

4-1-2010

Review of *Varieties of Spanish in the United States* by J.
Lipski

Todd A. Hernandez

Marquette University, todd.hernandez@marquette.edu

Lipski, John M. *Varieties of Spanish in the United States*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2008. ISBN: 978-1-58901-213-4.

In John M. Lipski's *Varieties of Spanish in the United States*, the author outlines the importance of the Spanish language in the United States and describes the major varieties of Spanish found here. This book consists of an introduction and 13 chapters. A brief historical account of each Spanish-speaking group, demographic information, sociolinguistic configurations, descriptive information about the Spanish varieties, and an overview of scholarship are presented in each chapter.

In Chapter 1, Lipski gives a brief introduction to the major varieties of U.S. Spanish and to the circumstances that brought these groups to the United States. The demographics of U.S. Spanish and the teaching of Spanish as a second language in the United States are then discussed.

In Chapter 2, the author outlines the scholarship on Spanish in the United States. He traces the evolution of U.S. Spanish studies from the pioneering work of Aurelio Espinosa, an expert on New Mexico Spanish, to the emergence of Spanish as a national language in the 1950s and 1960s, and to the study of U.S. Spanish in the era of civil rights and civil struggle. This was the same era in which the great Chicano authors Rudolfo Anaya, Rolando Hinojosa-Smith, Miguel Méndez, Tomás Rivera, Sabine Ulibarrí, and others came to prominence. Lipski describes the consequences of the United States Supreme Court *Lau v. Nichols* decision on bilingual education. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the coming of age of U.S. Spanish scholarship in the 1980s and 1990s.

Lipski addresses the concept of Spanglish in Chapter 3. The author identifies Spanglish as a term often used to describe the speech patterns of resident Latino communities and, in some instances, to marginalize U.S. Latino Spanish speakers. Lipski traces the origin of the term Spanglish (*espanglish* in Spanish) to the Puerto Rican journalist Salvador Tío (1954), who expressed concern about what he viewed as the deterioration of Spanish in Puerto Rico as a result of contact with English words. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how the evolving social and political identities of U.S. Latino communities and increasing dialogue between Latino intellectuals and activists resulted in new perspectives on the notion of Spanglish.

In Chapter 4, Lipski examines Mexican Spanish in the United States. In tracing the development of Mexican varieties of Spanish in the United States, the author discusses important events: the Texas Revolution of 1836, the Mexican-American War of 1848, the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1920, the *bracero* program post-World War I, and the railroad system connecting southern Texas to Midwestern industrial cities such as Chicago, Milwaukee, and Detroit, as well as the introduction of a new Chicano consciousness in the 1960s. The chapter concludes with an excellent discussion of Mexican-American Spanish versus Mexican Spanish.

The focus of Chapter 5 is Cuban Spanish in the United States. The author traces the Cuban presence in the United States from the Cuban intellectuals of the middle of the nineteenth century to the Cuban Revolution of 1959, and to the Mariel boatlift of 1980. Lipski then gives a current profile of Cuban-American communities in the United States and describes major linguistic features of Cuban Spanish, as well as the differences between Cuban and Cuban-American Spanish.

In Chapter 6, Lipski discusses Puerto Rican Spanish in the United States. The author outlines the historical demographics of Puerto Ricans in the United States as well as their major presence in the Northeast. Puerto Rican and U.S. Puerto Rican Spanish are discussed. The chapter concludes with a fascinating discussion of the bilingual code switching of Puerto Ricans in the United States.

The author gives a brief introduction to Dominican Spanish in the United States in Chapter 7. Lipski describes the relationship between the linguistic development of the Dominican Republic and the history of Santo Domingo. The demographics of this group of Spanish speakers are discussed. Linguistic features of Dominican Spanish and Dominican Spanish in the United States are then presented.

Central American Spanish in the United States is the focus of Chapter 8. Lipski identifies three major dialects in Central American Spanish: Guatemalan, Costa Rican, and El Salvadoran-Honduran-Nicaraguan. The author gives an interesting discussion of one of the most striking features of Central American Spanish, the use of the second person familiar pronoun *vos* instead of *tú*, which also appears in a few other Spanish-speaking countries. The chapter concludes with a brief overview of the Central American lexicon.

Lipski discusses Salvadoran Spanish in the United States in Chapter 9. The focus of Chapter 10 is Nicaraguan Spanish in the United States. Lipski describes the political circumstances—the abdication of Somoza, the triumph of the Sandinista Revolution in July 1979, and U.S. supported *contra* activities—that all resulted in the mass exodus of Nicaraguans to the United States in the 1980s. Linguistic features of Nicaraguan Spanish are discussed, such as this group's exclusive use of the *vos* form of address and the *voseo* verb paradigm.

In Chapter 11, Lipski examines Guatemalan and Honduran Spanish in the United States. The author discusses how the large and diverse indigenous population of Guatemala precluded large-scale Hispanization. As a result, at least half of the population of Guatemala does not speak Spanish, or speaks it as a recessive second language. What is often described as “Guatemalan Spanish” represents the middle- and upper-class monolingual Spanish speakers of Guatemala City. The “Popular Guatemalan Spanish” of the surrounding highland regions, in contrast, reflects the influence of Native American languages or imperfect learning of Spanish. A brief account of Honduran Spanish is then given.

Chapter 12 focuses on the traditional varieties of U.S. Spanish found in New Mexico, southern Colorado, and Louisiana. Lipski gives a fascinating account of the origin of the Spanish-speaking populations of New Mexico and southern Colorado. The author discusses the Juan de Oñate expedition of 1598, the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, the subsequent relationship between Spanish settlers in New Mexico and the remainder of New Spain, and the annexation of New Mexico to the United States after the Mexican-American War. He then describes the development of New Mexican Spanish, its linguistic features, and the scholarship on it. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of Spanish in Louisiana. In Chapter 13, Lipski gives a great discussion of lexical borrowing, loan translations and calques, and code switching among U.S. Spanish speakers.

In sum, John M. Lipski's *Varieties of Spanish in the United States* is an outstanding work of scholarship. Specialists in the field as well as undergraduate and graduate students will benefit from the author's excellent findings in this important area.

Todd A. Hernández, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Spanish
Marquette University
Milwaukee, Wisconsin