

## History of the Spanish language

The language known today as Spanish is derived from a dialect of spoken Latin, which was brought to the Iberian Peninsula by the Romans during the Second Punic War, beginning in 218 BC, and which evolved in central parts of the Iberian Peninsula after the fall of the Western Roman Empire in the fifth century. A written standard was developed in the cities of Toledo (13th to 16th centuries) and Madrid (from the 1560s). Over the past 1,000 years, the language expanded south to the Mediterranean Sea, and was later transferred to the Spanish colonial empire, most notably to the Americas. Today it is the official language of 20 countries, as well as an official language of numerous international organizations, including the United Nations.

### Main distinguishing features

The development of Spanish phonology is distinguished from those of other nearby Romance languages (e.g. Portuguese, Catalan) by several features:

diphthongization of Latin stressed short E and O in closed syllables as well as open (tiempo, puerta vs. Portuguese tempo, porta)

devoicing and further development of the medieval Spanish sibilants, producing (1) the velar fricative [x] in words such as caja, hijo, gente, and (2)—in many dialects of Spain, including the prestige varieties of Madrid, Toledo, etc.—the interdental [θ] in words such as cinco, hacer, and lazo

debuccalization and eventual loss of Latin initial /f/ in most contexts, marked in modern spelling by the silent ⟨h⟩ of words such as hablar, hilo, hoja (from Latin "fabulare", "filum", and "folia" respectively). Also in Gascon: hilh, huelha)

early fricativization of palatal /k/ (from Vulgar Latin -LY-, -CL-, -GL-), first into palatal /ç/ and ultimately into velar /x/, e.g., filiu →hijo, \*oc'lu → ojo, \*coag'lare → cuajar; cf. Portuguese filho, olho, coalhar)

development of initial PL-, CL-, FL- into palatal /k/ in many words, e.g., plorare → llorar, clamare → llamar, flamma → llama; cf. Portuguese chorar, chamar, chama, Catalan plorar, clamar, flama)

Vulgar Latin initial /j/ (from J-, DY-, G(E)-, G(I)-) remains before /a/, /e/ and /i/, subsequently disappearing in an unstressed syllable (yace, yeso, helar, enero, echar, hinojo vs.

Portuguese jaz, gesso, gelar, janeiro, jeitar, joelho)

The following features are characteristic of Spanish phonology and also of some other Ibero-Romance languages, but not the Romance languages as a whole:

palatalization of Latin -NN- and -LL- into /ɲ/ and /ʎ/ (año, caballo) (also in Catalan: any, cavall).

the phonemic merger of /b/ and /v/, making, for example, the noun tubo and the verb tuvo phonetically equivalent (in all contexts except those of hypercorrection or spelling pronunciation (also in Galician, Northern European Portuguese and some Catalan and Occitan varieties)

spirantization of /b/, /d/, and /g/ → [β̟̞], [ð̟̞] and [ɣ̟̞]—not only from original Latin B, D, and G (as in Sp. probar, sudar, legumbre), but also from Latin P, T, and C (as in Sp. sabe, vida, lago) (also in Galician, European Portuguese, Catalan and parts of Occitan)

The Latin system of four verb conjugations (form classes) is reduced to three in Spanish. The Latin infinitives with the endings -ĀRE, -ĒRE, and -ĪRE become Spanish infinitives in -ar, -er, and -ir respectively. The Latin third conjugation—infinitives ending in -ĔRE—are redistributed between the Spanish -er and -ir classes (e.g. *facere* → *hacer*, *dicere* → *decir*). Spanish verbal morphology continues the use of some Latin synthetic forms that were replaced by analytic ones in spoken French and (partly) Italian (cf. Sp. *lavó*, Fr. *il a lavé*), and the Spanish subjunctive mood maintains separate present and past-tense forms.

Spanish syntax provides overt marking for some direct objects (the so-called "personal a", see differential object marking for the general phenomenon), and uses clitic doubling with indirect objects, in which a "redundant" pronoun (*le*, *les*) appears even in the presence of an explicit noun phrase. (Neither feature occurs in other Western Romance languages,[citation needed] but both are features of Romanian, with *pe* < *PER* corresponding to Spanish *a*.) With regard to subject pronouns, Spanish is a pro-drop language, meaning that the verb phrase can often stand alone without the use of a subject pronoun (or a subject noun phrase). Compared to other Romance languages, Spanish has a somewhat freer syntax with relatively fewer restrictions on subject-verb-object word order.

Due to prolonged language contact with other languages, the Spanish lexicon contains loanwords from Basque, Hispano-Celtic (Celtiberian and Gallaecian), Iberian, Germanic (Gothic), Arabic and indigenous languages of the Americas.

Accents—used in Modern Spanish to mark the vowel of the stressed syllable in words where stress is not predictable from rules—came into use sporadically in the 15th century, and massively in the 16th century. Their use began to be standardized with the advent of the Spanish Royal Academy in the 18th century. See also Spanish orthography.

## External history

With the Reconquista in Iberia, various Vulgar Latin language groups ended up mixing (along with Basques). The largest such group was the Castilians, whose language became Spanish.

The standard Spanish language is also called Castilian in its original variant, and in order to distinguish it from other languages native to parts of Spain, such as Galician, Catalan, Basque, etc. In its earliest documented form, and up through approximately the 15th century, the language is customarily called Old Spanish. From approximately the 16th century on, it is called Modern Spanish. Spanish of the 16th and 17th centuries is sometimes called "classical" Spanish, referring to the literary accomplishments of that period. Unlike English and French, it is not customary to speak of a "middle" stage in the development of Spanish.

## Origins

Castilian Spanish originated (after the decline of the Roman Empire) as a continuation of spoken Latin in several areas of northern and central Spain. Eventually, the variety spoken in the city of Toledo around the 13th century became the basis for the written standard. With the Reconquista, this northern dialect spread to the south, where it almost entirely replaced or absorbed the local Romance dialects, at the same time as it borrowed many words from

Moorish Arabic and was influenced by Mozarabic (the Romance speech of Christians living in Moorish territory) and medieval Judaeo-Spanish (Ladino). These languages had vanished in the Iberian Peninsula by the late 16th century.

The prestige of Castile and its language was propagated partly by the exploits of Castilian heroes in the battles of the Reconquista—among them Fernán González and Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar (El Cid)—and by the narrative poems about them that were recited in Castilian even outside the original territory of that dialect.

The "first written Spanish" was traditionally considered to have appeared in the *Glosas Emilianenses* located in San Millán de la Cogolla, La Rioja. These are "glosses" (translations of isolated words and phrases in a form more like Hispanic Romance than Latin) added between the lines of a manuscript that was written earlier in Latin. Nowadays the language of the *Glosas Emilianenses* is considered to be closer to the Navarro-Aragonese language than to Spanish proper. Estimates of their date vary from the late 10th to the early 11th century.

The first steps toward standardization of written Castilian were taken in the 13th century by King Alfonso X of Castile, known as Alfonso el Sabio (Alfonso the Wise), in his court in Toledo. He assembled scribes at his court and supervised their writing, in Castilian, of extensive works on history, astronomy, law, and other fields of knowledge.

Antonio de Nebrija wrote the first grammar of Spanish, *Gramática de la lengua castellana*, and presented it, in 1492, to Queen Isabella, who is said to have had an early appreciation of the usefulness of the language as a tool of hegemony, as if anticipating the empire that was about to be founded with the voyages of Columbus.

Because Old Spanish resembles the modern written language to a relatively high degree, a reader of Modern Spanish can learn to read medieval documents without much difficulty.

The Spanish Royal Academy was founded in 1713, largely with the purpose of standardizing the language. The Academy published its first dictionary in six volumes over the period 1726–1739, and its first grammar in 1771, and it continues to produce new editions of both from time to time. (The Academy's dictionary is now accessible on the Internet.) Today, each of the Spanish-speaking countries has an analogous language academy, and an Association of Spanish Language Academies was created in 1951.

## **America**

Beginning in 1492, the Spanish discovery and colonization brought the language to the Americas (Mexico, Central America, and western and southern South America), where it is spoken today, as well as to several island groups in the Pacific where it is no longer spoken by any large numbers of people: the Philippines, Palau, the Marianas (including Guam), and what is today the Federated States of Micronesia.

Use of the language in the Americas was continued by descendants of the Spaniards: Spanish criollos and Mestizos. After the wars of independence fought by these colonies in the 19th century, the new ruling elites extended their Spanish to the whole population,

including the Amerindian majority, to strengthen national unity, and nowadays it is the first and official language of the resulting republics, except in very isolated parts of the former Spanish colonies.

In the late 19th century, the still-Spanish colonies of Cuba and Puerto Rico encouraged more immigrants from Spain, and similarly other Spanish-speaking countries such as Argentina, Uruguay, and to a lesser extent Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Panama and Venezuela, attracted waves of European immigration, Spanish and non-Spanish, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. There, the countries' large (or sizable minority) population groups of second- and third-generation descendants adopted the Spanish language as part of their governments' official assimilation policies to include Europeans. In some countries, they had to be Catholics and agreed to take an oath of allegiance to their chosen nation's government.

When Puerto Rico became a possession of the United States as a consequence of the Spanish–American War, its population—almost entirely of Spanish and mixed Afro-Caribbean/Spanish (mulatto and mestizo) descent—retained its inherited Spanish language as a mother tongue, in co-existence with the American-imposed English as co-official. In the 20th century, more than a million Puerto Ricans migrated to the mainland U.S. (see Puerto Ricans in the United States).

A similar situation occurred in the American Southwest, including California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas, where Spaniards, then criollos (Tejanos, Californios, etc.) followed by Chicanos (Mexican Americans) and later Mexican immigrants, kept the Spanish language alive before, during and after the American appropriation of those territories following the Mexican–American War. Spanish continues to be used by millions of citizens and immigrants to the United States from Spanish-speaking countries of the Americas (for example, many Cubans arrived in Miami, Florida, beginning with the Cuban Revolution in 1959, and followed by other Latin American groups; the local majority is now Spanish-speaking). Spanish is now treated as the country's "second language," and over 5 percent of the U.S. population are Spanish-speaking, but most Latino/Hispanic Americans are bilingual or also regularly speak English.

## **Africa**

The presence of Spanish in Equatorial Guinea dates from the late 18th century, and it was adopted as the official language when independence was granted in 1968.

Spanish is widely spoken in Western Sahara, which was a protectorate/colony of Spain from the 1880s to the 1970s.

## **Judaeo-Spanish**

In 1492 Spain expelled its Jewish population. Their Judaeo-Spanish language, called Ladino, developed along its own lines and continues to be spoken by a dwindling number of speakers, mainly in Israel, Turkey, and Greece.

## **In the Pacific**

In the Marianas, the Spanish language was retained until the Pacific War, but is no longer spoken there by any significant number of people. As part of Chile since 1888, Spanish is spoken by most people in Easter Island along with Rapa Nui language.

## **Spain**

Language politics in Francoist Spain declared Spanish as the only official language in Spain, and to this day it is the most widely used language in government, business, public education, the workplace, cultural arts, and the media. But in the 1960s and 1970s,[citation needed] the Spanish parliament agreed to allow provinces to use, speak, and print official documents in three other languages: Catalan for Catalonia, Balearic Islands and Valencia; Basque for the Basque provinces and Navarre, and Galician for Galicia. Since 1975, following the death of Franco, Spain has become a multi-party democracy and decentralized country, constituted in autonomous communities. Under this system, some languages of Spain—such as Aranese (an Occitan language of northwestern Catalonia), Basque, Catalan/Valencian, and Galician—have gained co-official status in their respective geographical areas. Others—such as Aragonese, Asturian and Leonese—have been recognized by regional governments.

## **International projection**

When the United Nations organization was founded in 1945, Spanish was designated one of its five official languages (along with Chinese, English, French, and Russian; a sixth language, Arabic, was added in 1973).

The list of Nobel laureates in Literature includes eleven authors who wrote in Spanish (José Echegaray, Jacinto Benavente, Gabriela Mistral, Juan Ramón Jiménez, Miguel Ángel Asturias, Pablo Neruda, Vicente Aleixandre, Gabriel García Márquez, Camilo José Cela, Octavio Paz, and Mario Vargas Llosa).

## **Influences on the Spanish language**

The mention of "influences" on the Spanish language refers primarily to lexical borrowing. Throughout its history, Spanish has accepted loanwords, first from pre-Roman languages (including Basque, Iberian, Celtiberian and Gallaecian), and later from Greek, from Germanic languages, from Arabic, from neighboring Romance languages, from Native American languages, and from English.

The most frequently used word that entered Spanish from (or through) Basque is *izquierda* "left". Basque is perhaps most evident in some common Spanish surnames, including *García* and *Echeverría*. Basque place names also are prominent throughout Spain, because many Castilians who took part in the Reconquista and repopulation of Moorish Iberia by Christians were of Basque lineage. Iberian and Celtiberian likewise are thought to have contributed place names to Spain. Words of everyday use that are attributed to Celtic sources include *camino* "road", *carro* "cart", *colmena* "hive", and *cerveza* "beer". Suffixes

such as -iego: *mujeriego* "womanizer" and -ego: *gallego* "Galician" are also attributed to Celtic sources.

Influence of Basque phonology is credited by some researchers with softening the Spanish labiodentals: turning labiodental [v] to bilabial [β], and ultimately deleting labiodental [f]. Others negate or downplay Basque phonological influence, claiming that these changes occurred in the affected dialects wholly as a result of factors internal to the language, not outside influence. It is also possible that the two forces, internal and external, worked in concert and reinforced each other.

Some words of Greek origin were already present in the spoken Latin that became Spanish. Additionally, many Greek words formed part of the language of the Church. Spanish also borrowed Ancient Greek vocabulary in the areas of medical, technical, and scientific language, beginning as early as the 13th century.

The influence of Germanic languages is very little on phonological development, but rather is found mainly in the Spanish lexicon. Words of Germanic origin are common in all varieties of Spanish. The modern words for the cardinal directions (*norte*, *este*, *sur*, *oeste*), for example, are all taken from Germanic words (compare north, east, south and west in Modern English), after the contact with Atlantic sailors. These words did not exist in Spanish prior to the 15th century. Instead, "north" and "south" were *septentrion* and *meridion* respectively (both virtually obsolete in Modern Spanish), while "east" was *oriente* (or *levante*), and "west" was *occidente* (or *poniente*). These older words for "east" and "west" continue to have some use in Modern Spanish.

In 711 Spain was invaded by Moors, who brought the Arabic language to the Peninsula. For about eight hundred years, until the fall of the Emirate of Granada (1492), Spanish borrowed thousands of words from Arabic, such as *alcalde* "mayor", *álgebra* "algebra", *aceite* "oil", *zanahoria* "carrot", *alquiler* "rent", *achacar* "to blame", *adelfa* "oleander", *barrio* "neighbourhood", *chaleco* "vest", to name just a few; making up 8% of the Spanish dictionary - the second largest lexical influence on Spanish after Latin.[19][20][21] It is thought that the bilingualism of the Mozarabs facilitated the large transfer of vocabulary from Arabic to Castilian.

The neighboring Romance languages—Portuguese/Galician, Catalan, French, and Occitan—contributed greatly to the Spanish lexicon throughout the Middle Ages and into the modern era. Borrowing from Italian occurred most frequently in the 16th and 17th centuries, due largely to the influence of the Italian Renaissance.

With the development of the Spanish Empire in the New World came lexical borrowing from indigenous languages of the Americas, especially vocabulary dealing with flora, fauna, and cultural concepts unique to the Americas.

Borrowing from English has become especially strong, beginning in the 20th century, with words borrowed from many fields of activity, including sports, technology, and commerce.

The incorporation into Spanish of learned, or "bookish" words from its own ancestor language, Latin, is arguably another form of lexical borrowing through the influence of written

language and the liturgical language of the Church. Throughout the Middle Ages and into the early modern period, most literate Spanish-speakers were also literate in Latin; and thus they easily adopted Latin words into their writing—and eventually speech—in Spanish. The form of Latin that Spaniards spoke and the loanwords came from was Classical Latin, but also Renaissance Latin, the form of Latin used in original works of the time.