The History of Spanish
A Student’s Introduction

This concise textbook provides students with an engaging and thorough overview of the history of Spanish and its development from Latin. Presupposing no prior knowledge of Latin or linguistics, students are provided with the background necessary to understand the history of Spanish. Short, easy-to-digest chapters feature numerous practice exercises and activities. Chapter “lead-in” questions draw comparisons between English and Spanish, enabling students to use their intuition about their native language to gain a deeper understanding of Spanish. Each chapter features further reading suggestions, an outline, and a summary. Highlighted key terms are collated in a glossary. Boxes on linguistic debates teach students to evaluate arguments and think critically about linguistics. Supporting online resources include Word files of all the practices and activities in the book and an instructor’s manual featuring a sample syllabus, answer key to the practices and activities, sample exams and teaching suggestions. This book is ideal for a range of courses on the history of Spanish and Spanish linguistics.

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This book is dedicated to the memory of my father,
Guy H. Ranson (1916–2000),
and my academic fathers,
Clifford S. Leonard, Jr. (1928–1999) and
Ernst Pulgram (1915–2005)

DLR

And also to the memory of my mother,
Marion Jean Snow (1927–2016),
and to the beginning of great memories with
Elsi Margaret Williams Quesada (2014–)

MLQ
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Preface for Students

This book is a user-friendly introduction to the history of the Spanish language. It is written for “students,” whether enrolled in a course or not, who are curious about the Spanish language. We hope that understanding the evolution of Spanish will help satisfy your curiosity and that it will at the same time inspire you to continue asking questions while observing and analyzing the use of language all around you. If you teach the Spanish language, we hope this book will make it possible for you to answer many of your students’ questions about Spanish so that you can satisfy and foster their curiosity as well.

The most user-friendly feature of the book is its style. We have written it as if we were sitting down with you chatting about these topics. Other features include the lead-in questions at the beginning of each chapter to help you reflect on your own use of language and relate it to the chapter’s topics. The text of each chapter is organized so that you can learn concepts step by step. We present all the background information you need to understand these concepts, so that you do not need any prior knowledge of Latin or linguistics or even a high degree of proficiency in Spanish. Within the chapters you will find textboxes that offer deeper explanations, additional information, or controversies on certain points. Each chapter ends with a summary to help you review its main points. Following the text of the chapter you will find a variety of activities to help you engage further with the concepts. Some of these help you review and reinforce what you have learned, whereas others provide new material to expand your understanding. We are delighted that you have decided to take this first step toward learning how Spanish has evolved. We would love to hear from you about your journey. Please feel free to email us if you have questions, suggestions, or fan mail.
Preface for Instructors

By writing a “student’s introduction” to the history of the Spanish language, we have sought to present in an accessible and engaging way material that has gained a reputation for being dry and difficult. We have learned from experience that students are genuinely interested in learning why duermo has one stem and dormimos has another and why mano is feminine and día is masculine. We hope with this book to foster their curiosity by providing them with the tools they need to find answers to their questions and relate them to their daily lives. We also hope that the accessibility of this book will make it easier for instructors, even those who are not experts in this field, to offer a course in the history of the Spanish language.

So as to make the material accessible we have written in a conversational style as if we were sitting down in our offices explaining these concepts to our readers. In fact, we have often found ourselves providing our students with exactly this kind of explication of the other textbooks we have used. The text of each of the seventeen chapters is a step-by-step presentation, supplemented by tables and figures for visual learners, and by textboxes with extra details, additional material, or the sides of a debate. The pedagogical features include lead-in questions at the beginning of each chapter, practice exercises at certain points in the chapter, end-of-chapter summaries, follow-up activities, and suggestions for further reading.

We have designed the book to be adaptable to the preferences of individual instructors. We assume that each of the seventeen chapters provides material for one week of course work, except Chapters 1 and 2, which can be completed together in the first week. Therefore, you may decide to omit two or three chapters, according to your interests and those of your students, and the amount of class time you devote to testing, oral presentations, and other activities. You will almost certainly want to cover Chapters 1–3, which provide an essential foundation, Chapters 6–7, which cover all the regular sound changes, and Chapters 10, 11, and 13, which cover the essentials of noun and verb morphology. You can then choose whether to include external history (Chapters 4 and 5),
Preface for Instructors

special sound changes (Chapters 8 and 9), other nominal elements (Chapter 12),
regular and irregular verb forms (Chapter 14), syntactic changes (Chapter 15),
semantic changes (Chapter 16), and lexical changes (Chapter 17).

You can assign the lead-in questions for each chapter as homework, or begin
the lesson on that chapter by discussing them in class, or – and this may be the
best approach – discuss them in class the day before you assign a particular
chapter. The follow-up activities help to verify and consolidate students’ learn-
ing, so these work well as homework assignments. In our own practice, though,
we have adopted a flipped classroom model where we ask students to read the
chapter and complete certain activities as homework before they come to class.
Then in class we verify students’ understanding by having them present and
discuss the assigned activities. Sometimes when an activity has many items –
more than we would expect a single student to complete – we assign different
items to different students either as homework or for presentation after they
come to class. In order to accommodate different preferences, we have provided
more activities than students could reasonably complete for one class meeting.
Therefore, you can select the ones best suited to your classroom.

One follow-up activity in most chapters is a corpus search. If you decide to
include these, we recommend spending class time showing students the websites
for the corpora, their organization, and then walking them through a sample
search to illustrate search terms and the types of results they return. Some of the
corpus searches are more time-intensive than a regular homework assignment
and could instead serve as the basis for a research paper. We also enjoy in our
own classes having students give oral presentations that take a deeper look at
one of the topics covered. The suggestions for further reading at the end of each
chapter provide articles and web resources that could serve as a basis for these
presentations or for research papers and self-guided learning.

We hope that these materials will allow you to make the history of the Spanish
language an accessible and enjoyable course for your students. Please feel free
to contact us if we can support your use of these materials and if we can make
changes in future editions to tailor these materials to your needs.

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Acknowledgments

From both authors:

It is a pleasure to recognize and thank the many people who have supported us during the writing of this book.

We would like first to thank the people who contributed directly to this book. Dallin Larsen, a doctoral student at the University of Georgia, contributed to its content by writing textboxes and research summaries, by reading and providing feedback on all the chapters, and generally by serving as an insightful consultant. Dallin also shared with us the handouts from his course on the history of the Spanish language with Jeffrey S. Turley of Brigham Young University, whom we would like to thank as well. Joy Peltier, a recent BA/MA graduate, provided valuable feedback regarding content and style on several chapters. Marissa Baer, a recent BA graduate, provided suggestions for further reading for five of the chapters. She and the ten other students in the undergraduate history of the Spanish language course and the twelve students in the equivalent graduate course in spring 2017 all made valuable contributions to this book through their reactions to and comments on the materials we piloted with them, and their suggestions for improvement. Furthermore, all of our former students at the University of Georgia on courses in the history of Spanish, the history of French, and comparative Romance linguistics and in gramática histórica del español at the Universidad Autónoma de Querétaro have helped shape the final form of this book and we are deeply grateful to them. We would like to mention in particular our former student Charo Pozo-Hurtado (1969–2016). We hope that this book will honor her memory.

We are also indebted to all the members of the Department of Romance Languages and the Department of Linguistics at the University of Georgia for their many tangible and intangible contributions. We would like to thank in particular, Stacey Casado, our department head, our colleagues in Romance linguistics, Gary Baker, Sarah Blackwell, Pilar Chamorro, Kelly Farmer Ford, Leslie Gordon, Tim Gupton, Chad Howe, Hilda Mata, Teresa Pérez-Gamboa, Peggy Renwick, and other colleagues with whom we have engaged in enlightening
discussions on the topics in this book, including Amélia Hutchinson, Catherine Jones, Keith Langston, Jared Klein, William Kretzschmar, and Jan Pendergrass.

It has been a pleasure to work with the staff at Cambridge University Press, in particular, Helen Barton, Commissioning Editor for Language and Linguistics, and Rosemary Crawley, Development Editor, Higher Education Division. We thank them for their professionalism, insight, and enthusiasm for the project. We also thank Hetty Marx for the extremely useful development assessment and Dominic Stock, senior content manager, Kay McKechnie, copy editor, and Revathi Thirunavukkarasu, typesetter, for their care in seeing the manuscript through to its final form. Finally, we thank the eight anonymous reviewers of our book proposal and the anonymous clearance reader for their suggestions and encouragement.

From Diana Ranson:

The material in this book has also been shaped by many hours of discussion on these topics with colleagues whose work I admire tremendously. First among them, of course, is my co-author and friend, Margaret Quesada, who graciously accepted to accompany me on this journey. Her substantial contributions have been decisive in seeing the book to completion. Special thanks go also to Joel Rini who helped launch this book when I was a visiting professor at the University of Virginia in 2013. I also thank Omar Velázquez Mendoza for his gracious hospitality on that occasion and Mark Elson and Gladys Saunders. Roger Wright has also been a special source of inspiration to me along with my other colleagues across the Atlantic, Dana Allen, Ralph Penny, Chris Pountain, and Miranda Stewart. I have also been fortunate to enjoy many hours of conviviality and conversation on topics related to this book with Janice Aski, Robert Blake, José del Valle, Toni Espòsito, Matt Juge, Enrique Pato Maldonado, David Pharies, Birte Stengaard, Natalya Stolova, Fernando Tejedo-Herrero, Don Tuten, Dieter Wanner, and Kenneth Wireback, and more recently with Marisa Carpenter, Jason Doroga, Sonia Kania, and Cynthia Kauffeld. I also cherish the memory of Ray Harris-Northall and Paul Lloyd, first-rate human beings whose scholarship stands as a memorial to them, and of Tom Lathrop, a good friend whose textbook I used for many years. I also want to extend heartfelt thanks to Steven Dworkin, my first professor of the history of Spanish at the University of Michigan, to whom I dedicate Chapter 17 of this book.

Tremendous thanks go of course to my family for their love, encouragement, numerous sacrifices, and patience in happily enduring far too many conversations
on the topics in this book: my mother, Rose Ranson, who also helped with proof-reading, my brothers, Ken and Kelly Ranson, my daughter, Catherine, her husband, Bill, and their three children, Daniel (10), Susanna (8), and Calvin (1), my other three grandchildren, Thomas (12), Aniah and Olivia (both 10), and my husband, Ron Miller, the renowned R. Baxter Miller, for his support and deep understanding of the rigors of scholarship, the craft of writing, and the art of teaching.

From Margaret Quesada:

My deep gratitude goes to my co-author, colleague and friend, Diana Ranson, for inviting me to collaborate with her on this project. As a specialist in second language acquisition studies, I have always considered the history of Spanish to be another of my scholarly interests and working with Diana has deepened my understanding of the historical and linguistic processes that impact language change and has given me new insights into the emergence of linguistic form in language acquisition. It has been a delight and an inspiration to work with her. I am indebted to my professors and mentors from Michigan State University who set me on the path to a rewarding life of scholarship and teaching: Grover Hudson, Ruth M. Brend (1926–2002), Julia S. Falk, Barbara Abbott, Carol Myers-Scotton, Patricia Lunn, Bill VanPatten, George Mansour, and Paul Munsell. I am grateful to my colleagues and students in Mexico for playing an integral role in my professional development during the twenty-plus years I spent there. I would like to mention specifically José Alfredo Zepeda, Silvia Yreri Mendoza, and Alma Rosa Sánchez of the Universidad Autónoma de Querétaro, and Chantal Melis and Beatriz Arias Álvarez of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, whose scholarship on the history of Spanish has served as a special inspiration for material in this book.

To my family goes my deepest appreciation and gratitude for their encouragement, patience, and unconditional support, especially to Sergio Quesada, anthropologist, field-researcher, scholar, teacher, life-long partner in adventures, both academic and non-academic, from Michigan to Mexico, from California and finally to Georgia; to my children, who all have their own lives now but are still a part of me every day: Sarah Quesada Williams, Sergio J. Quesada, Amanda Quesada, and son-in-law Kyle Williams; and finally (but not least of all) to granddaughter and emerging linguist, Elsi Margaret, who will now at last get to spend more time with abuelita.

Athens, Georgia, September 2017