

# Spanish as a Language for Geographical Expression

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## Abstract

This paper addresses the linguistic relativity of Spanish through an examination of correlations between some words and their environmental referents, making brief comparisons to English. Though both Spanish and English refer to foreign placenames by naturalizing them in accordance with their linguistic systems, Spanish often exhibits a more subtle use of gentilic or place-of-origin words. Spanish is shown to be generally well-endowed with a variety of words for elements of the natural landscape such as "hill" or "hillock." Where Spanish encounters difficulty in describing the natural landscape is in naming plants and animals through a system of concrete semantic categorization that can become unwieldy and inaccurate. As for the cultural landscape, Spanish has an array of words based on an ongoing close man-land relationship, various non-Latin, especially Amerindian, influences, and strong regionalism. Spanish nouns for "farm, farmhouse, farmstead, plantation, grange, ranch" and nouns and adjectives for "maize" are presented and evaluated.

Key words: *linguistic relativity, semiological triangle, natural landscape, cultural landscape, hacienda.*

## INTRODUCTION

In his essay on the national characters of England, France, and Spain, Salvador de Madariaga wrote that whereas English is a monosyllabic language in which most words are snapshots of acts, Spanish words "are the objects themselves four-square, with all their volume, colour, and mass" (de Madariaga 1969, 188). He knew his subject well. A Professor of Spanish Studies at Oxford, de Madariaga wrote his award-winning 1920s essay in all three languages. The distinctions among languages render any philological investigation especially difficult, whether it is based on personal experience or on carefully controlled experiments. Perhaps this is why very few geographers have undertaken the serious study of language, which is necessary for a full understanding of many topics in cultural geography (Wagner 1958; Zelinsky and Williams 1988). Even the study and mapping of the spatial distribution of dialectal forms, the traditional focus of linguistic geography, has received scant attention. In this paper, an initial philological comparison of two great languages, English and Spanish, is made from a geographical perspective. Because the focus is on Spanish as a language for geographical expression, the etymological discussions address mainly the Spanish words.

Although it is well known that Spanish has fewer phonemes or basic sounds, fewer loan-words, and fewer technical terms than does English, it is not generally recognized that Spanish has a wide array of words to describe the physical and cultural landscapes. Moreover, many of those words have a time dimension or refer to relative locations. By comparison, English is more static and allocational. Spanish is rich in geographically expressive words because it has adopted more Greek and especially Latin words to describe the physical environment than has English, and it has borrowed many Arabic and Amerindian words to describe landscapes. Surprisingly for a language controlled by an Academy bent on continual purification, Spanish, at least with respect to landscapes, has developed and preserved a plurality of names for the same things. This polyonymy is all the more challenging to historical or regional geographers because Spanish terms to describe the landscape are often only regional in usage or, if more widely known, are properly applied only to particular regions. This axiom holds true even for individual Spanish-speaking countries, especially Spain and Mexico.

## LINGUISTIC RELATIVITY

The principle of linguistic relativity provides a geographically oriented methodology for obtaining a deeper understanding of why a language has evolved as it has. Linguistic relativity holds that people living in different environments develop specialized vocabularies reflecting their experiences and needs (Gold 1980, 74). Perhaps the most widely known statement of the principle of linguistic relativity is the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which

states that:

human beings do not live in the objective world alone... but are very much at the mercy of a particular language... The fact of the matter is that the 'real world' is to a large extent unconsciously built upon the language habits of the group. No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to ever be considered as representing the same social reality (Bright and Bright 1969,67.)

Phrases and more elaborate constructions can be used to discriminate in the same manner as words, but a discrimination codified by a single word is more readily available to the speaker and more likely to be used. Words, as opposed to phrases, represent lexical concepts that are more common, more codable, and more readily transmitted (Kelling 1975). Color is often used to demonstrate linguistic relativity. Color can be objectively quantified according to wavelength and is part of nearly everyone's experience, yet different languages divide the color spectrum differently (Cole and Means 1981, 74-76). Traditionally, researchers in linguistic relativity have most often contrasted English or some other European language to an Amerindian or other non-Western language because of obvious differences in construction and content. Whorf and others have even gone so far as to use the label "SAE" or standard-average-European languages (Whorf 1956, 25). A notable exception is Sopher's comparison of the cognitive structuring of space in English with that in the Romance languages (Sopher 1978).

The principle of linguistic relativity has not been without its critics. In 1954 a special conference of linguists, anthropologists, psychologists, and philosophers was held to address the interrelations of language and other aspects of culture (Hojer 1954). One of the principal criticisms of the linguistic relativity studies up to that date was the lack of demonstrations of correlations between linguistic structure and non-linguistic behaviour (Whorf 1956, 29). The simplest approach to linguistic relativity is to find a different array of words in two languages for the same generic subject, say snow, and then assume that different words ipso facto indicate different thought processes and interactions with the environment in the cultures to which the languages belong. Not adhering to this agreeable assumption is difficult, but if we accept it, we then step beyond linguistic relativity and into linguistic determinism as did Whorf when he wrote:

We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native languages ... We cut nature up, organize it into concepts, and ascribe significances as we do, largely because we are parties to an agreement to organize it in this way-an agreement that holds throughout our speech community and is codified in the patterns of our language. The agreement is, of course, an implicit and unstated one, BUT ITS TERMS ARE ABSOLUTELY OBLIGATORY .... (Whorf 1956,213-214).

No consideration in this paper is given to different thought processes among different peoples, except to reject the very idea. Nor is it assumed that a panoply of words about a phenomenon indicates a certain kind of interaction between the language speakers and the phenomenon. Instead, the relationships between vocabulary and non-linguistic behavior are analyzed in specific geo-historical contexts. Thus, linguistic determinism is rejected.

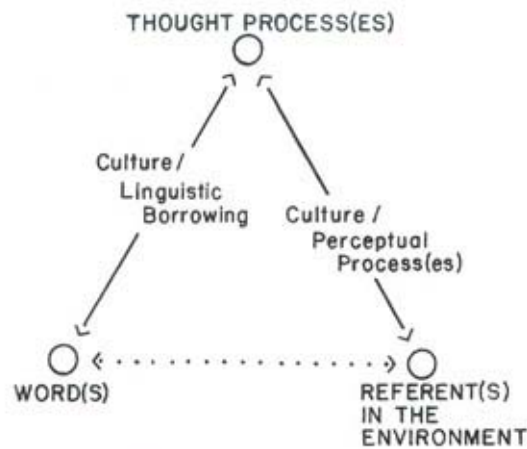


Fig. 1. Semiological triangle for the study of linguistic relativity.

Correlations in linguistic relativity can be most readily identified by use of a model known as the semiological triangle, presented in Figure 1 with major modifications from Jencks (1969, 15-16). The triangle makes very clear that there is no direct relationship between a word and the thing named in the environment except in the relatively few cases of onomatopoeia (to baa, to meow, to coo, etc.). Even then the cause and effect relation is not independent of the lexicon; for example, in Spanish to meow is *maullar* a rather distinct sound from the former. In all other instances, words, thought, and reality are related or correlated principally through the medium of culture' attempting to say that one might be the ultimate cause of the other is an essentially futile task. What we can say is that the referents at the bottom corners of the triangle have a different weight, depending on the language, culture, and environmental context under study. For example, a cognitive domain (environment) that is close or important to the survival of the group will be more differentiated linguistically (Kelling 1975, especially chapter four). Thus, Eskimos will have more words for snow, Arabs for sand, etc. On the basis of present knowledge, thought processes should probably not be assigned different weights for different peoples because the logical procedures of thought are held to be similar regardless of the languages.

Culture almost always plays a critical role in mediating the triangular correlations. Our own culture aids us in analyzing occurrences never before experienced. If an occurrence is even beyond the experience of our culture, then the latter may nevertheless remain important as it, for example, influences our disposition to seek information from other cultures as we do in linguistic borrowing. Even when a taxonomic class exists into which a percept in the environment may be fit (edible plant or grass, for example, for maize), different cultures may imbue virtually the same word with unlike meanings. Perceptual processes play a dominant role in only a few instances, as, for example, when there is a perceptual inference (storm cloud-rain) taken from direct experience (Cole et al. 1971, 19). An example of how the semiological triangle works is the Spaniards' naming of New World plants. In the sixteenth century, the Crown called for *relaciones* (geographic descriptions) of the Indies that included accounts of plants used by the natives for food, fiber, herbal cures, and other purposes. Spaniards incorporated such plants into taxonomic classes when available, often using a Spanish word with *de Indias* added as a modifier. For example, *zarzaparrilla de Indias*, whose roots were shipped to Spain for the treatment of syphilis, was a name applied to various American species of the genus *Smilax*. The different Indian names applied to these species were not incorporated into Spanish because it was simpler and more commercially expedient to treat them as a variant of *zarzaparrilla*, a thorny Mediterranean vine (*Smilax aspera*) with obviously similar appearance. When taxonomic classes were not available in Spanish, the Spaniards adopted the Indian names of such plants after Hispanicizing them by substituting familiar sounds and stresses for unfamiliar ones, as *tomate* for the Nahuatl 'tómatl.

The remainder of this paper is an examination of the linguistic relativity of Spanish through a search for correlations among some of the words and landscapes that are of geographical interest. Brief comparisons are

made to English.<sup>1</sup> Although Spanish is shown to be more spatial and diachronic than is English in several domains, one must bear in mind that these two great languages, as all languages, overall are functionally equivalent (Cole and Scribner 1974, 58). Spanish toponyms and related gentilic or place-of-origin words are examined first, then some relationships between Spanish and the natural and cultural landscapes are discussed.

### **SPANISH TOPONYMS AND GENTILIC WORDS**

Both Spanish and English refer to foreign place-names by naturalizing them or altering them slightly in accordance with the morphological structures of each language. Thus conceptualizations of space are infinitely extensible in both languages. However, the characteristics of this space vary. Sopher (1978, 261-264) wrote that whereas English is open and dynamic with its conceptualization of space, the Romance languages are bounded and static. Actually, Spanish is more temporally rich than English within certain bounds. In Europe, northern Africa, the Middle East, and the former Spanish colonies, Spanish gentilic words sometimes have two forms. For example, whereas English has only one gentilic word for the French city of Lyons, the adjective "Lyonnais," Spanish has *lionés,sa* (adjective, noun) or *lugdunense* (adjective, noun), the latter based on the ancient Roman name of Lugdunum for that settlement. Often these Spanish "pairs" may be used, as with Lyons, to refer to a person from modern Lyons, but with important nuances in meaning; *lugdunense* is flattering if referring to someone else from Lyons or pompous if referring to oneself as from Lyons. In other instances, there is a distinction made between an ancient or a modern people of the same place as with the country of Iran: *irani* for modern Iranians versus *iranio* for ancient Iranians. This differentiation is important in highlighting the historical depth and continuity of certain places and civilizations.

### **THE NATURAL LANDSCAPE**

Spanish has a wide array of words to refer to topographic features in the natural landscape. Both Spanish and English name landforms not only according to morphology, but according to relative location. However, many Spanish words of terrain features provide more ideational information than do related English words. As Hill (1896) noted long ago, topographic forms may be reduced to four distinct categories--- eminences, plains, valleys, and declivities---and in the parts of the southwestern United States settled by Spaniards a remarkable number of topographic terms for all four categories are found on published maps. For instance, there are no less than 22 words for a "hill" or "hillock" in Spanish (Table 1). In comparison, the author was able to identify only 15 additional words in English indicating some kind of hill or hillock (barrow, butte, fell, foothill, hummock, knap, knob, knoll, kopje, monadnock, mound, promontory, swell, tor, tumulus). Though English has obviously borrowed many of these words from other languages, as a group they still provide less visually descriptive information about site and situation than do the Spanish words.

TABLE 1 Spanish nouns for hill or hillock

Noun	Relevant Meanings in English
albardón	hillock or small ridge that becomes an island periodically
alcor	hill or hillock
altillo	hillock
altozano	hill or hillock surrounded by flat ground
asómate	hillock on a mountain crest that offers a wide panorama
cabezo	high hill, isolated hillock
cerro	hill higher than it is wide
colina	hill
collado	hill, hillock
cueto	isolated conical hill
loma	extended hillock
mambla	mound or hillock in the shape of a breast
mamelón	nipple-shaped low hill
mogote	any large or small elevation of terrain that resembles a mountain; knoll, hummock, blunt-tipped conical mound
montículo	hillock (real or artificial), mound
muela	hill with steep sides and a flat top; artificial hill, mound
otero	isolated hill
peña	craggy hill
promontorio	promontory, prominent hill
reteso	very low hill that is flat on top
terromontero	mound, hillock
teso	low hill that is flat on top

It is not surprising in this panoply of words that all but four (*albardón* and *alcor*- Arabic, *mogote*- Basque, *mamelón*- French) were derived directly from Latin, and those four do not have extensive use. *Albardón*, whose main meaning is a kind of large packsaddle, as used above is restricted to southern South America. *Alcor* is little used because it adds no meaning beyond the more familiar Latin-based words such as *colina* and *collado*. There is only one settlement using the name *alcor* in modern Spain, and it is located in the northern province of Palencia (Asin Palacios 1944). *Mogote* represents the survival of an ancient Basque word and its diffusion in the northern fringe of Spain, the area of the peninsula least Romanized during the imperial period.

Largely based on the apparent disinterest of Rome's officials in Strabo's 17-book *Geography* (written in Greek), it has often been erroneously stated that Rome was neglectful of the study of the geography of its newly conquered lands (Beazley 1949, 175-180; Wiseman 1956,210; James and Martin 1981,49, 51). It is more likely that there was an ongoing relationship between military adventures and the study of terrain. For example, Pomponius Mela, a native of a small Roman town on Algeciras Bay and the first geographer to write in Latin, produced *De Situ Orbis* in 43 A.D., which included detailed information on Britain and the Orkney Islands first available to him only that year as Roman legions conquered those islands (Fuson 1969, 39). Roman knowledge of geography surely would have been implanted in Hispania, the Latin name for the Iberian Peninsula. Not only did Roman armies push inland from the southern and eastern coasts in a series of fierce battles, but Rome maintained direct rule over the peninsula. The tendency to shift native communities from the hills to the valleys as parts of the peninsula were brought under Roman control must have been accompanied by land-capability surveys (Sutherland 1939, 101; Richardson 1986, 173). The largely Latin-based Spanish terrain vocabulary, no doubt

further developed during the wars against the Moors, may have contributed as much to the impressive military victories over the Aztec and Inca armies as the other factors (horses, attack dogs, and the like) so often stressed in historical accounts of the Conquest. In a review of the use of Spanish horses in the exploration and conquest of the Indies, Abbass (1986) concluded that the prevailing opinion of their importance is a myth.

The identification of a place within the natural landscape is often accomplished with a single word in Spanish. The place-words are usually the name for the feature or some root thereof with an *ar-* or *al-* ending, which are not phonetically distinct in some dialects of Spanish. This codification gives Spanish a clear edge over English in denoting places in the natural landscape and in facilitating communication about such places. For example, Spanish has *barrançal* (a place with many gulleys, ravines, or gorges), *fontanal* (a place with many springs), *peñascal* (a site covered in boulders), etc. This system is naturally extended to the cultural landscape centered on plants, as in *manzanar* or *manzanal* (apple orchard), *platanar* or *platanal* (banana grove or plantation), etc.

The most problematic use of Spanish in describing the natural landscape is in naming plants and animals. As in English, many plants and some animals have multiple vernacular names because the average person is content to use local names without a clue as to how these names might or might not be related to others through scientific classification. But the diversity of regional names in Spanish for many plants and animals is particularly great because the regions can be quite small. For example, in Veracruz, Mexico many plants and animals have one name in the north of the state and an entirely different name in the south. When these vernacularisms are applied differently in different regions to the more common and economically important plants and animals, as they are in Spanish, interregional communication and academic study is hindered. For example, although Spanish has the word *lima* to refer to the sweet lime (*Citrus limetta*) and the word *limón* to refer to the lemon (*Citrus limon*), in much of Middle America (where few lemons are grown) *limón* is used to refer to lime (the fruit of *Citrus aurantifolia*). Plants important to the export sector of Latin America can sometimes be extremely difficult to identify through their common names (*brasil*, *magüey*, *pita*, etc.) because of mixing and substitution in the production of products.

Spanish plant nomenclature also differs from that of English in its more frequent reference to species rather than genera. Whereas in English one name might refer to half a dozen or more closely related plants of the same genus, in Spanish each species of a genus usually has a distinct name, with one of the species having a one-word designation and others (though not all) having compound-word designations based on the former. For instance, whereas the English word "mustard" refers to any of several plants of the genus *Brassica* [black mustard (*B. nigra*), Indian mustard (*B. juncea*), or white mustard (*B. hirta*)], the Spanish word *mostaza*, according to the Spanish Royal Academy, refers to black mustard. This different approach reflects the needs of the two languages. English, with its worldwide coverage, must often use a more abstract semantic categorization (i.e., genera or even families) to avoid becoming unwieldy. Spanish, not as inclusive of exotic plants and animals, usually uses a concrete semantic categorization based on species. The principal species to which the others are compared is normally the one in or closest to Spain or one of its former colonies. The advantage of the Spanish approach is that a word for a plant or animal should evoke a detailed perceptual image, aiding communication. However, this concrete semantic categorization can become unwieldy and inaccurate when numerous closely related species exist that are difficult to distinguish. For example, Spanish has many common names for species and even hybrids of oaks. The correct usages of some of these vernacularisms is obscure even to the most learned persons.

## THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

As for the cultural landscape, Spanish has an array of words based on an ongoing close man-land relationship, various non-Latin (especially Amerindian) influences, and strong regionalism. These observations are exemplified in the 27 Spanish equivalents to the six English terms "farm, farmhouse, farmstead, grange, plantation, ranch" (Table 2).<sup>2</sup>In comparison, English has few additional related terms (dude ranch, homestead, market garden, truck farm, spread), and some of them are limited to less than the entire English-speaking domain.

TABLE 2 Selected Spanish nouns for farm, farmhouse, farmstead, grange, plantation, or ranch

Term	Origin	Regional Usage	Relevant Meanings in English
alquería	Arabic		farmhouse, grange (distant from a settlement); hamlet, small village (group of farmhouses)
casa de labranza	Latin		farmhouse
casco	Latin	Mexico	main compound on a farm
conuco	Amerindian language(s)	Cuba, Puerto Rico, Hispaniola	parcel of land formerly cultivated by the Taino
corral	Latin	Cuba Cuba	peculium of a slave; small (and poor) farm small circular farm or ranch usually with sheep, goats, or pigs
cortijo	Latin		farm, farmstead
chacra, chácara	Quechua	S. America	farmhouse, grange, farm
chaco	Quechua	Bolivia	farm, plantation
estancia	Latin	Argentina, Chile, Uruguay Cuba, Venezuela	cattle ranch country house with cultivated fields
finca	Latin		country estate or farm
fundo	Latin	Chile	farm, farmstead
granja	French, Latin		farm, grange
hacienda	Latin		country estate or usually large farm or ranch
hato	Portuguese, Gothic	Cuba, Peru, Venezuela	cattle ranch
huerta	Latin		market garden, truck farm
labranza	Latin		farm
manso	Latin		farmhouse, farmstead
mas	Catalan, Latin		farmhouse, farmstead
masada	Catalan		farmhouse, farmstead
masería	Catalan		farmhouse, farmstead
masia	Catalan		farmhouse, farmstead
milpa	Nahuatl	Mexico, C. America	farm, especially of maize
ovejería	Latin	S. America	sheep ranch
pegujal	Latin		peculium for farming; small farm
pegujar	Latin		peculium for farming; small farm
plantación	Latin		plantation
potrero	Latin	L. America	cattle ranch
quintería	Latin		farmhouse
rancho	German	Andalusia, L. America	farmstead, ranch
sitio	Latin	Cuba	small farm or ranch

The terms in Table 2 have been labeled "selective" because they do not include perhaps a dozen words restricted to regional usage in Spain. Without delving into regionalisms of Spain, one can observe that there is a strong local flavor to many terms for the cultural landscape. Those words reflect particular cultural landscapes, vernacular dialects that pre-date Castilian political control and have at least partially survived Castilianization, or simply decisions of the peoples or governments of overseas colonies to coin words more appropriate to their particular circumstances. Several words that are now usually used to designate large farms or ranches in Latin America have been strongly associated with particular regions in Spain. For example, *hacienda* originally was used in the north-central region of Castile to denote a large farm with various crops and livestock. But even there the meaning of this word was extended to any landed estate, whether under production or not (the latter referred to as a *hacienda de monte*) (*Enciclopedia universal* 1908, Vol. 27, 464-465). *Cortijo* was used first in Andalusia to refer to a large farm with an imposing house where a proprietor spent a *temporada* (season). A vivid portrayal of the cortijo in the Guadalquivir basin follows:

Beyond the *buertas* (of rural towns) stretch the immense estates of the landowners, who usually live for part of the year in their large farm-houses, which are spaced at wide intervals over the dusty plains. These *cortijos* often resemble Moorish citadels and are self-contained hamlets with workmen's cottages and stables. They are surrounded by well-cultivated gardens, which form oases in the arid plain (Spain and Portugal 1944, 116).

*Mas* or its equivalents--*masería*, *masada*, and *masía*, has been used in Catalonia and adjacent parts to the south (present-day provinces of Castellón and Teruel) since medieval times to refer to large estates with extensive orchards and gardens on the outskirts of towns. These estates were under the control of single extended families and while inheritance was through the oldest son, loyalty of the entire family to the estate was strong (Read 1978, 24-25). Today, the word *mas* not only conjures in one's mind the distinctive two-storied farmhouses with sloping roofs of Catalonia, but is a place-name usually combined with another word, often a surname, for many hamlets or small villages in Catalonia and the provinces of Castellón and Teruel. The author knows of no usage of *mas* in Latin America, but it does occur in the Languedoc and Provence regions of southern France. This interregional linguistic link reflects the close relationship between the languages of Catalonia and the Provence, especially during the Middle Ages when much of Catalonia was part of the Carolingian Empire's *Marca Hispánica* (Spanish March) and then southern France was feudatory to the Crown of Aragon.

The word *alquería*, of Arabic origin, is used in Spain to refer to isolated farms and hamlets or small villages from the provinces of Valencia and Baleares southward through the coastal provinces to Huelva. At the turn of the century there were only 19 communities in Spain with *alquería* as a sole or compound name (*Enciclopedia universal* 1908, Vol. 4, 925). Surely this wide spacing and the isolation that the word expresses are correlated with aridity. The *alquerías* probably lie between the *huertas* (irrigated districts of market gardens) of eastern Spain and the *vegas* (fertile lowlands) of the southern coastal strip.

Several of the words adapted or adopted for farming and ranching in the New World reflected new systems of social organization and the new natural landscape. A distinction arose between a farm or ranch devoted specifically to the raising of a certain animal such as sheep (the *ovejería*) or cattle (the *estancia*) and between small farms (*conucos* and *corrales* or *sitios*) and others (as *batos*, which in Cuba were supposedly four times as large in area as the *corrales*). The linguistic boundaries indicate that the regional expressions had less to do with the exercise of colonial authority than with similar local circumstances shared by private landowners or their resident laborers.

According to Lockhart (1969,421), *estancia* was the most commonly used word throughout the Indies during the Conquest period for private holdings devoted to stock or crops. The main meaning of *estanciero* was that of owner of such a landholding; the secondary meaning was that of overseer in charge of the Indians on an *estancia*. Again, according to Lockhart, in Mexico *estanciacame* also to mean where a small group of Indians lived far away from the main group, because that is where overseers spent much of their time trying to collect tribute.

How did the modern meaning of *estancia*, whose etymon is the Latin *estante*, meaning military station, in the Platine region come to mean cattle ranch? The people there were using *estancia* in the same sense as in Mexico, but the Whites' first use of the Pampas was the exploitation of the herds of feral cattle for their hides and tallow. Logically, the original "encampments" or *estancias* of the Pampas were camps for cattle skimmers who had licenses to hunt the wild beasts (Willis 1974, 102). The shift in meaning to cattle ranch must have come gradually because the Spanish government granted or, more often, sold large tracts of land to the Creoles beginning in the seventeenth century, but the herds remained essentially wild until the early 1800s (Wright and Neckhom 1978, 289). Thus large landed estates and camps for hunter-cattlemen coexisted for about two centuries, in which period both were called *estancias*.

The words for small farms have clearer and more stable meanings than those for large farms because folk society's relation with the land is direct and relatively constant through history. For example, a diachronic analysis of the usage of *conuco* is straightforward. Whether Indian, slave, or peasant, the person who works the *conuco* is outside the market economy except in the most marginalized way, instead working for food and any modicum of surplus crop that might be exchanged for basic necessities for the family. Pichardo's description of the slave *conuco* as a "small miserable farm with a shack" could be used today to describe most peasant farms in Latin America (Pichardo 1985, 180). The greatest question regarding *conuco* is the diffusion of the word in the Caribbean region. Surely the interregional trading of slaves and the transfer of sugarcane technology spread the word beyond the Taínan hearth of the Greater Antilles? Levine (1980, 40), for example, described *canucas* as small plots of land formerly cultivated by slaves in the Dutch Leeward Islands.

Geographers would be well-advised to consider how these basic words for rural landholdings are often missused academically and what criteria should be employed in their definition and usage. Typically, scholars want these words to be mutually exclusive, informative about man-land relations and social systems, and applied throughout the relevant linguistic realm. These are strong demands which lead ipso facto to the misuse of the more common words.

The use of the term *hacienda* is worthy of examination. This word entered English about the middle of the eighteenth century through travel reports on Hispanic America (Barnhart 1988, 459). The main meaning of hacienda first used in Spain was that of a large farm with a mix of crops and livestock or, broadly, any landed estate. This meaning also was utilized in early colonial Spanish America. At that time words such as *hacienda*, *estancia*, and *chacra*, which could also be a small Indian farm, were used to designate country or landed estates. Obviously there have been some shifts in meaning over the course of several centuries that are indigenous to the Hispanic culture; for example, as population increased, arable land remained essentially fixed in quantity, and society remained strongly agrarian, the words came to denote somewhat smaller chunks of land because of subdivision. However, the conception of hacienda has been distorted by scholarly convention over the last thirty or so years. Most typologies of farming in Latin America, especially the classic one of Wolf and Mintz, have portrayed all large landed estates in highland areas as manorial estates called haciendas (Wolf and Mintz 1957; Keith 1971). Here is a typical description of the hacienda in academic literature:

Geared to sell products in a market, it yet aimed at having little to sell. Voracious for land, it made inefficient use of it. Operating with large numbers of workers, it nevertheless personalized the relation between worker and owner. Created to produce a profit, it consumed a large part of its substance in conspicuous and unproductive displays of wealth (Wolf 1959, 204).

Wolf, Mintz, and other like-minded scholars have replaced a denotative meaning of hacienda with their connotative meaning of hacienda in the context of central Mexico and similar places during the early colonial period. Their hacienda is erroneously portrayed as peculiar to the highlands of Spanish America, as the only form of large highland estate there, and as embodying complex and exploitative social relations. In reality, haciendas also are found in the tropical lowlands of Spanish America, other large landed estates are located in the highlands there, and exploitation of Indian labor characterizes mining operations, cities, and other centers of production under the control of non-Indians.

What standards then should guide the definitions and usages of words for rural landholdings that are used in geography? Four criteria come to mind for definitions:

1. size (large, small, or either)
2. morphology (rectangular, polygonal, circular, continuous, and/or discontinuous)
3. product (monocultural, polycultural, large livestock and/or small livestock), and
4. location (site and situation).

Frustratingly, the more common the word, the more difficult it is to apply all the criteria succinctly. With words like *hacienda*, for example, we must either severely restrict the definition or form compound words (manorial hacienda, cattle hacienda, coffee hacienda, missionary hacienda, etc.) that can be defined more fully. Usages of such words may also focus on other factors associated with the four criteria. Thus analysis of social organization and relationships is not precluded, but is guided to examine such networks in the context of what is distinctive about a particular kind of farm, ranch, etc. rather than, as with Wolf's description above, what is typical of the larger society.

The various words in Spanish for maize or Indian corn (*Zea mays*) or any of its parts also reveal regional patterns, with an even greater borrowing from Amerindian languages (Table 3). Not counting the technical/local terms used to refer to the hundreds of races of maize in Latin America, there are at least 47 distinct words (nouns and adjectives) that refer specifically to that plant, of which 27 (including the compound words constructed with

*maíz*) have identifiable Amerindian origins and 32 are restricted to regional usage. One would expect a strong Amerindian influence over the nomenclature of a plant scholars consider to have been domesticated first in the Americas. The principal word in Spanish for Indian corn is *maíz*, an Hispanicization of the Taino word *mabís* (that which gives life), the first Amerindian word for that plant learned by the Spaniards during the exploration of the interior of Cuba by Columbus's scouts in the fall of 1492. What is surprising is the degree of polyonymy, reflecting not only linguistic regions in the former Spanish colonies but also significant linguistic autonomy from Spain. In comparison, English has some 19 additional nouns used to refer to maize or any of its parts (corn cob, corn silk, corn stalk, cow corn, dent corn, ear, flint corn, flour corn, green corn, husk corn, Guinea corn, pod corn, popcorn, shuck, soft corn, sugar corn, sweet corn, waxy corn, and Yankee corn).

The vast difference in the number of terms for maize in the two languages is principally the result of the Spanish culture being adaptive to Indian ways and the English culture being reactive. Although colonists from both countries were under royal directives to Christianize and civilize the Indians and in areas of first contact they encountered complex agricultures based on the same three major crops--maize, beans, and squash--the prolonged warfare with Indians in North America led to the attitude that any Indianization among whites was a degeneracy and fall from God's grace (Axtell 1981, 311). Thus while various eastern North American tribes distinguished several strains of maize based on color, shape, and size, and they recognized two broad categories--early (for roasting) and late (for bread), English colonists preferred to raise traditional English grains and, when it was necessary to raise maize, to do so in accordance with English rather than Indian farming practices (Hurt 1987, 40; Axtell 1981, 212-214). Here a corollary to the Law of Cultural Dominance can be drawn. This law states that "the cultural type that develops more power and resources in a given environmental space will spread there at the expense of indigenous and competing cultures" (Sahlins 1968, 2). The corollary may state that the "same cultural type will adopt few loanwords (and thus skills) from the vanquished though it may come to rely heavily on native resources."

TABLE 3 Selected Spanish terms for maize or Indian corn, including any of its parts

	Origin	Regional Usage	Relevant Meanings in English
abati, avati	Guarani	Argentina, Paraguay	maize, Indian corn, corn
barba	Latin		corn silk
borona	Celtic		maize, Indian corn, corn
cabellos	Latin		corn silk
camagua	Nahuatl	Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico	referring to ripening maize
camague	Nahuatl	El Salvador	tender ear of maize
chamagua	Nahuatl	Guatemala	tender ear of maize
canguil	?	Mexico	referring to ripening maize
capi	?	Ecuador	a variety of small maize
carozo	Quechua	S. America	maize, Indian corn, corn
cenancla	Latin		corn cob
concho	?	Mexico	ear of maize
coronta	Latin	Ecuador	shuck, maize husk
cuatequil	Quechua	Bolivia, Chile, Peru	stripped corncob, corncob
curagua	?	Mexico	maize, Indian corn, corn
chala	?	S. America	flint corn, Yankee corn
chilpe	Quechua	S. America	shuck, maize husk
choclo	?	Ecuador	dried maize leaf
chócolo	Quechua	S. America	tender of maize
doblador	Quechua		ear of maize
elote	Latin	Guatemala	shuck, maize husk
farfolla	Nahuatl	Mexico, C. America	tender ear of maize
guate	Latin		shuck, maize husk
huiro	Nahuatl	Costa Rica, Honduras, Nicaragua	maize harvested very mature which is to be used for forage
güiro	Quechua	Bolivia, Chile	green maize stalk
huitrín	Quechua	Bolivia, Chile	green maize stalk
hunche	Mapuche	Chile	string of corncobs
jilote	Chibcha	Colombia	shuck, maize husk
chilote	Amerindian language(s)	Mexico, C. America	unripened ear of maize
jora	Amerindian language(s)	Cuba, C. America	unripened ear of maize
maíz	Aymara	S. America	type of maize used to make chicha
dentado	Taino		maize, Indian corn, corn
dulce	Taino and Latin		dent corn
harinoso	Taino and Latin		sweet corn
palomero	Taino and Latin		flour corn, soft corn
maloja	Taino and Latin		popcorn
malojo	Latin	Cuba	maize suitable only for fodder
mazorca	Latin	Venezuela	maize suitable only for fodder
majorca	?		ear of maize, corncob
mijo	?		ear of maize, corncob
muñequilla	Latin	Spain	maize, Indian corn, corn
panca	pre-Latin of Iberia	Chile	young and tender ear of maize
panizo	Quechua	L. America	shuck, maize husk
panoja	Latin		maize, Indian corn, corn
panocha	Latin		ear of maize, corncob
paraguay	Latin		ear of maize, corncob
piña	Guarani	Peru	violet spikelets of maize
raspa	Latin		ear of maize dehusked
	German		stripped corncob

TABLE 3 Continued

	Origin	Regional Usage	Relevant Meanings in English
sarazo, zarazo	?	Colombia, Cuba, Mexico, Venezuela	said of ripening maize
tilo	Latin	Colombia	flower bud of maize
tlazol	Nahuatl	Mexico	top of maize used as fodder
tusa	?	Bolivia, Colombia, Puerto Rico, Venezuela C. America, Cuba Chile	stripped corncob, corncob  shuck, maize husk corn silk
zara	Quechua		maize, Indian corn, corn
zuro	?		stripped corncob

The Spanish culture was adaptive to Indian ways and words because Spanish society was organized on essentially the same sociopolitical level as the Indian states (as opposed to chiefdoms, tribes, or bands) (alien 1973, 63). Where the Spaniards encountered the more civilized Indian peoples during the first one or two generations of conquest and settlement, Hispanic and Amerindian societies joined socially, economically, and even politically. If maize growing had become widespread in Spain in the sixteenth century, many of the Indian words for maize or its parts in those regions of the New World colonies most closely linked to the mother country would very likely have been supplanted with Castilian ones. According to Salvador de Maadariaga, on his third voyage Columbus described maize as "a seed which produces a spike like a cob, which I brought there, and now there is much of it in Seville" (Finan 1950, 150). Although maize was not mentioned in European botanical works until the last decade of the fifteenth century, during the sixteenth century maize was mentioned in the herbals of England, Germany, Italy, the Low Countries, Spain, and Switzerland (Mangelsdorf 1974, 206). However, we must not confuse knowledge of maize and growing of it as a garden curiosity with widespread maize culture. Crosby (1972, 178-179) noted that Europeans were slow to take up maize, possibly because Europe entered a cold period that lasted until the eighteenth century. That there were frequent and severe food shortages in the Sevillian region from 1486 to 1522 argues against any serious introduction of maize there at an early date (Butzer 1988, 48). The picture that emerges, then, is one of Spanish colonists learning about maize from Indian cultivators and relying on them to supply it for fodder or, when wheat was not available, for human consumption. In each discrete interaction sphere within the vast Spanish domain of the New World, discussions about maize relied on key indigenous words. This pattern continues today.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study demonstrates that Spanish is well-equipped to serve as a vehicle of geographic expression. Spanish and English may be compared philologically and found to be overall functionally equivalent, but Spanish has a different approach toward the semantic categorization of landscapes and, most notably, a richer vocabulary in certain domains. The principle of linguistic relativity, when applied in a non-deterministic manner, can lead to a heightened understanding of the relationships between words, culture, and the environment. Geographers can play a central role in that understanding because of their knowledge of landscapes. However, as this study has clearly demonstrated, insights into the linguistic relativity of any Spanish words must first be drawn from the lexical, historical, and geographical records of Spain.

A number of subjects raised in this study merit further research, especially the absence of Amerindian loan-words in Spanish terrain vocabulary. As the Spaniards were not strong in topographical mapping skills until well into the eighteenth century (Skelton 1958, 77-113), they must have relied on the expertise of Amerindian cartographers or their maps to have conquered and exploited the lands of the New World so rapidly. Bagrow (1985, 27) noted that Cortés received a coastal chart from Moctezuma after he inquired about harbors and that in 1526 Indian cartographers drew a map for the conquistador that depicted land extending almost to Panama. Surely some of the terrain covered with tropical vegetation defied classification within the existing Spanish lexicon. Did the Spanish borrow Amerindian topographic vocabulary that was later culled from the language

when the Spanish Academy issued its first dictionary in the eighteenth century (Hirsch 1987, 77-78)? One way to ascertain if Amerindian loan-words were used for the terrain is to examine the language used on early Spanish colonial maps and accompanying documents, a number of which are preserved in the Archivo de Indias at Seville and in the Archivo General de la Nación at Mexico City.

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## NOTES

1. Except where noted with references in the text, I relied on two sources for final authority on the origins, definitions, and usages of Spanish words: (a) the twentieth edition of the Real Academia Española's *Diccionario de la lengua española*, (b) Maria Moliner's *Diccionario de uso del español*. George Friederici's *Amerikanistisches Wörterbuch und Hilfswörterbuch für den Amerikanisten* was consulted for additional information on some words of Indian origin. For definitions and usages of English words I used (a) the second edition of the Oxford English Dictionary and (b) Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged. For synonyms in English listed after each table, I used Charlton Laird's Webster's New World Thesaurus, the most comprehensive thesaurus in English. More information on these works is contained in the listing of citations.

2. The listed Spanish words do not include the numerous words ending in "al" or "ar" that indicate a plantation of a particular crop, as *agodon* (cotton plantation), *cocotal* (coconut plantation), *tabacal* (tobacco plantation), etc.

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### **Resumen**

Por medio de breves comparaciones con la lengua inglesa, en esta ponencia se desarrolla el tema de la relatividad lingüística del español a través de un examen de correlaciones entre un cierto número de términos léxicos y sus referentes ambientales. A pesar de que tanto el español como el inglés incorporan toponímicos extranjeros según sus propios sistemas lingüísticos, el español exhibe a menudo un uso más sutil del términos gentilicios o indicadores de lugar de origen. En la ponencia se trata de mostrar que el español se halla en general dotado de una gran variedad de términos referentes a elementos del paisaje natural, tales como los correspondientes a hill o hillock. Si en el español aparecen dificultades en lo que se refiere a la descripción del paisaje natural, la designación de plantas y animales mediante un sistema de categorización semántica concreta puede llegar a ser inexacto y difícil de manejar. En lo que se refiere al paisaje cultural, el español presenta una extensa gama de términos basados en una continua y estrecha relación entre el hombre y la tierra, además de influencias no latinas de todo orden, especialmente ameríndias y un marcado regionalismo. Una serie de nombres españoles que significan farm, farmhouse, farmstead, grange, ranch, y nombres y adjetivos referentes a maíz quedan presentados y evaluados.

Palabras clave: *relatividad lingüística, triángulo semiológico, paisaje natural, paisaje cultural, hacienda.*