4 Spanish in the USA

Kim Potowski and Maria Carreira

Introduction

Spanish is the most commonly spoken non-English language in the US, with the 2007 Census update citing 34.5 million speakers on the mainland (that is, excluding Puerto Rico, where it is spoken by nearly everyone). As noted in Table 1.1, there was a 62 percent growth in the Spanish-speaking population between 1990 and 2000 and a further 23 percent growth between 2000 and 2007. In fact, it is predicted that Latinos – a term we will be using interchangeably with "Hispanics" – may contribute more net growth to the US population than all other groups combined after 2020 (US Census Bureau 2000). What surprises many people is that the USA has currently the fifth largest Spanish-speaking population in the world, with more Spanish-speakers than any other nation except Mexico, Colombia, Spain and Argentina (CIA 2008).

Spanish is also the non-English language that hails from the greatest number of different countries. In total, Spanish-speakers from nineteen different Latin American countries were present in the "Hispanic" category of the 2000 Census. The Spanish spoken in these countries is mutually intelligible for the most part, yet different linguistic and cultural backgrounds create an interesting Spanish-speaking mosaic in the USA. As we will see in this chapter, there are many factors that appear to favor the maintenance of the Spanish language in the USA, yet despite its strong presence in the media and many educational efforts, shift to English is clearly happening by the third generation.

History

Spanish, like all Romance languages, originally derived from Latin. This particular dialect of Latin was spoken in northern Spain. It rose to prominence during the "Reconquest," when Christian kingdoms in northern Spain fought to take control of southern Spain from the Moors, an Arabic-speaking group who had invaded the Iberian Peninsula in 711. In 1492, when the last Moor stronghold fell to the northern military, Queen Isabel of Castile and King Ferdinand of Aragon declared that the dialect of Castile, called Castilian, would

be the official language of the kingdom. In common usage today, "Castilian" is synonymous with "Spanish." Over the next centuries, waves of Spanish explorers and colonists transported the Spanish language to Latin America and other parts of the world (Penny 2002). As is common with most languages, Spanish underwent many changes in its new homelands, and today there are marked differences in how Spanish is spoken around the world. Yet for the most part, people can understand each other, in much the same way that English speakers from the USA, the UK, Australia, and India can understand each other despite dialect differences.

In what is currently US territory, Spanish has been spoken since the sixteenth century, when Spanish explorer Ponce de León arrived in Florida in 1513. The Spaniards founded St. Augustine soon thereafter, in 1565, which is now the oldest continuously occupied European settlement in the modern territory of the USA. As the size of the USA expanded due to wars and land purchases, its Spanish-speaking population increased. For example, when the USA made the Louisiana Purchase from the French in 1803, there were many Spanish speakers who had moved to that area when it briefly belonged to Spain from 1763–1800. However, the largest increase of Spanish speakers came with the end of the Mexican–American war in 1848, when Mexico lost nearly half of its territory, including all of modern-day California, Nevada, and Utah, and parts of modern-day Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Texas, and Wyoming. This annexation resulted in all of the territory's Spanish-speaking Mexican residents becoming American citizens overnight. Finally, the Spanish–American War of 1898 saw the annexation of Cuba and Puerto Rico. Cuba gained its independence in 1902, but Puerto Rico remained a territory of the USA, where Spanish is the first language and the citizens hold US citizenship.

More recent influxes of Spanish speakers include Mexican workers brought in under the "bracero" programs during World War I, Cuban "Marielitos" in the 1980s and the "Balseros" in the 1990s, many economically motivated groups from Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, and Central Americans fleeing civil unrest in the latter part of the twentieth century. The Center for Immigration Studies (2003) estimates that an average of 1.5 million legal and undocumented immigrants arrive in the US each year, 46 percent of whom come from Spanish-speaking Latin American countries. Mexico is the country of origin of most of these immigrants (64 percent). Other countries that contribute large numbers of immigrants are El Salvador, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, and Colombia (US Census Bureau 2003a).[1]

Demographics

In 2000, Census-counted Hispanics constituted 14 percent of the US population.[2] However, their demographic presence varies widely from one

Table 4.1. *States with the largest Spanish-speaking populations*

	Ages 5 +	Percentage of all US Spanish speakers
California	9,212,392	28.56
Texas	5,932,609	18.39
Florida	3,031,002	9.39
New York	2,454,592	7.61
Illinois	1,450,811	4.49
Arizona	1,155,803	3.58
New Jersey	1,078,532	3.34
Georgia	547,778	1.69
Colorado	515,762	1.59
New Mexico	485,757	1.50
Total in USA	34,547,077	

Source: Modern Language Association 2009, US Census Bureau 2007c.

state to another. For example, the nation's highest concentrations of Hispanics are found in New Mexico (which is 44% Latino), California (36%), Texas (35%), Arizona (29%), Nevada (24%), and Florida (20%). By contrast, Latinos make up just 1% of the population of Vermont. Table 4.1 displays the ten states with the largest Spanish-speaking populations. It is worth noting, though, that while some areas are relatively sparsely populated – particularly in New Mexico and western Texas – they have very high concentrations of Latinos. Some cities, such as New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Houston, have both large raw numbers and high concentrations of Hispanics. We will see later how geographic concentration has a positive effect on minority language maintenance.

In addition, as is evident from Table 4.2, Latinos are largely urban dwellers. 92 percent reside in a metropolitan area or in close proximity to one. Accordingly, in all but two of the ten largest American cities (Philadelphia and Detroit), the Latino presence amply exceeds the national average of 14 percent.

Approximately 70 percent of US Latinos – that is, 28 million out of the 42 million Hispanics in the USA – speak Spanish at home. This means that one out of ten American households is Spanish speaking (Pew Hispanic Center 2007), although it is important to remember that of all US Spanish speakers, 71 percent claim to speak English "very well" or "well" (US Census Bureau 2007c). The ratio of Spanish speakers is significantly higher in areas of high Latino concentration such as those represented in Table 4.2 – for example, 92 percent of households in Hialeah, Florida, near Miami, are Spanish speaking.

Table 4.2. *Ten largest urban areas in total population and in Latino population*

City and state	Rank by total population	Rank by Hispanic population	Percent Latino of total population
New York, NY	1	1	27.0
Los Angeles, CA	2	2	46.5
Chicago, IL	3	3	26.0
Houston, TX	4	4	37.4
Philadelphia, PA	5	24	8.5
Phoenix, AZ	6	6	34.1
San Diego, CA	7	9	25.4
Dallas, TX	8	8	35.6
San Antonio, TX	9	5	58.7
Detroit, MI	10	72	5.0

Source: US Census Bureau 2000a.

Thus, in terms of demographics, the US Latino population and its Spanish-speaking contingent are both numerically large and geographically concentrated. Geographic concentration has been shown to play a major role in the preservation of minority languages (Portes and Rumbaut 1996, 229). In particular, regarding Spanish, Alba *et al.* (2002) found that a third generation Cuban child living in Miami, where 50 percent of the population is Spanish-speaking, is twenty times more likely to be bilingual than a child living in an area where just 5 percent of the population speaks this language. A similar, though smaller, effect was found to hold for Mexicans as well. The other primary factor correlated with Spanish maintenance was whether or not the parents had married a Spanish speaker.

According to the 2000 Census, the three largest Hispanic groups in the USA are Mexican (59%), Puerto Rican (10%), and Cuban (4%). Typically there have been large concentrations of Mexicans in the Southwest, Puerto Ricans in the Northeast, and Cubans in Miami. However, more diverse communities are beginning to emerge. Table 4.2 displays the ten largest groups and the cities they most commonly live in. Larger US cities such as New York, Los Angeles and Chicago are also beginning to see individuals of mixed Hispanic ethnicity, such as "MexiRicans" (Rúa 2001; Potowski 2008).

Of the US Latino population, it is estimated that 40 percent are foreign-born (see Table 4.3) and 60 percent are born in the USA. This distinction can be important for language use and retention. Those Hispanics born abroad have usually experienced sustained and often monolingual development in Spanish. Research has indicated that the later the age at which home Spanish speakers begin to acquire English, the stronger their Spanish grammatical systems will be

Table 4.3. *Ten largest Hispanic groups by country of ethnic origin*

National origin	Total number	Percentage of US Latino population
Mexico	20,640,711	58.5
Puerto Rico	3,406,178	9.6
Cuba	1,241,685	3.5
Dominican Republic	764,945	2.2
El Salvador	655,165	1.9
Colombia	470,684	1.3
Guatemala	372,487	1.1
Ecuador	260,559	0.7
Peru	233,926	0.7
Honduras	217,569	0.6

Source: US Census Bureau 2000a.

(Montrul 2002). US Hispanics have the highest birth rate in the nation, thus the proportion of US-born Latinos may soon become even larger than it already is. As we will see in a later section, there is a strong tendency for Spanish speakers to shift to English by the third generation in the USA. Therefore, these demographic trends indicate that the presence of Spanish in the USA is being bolstered by the new arrival of monolingual immigrants, but not by those who are the grandchildren of these immigrants.[3]

Public presence of Spanish

The previous section showed that Spanish speakers are numerous and concentrated. This section will present a brief description of the presence of Spanish in public life in the USA, which is quite large given the numbers of Spanish speakers in the nation. One can be attended to in Spanish over the telephone and in person for many basic services including the Department of Motor Vehicles, police, hospitals, utility companies, banks, fast-food restaurants, supermarkets, many libraries, and airports, either because Spanish service is officially offered by the organization or because it employs individuals who are Spanish speakers. In this section we will focus on the presence of Spanish in government, the media, business, and education.

Government

In the realm of government, public policy, and politics, Spanish presents a mixed profile. On the one hand, many Americans see it as a threat to their country's

identity and linguistic integrity. On the other, elected officials see it as a critical tool for communicating effectively with the Latino population and gaining its support. Chapter 1 presented information on the status of official language statutes in the USA. As of 2007, twenty-one states have laws declaring English an official language. In many cases, it was the presence of Spanish speakers that prompted such legislation in the first place. For example, Spanish is commonly thought to be a co-official language in New Mexico, yet in reality that state was declared "English Plus" in 1989. Despite the existence of official English laws in Arizona and California, Spanish is still spoken widely throughout these states, and many government documents and services are available in both English and Spanish. In fact, government agencies in most states and at the federal level can commonly communicate in Spanish.

Beginning with Bill Clinton's administration, the State of the Union address and other Presidential speeches have been translated into Spanish (available at www.whitehouse.gov). Even some non-Hispanic politicians have delivered speeches in Spanish to Hispanic majority constituencies. This speaks to the strong and growing political presence of Latinos in the USA.

The 2007–08 presidential primaries offer a particularly revealing example of the dual status of US Spanish. Wooing the Latino electorate, the democratic candidates took part in the first-ever Presidential debate on a Spanish-language network on September 9, 2007. Throughout the evening, the candidates explained their positions on the most important issues impacting the Latino community, notably immigration, the economy, education, and the war. However, when the debate veered toward the issue of language, they found themselves in an uncomfortable spot. Asked if they would be willing to promote Spanish as the second official language in the USA, only one candidate, Dennis Kucinich, answered in the affirmative. Chris Dodd, on the other hand, opined that we should teach more Spanish, but not as an official second language. The rest of the candidates avoided a straight answer (Lovato 2007).

Media

Multiple types of media are widely available in Spanish, either created in the USA or imported from Latin America or Spain. In 2007, there were 730 radio stations and 200 television stations broadcasting in Spanish in the USA (Arbitron 2007). While the foreign-born make up the largest share of this market, US Latinos also rely on this media. Traditionally, it was believed that as soon as US Hispanics learned enough English, they preferred their advertising, public service announcements, and news in English. But media consumption trends show that even Latinos who are very fluent in English prefer receiving certain information in Spanish, including information about US Latinos and about Latin America, sports, music, and some advertising. In

fact, in Los Angeles and Miami, Spanish-language television and radio have a larger audience than their English-language counterparts. Likewise, in New York City – the nation's largest radio market – Spanish-language stations La Mega 97.9 and AMOR 93.1 occupy the second and third spots in terms of market share (Arbitron). Spanish is also widely present in newspapers and other print forms. In 2006, Western Publication Research documented nearly 1,851 print publications in the USA written wholly or partially in Spanish. These include 38 dailies, 384 weekly newspapers, and 513 magazines (Whistler 2007).

Illustrating the financial success of this market, Whistler (2007: 1) states:

> This year we can note that Hispanic Print, at $1.54 billion, has surpassed the ad revenues for the UK's magazine revenues and Internet revenues, which are about $1.3 billion each.

As for the Spanish book market in the USA, industry consultants Kiser and Associates put its size at $350 million and document more than one hundred wholesalers and retailers in this country that specialize in Spanish-language material (Kiser and Associates n.d.). Notwithstanding these impressive figures, the Spanish-language book market faces significant challenges. These include the limited availability of Spanish-language titles in mainstream bookstores and libraries, the preference for English-language books among acculturated Latinos, and the inherent difficulty of selling books to a market as linguistically and culturally diverse as the US Latino market (Rodríguez-Martín 2006).

Business

Commercially speaking, the size and concentration of the Latino population translates into a market that is lucrative both locally and nationally. Countless public and private enterprises serve this market, particularly in Miami, which *Time* magazine described as "the frontier city between 'America' and Latin America," where the Latin American headquarters of AT and T, General Motors, Disney, and Iberia Airlines among many others have been established, and where "[the city's] success has been its ability to use its immigrant population to offer American products and business savvy in a Latin environment" (Booth 2001). The linguistic impact of these and other enterprises is threefold: (1) They fuel the need for a bilingual Spanish–English workforce, (2) They elevate the economic and social profile of Spanish in this country (Carreira 2002), and (3) They are a source of rich linguistic input for US Latinos, providing opportunities for them to use Spanish in their everyday lives (however, see the findings of Gorman and Potowski (2009), cited earlier, suggesting that there may not be much contact between these groups).

Given the tremendous buying power of the US Latino market – the largest Spanish-speaking market and the ninth largest overall market in the world – this

group's language preferences are increasingly studied and heeded by marketers (Business Editors 2002).

Education

This section will explore the teaching of Spanish both as a foreign language and as a heritage language in the USA. Spanish is the most widely taught non-English language in US high schools and postsecondary institutions. Of the 1.4 million US college students enrolled in language courses in fall 2002, Spanish was studied by 53 percent of them (Welles 2004). At the secondary level, the numbers are even more impressive. In 2000, 69 percent of high school foreign language students were studying Spanish, for a total of 6 million students (National Center for Education Statistics 2002b). Professionals from all walks of life – including this nation's most powerful politicians – are also learning Spanish. For members of Congress there's even a ten-week program called "Spanish on the Hill" (Jordan 1999).

In the larger US cities, the concentration of Latino students is remarkable. According to Stearns and Watanabe (2002), there are approximately 7,000 public schools in the USA with a Latino population between 50 percent and 100 percent, most notably Los Angeles, California (where 71% of public schools are over one half Latino), Miami-Dade County, Florida (58% of public schools), New York City (34%), and Chicago, Illinois (33%). Given the huge and growing presence of students who have some background in Spanish, there are also school-based Spanish programs created especially for US Spanish speakers who grew up speaking the language, but who typically have not been able to develop reading and writing skills in the language. These students are often called heritage speakers, a term which was defined in Chapter 1 of this book as referring to individuals who grow up in households where a minority language is spoken, yet they are schooled in the country's majority language. Such individuals usually end up functionally bilingual, but dominant in the majority language in which they were schooled. In our case, although children of Spanish-speaking immigrants usually maintain communicative competence in their family's heritage language, they often do not develop age-appropriate levels of literacy, vocabulary, and grammatical systems in it. This is why special curricula have been developed for heritage speakers that address their specific communicative strengths and needs.

Despite the strong need for Spanish for heritage speaker programs, a survey conducted by the National Foreign Language Center and the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese found that only 18 percent of US colleges and universities offered such courses (Ingold *et al.* 2002). At the high school level, the lack of heritage courses is even more pronounced, with only 9 percent of schools in 1997 offering such courses (Rhodes and Branaman

1999). This means that the majority of Spanish heritage speakers in the USA receive instruction in Spanish as a foreign language. In a later section, we will explore how heritage programs may better contribute to heritage language maintenance.

There are also some forms of education at the elementary level that promote foreign and heritage language learning. One-way immersion teaches foreign languages to English-speaking children during a significant portion of the school day (Center for Applied Linguistics 2006a). Two-way immersion also teaches a minority language during a large percentage of the day, but the classrooms contain a mixture of both English-speaking and heritage speaker children. By one estimate, 93 percent of US two-way immersion programs teach in Spanish (Center for Applied Linguistics 2006b). Finally, a program type called Foreign Languages in the Elementary Schools (FLES) teaches minority languages for just thirty to fifty minutes per day, three to four times per week. Currently, 25 percent of US elementary schools in the US offer FLES programs (Center for Applied Linguistics 2008), and the majority of them teach Spanish.

An interesting thing happens at elementary schools with FLES programs that also have large Latino populations: the FLES Spanish courses are filled with heritage Spanish-speaking children. Since these children already possess communicative competence in Spanish – even if they are actually dominant in English – such students typically do not get much out of a traditional FLES curriculum, which is designed for children learning Spanish as a foreign language. The same problem would occur if native speakers of English were to take courses in English as a Second Language. Some work has begun to address the needs of heritage speakers in K-8 contexts (New York State Education Department 2004; Carreira 2007; Potowski *et al.* 2008).

What seem to be missing from the US Spanish language landscape, however, are Saturday schools for Spanish-speaking schoolchildren. Rodriguez (2007) documents the efforts of several parent groups in Los Angeles to create such language and culture groups, noting that the Chinese- and Japanese-speaking communities in the area have had successful Saturday programs for years. While our co-contributors in this book document Saturday school efforts of several language groups around the nation, Spanish is noticeably absent in this regard. This may be due to family beliefs that children will acquire sufficient Spanish, constraints on family time and budget, and perhaps concern about children's English development, either real or based on public perception.

Evidence of language shift to English and of Spanish maintenance

In all, it is primarily demographic factors and market forces that are creating highly favorable conditions for the maintenance and growth of Spanish

in the USA. However, linguistic research suggests that these forces alone cannot sustain it indefinitely. To live on, minority languages must reproduce themselves among successive generations in the US. In the case of Spanish, given that 60 percent of US Spanish speakers are born here, intergenerational transmission of Spanish will be crucial for its survival. Yet even in the immigrant generation, some Hispanics abandon the use of Spanish in favor of English (Veltman 2000: 81).

Before we discuss evidence of shift to English and of maintenance of Spanish in the USA, we will first offer a few general details about the Spanish language as it is spoken in various communities of the USA.[4] Given the large number of countries of origin of US Spanish speakers, there is no single US Spanish variety, but rather a rich multiplicity of types of Spanish spoken in the nation. In the Southwest, for example, one predominately hears Mexican varieties of Spanish, while in the Northeast and Southeast one predominately hears Caribbean Spanish.

Perhaps the most noticeable trait of US Spanish, used by Spanish speakers of all national backgrounds, is the mixture of Spanish and English in the same conversation. This common practice in many bilingual communities, described in Chapter 2 of this volume, is referred to as *code-switching*. Speakers can code-switch within a single sentence, such as "I got there at two o'clock *pero ya no estaban* [but they weren't there anymore]," or between separate sentences, such as "*Dijo que no quería jugar* [He said he didn't want to play]. He had too much homework." Sometimes a code-switch within a sentence consists of just one word, such as "*Se quedó allí leyendo un* [He/she stayed there reading a] magazine." It is important to realize that not all code-switches into English happen because the speaker does not know how to say certain things in Spanish – in fact, one study showed that fully 75 percent of code-switches were words that the speakers knew in both languages (Zentella 1997). So why do people switch into English or into Spanish instead of just sticking to one language, especially if they know all the words they need? It is a very common phenomenon in bilingual communities to code-switch in order to signal ethnic identity, quote someone directly, emphasize, clarify or elaborate what is said, or to shift topics, among other functions.

Other common features of US Spanish include the use of word *borrowings*, such as *nicle* for "nickel" and *wachar* for "to watch." It is often the case that today's criticized borrowings enter tomorrow's formal dictionaries, as was the case with *checar* for "to check." Another feature is called a *semantic extension*, in which words that mean one thing in monolingual Spanish-speaking countries take on a new meaning in the USA. For example, the word *librería* in monolingual contexts refers to a bookstore, but in the USA it has taken on the meaning of "library." Finally, entire phrases can be borrowed (or *calqued*) into Spanish, such as *correr para presidente* for "run for president."

Table 4.4. *Language dominance, by generation*

Language preference	Total Latinos (%)	First (foreign-born) (%)	Second (%)	Third (%)
English dominant	25	4	46	78
Bilingual (equal)	28	24	47	22
Spanish dominant	47	72	7	–

Source: Suro 2002: 13.

Some people refer to these phenomena as "Spanglish," while others reject this term as pejorative and not useful in distinguishing very different processes from each other. It is important to remember that whenever there are languages in contact, it is very likely that these phenomena will take place.

Signs of shift

Currently, a large majority of US Latinos (75 percent) speaks Spanish to some degree, while another 25 percent are for the most part restricted to English for communication. However, the number of Spanish-proficient Latinos is projected to decline over the course of this century as a result of intergenerational linguistic shift. As a general rule, the foreign-born strongly prefer their native language over English. But with each successive generation in the USA, mastery of this language declines sharply. By the third generation, few remain proficient in the language of their grandparents. This pattern has been amply attested among US Latinos (Table 4.4).

So far, the generational loss of Spanish speakers as shown in Table 4.4 has been offset by a steady flow of new immigrants from Latin America. However, with Latino birthrates rapidly outpacing immigration rates, the number of Spanish speakers will undoubtedly decline over the course of the century. The question is, by how much?

The weight of the evidence suggests that the ongoing generational loss of Spanish is both swift and pervasive. For example Veltman (2000) provides evidence that Spanish speakers are more likely to adopt English today than their older peers did when they were young, concluding that the ability of Latinos to maintain dominant use of Spanish has receded significantly since 1976 (see also Rivera-Mills 2001).[5] In a recent study of Southern California, Rumbaut, Massey, and Bean (2006) found that "the ability to speak Spanish very well can be expected to disappear sometime between the second and third generation for all Latin American groups" (p. 458). Many scholars, including Hudson-Edwards, Hernández Chávez, and Bills (1995) believe that American-born Latinos alone cannot sustain Spanish in this country:

maintenance of Spanish in the Southwest, in terms of raw numbers of speakers only, is heavily dependent upon a steady transfusion of speakers from Mexico to communities in the United States, and offer no warrant for the survival of Spanish beyond a point when such speakers are no longer available to replace speakers north of the border lost through mortality or linguistic assimilation. (p. 182)

Closer examination of the grammatical systems of individual US Latinos also reveals signs of language shift. Silva-Corvalán (1994) showed that many verbal constructions, such as the subjunctive, the conditional, and compound verb tenses, are far less frequent in the Spanish of third generation speakers than second and first generation speakers. Lipski (1993) also outlines some of the characteristics of Spanish speakers with very low proficiency, while Montrul (2002, 2005, 2007) has shown that several underlying grammatical representations are not acquired by Latinos raised bilingually in the USA. Thus, by the third generation, US Hispanics are dominant in English, and their Spanish – when they can speak it at all – shows signs of incomplete acquisition, attrition, and many contact features.

Signs of maintenance

The previous section outlined evidence of shift to English. However, some recent research suggests that the generational loss of Spanish may not be as radical as previously believed. For example, contradicting Veltman (2000), a survey from the Pew Hispanic Center/Kaiser Family Foundation (2004: 5) indicates that more than one half of third generation Latino adults are relatively proficient in Spanish, suggesting that "the loss of speaking competence in Spanish in favor of English may not happen as comprehensively, rapidly and readily as some scholars suggest." That said, it bears noting that this last study also found telling signs of language shift. In particular, Latino parents indicated that English is the primary language used by their children when speaking to their friends. Also, bilingual Latinos reported making more extensive use of English than Spanish outside of the home environment.

Comparing data from the 1980, 1990, and 2000 US Census reports, Mora, Villa, and Dávila (2006) argue that there is actually a high degree of transmission of Spanish between first and second generation Latinos. Similarly, in their study of third generation Cuban and Mexican children that we cited earlier, Alba *et al.* (2002) found lower rates of English-only speakers – that is, higher rates of bilinguals – than was observed for Europeans in the early twentieth century and among current third generation immigrants from Asia. This study also found that family and community contexts are better predictors of linguistic proficiency among third generation Cubans and Mexicans than is generational standing; Torres and Potowski (2008) also found that generation was not as tightly bound to Spanish proficiency as is often believed. All things

Table 4.5. *The Latino market by generational distance*

	Generational distance	Percentage of the Latino population	Percentage of life in the USA	Language
Foreign-born	Newcomers	18	Less than 1/3	Spanish only
	Transitionals	21	1/3 to 2/3	Spanish mostly
	Transplants	22	Greater than 1/3	Equally bilingual
US-born	Maintainers	25	100%	Mostly bilingual*
	Adapters	14	100%	English only

Note: * Although these terms are not defined in the original publication, we take this term to mean that the person speaks mostly English but has fairly strong communicative ability in Spanish.
Source: Allen and Friedman 2005: 85.

being equal, children from families that are supportive of Spanish and who live in high-density ethnic neighborhoods in regions with a biethnic identity have the highest chance of becoming bilingual, underscoring the role of geographic concentration in the preservation of US Spanish.

Coming from a different perspective, market research indicates that length of residency in the USA and affective factors play a decisive role in shaping the linguistic profile of US Latinos. Using the concept of "generational distance," this line of research identifies five subpopulations of US Latinos, as shown in Table 4.5. With the exception of *Adapters*, who can only be reached in English, many Latinos are more emotionally receptive to advertising done in Spanish. Interestingly, the distinguishing feature between Adapters and *Maintainers*, both of whom are American-born and English dominant, appears to be the home culture. Maintainers come from homes where the cultural values and customs of the parents' home country predominate over those of the mainstream Anglo US culture – hence their emotional attachment to things Hispanic, including the language. By contrast, adapters come from largely Americanized homes (Allen and Friedman 2005).

An important question to explore is whether US Latinos consider it important for themselves to know Spanish. Some research indicates that they do in fact consider Spanish an important component of their identity, yet most studies point to the belief that one can be equally Latino whether one knows Spanish or not (for example Zentella 1997).

Spanish does have a good deal of international status, which may contribute in some degree to its maintenance in the USA. In all, there are over 400 million people in the world that speak it, making it the fourth most spoken language in the world after Chinese, Hindi, and English (Graddol 2000). And in almost all of the countries where Spanish is spoken, it is the official national language, dominant over local or indigenous languages (often in much the same way that

English is dominant over Spanish in the USA). The Royal Spanish Academy (*Real Academia Española*), a widely respected institution founded in Spain in 1713, serves to regulate formal matters of the language through the publication of dictionaries and grammars. A number of academies were also founded in Latin American and North America throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and in 1951 they joined to form the Association of Spanish Language Academies (*Asociación de Academias de la Lengua Española*), with a total of twenty-two members. The USA is also home to three of the more than seventy centers of the Cervantes Institute, an organization created by the government of Spain to promote Spanish language and culture, which now has centers in thirty nations around the world.

However, the domestic status of the language in the USA is clearly not as high as in Latin America or Spain. In addition to the negative comments one may hear in public when speaking Spanish (or any other non-English language, in fact), there have also been widely publicized cases of discrimination against speaking Spanish. For example, in 1995 a Texas judge ruled that a mother who spoke Spanish to her daughter was committing a type of child abuse and threatened to take away custody (Verhovek 1995); in 2004, an Arizona teacher made the news for hitting children who spoke Spanish in class (Ryman and Madrid, 2004); in New York, three women were fired from a Sephora beauty store for speaking Spanish during their breaks (Valenti 2003); and in Kansas City, a high school student was suspended for speaking Spanish in the hallway (Reid 2005). The sad irony that the most studied foreign language in the nation is criticized when spoken by those who actually speak it natively is an example of mainstream US attitudes toward non-English languages: it seems that many people feel these languages should be spoken only abroad, not on US territory.

Conclusions

Spanish is the most publicly present and vibrant non-English language spoken in the USA, the language most studied in high schools and universities, the language most people will tell you that they wish they could speak. Ironically, US public school policies do not typically allow heritage Spanish-speaking children the opportunity to continue developing age-appropriate communication and literacy skills in Spanish, nor is public use of Spanish always welcomed by the general populace.

In spite of strong public presence stemming from large numbers and demographic concentration, there are clear indications that the future vitality of Spanish in the USA rests on continued immigration from Latin America. Intergenerational transmission of the language rarely extends beyond the grandchildren of immigrants. An increase in truly bilingual programs, such as dual immersion, may contribute to the longevity of Spanish through the generations,

Table 4.6. *Discussion question #2*

City = Group 1 = Group 2 =		1990 Census	2000 Census
Percentage of local Latino population	Group 1		
	Group 2		
Percentage of total local population	Group 1		
	Group 2		

but it seems more likely that, as the Latino population shifts entirely to English, the Spanish language will continue to thrive only through the arrival of new monolingual speakers.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The authors cite a study (Alba *et al.* 2002) in which a third generation Cuban child living in Miami is twenty times more likely to be bilingual than a child living in another town where just 5 percent of the population speaks Spanish. Describe some of the experiences that you think the child would encounter in Miami (and not in the other town) that would lead to stronger proficiency in Spanish.

2. Choose one of the cities from Table 4.2 in this chapter. Using the US Census website, complete Table 4.6 with as many details as you can, including the area's two largest national origin groups (Group 1 and Group 2). Then, make predictions about the proliferation and maintenance of Spanish in the area.