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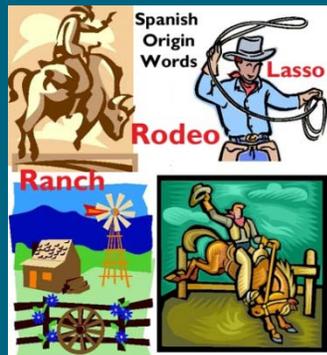
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## Hispanic Heritage Month is All About Us: Romance Influence in Our Everyday Language

By Tania Nanna, Hispanic SEPM, NRCS Louisiana



National Hispanic Heritage Month, September 15th to October 15th, celebrates and recognizes the contributions that Hispanic Americans have made to American society and culture.

According to the recent 2010 U.S. census people of Hispanic origin constitute about 16.3% of the nation's population. It is projected by the U.S. Census Bureau that by the year 2050 the Hispanic population will increase, from the year 2010 population of 50.5 million, to 132.8 million an increase in over 100 percent. This share of the nation's population will nearly double, from 16.3 to 30 percent.

The first question that comes to mind is what might be the cultural implication of such a large Hispanic expansion within the U.S.? If events in the past are examined in terms of a progression of events, events in the future can be easily understood. A historic perspective of U.S. maps over the past 400 years shows the diffusion of Hispanic culture and language throughout North America, along both the eastern and western coasts. One might simply follow the trail of cities that have Spanish names across the U.S.

As revealed by the 2010 Census, the Spanish language is now spoken by about 37 million U.S. residents 5 and older. When one popular Hollywood actor coined the phrase "Hasta la vista baby!", in the 1991 action film "Terminator 2", there was no need for translation. As with so many other Spanish words, the simple sentence naturally fits into U.S. vocabulary. How could it not fit in?

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Demographically speaking the Spanish language has co-existed with the English language for the last 400-years. It is estimated that about 10,000 Spanish or Latin derived "cognate" words, reside within American English vocabulary. Overall, about 53 % of English words are of Romance language origin. Besides Spanish, Romance languages also include French, Italian, Portuguese, and Romanian. The differences among these languages are more phonetic than structural or lexical; as in the way Americans incorporate Spanish words into their everyday conversations as a means of flavoring, synthesizing modern ideas, and relating new concepts. Some examples of Spanish vocabulary that are part of our lexicon:

- Ranch, rodeo, lasso: Mexican Spanish rancho, rodeo, and lasso
- Hurricane, tobacco, and hammock: Spanish origin from the Caribbean
- Some words such as aficionado, armada, mosquito, and a variety of food terms such as oregano, salsa, and vanilla, have been adopted from their Spanish form.
- Many Indian words such as chocolate, potato, tomato, puma, jaguar, and iguana were modified by Spanish before entering the English vocabulary.
- Other Spanish words common in our vocabulary: alligator, bonanza, cafeteria, cargo, cigarette, guerilla, mustang, patio, renegade, tornado.

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## Spanish's Gift to English

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Adapted from The Library of Congress' Classroom Materials for Teachers at <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/>

Government projections show that, by the next two generations, more than 25 percent of the U.S. population will be of Latin American origin. The nation's clothing, music, architecture, literature, and food have all been influenced by our growing Latin and Mexican American populations. American English has been most profoundly affected by immigration from Mexico and other Spanish-speaking nations. More people in the U.S. speak Spanish than ever before, and many find it a great advantage to speak more than one language.

You may not realize just how many American English words have Spanish origins.

Can you find all the Spanish-origin words in this letter?

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Dear David,

I wanted to invite you to a barbecue at my parents' ranch this Sunday. We'll have plenty to eat, including potato salad and my famous tomato salsa. No cafeteria food allowed! If you need to stay the night, there's a sleeping alcove out on the patio, with a comfortable hammock. I'm allergic to tobacco smoke, so please don't bring your smelly cigars.

To get here, start at the plaza downtown, go north until you reach the mouth of the canyon, then turn right at the first silo — it's a cinch.

Drive safely, and watch out for armadillos!

Hector

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Answers: 1. *barbecue* (barbacoa); 2. *ranch* (rancho); 3. *potato* (patata); 4. *tomato* (tomate); 5. *salsa* (salsa); 6. *cafeteria* (cafetería); 7. *alcove* (alcova); 8. *patio* (patio); 9. *hammock* (jamaca); 10. *tobacco* (tabaco); 11. *cigar* (cigarro); 12. *plaza* (plaza); 13. *canyon* (canon); 14. *silos* (silos); 15. *cinch* (cincho); 16. *armadillo* (armadillo)

Source:

[http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/immigration/mexican\\_voc.html](http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/immigration/mexican_voc.html)

## QUARTERLY QUOTE

"Civil Rights opened the windows. When you open the windows, it does not mean that everybody will get through. We must create our own opportunities."

Mary Frances Berry

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