1
SPANISH AS A HERITAGE/MINORITY LANGUAGE

A multifaceted look at ten nations

Kim Potowski

THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT CHICAGO, USA

Introduction

It is estimated that the combined total number of “native” Spanish speakers\(^1\) around the world is between 437 million (Ethnologue 2016, www.ethnologue.com/statistics/size) and 472 million people (Instituto Cervantes 2016), making it the second most commonly spoken language in the world. It is spoken by sizeable populations over 20 countries; the top ten countries with the largest numbers of Spanish-speaking inhabitants are displayed in Table 1.1.

This table assumes that all residents in each country (except the U.S.) are Spanish-speaking, although this is not totally accurate. For example, although it is estimated that over 95% of the population in Mexico speaks Spanish, the number in Paraguay is closer to 69% (Moreno Fernández & Otero Roth 2006). The presence of the U.S. on this list surprises some people, particularly its position as home to the third largest Spanish-speaking population among the world’s nations.\(^2\)

Before continuing, I should make clear the problematic nature of two principal concepts discussed in this chapter and the volume overall. The most basic is the idea of “Spanish.” As noted by Otheguy, García, and Reid (2015, p. 286), named languages such as “Spanish,” “English,”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Estimated number of Spanish-speaking inhabitants</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>120,000,000</td>
<td>2015, <a href="http://www.inegi.org.mx">www.inegi.org.mx</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>49,100,000</td>
<td>2017, <a href="http://www.dane.gov.co">www.dane.gov.co</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>46,500,000</td>
<td>2015, <a href="http://www.census.gov">www.census.gov</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>46,400,000</td>
<td>2015, <a href="http://www.ine.es">www.ine.es</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>43,500,000</td>
<td>2016, <a href="http://www.indec.gov.ar">www.indec.gov.ar</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>31,800,000</td>
<td>2017, <a href="http://www.imei.gob.pe">www.imei.gob.pe</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>31,000,000</td>
<td>2016, <a href="http://www.ine.gob.ve">www.ine.gob.ve</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>18,300,000</td>
<td>2017, <a href="http://www.ine.cl">www.ine.cl</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>16,200,000</td>
<td>2015, <a href="http://www.inec.gob.ec">www.inec.gob.ec</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and “Quechua” are not actually independent linguistic objects, but rather constructs that exist only socially according to the definitions and affiliations of its speakers. Similarly, the concept of “countries” is problematic. The emergence of most modern nation-states in the 19th century resulted from wars and annexations, and as a result, many populations of individuals with similar ethnic, religious, and/or linguistic affiliations were arbitrarily split by lines drawn on a map. Thus, when contemplating ideas about “Spanish” and about “countries/nations,” readers should keep present the fact that these constitute a kind of conceptual shorthand that do not always correspond to realities as individuals experience them. Despite these important limitations, I believe that much can be learned about what we generally understand to be the Spanish language via a study of those who claim to speak it in different parts of the world.

In most of the 21 nations where Spanish is an official or national language (either de facto or de jure), it exists in contact with at least one other language. For example, it is estimated that 43% of the population of Guatemala, 37% of that of Bolivia, 35% of Peru, and 5.4% of the population of Mexico speaks an indigenous language. Yet in these contexts, Spanish is the dominant language of society – the one typically taught in schools, used in the media, and necessary for economic stability. In other places, Spanish is in contact with another language, but it has equal official status with that language. Such is the case in three autonomous regions of Spain (the Basque Country, Catalonia, and Galicia) where children are frequently educated through varying proportions of Basque, Catalan, and Galician respectively. However, despite its co-official status, in these autonomous regions Spanish is typically seen as having greater social value. For example, there are few if any adults who are monolingual in Basque (Cenoz 2008) or Catalan (Boix-Fuster & Sanz 2008), and all Spaniards are obliged to know Spanish but not any other language (del Valle 2000). In any case, in places like these around the world where Spanish is the majority and high status language – both where Spanish exists largely by itself as well as where it is in contact with but shares equal legal status with another language – there has been a great deal of linguistic research documenting micro- and macro-level linguistic features.

However, in locations where Spanish is a minority language, and especially where it is a minoritized language, the sociolinguistic reality is very different. The term minority is easy enough to define: it refers to a quantity less than 50%. The Cervantes Institute (Instituto Cervantes 2016) calculated a total of 45.8 million native Spanish speakers residing in non-Spanish-speaking countries (i.e. where Spanish is a minority language) including Australia, Russia, and Switzerland. However, this source likely undercounted the Spanish-speaking population in the U.S., listing it at 42.7 million, which is 3.8 million short of the 46.5 million listed in Table 1.1. If we add these 3.8 million U.S. Spanish speakers to the 45.8 million estimated by the Cervantes Institute, we get a possibly more accurate total of 49.6 million Spanish speakers around the world residing in non-Spanish-speaking countries. It is likely that no language besides English has as many “native” speakers living in places where it is not the common tongue.

Clearly the largest number of Spanish speakers in this situation (46.5 million out of 49.6 million, or 94%) live in the U.S., constituting approximately 15% of its national population. Figure 1.1 shows the proportion of U.S. Spanish-speaking residents by county. The areas marked with the darkest shade have a proportion of Spanish speakers greater than 68%, and some areas demarcated with the next darkest shade have over 50%. We notice that in counties in the Southwest, southern Florida, and rural Washington, Idaho, and Kansas, Spanish speakers form the majority of the local population.

Despite these local majority concentrations, on the national level Spanish remains a minority and minoritized language in the U.S. Minoritized means that in addition to being in the minority and having no legal status or support, Spanish is marginalized and sometimes outwardly discriminated against. Both local and national discourses frequently frame it as inferior, problematic, and a
threat to national unity and to children’s advancement in school. These negative forces lead many individuals to abandon Spanish and not pass it down to future generations (see Potowski 2010 for evidence that this is in fact the outcome for almost all non-English languages in the U.S.). Around the world, it is common for minority and minoritized languages, which I will abbreviate as minority/ized, to be replaced by the locally dominant language. Lambert (1977) described this phenomenon as subtractive bilingualism, in which lower status, negative attitudes, and lack of educational opportunities in the language lead to its weakening or total replacement. Thus, unlike studying Spanish in contact with Guarani in Paraguay or with Galician in Spain, for example, where Spanish is not minority/ized, it is reasonable to hypothesize that there will be different linguistic and social features of Spanish where it is a minority/ized language – not least of which is the fact that under these conditions, the language is very frequently on a path towards loss.

In the U.S., non-English languages are commonly referred to as heritage languages. The first part of the 21st century saw the creation of the National Heritage Language Resource Center in addition to numerous Spanish for heritage speakers educational programs (see chapters by Beaudrie and by Valdés & Parra, this volume). However, some scholars reject this term, embracing the position of García (2005) that the word heritage “connotes something that one holds onto vaguely as one’s remembrances but certainly not something that is used in the present or that can be projected into the future” (2005, p. 601) and that:

[a]s the languages of the world transcend their traditional territories and English spreads, languages other than English in the U.S. are being controlled through a shift in discourse . . . perhaps best exemplified by the silencing of the word bilingual and replacing it with heritage languages.
Despite these valid criticisms, the title of this volume and of the present chapter utilize the term *heritage*, although chapter authors use the terms of their choice.

It is important to note here that not all minority languages are minoritized. For example, English is spoken natively in Mexico by a relatively small number of people, many of whom refer to themselves as *expats* (even though they fit most definitions of *immigrant*). While proficiency in Spanish is necessary for most avenues of success in Mexico, many of these individuals are able to secure employment in white-collar professions and are not shamed for speaking English. Quite the opposite is true, in fact, with the worldwide prestige of English usually granting them high status and earning potential. Even so, as Anderson and Solis (2014) and Mar-Molinero (this volume) show, many Mexican-origin individuals who (in)voluntarily move to Mexico after growing up in the U.S. do not necessarily enjoy all the benefits of native English proficiency that one might expect, which is likely related to their lower socioeconomic position as the children of economically motivated migrants to the U.S. This forces an examination of the role of socioeconomic status in language prestige. Middle class Chilean political exiles in Sweden (Neilson Parada, this volume), for example, likely present a different sociolinguistic profile than poorer Ecuadorian immigrants in Italy (Bonomi and Sanfelici, this volume), the former perhaps more likely to maintain Spanish intergenerationally and the latter to lose it.

The purpose of this volume is to explore Spanish as a minority/ized language in different parts of the world, its authors examining macro and/or micro elements of Spanish as well as issues that impact speakers’ use of the language. Most work to date on Spanish as a minority/ized language has focused on adults and has been produced in the U.S. by two groups: linguists, and high school and postsecondary language instructors in heritage Spanish programs. In addition to these two important areas of scholarship, this collection presents the perspectives of researchers working in the fields of primary school education (grades preschool through eight) and Latina/o Studies. The focus thus moves beyond Spanish as a minority/heritage *language* to include a variety of linguistically relevant considerations about the *people* who speak it, and includes work focused on adults and on children.

I divide this introductory chapter into the same four Parts that structure the volume: (1) social issues, (2) linguistic studies, (3) educational issues, and (4) countries outside of the U.S. These divisions are somewhat arbitrary in that there are obvious intersections between social issues, education, and linguistics both within and outside of the U.S. For example, Jones Diaz and Walker’s chapter on Spanish-speakers in Australia and New Zealand combines social and educational issues, while Bowles’ chapter detailing outcomes of adult classroom heritage language instruction involve some linguistic descriptions of their Spanish systems. Despite these thematic overlaps, the Parts are meant to help readers conceptualize broader themes. Countries outside of the U.S. appear in their own Part because research on Spanish in these locations is scant; except for the lexical availability analysis in Neilson Parada’s chapter about Chile, and Mar-Molinero’s chapter about U.S.-raised Mexican-origin individuals in Mexico, these chapters are limited to offering an introductory overview of how Spanish came to be spoken in each country and considerations regarding its continued vitality.

**Part I: Social issues**

The nine chapters in this Part address a variety of social issues related to Spanish in the U.S. The chapter by Lynch presents an analysis of the forces that brought the construct of *latinidad*, and the Spanish language as an essential feature of it, into the U.S. cultural landscape during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. He traces the early presence of “Hispanic-positive” novels and Hollywood actors along with the incorporation of New Mexico into the U.S. and the
scholarship of Aurelio Espinosa, but shows that by the 1930s the country had shifted to more Hispanophobic realities, the likes of which would prompt actress Margarita Carmen Cansino to change her name to Rita Hayworth. Moving to more current times up through April 2017, Carter outlines what he calls the “paradox of Spanish in the United States” via an examination of two phenomena: the use of Spanish in political discourse, and language policies toward Spanish in the U.S. For example, he notes that “the act of speaking Spanish figures differently depending on who is doing it” and that race is always present in questions of language and politics (also a theme in Negrón’s chapter). He concludes with an important consideration of the role of Spanish Language Academies in supporting Spanish in such hostile environments, noting that to date, they have generally shown disdain for the way Spanish is spoken in the U.S. Both of these chapters offer timely insight into the current resurgence of nationalist, anti-immigration discourse in the U.S. under the Trump administration.

After this consideration of the effects of the political and discursive landscape in the U.S. on the use of Spanish, Jenkins’ chapter presents a demographic update of current Hispanophone populations around the country. Interesting trends include that Mexicans are the fastest growing Spanish-speaking group in the New York City area (heretofore dominated by Puerto Ricans and Dominicans); Orlando has become a nouveau Puerto Rican enclave; and the Eastern seaboard is the region that has seen the most significant numerical increase in Hispanic residents between the 2000 and 2010 Censuses. He then moves into a deft analysis of several trajectories that lead to predictions about the future of the language. Franco Rodríguez’ chapter follows nicely with a summary of work on the presence of Spanish in the “linguistic landscape” of the U.S., with many studies finding that the visibility of Spanish is disproportionately low in relation to the size of the Hispanic population, in part due to an increasingly English-centered ideological environment.

Next, the chapter by Torres explores connections between Spanish-speakers and social justice and the ways in which language functions in the life of Latino communities. Focusing on how the fields of sociolinguistics and Latino studies have responded to prejudicial, status quo notions of Latino ways of speaking, she argues for continued advocacy in advancing language rights along the lines of work done by Shana Poplack, Ana Celia Zentella, Bonnie Urciuoli, Guadalupe Valdés, and Ofelia García. Similarly, Showstack’s chapter explores connections between Latino identity and language, unpacking essentialized assumptions that Spanish has a uniform social meaning for all Latinos and instead demonstrating several ways in which individuals use Spanish to represent identities in interaction within specific social contexts such as family, community, work, and classrooms – this last context a potent site for potentially (re) constructing positive opinions about U.S. Spanish varieties.

Negrón further complicates relationships between Latinos and their Spanish varieties by incorporating an analysis of “race” (the purpose of these quotation marks is explained in the chapter) and the social hierarchy it generates both in the U.S. and in Latin America. Through her literature review as well as examples from her own work in New York City, she demonstrates that Latinos frequently negotiate racial categorization through Spanish in both affiliative and differentiating ways, the latter often couched in racial terms. Specifically, Latinos sometimes judge each other’s Spanish as inferior because they see certain people as racially inferior. Finally, focusing on commercially produced textbooks for Spanish heritage speaker courses, Cashman and Trujillo reveal the rampant heteronormativity that serves to erase the experiences of and potentially alienate Latino LGBTQ+ students, simultaneously doing nothing to address racialized violence, economic injustice, and racial privilege that impact queer communities of color.

Since these chapters were completed, the Spanish version of the U.S. government website was taken down for several months after Trump’s inauguration; draconian migratory regulations
were threatened and some enacted; and general moves away from national and linguistic permeability have increased. Many of the chapters in this Part offer recommendations for practice; it is of crucial importance for readers to think about and act on concrete suggestions to combat injustices against Spanish-speaking individuals and communities.

**Part II: Linguistic studies**

In places where Spanish is the only language spoken, it seems logical to posit that all children learn it in more or less the same way, going through similar stages of phonological and morphosyntactic development in the same order. However, linguistic forms and frequencies change over time, indicating that the systems of children differ from those of their parents. There are also obvious differences in the Spanish spoken in different geographic locations and by varying social classes, genders, and ethno/racial groups, to name a few categories. This kind of sociolinguistic variation continues to be amply documented around the Spanish-speaking world, for example in the work compiled in Díaz-Campos (2011) as well as presentations at the biannual Workshops on Spanish Sociolinguistics and other venues.

But when another language is present, the two linguistic systems interact and complicate acquisition, use, and social meaning. Do monolingual and bilingual Spanish systems differ, and if so how? And do bilingual Spanish systems differ in cases in which: (a) Spanish is the majority prestige of the two languages, (b) Spanish has equal prestige with the other language, or (c) Spanish is a minority language? The ten chapters in this Part address situation (c), presenting cogent reviews of relevant work. They all focus on Spanish in the U.S. because this is where the majority of work on the topic has been carried out; comparative studies are sorely needed in other countries as well. I begin this summary with an important quote from Pinto’s chapter that all discussions of heritage languages should keep in mind:

>c]omparing SHL [Spanish as a heritage language] to monolingual varieties of Spanish should be considered an analytical exercise that does not necessarily imply any of the following: 1) That heritage speakers of Spanish strive, or should strive, to speak like monolingual speakers; 2) That the monolingual variety is superior; 3) That any differences reported for SHL represent deficiencies that need to be corrected; 4) That formal registers are more valid than informal registers, although one or the other may be more appropriate in a particular context.

Pinto, this volume

The Part begins with Montrul’s chapter on the grammatical aspects of U.S. Spanish heritage language systems, carefully detailing aspects of the highly variable inflectional instances of morphology; interfaces between morphosyntax, semantics, and pragmatics; and complex syntax that these speakers evidence. It walks readers through clear explanations with helpful examples and compares important points in summative tables, such that experts and more novice readers alike can appreciate the complexity and also the frequent systematicity of these bilingual systems.

The Part then moves from acquisition/processing into production. Ronquest and Rao summarize current research in heritage Spanish phonetics and phonology, including Voice Onset Times of the consonants /ptk/ as well as very recent work on rhotics (‘r’ sounds). Regarding Spanish vowels, they present interesting findings that even minimal contact with English can affect them, as can whether a task is formal or informal. The penultimate section of the chapter summarizes work in the most understudied area to date, heritage speaker prosody (intonation, stress, and rhythm), while the final section presents a summary of where heritage speaker
Spanish as a heritage/minority language

phonology is more like that of monolingual speakers and where it is not, leading to “two seemingly contradictory observations about heritage Spanish pronunciation: ‘sounding’ like [native Spanish speakers] on the one hand, but having a ‘heritage accent’ on the other.”

Moving to the lexicon, Fairclough and Garza first dispense with the mistaken notion that vocabulary is “simply memorized lexical units . . . consisting of individual word forms” by explaining the various types of lexical knowledge required to use a word productively. The authors then describe the vast dialectal variation present in U.S. Spanish lexicon, the role of the age of acquisition on the lexicon, and studies on both receptive and productive lexicon with U.S. Spanish speakers. They argue that heritage language instruction should focus on building students’ lexicon because it has been correlated with greater global language proficiency as well as a reduction in students’ linguistic insecurity.

The chapter by Pinto explores the relatively scant published work on the pragmatic systems of U.S.-raised Spanish speakers, including the discourse marker use of Chicano children in southern California and of Puerto Rican adults in New York, Miami, and Chicago; the use of non-canonical grammar structures (influenced by English) for requests and complaints; communicative strategies in longer oral narratives; and the use of tú and vos in Houston. He notes that research on pragmatic phenomena – which exhibit unwieldy variety – would benefit greatly from close comparisons with monolingual Spanish and monolingual English data, from a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis, and the incorporation of interpretation studies instead of just production.

Bowden and Issa discuss neurophysiological investigations of heritage language online processing of Spanish (meaning that it takes place in real-time) during recognition and production tasks. These studies use functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), functional near infrared spectroscopy (fNIRS), and event-related potentials (ERP), all of which measure changes in electrical activity or blood flow in the brain. Main findings include that heritage speakers’ two languages may be differentiated on a fine-grained neurological level, yet there is a high degree of overlap in neural substrates that underlie their two languages. They also show increased activation of particular regions of the brain related to executive function when switching between their two languages.

Also centered on real-time processing methodology such as timed lexical decision tasks and eye tracking, Jegerski’s chapter elucidates the state of the art in psycholinguistic studies of heritage Spanish systems, including the intriguing finding that heritage speakers look more like second language learners in off-line tasks but more like monolingually raised native speakers in on-line tasks.

The chapter by Shin also looks at morphosyntax but focuses on children, finding that in the U.S. context of reduced exposure to Spanish, bilingual children tend to acquire Spanish morphosyntax at a slower rate than monolingual children, and that while English does influence children’s Spanish morphosyntax, as they get older they become increasingly adept at suppressing features that do not correspond to communicative expectations. Such knowledge can assist speech pathologists working with bilingual children, helping them understand what to expect among typically developing bilinguals versus what requires intervention. In addition, the chapter outlines outstanding theoretical issues that are ripe for future research, such as the need to better understand how bilingual children acquire variable grammatical patterns as opposed to categorical ones, as well as when and how bilingual children generalize over lexically restricted patterns.

Torres-Cacoullos and Berry examine the understudied area of sociolinguistic variation in U.S. Spanish – that is, correlations between linguistic behavior and speakers’ sociodemographic characteristics. They find patterns that generally replicate those found across the Spanish-speaking
Kim Potowski

world, indicating that social factors are just as important in minority language situations as they are in other sociodemographic contexts. They also argue for a data optimization method such as principal component analysis as a way to group speakers on the basis of their linguistic behavior, illustrating with a corpus of New Mexico Spanish. Another type of variation in U.S. Spanish results from the fact that speakers hail from vastly different dialect regions of Latin America. Yet Erker’s chapter on dialectal contact shows that speaker region of origin is only one among many social factors contributing to their linguistic choices. The studies he reviews show both inter-generational continuity and change, as well as the fact that it is typically highly salient linguistic features (such as the pronoun vos and syllable final /s/) that are sensitive to change in the U.S.

Finally, Toribio and Durán explore research on macro bilingual practices including code-switching and the ways in which children are socialized into these practices. They note that many K-12 researchers and classrooms have begun legitimizing code-switching and translanguage, but the university level has largely not, meaning that when they “[enter] the university Spanish language classroom, heritage speakers are expected to leave their hybrid practices at the door.” In this way, an important resource for developing linguistic and content knowledge among college students is overlooked. The authors advocate for critical language awareness approaches (see Leeman, this volume) that engage Latino students in discussions of bilingual varieties and language mixing practices.

At least three areas for future research are suggested by the work in this Part. First, our knowledge would benefit from comparisons of two groups of Spanish-speaking bilingual individuals, both children and adults: those in majority contexts vs. those in contexts where Spanish is a minority language. For example, how does the Spanish spoken by indigenous bilingual speakers in Ecuador compare with that spoken by second generation Colombians in Switzerland or third generation Puerto Ricans in New York? A second area in need of research is the role of contextual factors including societal and familial attitudes. For example, King, Fogle, and Logan-Terry (2008) document that some indigenous Ecuadorian parents believe that early second language exposure confuses children, which leads these parents to promote Spanish only in the home and, concomitantly, to shift away from their indigenous language. Finally, we sorely need more longitudinal studies that follow children over a period of time to see how their Spanish system changes (such as Silva-Corvalán’s 2014 study of her two grandsons).

Part III: Educational issues

In the U.S., three-fourths of all Hispanics aged five and older speak Spanish. However, that share is projected to fall to about two-thirds in 2020 (López & González-Barrera 2013). In addition, one out of every four school-age students in the U.S. today is Latino, yet the National Center for Educational Statistics reports that Latino fourth and eighth graders score about two grade levels lower than the national average on tests in math and reading. There is an even larger difference – up to four grade levels – between Hispanic students who are proficient in English and those who are not. We also know that 12% of all U.S. Latino students drop out of high school, compared to 5% of White students. It is painfully obvious that our current educational approaches are not benefitting these students’ Spanish, their English, or their academic achievement.

In the fortunate event that these students make it to college, many of them are classified as “heritage Spanish speakers” and take Spanish courses specifically developed based on their strengths and needs. There have been excellent recent collections detailing educational issues related to teaching Spanish to heritage speakers at the college level, including Pascual y Cabo (2016), Fairclough and Beaudrie (2016), and Beaudrie, Ducar, and Potowski (2014). This Part presents a few new explorations of this theme as well as important considerations for promoting
Spanish as a heritage/minority language

successful outcomes among Latino children at the K-8 level. Valdés and Parra set the stage by exploring a seven-step process that underlies most attempts at “curricularizing language” and how each step might apply to the teaching of Spanish as a heritage language. Important elements include ideologies of language, race (connecting nicely with the chapter by Negrón), class, and identity (the topic of Showstack’s chapter) as well as theories of second language acquisition and bilingualism. In general, the authors support the goal of raising students’ critical language awareness “as a way to decolonize their thoughts and feelings about their use of the Spanish language, so they can become active users and address their communities’ needs.” Similarly, Leeman’s chapter focuses on critical language awareness, highlighting the unfortunate central role of mainstream educational institutions in the legitimization of linguistic subordination. She challenges educators to examine how they can engage students in questioning dominant ideologies surrounding bilingualism and bidialectalism and alter the status quo.

The Part then moves from these larger curricular issues to more micro classroom-level themes. As explained by Bowles, we have several decades of research on instructed second language acquisition – most using a pre-test, treatment, and post-test design – yet few such studies in heritage speaker classrooms. This is despite indications that heritage language development probably differs from that of second language learners. Her chapter seeks to answer two fundamental questions: (1) Is instruction in a classroom setting beneficial for heritage language acquisition? If so, (2) What features make such instruction most effective? She concludes with concrete suggestions for future research in this sorely understudied area, arguing for a new subfield of research called instructed heritage language acquisition. In keeping with the volume’s insistence on bridging areas of inquiry, I would like to also suggest that pre-test/treatment/post-test studies also be carried out on K-8 Spanish speakers in dual language programs (see Lindholm-Leary’s chapter, this volume) as well as with high school students in heritage speaker programs.

Focusing on classroom processes instead of outcomes, Carreira and Hitchins Chik describe how, unlike second language students whose Spanish proficiency is mostly a direct result of prior coursework, heritage speakers’ knowledge and abilities are much more heterogeneous because they derive from life experiences. They then summarize principles in differentiated teaching, offering eight concrete tools for teachers to help their students get the most out of their Spanish classes. This is important both for separate heritage speaker classrooms as well as in Spanish programs where heritage speakers and second language learners come together at some point.

Returning again to a more macro perspective, the Part features Beaudrie’s chapter on heritage language program administration. Given the exponential growth of these programs around the nation, as well as the increase in Hispanic Serving Institutions4 (which are logical places for heritage Spanish programs to blossom and which could ideally form a coalition to support these programs), this is a particularly important area of practice and scholarship. Her chapter includes important topics such as course placement procedures, curriculum development,5 and evaluating student success. Abbott and Martínez examine issues in the increasingly popular fields of Spanish for the professions and community service learning and some specific applications for heritage speaker populations. Spanish for the professions grew out of a need to connect second language learners with functional language that was absent from traditional textbooks, including business and healthcare, while community service learning sought to expand opportunities for second language learners to interact with native speakers while developing a sense of social responsibility. Yet these two key areas were absent from heritage language education until recently, and the authors make a compelling case for the transformative educational experiences that these approaches can foster for heritage speakers connected to issues of immigration, health care, and cultural perspectives. Also in the university context, noting that the number of U.S. students studying abroad has more than tripled since the late 1990s, Shively examines issues
related to heritage speakers studying abroad in Spanish-speaking countries. For many of these students, study abroad may be more of a “return home” than an “immersion in difference” which typically characterizes the second language study abroad experience. But even so, these students often encounter being positioned as “foreign,” which ushers in a certain amount of identity renegotiation. Carvalho and Child explore issues in the acquisition of cognate languages (such as French, Italian, and Portuguese) by heritage Spanish speakers. Specifically, when compared with the acquisition of second language learners, heritage speakers’ acquisition of these languages is characterized by a faster rate, early high competence in receptive skills, and ease of communication. The authors detail efforts of curriculum designers to develop materials that best suit heritage Spanish speakers in these courses – which are technically third language (L3) contexts – using activities that capitalize on their implicit linguistic knowledge, while also keeping in mind that heritage Spanish speakers are a linguistically heterogeneous group. Questions about linguistic transfer and language change that emerge here are also relevant where Spanish-speakers have immigrated to countries where Italian or French are spoken (see the chapters by Bonomi and Sanfelici and by Sánchez Abchi, respectively).

The Part concludes with two chapters that focus on the elementary school years, a critical topic given that the seven hours per day that kids spend in school constitute approximately half of their waking hours. Lindholm-Leary focuses on a topic close to my heart, dual language programs, which teach between 50% to 90% of the curriculum in Spanish. Over 30 years of research findings demonstrate that both native Spanish speakers and native English speakers benefit from dual language programs on standardized achievement tests, course grades, school attendance and dropout rates, and student attitudes. I have not seen any other school model with as strong an impact on Latino youth (who at the national level are at risk on many measures) and on Spanish language development, both of which constitute key components of a social justice-driven curriculum. Unfortunately, there are far too few Spanish dual language programs around the U.S., with a recent estimate of under 300 schools for almost 8 million Latino students (Potowski 2016) based on data from the dual language directory of the Center for Applied Linguistics (2007). Given the resounding success of dual immersion programs for Latino students’ Spanish, English, and overall academic development, the Spanish heritage language community should be fighting for the creation of more such programs as well as greater availability of high quality teacher preparation programs for the professionals who work there.

Finally, the chapter by Mancilla-Martinez explores what we know about how Spanish-English bilingual Latino children develop literacy skills in Spanish. Unfortunately, we know relatively little about this process, due in large part to a lack of assessments designed for and normed on Spanish-English bilinguals. The author reviews research on English literacy development and on Spanish literacy development, highlighting important differences between the two and suggesting important areas for how best to support this growing and vulnerable population’s literacy achievement in both languages.

Part IV: Spanish as a minority/heritage language outside of the U.S.

The final Part of the book presents profiles of Spanish-speaking communities in nine nations around the globe. As noted in the Introduction, it would be difficult for a single volume to include all contexts where Spanish is a minority language, and this one is no exception. Several interesting contexts that are unfortunately not represented include Brazil, Morocco, Gibraltar, Equatorial Guinea, and the Philippines. However, the countries profiled (shown in Table 1.2) provide an interesting range of contexts in Europe, Australia/New Zealand, and
Spanish as a heritage/minority language

North America. Some of these chapters represent the first publications to my knowledge about Spanish and its speakers in these locations.

Jones Díaz and Walker combine quantitative data with qualitative original research with Latin American immigrants in Australia and Aotearoa-New Zealand, with several poignant anecdotes that highlight the role of Spanish in identity construction and cultural maintenance. Due in large part to the similarities between Spanish and Italian, Bonomi and Sanfelici’s chapter about Italy includes the concept of Spanish in-motion to describe the set of hybrid and multiple language practices performed by Latinos there, which occur despite the nation’s largely monolingual ideology that seeks to assimilate migrants through the exclusive use of Italian. Similarly, beliefs about how to best promote German acquisition is a focus of Ramos Méndez-Sahlender’s chapter about Germany, where declining resources are a main factor in the lack of Spanish maintenance programs. The chapter on Switzerland by Sánchez Abchi documents that despite the challenge of extremely diverse backgrounds, students have been shown to write better in Spanish after attending “Language and Culture of Origin” classes. Nielson Parada summarizes linguistic research to date on the Chilean-Swedish community before describing the climate of heritage language support in the country’s educational system. Guardado examines Canada and the UK (a combination I requested in order to represent two Anglophone contexts), summarizing research on morphosyntax, language and identity, and educational experiences among Spanish-speaking immigrants to these two locations.

Finally, the inclusion of Mexico in this Part might seem surprising, particularly since we saw in Table 1.1 that this is the Spanish-speaking nation with the largest number of inhabitants in the world. In this chapter, Mar-Molinero focuses on a phenomenon that is increasingly common: that of individuals raised for most or all of their lives in the U.S., who are descendants of Mexican nationals and who have returned to Mexico. Growing up in the U.S. frequently leads to certain linguistic phenomena in their Spanish (explored in Part II) as well as cultural knowledge and experiences that are out of harmony with what is expected of their Mexico-raised peers. The author details ways in which Mexican schools might best meet the needs of these “returnee” students.

Conclusions and future directions

Minoritized languages around the world, especially those spoken by immigrants, are very typically on a path towards loss. This volume explores linguistic, social, and educational issues germane to understanding Spanish as a heritage/minoritized language in ten different nations.
There are, of course, many other important and relevant topics that could have appeared here, including some that I was simply unable to procure (such as Spanish in U.S. mainstream media and in U.S. literature) as well as others that did not occur to me. I conclude by briefly describing four additional areas that may be fruitful for future investigations into the topic of heritage/minoritized languages.

**Social justice**

In what ways can researchers bring about greater social justice for speakers of Spanish as a minoritized language? Can we work to lessen linguistic prejudice? Help stem language loss? Encourage speakers to develop a sense of pride in their Spanish in the face of negative forces, as does the curricular work of Wolfram (2013) and of Charity Hudley and Mallinson (2014)? As noted by Heleta (2016), a lot of researchers’ work is “largely sitting in academic journals that are read almost exclusively by [our] peers.” Instead we need to share our work with the broader public in order to effect change. For example, it is shocking that the field has not yet produced an educational, mainstream-oriented feature-length documentary about Spanish in the U.S. akin to *American Tongues, Do you speak American?* or *Talking Black in America*. Such a video could not only generate pride among U.S. Spanish-speakers but also educate the broader public about the history and value of the language in the present-day U.S.

**Mothers as minority/ized language transmitters**

Mothers may play an especially important role in the development of a minoritized language. For example, Walker (2011) observed that mothers exerted a definitive influence on Spanish language use among Latino children in New Zealand. Potowski (2016) studied the Spanish of ‘MexiRicans’ (individuals who have one Mexican parent and one Puerto Rican parent) raised in Chicago, where Spanish is a minority language and Puerto Rican Spanish is the minority dialect compared to Mexican Spanish. She found that those MexiRicans who exhibited Puerto Rican phonological features always had a Puerto Rican mother, suggesting that in order to develop features of a locally minority dialect within a minority language, having a mother who speaks that minority dialect is necessary. Zentella (1997) found that Puerto Rican girls in a New York City neighborhood developed stronger Spanish than the boys – because they were required to stay near the home with their mothers, while boys were allowed to leave the block – which meant that when they became parents, girls were in a stronger position to pass on Spanish than their U.S.-raised male partners. Work on other languages, too, has made a connection between successful minority language transmission and having a mother who spoke the minority language (Williams 1987 in Wales; Kamada 1997 in Japan; Kondo 1997 in Hawai; Boyd 1998 in Denmark, Finland, and Sweden; Chiaro & Nocella, 1999 in Britain). This suggests that a society might bolster minority language maintenance via mother-friendly policies including postpartum leaves of absence, equal pay, jobsite childcare, and incentives to stay home with children until they go to preschool.

**Technology**

What is the role of technology in the bilingualism of the world’s Spanish-speaking individuals? Trenchs (2013) comments on the value of the Internet, specifically YouTube, for purposes of cultural entertainment tied to ethnolinguistic identity among Chinese immigrant adolescents in Barcelona, while Vincent (2015) explores the role of mobile phones and Internet cafés among...
Latino diaspora members in maintaining cultural and linguistic connections. Yet a digital divide in broadband access continues to exist in the U.S., with only 46% of Latinos (vs. 73% of Whites) having home access in 2015 (Pew Hispanic Center 2016), constituting yet another inequity in Latinos’ socioeconomic realities that might be addressed through dedicated policies.

Notes

1 An air tight definition of the term “native” speaker is elusive, hence my use of quotation marks. Criteria such as “commencing acquisition at birth” or “speaking the language at home” are imperfect because both situations can lead to linguistic systems that could not sensibly be referred to as “native-like.” Monolingualism obviously cannot be a requirement, either. Thus, I use instead the term “Spanish speaker” with the goal of identifying the number of individuals who use Spanish with locally adequate proficiency to accomplish tasks in their lives. This includes, for example, speakers of indigenous languages in Latin America as well as the estimated 3 million non-Latinos in the U.S. and the 400,000 in Italy who identify as home Spanish speakers. Given the near impossibility of ascertaining reliable data for such an imprecise definition, these figures should be taken as estimates only.

2 The U.S. number was calculated by adding 37.6 million home Spanish speakers (American Community Survey, U.S. Census 2011) and an estimated 8.9 million undocumented Spanish speakers from Latin America as of 2014 (Pew Hispanic Center 2016).

3 Rei-Doval (2016) reports that in 2013, 31% of Galicians were monolingual in Galician.

4 A federal designation meaning that 25% or more of the student population is Hispanic.

5 The Hispanidades project is another excellent curricular model that links Latino students from around the U.S. in sharing first person, locally relevant material (www.lrc.columbia.edu/hispanidades/collaborations).

6 Although this is likely an undercounting. Unofficial estimates place the national number of dual language schools in the U.S. between 1,000 (Maxwell 2012) to over 2,000 (Watanabe 2011). But even if there were 2,000 such programs, that would not be nearly enough for almost 8 million Latino students.

7 In her summary of a large body of work, DeHouwer (2009) found no effect for parental gender on language development. It may be only in language minority contexts, such as those explored by Walker, Potowski, Zentella, and others, that the mother might exert greater influence on children’s bilingual language development.

References


