

Introduction

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We are extremely pleased to have had the opportunity to host the 8th Hispanic Linguistics Symposium and the 7th Conference on the Acquisition of Spanish and Portuguese as First and Second Languages and to continue what has become a strong annual tradition and celebration of scholarly activity in Hispanic Linguistics. The advent of these two conferences in the mid-to-late 1990s had a dramatic impact on the presentation and dissemination of research on Hispanic Linguistics in North America. Prior to these conferences, papers on Hispanic Linguistics were presented at conferences on general linguistics and Romance linguistics, but many quality papers on specific languages had to be left out. As the quantity of research on Hispanic Linguistics continued to grow, the need for a venue for presentation of this research became more and more evident. While these two conferences have been hosted together several times now and are hard to imagine as separate, they began as separate conferences. In light of their separate histories that are now somewhat masked by their joint nature, and also in light of an impending official merger of these two conferences into one, we wanted to record here a brief history of the Hispanic Linguistic Symposium and the Conference on the Acquisition of Spanish and Portuguese as First and Second Languages.

The Conference on the Acquisition of Spanish and Portuguese as First and Second Languages began in 1995 when it was hosted for the first time by Pennsylvania State University. This conference became a biennial conference, with the second conference being hosted in 1997 by McGill University. Also in 1997, the Hispanic Linguistics Symposium began, though in a format very different from the conference we know today. Miami University (Ohio) hosted the first Hispanic Linguistics Symposium, but it was a small regional meeting of linguists from the Midwest, and participation was by invitation only. The second Hispanic Linguistics symposium was hosted the following year by The Ohio State University, and while participation in the symposium remained by invitation only, it was a national conference rather than a regional one. In 1999 Georgetown University hosted the third edition of both the Conference on the Acquisition of Spanish and Portuguese as First and Second Languages and the Hispanic Linguistics Symposium, and it was at this time that the Hispanic Linguistics Symposium was opened to all through a call for papers. While the two conferences were hosted together, they were still quite separate at this point, and each continued on its own schedule: the Hispanic Linguistics Symposium continued to be an annual meeting while the Conference on the Acquisition of Spanish and Portuguese as First and Second Languages continued to meet biannually. The Hispanic Linguistics Symposium was hosted by Indiana University in 2000, and in 2001 both conferences were hosted by the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. It was at the business meeting in Urbana-Champaign that the decision was made that the Conference on the Acquisition of Spanish and Portuguese as First and Second Languages would become an annual meeting and that, whenever possible, the two conferences would be jointly hosted. Every year since 2001, this has been the case. The conferences were hosted by the University of Iowa in 2002, the University of New Mexico in 2003, and by us at the University of Minnesota in 2004. As we write this introduction, the 2005 editions of these conferences have just been completed and were hosted by Pennsylvania State University, marking the tenth anniversary of the original Conference on the Acquisition of Spanish and Portuguese as First and Second Languages, which they hosted in 1995. As these two conferences have been hosted together six times, including in five consecutive years, they have clearly become one large meeting for much of the Hispanic Linguistics community in North America, with participation from other continents as well. In recognition of the fact that these two conferences are no longer in practice separate events, a name change is planned to take place in 2006, when the 2006 Hispanic Linguistics Symposium, including the areas of linguistics covered by both of the once separate conferences, will be hosted by the University of Western Ontario.

Over the years, institutional support for these conferences has been crucial and no less so in 2004 when they were hosted at the University of Minnesota. We are especially indebted for the financial support of the Spanish government through the Program for Cultural Cooperation between the Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports and United States Universities, and the Instituto Cervantes-Chicago and Madrid. We are also grateful for the financial and organizational support of several University of Minnesota offices and programs, including the Department of Spanish and Portuguese Studies, the College of Liberal Arts, the Humanities Institute, the European Studies Consortium through a Title VI Grant from the U.S. Department of Education, the Academic Initiative of the University of Minnesota in Partnership with Coca-Cola®, the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition, the Institute of Linguistics, English as a Second Language, and Slavic Languages and Literatures, and the Department of Curriculum and Instruction. We also appreciate the support of the Minnesota Chapter of the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese.

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