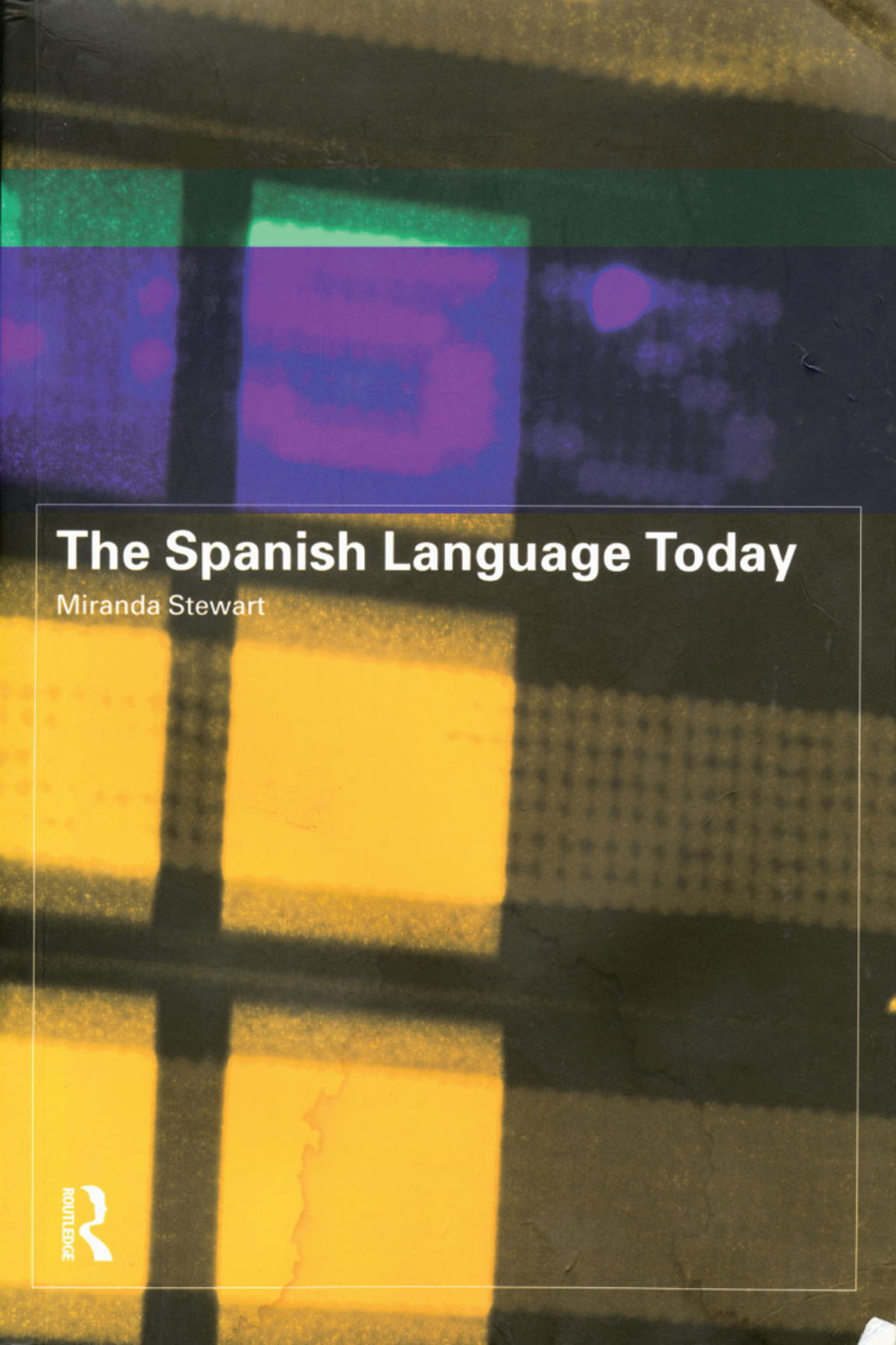
The Spanish Language Today
Miranda Stewart
ROUTLEDGE

The Spanish Language Today

'*The Spanish Language Today* is a lively and valuable addition to the bookshelf of students and teachers in Spanish studies. It is quite unprecedented in the topics it covers and in the authenticity of the materials on which it draws. This book is highly accessible and useful.'

Professor Ralph Penny
Queen Mary and Westfield College, University of London

The Spanish Language Today describes the varied and changing Spanish language in the world today.

As conflicting forces work towards the unification and fragmentation of both Peninsular and Latin American Spanish, this book examines:

- **where** Spanish is spoken on a global scale, from its decline in the Philippines to its vitality in the southern states of the US
- the **status** of Spanish within the realms of politics, education and media, including reference to the English-only movement in the US
- the **standardization** of Spanish
- specific areas of **linguistic variation and change** including: phonetics and phonology, orthography, lexis, and morphosyntax
- the effects of **language contact** on Spanish which is spoken widely in contexts of bi- and multilingualism
- the **linguistic and pragmatic factors** which underlie variation and change
- whether **new technologies** are an opportunity or a threat to the Spanish language

The Spanish Language Today contains numerous extracts from contemporary texts, a glossary of technical linguistic terms and selected translations. It is suitable for those engaged with the modern Spanish language, from beginning students with no prior linguistic knowledge to researchers.

Miranda Stewart is Senior Lecturer in Spanish and Latin American Studies at the University of Strathclyde

The Spanish Language Today

Miranda Stewart

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To Ian and Julia

Contents

Preface

The aim of this book is to describe the varied and changing contemporary Spanish language. Given that Spanish is used by approximately 400 million speakers throughout the world, whether as a mother tongue, an official language or a lingua franca in contexts that range from trading in East Africa, through informal conversation in Spain to formal interventions in international organizations, it is quite beyond the scope of this book to be a comprehensive inventory, were such possible, of the enormous variation that exists. Nor do we seek to provide a comprehensive description of an idealized, unchanging, supranational variety of Spanish; indeed, there are many excellent grammars of Spanish which cover the core system of the language and a number which also examine its principal functions. Unlike C.H.Stevenson's book of the same name as the present volume where 'today' is taken to refer to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries' (Hickey 1983/4:25) we shall endeavour to focus on Spanish at the end of the twentieth century and to describe the current state of the language in terms of the twin phenomena of **variation** and **change**.

We propose to examine the conflicting forces that work towards both unification and fragmentation. On the one hand there is the pressure towards conformity to a common code, which ensures that supranational varieties of the language are available for use in, say, the media, education and administration. At the same time, there is the attraction of diversity, which enables different groups within the Spanish-speaking community to express their individuality through distinctive language usage that may, at extremes, be incomprehensible to a Spanish-speaker from outside that community. We shall look at language **prescription,** whereby a number of agencies ranging from grammarians to press agencies, from letters to the editor to individuals' perceptions of their own language competence, attempt to persuade or even compel language users to speak or write in certain desired and standard ways; we shall also look at how speakers and writers actually **use** the language, on occasion promoting language change through their sheer persistence in using new forms. Such change may, in time and if accepted by the community at large, result in the updating of the prescriptive norm.

The book embraces both Peninsular and American Spanish. There is a proportionately greater focus on Peninsular Spanish principally due to the fact

that large areas of the Spanish-speaking world remain seriously under-researched and also to the geographic location of the writer. However, it should be remembered that there may be greater differences between two varieties of Spanish within Spain than between a Peninsular variety and one from a given Latin American country. Indeed, the Spanish spoken in southern Spain and the Canaries has more in common with the majority of Latin American varieties of the language than it has with that of the north of Spain. Therefore, when we provide examples from one side of the Atlantic or the other, they are rarely intended to be representative of the many varieties of Spanish spoken in either Latin America or in Spain respectively. In any case, the geographical dimension is only one of many which underlie language variation. As far as speakers are concerned, factors such as age, sex, social class, level of education are also of prime importance. For example, the resources available to youth subcultures to generate their own varieties of Spanish are remarkably similar across speech communities; the use they are put to, however, may be vastly different. Furthermore, there is the whole, and in our view, under-researched area of language use, that of language functions. That is, usage varies depending on who we are addressing, for what purpose and in what context. Therefore, in *The Spanish Language Today* we shall take as our point of departure the linguistic and pragmatic factors which underlie variation and change and provide examples of these from different varieties of Spanish from both sides of the Atlantic. Consequently, the book should be of relevance to students on courses dealing with the modern Spanish language, to scholars in the language, to those engaged in research in this area and also to those with a more general interest in language variation and change.

It is assumed that many of the readers of this book will have high levels of passive knowledge of Spanish. Therefore, we shall provide translations or glosses of some the Spanish used in the text principally where an understanding of context is crucial to an understanding of the language or where important lexis is unlikely to be included in standard dictionaries. These, where appropriate will be included as notes to each chapter. In line with the focus of the book on authentic Spanish used by a variety of speakers and writers at the end of the twentieth century, the vast majority of examples will be taken from naturally-occurring spoken and written discourse and not be confected to illustrate a particular point of linguistic interest. The reader is not expected to have a knowledge of modern linguistics and sociolinguistics although the book will derive its framework from this field. Technical linguistic terms will be explained as they arise and those which are crucial to an understanding of the text will be explained in a separate glossary to be found at the end of the book. Our primary purpose is to use linguistics to provide some insight into Spanish used today rather than to refine categories over which linguists frequently disagree, and therefore it may be necessary to simplify the linguistic presentation in certain areas. While specialists may feel that we have failed to represent certain areas of contention, we hope that the approach we have adopted will maintain an acceptable level of rigour while at the same time achieving comprehensibility for a non-specialist readership.

Part I (Chapters 1 and 2) will focus on Spanish as a world language. In Chapter 1 we shall focus on **where** Spanish is spoken in the world today and on the vitality of the different groups which speak it. For example, while Spanish may be a language in terminal decline in Israel or the Philippines, it enjoys conversely undisputed vitality in the southern states of the United States of America. We shall also look at its **status** in the world as evidenced, for example, by its presence in major international organizations, as a second language on the curriculum of non-Spanish-speaking countries and its impact in the audiovisual media.

In Chapter 2 we shall look at the **standardization** of Spanish and in particular at the different agencies responsible for language **prescription** notably the grammarians and lexicographers whether in their old roles as the providers of academic dictionaries and grammars or their newly-acquired ones as consultants to the media, public administration and the professions. One function of language prescription tends towards the conservative and seeks to prevent change from a supposed standard norm; it is interesting therefore to view prescription as providing a window into change currently in progress within groups of speakers of the language, change which this very prescription is designed to arrest. Another role of prescription is, in fact, to promote modernization and renewal of the language by, for example, sanctioning standard neologisms or by proscribing certain archaisms. We shall also examine briefly attempts both in Latin America and Spain to collect language corpora in order to enable linguists to refine their **descriptions** of the language.

Part II (comprising Chapters 3 to 5) will focus on the **system and structures** of the language and examine salient areas of variation and change in its phonetics and phonology, orthography, lexis and morphosyntax. Stevenson (1970) already noted that lexis is the area in which change is most rapid and this is certainly the case in Spanish, a language of considerable vitality. In phonetics and phonology change is considerably slower although variation may be considerable and in morpho-syntax there appears to be comparatively little variation and a very slow pace of change.

Part III (containing Chapters 6 to 8) will focus on the **functions** of the language, on how speakers draw from a common pool of linguistic resources to achieve their communicative ends. How can linguistic politeness be expressed and how might this differ from one community to another, what are the rules in different communities for mutual address, what constitutes a normative telephone call in, for example, Ecuador as compared with Spain, what counts as taboo amongst a given group of speakers today? What are the conventions governing different genres of writing and speaking, for example newspaper headlines or political speeches, in different parts of the Spanish-speaking world?

Spanish is spoken widely in contexts of bi- and multilingualism as well as forming the base for a limited number of Spanish-based pidgins and creoles. After examining the latter, Part IV (Chapter 9) will focus on the effects of **language contact** on Spanish, whether the language in question is cognate such as Catalan or non-cognate such as Maya and Basque, whether Spanish is the dominant language, as it is in its relationship with, for example, Galician or the minority

language, as it is in relation to English in the southern states of the United States or on an equal footing as it is with Portuguese on the border between Uruguay and Brazil.

Clearly, within the limits of this book we cannot provide a comprehensive account of each of these areas and the great variety which exists in the Spanish-speaking world can only really be hinted at. However, we hope to have given readers the tools to be able to ask some informed questions about the varieties of Spanish with which they come into contact and some points of comparison when faced with one of the rich varieties of Spanish which does not match the description provided in a standard grammar. We also hope to have demonstrated the current vitality of the Spanish language which continues to be *una lengua en ebullición* ('a language in ferment') (Lorenzo 1966) rapidly changing to meet the newly created needs of an expanding community of users. While these developments can be seen most clearly at the level of lexis, there is also evidence of change in progress in the phonetics and morpho-syntax of Spanish. Furthermore, we hope to show that patterns of use are also evolving to reflect the needs of their users.

Miranda Stewart
Edinburgh, July 1998

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Part I

Spanish as a world language

1 The extent and status of Spanish in the world

1.0 Introduction

At the end of the twentieth century Spanish is spoken by approaching 400 million people throughout the world, and as such is the fourth most widely spoken language in the world after Mandarin Chinese, English and Hindi. It is an official language, generally the sole one, in twenty-one countries. It is spoken not only as a mother tongue but as an important second language (for example in Paraguay where it enjoys co-official status with the indigenous language of Guaraní) and also as a vehicular language or 'lingua franca'. While the Spanish language is most readily associated with its country of origin, Spain, the majority of its speakers live in Latin America where population growth means that numbers of speakers are steadily on the increase. It has a vibrant and rapidly expanding presence in the United States. It is also represented, albeit by small and declining numbers of speakers, in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. In this chapter, we shall look at the Spanish-speaking world and at the current status of Spanish today as a major world language.

It is clear that the number of speakers is but one factor in assessing the status of a language: many other considerations such as its status as an official, co-official or minority language, the economic and cultural potential of the countries where it enjoys official status, the number of those who study it as a foreign or second language, the extent of the domains in which it can be used, its presence in supranational forums, and the efforts expended on its promotion are all factors which contribute to the status of a language.

1.1 The extent of Spanish in the world

1.1.0 Spanish in Latin America

Spanish is the official language of Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Uruguay

Figure 1.1 Map of Spanish-speaking nations of Central and South America (based on Mar-Molinero (1997))

and Venezuela (see Figure 1.1). In the case of Puerto Rico it shares this status with English, in Paraguay with the indigenous language Guaraní, in Peru with Quechua and Aymara and in Bolivia with Aymara. It is also spoken in the former British colony of Belize, on the borders of Guyana and Haiti and in isolated communities in Trinidad. Mexico with a population of some ninety-three million, more than double that of Spain provides the greatest number of Spanish speakers, followed by Argentina and Colombia with approximately thirty-five million inhabitants each. It should be remembered, however, that the process of Castilianization of indigenous populations, while wide-ranging and rapid, is not complete and many countries still have groups of monolingual speakers of indigenous Amerindian languages.[1] Throughout Latin America bi- and multilingualism are commonplace whether between Spanish and the indigenous languages or Spanish and other languages of colonization, for example, Italian and Portuguese. Indeed, care needs to be taken when interpreting figures relating to proficiency in a second language as there may be wide disparities between the literacy claimed for an individual and their ability, opportunity or desire to use that language proficiently. Spanish represents the language of social mobility and functions as the High variety, used, for example, in education and public administration. The indigenous languages serve as the Low variety used, for example, in the home and among the immediate speech community. Interestingly, this is even the case for Guaraní, a co-official national language which enjoys considerable prestige.

1.1.1 Spanish in Spain

In Spain, Spanish is spoken by approximately 40 million people of whom some 40 per cent are bilingual in one of Spain's minority languages (see Figure 1.2). One of the most distinctive features of post-Franco Spain is its emergence as a decentralized and plurilingual country after a period during which severe, albeit lessening, repression of minority languages was exercised in the interests of achieving a centralized, monolingual state.[2] As a reaction against the linguistic illiberalism of this period typified by Franco's vision of national unity, *'la unidad nacional la queremos absoluta, con una sola lengua, el castellano, y una sola personalidad, la española'* (Sala 1991), the Constitution of 6 December 1978 sought to redress the balance and offer a measure of protection to minority languages, henceforth seen as part of Spain's rich cultural diversity. Nevertheless, the Constitution clearly established Spanish as the official state language despite the many compromises apparent in its drafting, and in Article 3.1 declares:

> *El castellano es la lengua oficial del Estado. Todos los españoles tienen el deber de conocerla y el derecho a usarla.*
>
> (Siguan 1992:75)

Thus, the intention is clear that monolingualism in any language other than

Figure 1.2 Map of Spain showing linguistic and dialect divisions (based on García Mouton (1994))

Spanish is not permitted to the Spanish citizen and in effect virtually does not exist. Article 3.2 provides for the co-officiality of the various minority languages or *lenguas propias* but only within their autonomous communities and not throughout the national territory. Thus Spanish is still very much the language of majority use in Spain and of Spaniards outside Spain despite strenuous efforts by some minority cultures, particularly the Catalans, to express themselves through the medium of their own language nationally and internationally.

1.1.2 Spanish as the second language in the United States

Spanish is currently spoken as a first language by approximately twenty-two million people[3] in the United States. Approximately 60 per cent are Mexican in origin and are concentrated in the south west; Puerto Ricans (12 per cent) tend to live in the north east, and principally New York, while the Cubans (4 per cent) favour Florida.

The Hispanics are currently America's fastest growing ethnic community and their numbers are set to rise to 96.5 million by 2050 (*The Guardian*, 16.07.98). This is not without problems as the United States does not have legislation which states that English is the official language of the Union; it has always relied on the desire of immigrants for social assimilation and mobility to consolidate the pre-eminence of English. However, friction is now arising between increasingly monolingual Spanish communities and the English-speaking majority, particularly in the southern states where the Hispanic communities are concentrated. In some major cities such as San Antonio and Los Angeles up to one half of the population is of Hispanic descent, and even in New York one tenth of the population is Spanish-speaking.

In the 1990s the Republicans have been active in seeking official status for English and in seeking to limit the use of Spanish mainly outside but also inside the home and they have promoted an 'English only' movement. They are particularly unhappy about the proportion of the state budget devoted to mother-tongue maintenance programmes. However, there has been active resistance on the part of the Spanish-speaking community. In 1994 a federal tribunal ruling in the state of Arizona turned down state legislation prohibiting state employees from using the Spanish language in their official duties on the grounds that it infringed the first amendment of the Constitution. This enabled, for example, administrators in the state administration to deal in Spanish with complaints about healthcare services by Hispanic citizens who were not fluent in English. In San Antonio (Texas), the ninth biggest city in the US, a resolution was passed in 1995 proclaiming the city to be bilingual. In June 1998, however, the Spanish language received a major setback with the United States' most populous state, California, voting for what was called Proposition 227. The effect of this was to end more than twenty years of bilingual education for immigrant children. While the aim is to prevent Hispanic children from being ghettoized and marginalized through lack of proficiency in English, it will be interesting to chart its effects on the use of Spanish amongst the Hispanic community and the status of the language within the US.

1.1.3 Spanish in the rest of the world

Equatorial Guinea

Equatorial Guinea is a fragmented nation on the west coast of Africa with a tiny population which stood, in 1991, at some 335,000 (Quilis 1992:205).[4]

Spanish was recognized as the country's official language in 1928 and is spoken in general use and as a lingua franca alongside seven indigenous Bantu languages, a Portuguese creole and an English pidgin. After a period under the dictatorship of Macías where indigenous languages, and particularly *fang*, were promoted, independence in 1979 heralded a time of improved relations with Spain and an increase in the use and status accorded to Spanish. However, in the 1990s, there appears to be a rejection of Spanish in favour of French as a trade language,

primarily for geo-political reasons; in September 1997 the President, Teodoro Obiang, announced that French would become, in the short term, the official language of the country (El País, 23.9.97).

Guam

Guam, a United States colony in the Pacific Ocean, has a Spanish-speaking minority numbering some 780 in 1980 (Rodríguez-Ponga, in Alvar, 1996a:245) and who are of Spanish, Latin American, United States and Philippine ori-gins. Additionally, some vestigial Spanish is spoken by older speakers of the predominantly Spanish-lexified creole, *chamorro,* used by almost 30 per cent of the population, with further speakers in the northern Marianas Islands and in the United States. On Guam *chamorro* enjoys co-official status with English.

North Africa

Until the independence of Morocco in 1956, Spanish was a co-official language alongside Arabic in the northern part of the Protectorate. Since independence Spanish has ceded ground to French although Quilis (1992:201–2) has noted a recent slow recovery which he attributes to Spain's policy of creating a number of Spanish-medium primary and secondary schools, to access to Spanish-language broadcast media, and to nationalist feelings in part due to what is perceived as preferential treatment given to French-speaking areas. Radio Rabat provides five hours a day of its broadcasting in Spanish and the French-language newspaper, *L'Opinion* provides a weekly Spanish-language supplement, *Opinión semanal.*

Spanish is also spoken in the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla where approximately 15 per cent of the population is Spanish in origin and by a small number of elderly Spaniards resident in Tangier where a proportion of the population is bilingual in French or Spanish and Arabic or trilingual in all three.

Andorra

Here the official language is Catalan which coexists with Spanish, predominantly in the south, and French, predominantly in the north. There are approximately 33,000 users of Spanish.

Ladino *or Judeo-Spanish*

Ladino or Judeo-Spanish is a variety of Spanish preserved by the Sephardic Jews who were expelled from Spain in 1492 and went to settle not only throughout Europe, North Africa and the Middle East but also further afield, for example to

the United States of America. Currently the largest Sephardic communities are located in the United States and Israel. However, in these communities, as elsewhere, *ladino* is being ousted by the dominant language, English or Hebrew, or, in the case of a second language, modern Spanish. Harris (1996) notes that it is used by increasingly fewer speakers, mainly those over the age of seventy, and in increasingly fewer domains, often only with elderly relatives, for entertainment, for example for singing *romanzas* and as a humorous or secret language. She further argues (1996:45) that 60,000 would be a generous estimate of the number of proficient Judeo-Spanish speakers, of whom none are monolingual speakers of the language and none are passing it on to their children. The United States has given very little institutional support for the language and support in Israel is diminishing. Here, until recent years there had been a thriving press in *ladino* but today this has dwindled virtually out of existence, as have audiovisual broadcasts, with the radio station *Kol Israel* being pressed to give up its Judeo-Spanish broadcasts. There is one journal written completely in Judeo-Spanish, *Aki Yerushalayim*, still in existence mainly due to the efforts of its editor, Moshe Shaul. Indeed, it is to be expected that within a generation this variety of Spanish will disappear as a living language.[5]

Philippines

Spanish in the Philippines is, according to Lipski (1987b), in the process of language death with, already by the 1980s, few proficient speakers under the age of forty. Despite three hundred years of Spanish presence in the Philippines the language did not strike firm roots. It never became a trade language and the Church and the administration preferred to use indigenous languages in pursuit of their goals. From 1898 onwards, the United States, which had won the Philippines from Spain, invested heavily in English-language programmes and precipitated the decline of Spanish. In line with the linguistic reality of the country, the Philippine Constitution of 1987 effectively demoted Spanish from its previous status as a co-official language alongside English and Filipino (Tagalog), stating that it, along with Arabic, 'shall be promoted on a voluntary and optional basis'. It is difficult to obtain the precise numbers of Spanish speakers as censuses do not distinguish between speakers of Spanish and of Spanish-based creoles *(chabacano)*.[6] Despite being brought to the Philippines via Mexico, the Spanish spoken here is closest to central and northern Peninsular Spanish and has few features, mainly lexis, from Hispanic America. Interestingly, and unlike the case of Philippines English, there is virtually no geographical variation within Philippines Spanish. It is spoken primarily by Euroasian *mestizos* of Hispanic descent, many of whom have close relations with Spain, who have tended towards intermarriage over the centuries. This group, primarily descended from wealthy landowners, has struggled to keep the language alive but now appears to be losing the battle. In addition to these speakers, there are others who have acquired levels of proficiency through education (until recently Spanish was