

9-1984

## Review of: Spanish and Portuguese in Social Context by J. Bergen and G. Bills (eds.)

Shaw N. Gynan

Western Washington University, shaw.gynan@wwu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: [http://cedar.wwu.edu/mcl\\_facpubs](http://cedar.wwu.edu/mcl_facpubs)



Part of the [Linguistics Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Gynan, Shaw N., "Review of: Spanish and Portuguese in Social Context by J. Bergen and G. Bills (eds.)" (1984). *Modern & Classical Languages*. 63.

[http://cedar.wwu.edu/mcl\\_facpubs/63](http://cedar.wwu.edu/mcl_facpubs/63)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Humanities at Western CEDAR. It has been accepted for inclusion in Modern & Classical Languages by an authorized administrator of Western CEDAR. For more information, please contact [westerncedar@wwu.edu](mailto:westerncedar@wwu.edu).

BERGEN, JOHN J., and BILLS, GARLAND D., editors. *Spanish and Portuguese in Social Context*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1983. vi + 118 pp.

This collection of thirteen papers from the Seventh Colloquium on Hispanic Linguistics (1980) is the fourth published by Georgetown University. As in the three previous volumes, the reports in this one represent slightly over half of those presented. Unlike previous published proceedings, the present one deals with aspects of a single theme. Interesting hypotheses are forwarded concerning the relationship between social factors and history of Spanish language acquisition, bilingualism, and Spanish and Portuguese phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexicon.

Charles Elerick applies knowledge of the social context of bilingualism to the analysis of a well-known problem in Spanish historical linguistics. The  $f \rightarrow h \rightarrow \emptyset$  sound change almost universally attributed to late Basque influence is more likely due to Sabine-Latin, Faliscan-Latin, and other types of Italic bilingualism which produced the reduction rule,  $f \rightarrow h$ ; because of its inherent instability in Latin,  $h$  reduced to  $\emptyset$ . Elerick suggests that more knowledge about ancient societies be used to interpret linguistic data.

Tracy Terrell uses data from Dominican Spanish to support the assertion that the *-e-* found in some Spanish plurals is neither a part of the stem nor inserted epenthetically, but rather part of a morphological variant, *-es*. This study illustrates how useful language variation may be to development of linguistic theory. The utility of language variation is further demonstrated by Jorge Guitart, who analyzes evidence from spoken Brazilian Portuguese in order to contribute to the theory of underlying nasal consonants in that language.

Leopoldo Wigdorsky tests the hypothesis that age and social class account for variation in phonological and syntactic norms in Chile. Wigdorsky reports that innovation originates among the young and the less educated. Bernstein's concepts of elaborated and restricted codes are used to label the language of the informants. Wigdorsky's operational definitions of the two classes of informants, based on level of education, would have sufficed. Bernstein's concepts have come under attack, and even the data presented indicate that less educated informants show more linguistic flexibility (collectively, a more elaborated code) than those of the more educated group, whose verbal repertoire is apparently restricted to upper class forms. Wigdorsky's article is a good description of the Spanish in Santiago, Chile, and includes a large range of phonological and syntactic variables.

Spanish teachers will find intriguing Mark Goldin's suggestion that a simplified system of Spanish clitic pronouns be presented in beginning Spanish courses. Teachers of Spanish for native speakers should examine the important reasons for use of diagnostic testing for placement of native speakers presented by Erlinda Gonzales-Berry and Thomasina Hannum.

All thirteen articles in this volume treat important areas of research in Spanish and Portuguese sociolinguistics and suggest the need for further study. As such, they should be a good source of activities and

discussion in a course on sociolinguistics.

SHAW N. GYNAN

*The University of New Mexico*

BOW, ERNIE L. *Spanish Through Proverbs*. Vol. I. Santa Maria: El Quetzal, 1983. n.pp.

BOW, ERNIE L. *808 Spanish Verbs*. Santa Maria: El Quetzal, 1983 n.pp.

BOW, ERNIE L. *700 Spanish Proverbs*. Santa Maria: El Quetzal, 1983. xv + 59 pp.

This series of privately published books uses proverbs as the basis for teaching language, culture and poetry. Directed to classroom and independent students of Spanish, ESL or Hispanic folklore at all levels, these texts are part of a set of products based on the author's proverb collection, almost all of which is credited to a single informant.

There is considerable overlap in the design of the three books. The introductions are primarily enthusiastic endorsements of the beauty and value of proverbs; there is no exercise material. The books do include several kinds of indexes. In *Spanish Through Proverbs* (henceforth STP), the centerpiece of the series, the *usage index* is an alphabetical list of 129 numbered grammatical features represented in proverbs; in *700 Spanish Proverbs* (henceforth 700), a similar list has 117 features, differently ordered. The organizational idiosyncracies of the indexes are distracting. In STP, for example, a section of "Lyric Refranes" intervenes between a single example of *lo uno* and the entries of *mismo*. In 700, there is an entry for "Infinitive as Subject, with Definite Article; and *como* Plus Infinitive—English *ing*" (p. xiii). Brief *poetic indexes* in STP and *800 Spanish Verbs* (henceforth 808) guide the reader to proverbs illustrating literary devices such as metaphor, simile, alliteration and parallelism, though these terms are not always clearly defined. The *proverb index* (40 pages in STP) is a Spanish alphabetical list of key words with proverb reference numbers. In 700, this listing, called the *culture index*, incorporates the proverbs and forms the core of the book. Key words are not necessarily a reliable guide to culturally significant concepts, however, a fact confirmed repeatedly in 700. Proverbs appear under literal headings of little cultural interest. *La ropa sucia se lava en casa* is entered under *ropa sucia*, and important Hispanic cultural ideas are ill-represented, e.g., *caballero* is exemplified only by *Enero es buen caballero*.

The various numbering systems employed to integrate the indexes are less helpful than they might be. In 700, for example, a language learner who is interested in a particular grammar point must search each page of the book to find the relevant reference number.

In all the books the bulk of pages is devoted to listing the proverbs themselves (with some which seem inappropriately included, e.g., *Yo llevo la contraria. Señores, ¿de qué se trata?*) Only STP includes English translations for its 614 proverbs. (Reference numbers below are those of STP.) These translations are sometimes faulty. Excessive fealty to original word order creates inelegant as well as ungrammatical results. Consider examples such as *Many hands alleviate the work* (2-2), *The crazy and the children tell the true things* (4-1), and *December*