highlight the fact that Spanish is both a cultural artifact and a form of social practice, and that, as such, it cannot be understood separately from the cultural, political, and social contexts of its production and use.
2. They stand for curricular choices that place the understanding of the contextual conditions under which Spanish is produced and used as a central piece of the syllabus.

The importance given here to these lines of thinking rests on the fact that they are not exclusively relevant to the teaching of SNS. They are in fact central to the teaching of Spanish as a foreign language—and of any foreign language for that matter—in a way that meets the intellectual and institutional challenges posed by globalization to the humanities and outlined by the MLA reports discussed earlier in this article.

As individuals participate in multiple networks at the local, national, regional, and global levels, they require not just some form of the elite bilingualism that Modernity so valued, but a broader linguistic culture. Speaking two, three, or as many languages as one can learn will not suffice in many of the communication sites being generated by globalization unless that ability is part of a larger and more contextually nuanced linguistic competence that enables the individual to commit to translanguaging and transcultural practices that do not fit within the monolingual communication model. (For an insightful discussion of the meaning and pedagogical implications of translanguaging and transcultural communication, see Kramsch, 2006, 2010; see also Ofelia García and her team's work on translanguaging, e.g., Celic & Seltzer, 2011; García, 2009). Multilingualism will not suffice unless individuals are prepared to confront new languages and new communicative practices equipped with the ability to decodify the cultural, political, and social arrangements entangled with them. The proliferation and growth of multifarious networks of communication will constantly bring individuals face to face with new cultural narratives anchored in unfamiliar cultural, political, and social worlds. Teaching language as grammar can no longer meet these needs; it can no longer (has it ever?) claim to be a central mission of the truly humanistic knowledge that our universities should stimulate students to acquire.

The authors of textbooks who choose among multiple norms and endless sources for reading, the language program directors who select textbooks and other teaching materials, and the

instructors who decide whether or how to adjust their speech to the classroom setting, all face a dilemma. They must make a choice, and they do, whether they want to or not, because choosing what to say and how to say it is the very nature of language. Their choice, like all choices, will be inscribed in a particular linguistic regime, maybe even in a crossroads where several linguistic regimes converge and even clash. What is crucial from the position that I am taking here is less the choice of one particular norm over others than the importance that students be made aware that a choice was made and be equipped with the necessary analytical tools to see the cultural, political, and social context of the choice.

Developing students' critical knowledge—not just awareness—of the cultural, political, and social dimensions of language must be placed at the center of curriculum planning and syllabus design from the early stages of language learning. This means that even at the so-called elementary and intermediate levels, syllabi should include metalinguistic content that focuses on the development of that kind of critical competence. From these early stages, metalinguistic material must be presented in a form that meets the particular intellectual challenges associated with a university education in the age of globalization. We must further push in the direction of content-based instruction and, in particular, of syllabi that include a significant number of units devoted to social dialectology, discourse analysis, and the critical understanding of the cultural, social, and political dimension of language. We must envision and test syllabi in which a significant percentage of the units (to be determined by further research) are devoted to these content areas and taught in English. We must envision and test syllabi in which the development of communication skills is not conceived as the acquisition of a purely technical ability but imagined as the acquisition of a greater capacity to engage in communicationally challenging and socio-politically loaded encounters. We must prove that there is a fundamental difference between studying a language in an institution of higher education and learning it at a language school for tourists or business travelers. This kind of break in curriculum design will entail, of course, revising and, in all likelihood, renouncing some deeply entrenched dogmas (such as the exclusive use of the target language in the classroom) and accepting the gigantic challenges associated with preparing instructors who are properly qualified for this kind of pedagogical practice.

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