Chapter 3
The Spanish language and its variations in New Spain

3.1 The earliest Spanish documents written in Mexico

This chapter deals with the features that were transferred from peninsular Spanish to the Mesoamerican area in the 16th century. The point of departure is the Spanish written by Hernán Cortés, author of the *Cartas de Relación* that he delivered to the kings of Spain between 1520 and 1526, and some other lesser known documents. The letters were printed in Spain, France, and Mexico in several editions (1520/1522/1866/2007). The *First Letter*, found in modern editions, is still useful to reconstruct language data, particularly lexicon and morpho-syntactic features. The *Second Letter*, handwritten by Cortés in 1520, was printed in Seville in 1522. From this edition it is possible to reconstruct select phonetic, morpho-syntactic and lexical features that in turn serve as a starting line of reasoning to show, on the basis of the available evidence, the earliest version of Mexican Spanish, some of the features that were transmitted to New World Spanish, and those that remained in the Mesoamerican area. The first speaker and writer of Mexican Spanish was Hernán Cortés himself. While it is difficult to look into all the aspects of Cortés' speech, it is possible to analyze interesting traits of his prose. This analysis is conducive to study the chronological development of the same features in subsequent writers of Mexican Spanish.

An ambitious and overly self-confident young man, Hernán Cortés had nothing to lose when he embarked himself on the adventure to the Indies; instead he had a sneaking suspicion that he could gain fame and fortune that would sell well in the Old World. A victorious war was all he needed to climb the socio-political ladder in the Iberian Peninsula. Cortés was not a representative of the officialdom but was determined to secure sufficient merit and riches to become one. He was born in Medellín (Extremadura) in 1485 to parents of Old Christian lineage and limited financial resources; at the age of 14, he was sent to Salamanca to study Law and Latin at the University or with private tutors, but returned to his hometown after only two years. His Spanish did not reach the levels of sophistication prevailing among the men trained within the cloisters of religious orders or that of scholars who had learned Latin well enough to write treatises on specialized subjects. What he learned in Salamanca was however beneficial in the understanding of his own enterprise. Cortés wrote directly to the Spanish monarch asking for acknowledgement of his successes instead of

DOI 10.1515/9781501504532-006,

punishment for insubordination. He reported the outcomes of his skirmishes and his intentions to establish a new system in the Mesoamerican lands that became New Spain. Those who knew him believed that Cortés was outgoing, nervy and obstinate; as a young man he was enrolled in the Spanish militia, spent a few years in Italy, and participated in the exploration of Algiers. When he returned to Spain he was ready to join Nicolás de Ovando, the Governor of Hispaniola and distant relative, who was in Seville preparing his next trip to the Indies. Córtés' plans were jeopardized by an accident, and for about a year, he was wandering the ports of Cadiz, Palos, Sanlucar and Seville, and learning in addition about the voyages to the Indies. At the age of 19, he joined the ship of Alonso Quintero and in 1504 he left for Hispaniola, where he became a colonist.

As soon as he arrived in Hispaniola he introduced himself to Governor Ovando and made sufficient merits to receive a *repartimiento* (distribution of property, Indians, services, and the like) in Deaguas along with the notary office in the Ville of Azua. In 1511, he accompanied Diego Velázquez in his exploration of Cuba. There he was awarded another *repartimiento* in Manicarao and later moved to Santiago de Barucoa, where he became Diego Velázquez' secretary, the Governor of Cuba. When he began to explore the Mexican territories, he had had the trans-Castilian, trans-frontier, and transatlantic experience. He had been in northern Africa and had lived in Extremadura, Old Castile, Italy, Andalusia, Hispaniola, and Cuba. Before he arrived in Mexico he had been acquainted with various languages and cultures although he might have been a monolingual Spanish speaker. The scholarly writings of his contemporaries contrast with his improvised but ingenious reports to the Spanish monarchs. While the documents delivered by the friars of the late 15th and early 16th centuries exhibited Latinate syntax, the prose of Cortés is clear, straight-forward, and similar to pre-modern Spanish. He used few Latin phrases, and as of the *Second Letter* (1522), he turned into a master of narration, description, reflection and persuasion. In the *First* and *Second Letter*, he introduced fresh borrowings from Taino and Nahuatl, and continued to use them with only brief definitions or no definitions at all until they sounded natural. The information about his life derives directly from the *Cartas de Relación* (1520/1866/2007), from the *Second Letter* (1522), from *La conquista de México* (1552) by Francisco López de Gómara, and from the *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España* (1571) by the *encomendero* Bernal Díaz del Castillo, one of his loyal soldiers.

3.2 The *First Letter* by Hernán Cortés

The original first letter written by Hernán Cortés has been lost, and it is assumed that a copy derived from the original must have been transcribed by a professional copyist who referred to Hernán Cortés in the third person instead of using the first person, as in the rest of the letters. The *First Letter* (1520) narrates the explorations of Juan de Grijalva, the nephew of Cuba's Governor, Diego Velázquez. Juan de Grijalva had experience in the journeying of Cuba and the founding of Trinidad, and was therefore, a veritable rival in the new exploration of the Mexican coasts. Grijalva sailed around Yucatan to the shores of the Bay of Campeche, discovered the Cozumel Island, and mapped the river that bears his name. Despite his endeavors, Grijalva was not able to collect the amount of riches that his uncle was expecting after having subsidized part of the expedition. In Cuba or the Fernandina Island, some Spanish settlers were dissatisfied with Governor Velázquez's arbitrary practices and thought that the young Hernán Cortés was capable of confronting the adverse situation. They asked Cortés to return to Hispaniola to submit the complaints they all had about Governor Velázquez, whose reaction was to ignore them; from that point on, however, the Governor had serious doubts about the adventurous expeditionary.

At that time other explorers had been reconnoitering the coasts of Yucatan. Hernán Cortés was one of the potential appointees to continue surveying the unknown lands, but Governor Velázquez recalled the expedition and reassigned the task to another captain. When Cortés found out that the Governor had dismissed him from the early exploration of Mexico, he issued orders to weigh anchor and set out to the coasts of Yucatan. Accompanied by about 10 ships, 400 men, 16 horses and a small number of cannons, he landed in the Yucatan Peninsula in Mayan territory. He disembarked at Cozumel, where he met the natives of the island. Cortés knew of Spanish captives who were lost on the different islands. At Cozumel he found Gerónimo de Aguilar, a Spaniard who had survived from a shipwreck and who willingly joined the Spanish troops. Aguilar had learned Maya during his captivity and could thus translate for Cortés. Cortés and his men struggled to survive from day to day and somehow managed to gather information from the natives and their caciques. He continued to Campeche then marched to Tabasco and the Grijalva River (see the route of Hernán Cortés in Map 3.1). The *First Letter* also describes the topography, the plants and animals, and diverse customs of the people, housing and religious practices (including human sacrifices) that he observed in both Cozumel and Yucatan. The comparisons with Moorish Spain are glaring; for Cortés, the natives lived *amoriscados* (like the Moors) and were fond of going to *mezquitas* (temples) where they worshipped their idols. Cortés took full advantage of this opportunity to persuade

the Spanish monarchs that the natives needed instruction in the Catholic faith. In closing, he warned them of the risks associated with Governor Velázquez, who was selfish and greedy. The letter ends with an itemized inventory of the presents that his envoys should deliver to the monarchs. This is in short the content of his *First Letter* addressed to Queen Doña Juana and Emperor Charles V, dated on 10 July 1519, and dispatched from Villa Rica de la Vera Cruz. The envoys assigned by Cortés and his men to deliver the missive along with some presents were Alonso Fernández Portocarrero and Francisco de Montejo (cf. Cortés 1520/2007: 7-34).

3.3 The *Second Letter* by Hernán Cortés

Dated on 30 October 1520 in Segura de la Frontera (on the coast of Oaxaca), the *Second Letter* offers a flamboyant narration of the battles Cortés fought on his route to the capital of the Aztec Empire and a flashy painting of an empire solidly established in the Great Tenochtitlan. In November 1522, Jacobo Cromberger published the *Second Letter* in Seville. It also appeared in Zaragoza in January 1523. The narration of the *Second Letter* begins 16 August 1519, when Cortés marched to Cempoala with 15 horsemen and 30 troopers; Cempoala was a prosperous Aztec village near the Villa Rica de la Vera Cruz (modern Veracruz), where he left two horsemen and 50 of his best troopers. Thinking that his men would be tempted to desert him in this adventure, Cortés scuttled his ships on the coast but saved one in which his loyal soldiers returned to Spain. In addition, he reported to the Spanish Emperor his concerns about the independent expeditions of Francisco de Garay, Governor of Jamaica, who was working on the premises with a few ships and allies. Cortés' main goal at this point was to meet the lord of the Aztecs, Muteeçuma (modern Spanish Moctezuma) and sent him messages through his *lenguas* ('interpreters').

As he was marching along the coasts of Veracruz, he was welcomed by the natives, who quickly learned of his desires to meet the Aztecs' ruler; some of them even gave him provisions. On his way to the Aztec capital he described the villages and the peoples he met. Taking full advantage of these encounters Cortés inquired about the lord Moctezuma and collected valuable pieces of gold. The towns described in detail as they appear in the *Second Letter* are the following: Tascaltecal (modern Tlaxcala), Churultecal (modern Cholula), Guasucingo (modern Huejotzingo), Temixtitan (old Tenochtitlan), Iztapalapa (modern Iztapalapa), Tezcuco (modern Texcoco), Ocupatuyo (variable names), and Izzucan (variable names). When Cortés reached Tascaltecal, he realized that in that province Moctezuma had numerous enemies. To his surprise, the natives of the province offered him an unholy alliance in order to trounce the feared Aztec Emperor.

Before he finally entered the Great Tenochtitlan, Cortés and his men had imaginative battles once with 100,000 Indians and another time with more than 149,000. The attacks on small towns at dawn forced the negotiations with the native caciques who ultimately pledged allegiance to him and to the unknown Spanish monarchs. The leaders of those towns advised him to leave the countryside and continue on to the great city. Some of them attempted to intervene in arranging a meeting with the Aztec Emperor but he repeatedly turned them down.

The first featured city was Tascaltecal, which he compared to Granada but actually larger and stronger with very good constructions and better supplies. About 30,000 people visited the daily market to trade produce and all kinds of goods. Cortés continued to describe the fertile valley and the beautiful fields. One day he was in his own camp when six caciques and 200 men who were Moctezuma's vassals informed him that they all wanted to become the subjects of His Majesty, Emperor Charles V. At the same time they asked Cortés to specify the kind of tribute that he wanted from them in exchange for suspending his plans to enter Moctezuma's territory. Some other people told him that he should not trust those vassals. From Tascaltecal Cortés wanted to march to Tenochtitlan but he was warned of the perils of this design because the Aztec lord was presumably preparing an ambuscade. On his way to the splendorous capital he made more allies who received him as a guest. Upon learning that some of his men were furtively talking on the premises to some of the Moctezuma's allies, he was so puzzled that he had to resort to the multilingual Aztec woman who was in captivity in order to find out that the Aztec ruler was close to his camp; all the people there got ready to flee the area because they were terrified of Moctezuma's troops. As Cortés became leery of the situation, he positioned himself on the offensive and decided to use his air gun killing about 3,000 people. The surviving native leaders were jolted awake by the fire and conceded defeat not without making a pact of loyalty with Cortés.

His report on Churultecal reads that this town had about 20,000 houses and many slums. This city was independent and people were well-dressed. The land was fertile and had a good irrigation system. Outside of Spain, this was the most impressive city, beautified with 430 towers built on temples. Because the people were presumably loyal vassals of Charles V, Cortés claimed that he wanted to make peace with Moctezuma who most likely had intentions to harm him. Before waging war on Moctezuma, one of the vassals went to see him and returned six days later with 10 gold dishes, 1,500 pieces of garments, and plenty of foodstuffs. Cortés was intent on meeting Moctezuma personally and nothing was going to stop him. At Churultecal his men explored the mountains and the surroundings of the volcanoes. When he departed from Churultecal he continued to Guasucingo, where he was welcomed by the natives. Very soon he gained the sympathy of

about 4,000 Indians from the provinces of Tascaltecal, Guasucingo, Churultecal and Cempoala. On his way through the province of Chalco, he reached Amecameca, where he had good hostesses. There some people told him that Moctezuma had asked them to wait for him to give him plenty of provisions. On behalf of Moctezuma, a young 25-year-old cacique delivered apologies to Cortés because he was not able to show up personally. Moctezuma's envoys told Cortés that they were in charge of guiding him in person. Cortés followed a convoy and found a city of 2,000 people, where he was invited to stay overnight; members of his entourage persuaded him to continue to Iztapalapa, which was the territory of Moctezuma's brother. Iztapalapa had about 12,000-15,000 neighbors while the city's lord had new large houses with many rooms and fresh gardens, trees, lakes, and very good stone floors.

The next day Cortés went through an aquatic thoroughfare that led him to Tenochtitlan, which was founded in the middle of the lake along with three small cities. When he finally arrived there, he was received ceremoniously by about 100 men. Then he crossed a wood bridge and Moctezuma finally appeared with 200 men, all of them barefoot and very well dressed. Moctezuma talked to Cortés and exchanged embellished ribbons with him, and then he took him by the hand and led him to a large room. Once all the members of the entourage were seated, the Aztec lord approached Cortés with jewels of gold and silver. Moctezuma gave an enlightening speech but Cortés does not mention who interpreted it for him. After six days of staying at Moctezuma's palace, Cortés determined that the Aztec leader should be imprisoned in the very same room where he himself was staying as a guest. His decision was based on the news delivered to him by a Spanish captain who named Qualpopoca (or Quetzalpopoca) as being responsible for having captured and killed a number of Spanish soldiers in a battle close to Nauhtla after a dispute over tribute. Apparently, Qualpopoca had claimed loyalty to Charles V but had apologized for not being able to come to Cortés and offer his services to His Majesty; his excuse was that he could not cross the territory of his enemies. For that reason he requested the accompaniment of four Spaniards, who were sent to him to his house. Qualpopoca was deceptive and actually wanted to kill them and succeeded killing two while the other two escaped alive.

Intrigued by the incident Moctezuma and Cortés called a few witnesses to tell their side of the story. Cortés wanted to know if Qualpopoca had killed the Spaniards following the orders of the Aztec lord. Qualpopoca's allies first denied Moctezuma's involvement, but under pressure all those implicated finally changed the previous version; furthermore, they stated that there was no other mastermind in charge of the whole operation but Moctezuma, who was held in captivity. In a very weak position, the former Aztec ruler was compelled by Cortés to order Qualpopoca's arrest, to bring him back to Tenochtitlan, and to burn him alive in

front of what is assumed to be the *Templo Mayor* (Great Temple). In retaliation, he then made him watch when Qualpopoca, his sons, and some other prisoners were tied to stakes while they were being burned to death before a speechless crowd. Once the prisoners were dead, Cortés told Moctezuma he was free to go, but Moctezuma declined the offer and decided to stay in his own palace where he was comfortable and had everything he needed.

This confrontation was not only the turning point in the Aztec-Spanish affairs but the perfect excuse to justify the arrest of Moctezuma and to cause the downfall the Aztec Empire. Once Cortés had subdued Moctezuma, he began to inquire about the places where he could find gold; debilitated by his mistakes, Moctezuma gave him all the information Cortés wanted without suspecting that the newcomers would be more than thrilled to take away large amounts of gold. The unpopular Aztec leader even provided guides to the rivers and sites where the precious metals could be found. Cortés was open when he said that Charles V needed gold, silver, and other metals, and Moctezuma gracefully agreed to smelt abundant and exquisite objects that would be delivered to the Spanish monarch.

The narration of the marches and exploratory trips of Cortés ended when the description of Tenochtitlan began. This is the first big Western picture of the Mexican capital, its markets, plazas, temples, Moctezuma's houses and his fearful vassals. The episodes of the first part of 1520 made Cortés the virtual ruler of the Great Tenochtitlan while Moctezuma became more and more detested by the different Mesoamerican groups. As Cortés was strengthening his position vis-à-vis Moctezuma, the enemies he had made in Cuba were determined to hunt him. One of them was Diego Velázquez, who was sending another expedition led by his nephew, Pánfilo de Narváez, who arrived in Mexico in April with more than 1,000 men. The large expedition had instructions to bring Cortés back dead or alive. Narváez disembarked at Vera Cruz, where Cortés had left a few of his troops. Planning the counterattack, Hernán Cortés departed from Tenochtitlan in May leaving 200 men there while the rest accompanied him to the coast. When Cortés learned that Narváez was close to the premises, he gathered his troops and defeated the latter. Upon his return to the Aztec capital in June, Cortés tried to regain his former position but his people were in great trouble as a result of another massacre deliberately perpetrated by his lieutenant Pedro de Alvarado. From Cortés' perspective, Spaniards were in the mood of imploring peaceful arrangements or else fighting for control of the causeways; nonetheless, for every Aztec they killed, many more appeared. At a time during the bloody battles, the indigenous combatants were so numerous that they themselves lost track of the identity of their allies serving in the battlefields. In desperation, the final strategy of the Aztecs was to destroy the bridges to prevent the Spaniards' escape.

Taking advantage of Moctezuma's decayed image, Cortés proposed the cessation of hostilities with the native enemies, but by then Moctezuma had provoked the wrath of his own subjects. On July 1, when Moctezuma was attempting to placate his people by delivering a harangue to a crowd, he was stoned to death. That night Cortés decided to flee for Tlaxcala, where he still had confederates. The Spaniards managed a narrow escape from Tenochtitlan across the causeway, while their back guard was being slaughtered. Much of the treasure looted by Cortés and his artillery was lost during this panic-stricken escape from Tenochtitlán. This episode is known as *La Noche Triste* (Sad Night). After another battle in Otumba, the Spaniards and his allies managed to reach Tlaxcala, not without having lost 870 men. In Tlaxcala Cortés plotted the siege of Tenochtitlan and the destruction of the Aztec Empire.

With the assistance of their allies, Cortés's men finally prevailed with reinforcements arriving from Cuba. Cortés planned the retreat of his men towards the city island of Tenochtitlan cutting off supplies and crushing the Aztecs' allied cities, a maneuver that changed the preparation of the siege of Tenochtitlan. In January 1521, Cortés repudiated a conspiracy headed by Antonio de Villafaña, who was hanged for his offense. Finally, with the capture of Cuauhtémoc, the younger *tlatoani* (ruler) of Tenochtitlan, on 13 August 1521, the Aztec Empire disappeared, and Cortés was able to claim it for Spain, thus renaming the city Mexico City. In closing, he solicited authorization to name the new territories as Nueva España (New Spain) due to the similarity of weather with the Iberian Peninsula. The envoy of the *Second Letter* was Alonso de Mendoza. The Aztec empire collapsed when the capital, Tenochtitlan, fell to the Spanish in August. Several months later, on November 25, 1521, Francisco de Oruzco arrived in the Valley of Oaxaca to claim it in the name of Cortés, who had been granted Oaxaca as his prize for conquering New Spain to the Spanish crown, and who was thereafter named *Marqués del Valle de Oaxaca*.

In 1521, the victorious Spanish soldiers settled in a community known as Segura de la Frontera, located in the central part of the Valley of Oaxaca and approximately six miles east of Monte Alban (modern state of Oaxaca). Later known as Nueva Antequera, it was officially raised to the category of a "royal" city in 1532 by decree of Emperor Charles V (Carlos I) with the name of Antequera de Guaxaca. Today it is known as Oaxaca or Oaxaca City. Following the initial settlement of this community, the Spanish quickly introduced new agricultural crops and methods of cultivation into the Valley of Oaxaca. King Charles I of Spain, who had become Holy Roman Emperor Charles V in 1519, appointed Cortés as governor, captain general and chief justice of the newly conquered territory. From 1521 to 1524, Cortés personally governed Mexico. Simultaneously, four royal officials were appointed to assist him in his governing; in effect, however, they

submitted him to rigorous scrutiny, criticism, and even defamation. In the face of internal conflicts and political turmoil, the boundaries of New Spain were established and renamed (see Maps 3.2 and 3.3 at the end of this chapter).

3.3.1 Salient features in Hernán Cortés' *Cartas de Relación*

The Spanish spoken and written at the time still belongs to a late medieval period representing the transition to pre-modern Spanish, when it was trendy to maintain the orthography and etymology of Old Spanish; the role of the printing press in addition was to respect the old norms such as the distinction of single *-s-* and double *-ss-*. Hernán Cortés falls in the category of writers with average education but plenty of worldly experiences. His writings follow the norms of the northern-central Spanish writers and scribes. By the time he reached the coasts of Mexico, his Spanish had been in contact with Taino, as the *First Letter* shows. When he wrote the *Second Letter*, his use of lexical items from both Taino and Nahuatl was both natural and convenient. The morpho-syntactic features, however, reveal the transitional and inter-dialectal patterns he used. The language data from the *First Letter* (1520/2007: 7-34) referring to morphology, syntax and lexicon are useful to reconstruct the Spanish used by Cortés, whereas the *Second Letter* published in Seville in November 1522 offers leads to reconstruct the pronunciation, morpho-syntactic patterns and lexical innovations. The *Second Letter* (1522) is a rare text of 54 unnumbered pages, which is available in a few libraries. I have numbered each page of my personal facsimilar copy, which was retrieved from the Henry E. Huntington Library.

The *Second Letter* aids in the reconstruction of the earliest stage of Mexican Spanish or proto-Mexican Spanish, a variety which is distinguished by the pronunciation and spelling norms of late medieval Spanish. Phonetic features appear in sub-sections 3.3.1-3.3.8; the adaptation of Amerindian languages is discussed in 3.4; various morpho-syntactic variants are exemplified in 3.5 and 3.6; and all the other variants are listed in 3.7-3.13.

3.3.1. High close vowels of modern Spanish replaced mid open vowels. In the *Second Letter* (1522), Cortés uses both *mesmo* and modern *mismo* as in "la *mesma* voluntad". He preferred the mid vowel in *descobrir* (modern *descubrir*); *sotiles* (modern *sutiles*); s*ofrían* (modern *sufrían*) and c*obrían* (modern *cubrían*).

3.3.2. Late medieval Spanish verbs ending in –ÇAR –ÇER and –ÇIR (modern –ZAR, –CER, and –CIR) were spelled with the consonant sequence *-sç-* as in *favoresçi-*

dos, *paresçió*, *resçebido*. Cortés omitted the grapheme <ç> or *ç con cedilla principal* and *encima* but he preserved in other words, e.g. *alçar* and *cabeça*.

3.3.3. In the *Second Letter* Hernán Cortés used both F- and H- in initial position, as in *fablar* and *hablar* ('to speak'); *fallé* and *hallé* ('I found'); *fasta* and *hasta* ('until' or 'up to'); *fizieron* and *hizieron* ('they made' or 'they did'). Other duplicate forms also appeared as *fermoso* and *hermoso* ('beautiful'); *fallar* and *hallar* ('to find'), *folgar* and *holgar* ('to enjoy'). The adjective *harto/a* appears with either H or F as in *harta tristeza* (40) *farto trabajo* (42). Phrases such as *filado de algodon* ('cotton thread') (27) and *aquel fumo* ('that smoke') (50) reveal the old medieval spelling. According to Lapesa (1985: 368), in the first half of the 16th century the archaic F- in *fijo*, *fincar*, *fecho* was still tolerated.

3.3.4. Modern Spanish has only two contractions, AL and DEL. In medieval Spanish, the prepositions A and DE coalesced with definite articles and demonstrative pronouns as in *alos*, *dela*, *della*, *destos*, *dellos*, *dela*. Hernán Cortés preferred the contracted forms.

3.3.5. Cortés used the modern synthetic future and conditional tenses as in: *guiaría, sabría*, *saltaría*, *socorrería*, but with other verbs such as *venir* and *tener*, he preferred the medieval forms *vernía*, *ternía*.

3.3.6. The spelling of the modern verb HABER was restored according to the Latin etymology of the verb HABEO. In medieval Spanish, present tense conjugations omitted the initial H- as in *yo e dicho* (*yo he dicho*) and *loan determinado* (*lo han determinado*). The modern spelling in the pluperfect tense follows, too, the Latin etymology as in *había*, *habías*, *habíamos*, *habían*; however, in the *Second Letter* Hernán Cortés used the norm established by Antonio de Nebrija's grammar (*avia*, *avias*, *aviamos*, *avian*).

3.3.7. In modern Spanish, direct, indirect and reflexive objects can go before or attached to the verbs in the infinitive, *quiero verlo*, *lo quiero ver*. In medieval Spanish the object was attached to an infinitive form assimilated to the object, as in *velle* or *respondelle* (modern *verle* and *responderle*).

3.3.8. The modern Spanish gender of MAR ('sea') and PUENTE ('bridge'), CALOR and CANAL are masculine. In late medieval Spanish, these nouns were feminine, although occasionally MAR could be masculine. The examples (a) and (b) are from the *First Letter* (1520/2007) while the sentencess (c) through (f) come from the *Second Letter* (1522).

(a) supo de tres indios que se tomaron en una canoa en *la mar* (13)
(b) Los que se quedaron en la barca se hicieron a *la mar* (41)
(c) Passada *esta puente* nos salio a resçibir aquel señor Muteeçuma (17)
(d) murio en *las puentes* el hijo de Muteeçuma (52)
(e) llegan las canoas debajo de *las puentes* por do están *las canales* (29)
(f) cayeron muchos dellos muertos y ahogados de *la calor* (50)

3.4 Adaptation of Amerindian languages

When Spanish speakers had contact with Mesoamerican languages they made adaptations to the Spanish spoken in the region, some of which have remained with high vitality. Select pronunciation traits of Cortés' speech can be reconstructed on the basis of two major sources: the use of Amerindian toponyms and an original handwritten letter found in the Archivo de Indias in Seville (cf. Lope Blanch 1995-1996). One of the first tasks of the Spanish explorers was the recording of the places they found in the Mesoamerican area. Such process entailed the addition of the voiceless affricate Nahuatl phoneme /tɬ which was unknown to Spanish speakers. This phoneme lost the lateral segment and became de-lateralized in the east and southeast of the territory occupied by the Aztecs at the time of the Spanish conquest, resulting in the adoption of *–t*. Spanish speakers wrote the toponyms with the three variants: Chinan*tl*a, Ma*t*alçingo and Tascalteca*l*. The Nahuatl diphthong /wa/, which appeared in the Nahuatl Huaxyacac was velarized following the Spanish model in toponyms such as Guadalquivir, Guadalcanal, Guadalajara coming from the Arabic *wad* with the meaning of "river". In his testament, Cortés dictates Teguantepequ*e*, Chapultepequ*e*, Jilotepequ*e*, Ocotepqu*e*, adding the paragogic *–e* or final vowel that is more common in Spanish. Finally, he also wrote Guaxocingo representing the prepalatal voiceless fricative sound /ʃ/, which by chance was similar to Old Spanish /x/ in words such as *dixo*, *baxo*. Once /x/ was inserted in the Spanish inventory of sounds it was easier to pronounce Mexico [meʃiko], Juchitán [ʃotʃitan.

3.5 Morphology and syntax

Primary morpho-syntactic traits listed below are general to Spanish and have evolved from the late 15th century on; they are better identified as the necessary transition from late medieval to modern Spanish.

3.5.1. Use of the coordinator *como* with the function of the relative *que*; such construction became frequent among the Golden Age authors. Example (a) from the *First Letter* and examples (b) to (d) from the *Second Letter* illustrate the use.

(a) [nosotros] vimos *como* venía en ella uno de los españoles cautivos que se llama Gerónimo de Aguilar (15)
(b) el dicho capitan les auia dicho *como* yo en nombre de vra. alteza tenia poblada toda esta tierra (2)
(c) yrse a la isla Fernandia a hazer saber a Diego Velasquez *como* yo embiava la nao que a vra alteza embie (1)
(d) me hizieron saber *como* por la costa della andauan quatro nauios (2)

3.5.2. In modern Spanish, double negatives are almost non-existent, whereas in medieval Spanish it was possible to use sentences (a) through (c) retrieved from the *Second Letter*.

(a) y que *ninguno no* auia saltado en tierra (2)
(b) tardaron aquel dia y otro que *no vinieron* con *ninguna* comida (18)
(c) tenemos noticia que yo *ni* todos los que en esta tierra abitamos *no* somos naturales della sino estrangeros (18)

3.5.3. Use of past participle with an adverbial function to express completion of an action. Medieval Spanish used past participles as adjectives in adverbial clauses. Sentences (a) through (d) appear in the *First Letter*; sentences (e) and (f) are from the *Second Letter*.

(a) *Acabada* de hacer la dicha armada, se partió de la dicha isla Fernando Cortés (12)
(b) *Partidos* de esta isla, fuimos a Yucatán, y por la banda del norte corrimos la tierra adelante hasta llegar al río (16)
(c) *Después* de idos determinó el dicho capitán de ir allá (17)
(d) *Oído* esto por los indios, respondiéronle que hablase desde ahí lo que quisiese (17)
(e) Y *llegados* a me fablar cada vno por si fazia a mi una cerimonia que entre ellos se via mucho (17)
(f) *asi recogidos* y *curados* los heridos nos boluimos al real y traximos con nosotros dos indios (19)

3.5.4. Modern Spanish uses an infinitive preceded by the preposition A + article EL (*al amanecer*, *al decir, al soltar*). In contrast, 16th century authors used a prepositional gerund with a transitive or an intransitive verb in order to indicate that an event occurred immediately before another. The items below appear in the *Second Letter*.

(a) Otro día *en amanesciendo* dan sobre nuestro real mas de ciento quarenta y nueue mill hombres que cobrian toda la tierra (6)
(b) *en llegando* a un petril que salia fuera de la fortaleza, queriendo hablar ala gente que por alli combatia le dieron una pedrada los suyos en la cabeça (40)
(c) sali *en amanesciendo* por aquella calle donde el dia antes nos auian desbaratado (42)
(d) *en entrando* por tierra dela dicha prouincia salio mucha gente de los naturales (47)

3.5.5. The preposition PARA and its reduced form PA appear in different contexts: (1) to indicate direction in space, as in items (a) and (b); (2) with a noun or noun phrase to indicate intention, purpose or goal, as in (c)-(h); (3) before an infinitive when it is preceded by an object clitic or without the object clitic as in examples (i)-(p); (4) with sentences in which the subjunctive mood is preceded by the relative coordinator *que*, as in (q)-(u). In the *Second Letter* the use of PA prevails, and there seems to be no stylistic distinction between formal and informal discourse, since Cortés, who was an expert in reverential formulae, used *PA* before His Majesty, as in (d) and (e).

(a) el dicho capitán me fizo saber a la hora me partí *pa la dicha villa* (2)
(b) siendo yo salido de la Vera Cruz hasta la ciudad de Cempoal que esta a quatro leguas della *pa de alli* seguir mi camino (2)
(c) *Para mas seguridad* de los que en la villa quedaban traxe comigo algunas personas principales (1)
(d) de las quales todas me dio *pa vra. alteza* (25)
(e) *pa un gran príncipe y señor* (29)
(f) Esteras de muchas maneras *pa camas*, y otras mas delgadas *pa asiento* y *pa esteras* (27)
(g) Colores *pa pintores* quantos se pueden hallar en España (27)
(h) Y *para las aues* que se crian en la mar eran los estanques (30)
(i) *Pa hazer* estancias y *pa sacar* oro (22)
(j) Les pidio canoas *pa mirar* el rio (22)
(k) y con tantos generos de armas *para* nos *ofender* salimos tan libres (6)
(l) auia en esta casa aposentamientos *pa* se aposentar (30)
(m) de allí me fui por la costa por alguna gente *pa saber* lengua (2)
(n) tomaua sus hijos *para* los *matar y sacrificar* a sus ydolos (1)
(o) tuue manera como so color que los dichos nauios no estaban *pa nauegar* (1)
(p) Venden conejos, liebres, venados y perros pequeños *pa comer* castrados (27)
(q) *pa que* el dicho Diego Velazquez *pusiesse* nauios en guarda *pa que* la *tomassen* (1)
(r) Por descubrir la tierra *para que* si algo *ouuiesse* yo lo *supiesse* (5)

(s) hecho otro nueuo de muchos hojos y palos agudos hincados y encubiertos *para que* los caballos *cayessen* y se *mancassen* (10)
(t) tenia muchas de las calles tapiadas y por las açoteas de las casas muchas piedras: *para que* despues que *entrassemos* en la ciudad tomar nos seguramente y aprovecharse de nos otros (10)

3.6 Common verbs in transition

Common verbs such as DECIR, HABER, HACER, TRAER, VER, etc. can have one or more forms in the same tense or in different tenses; they reveal the polymorphism of late medieval Spanish.

3.6.1. Modern Spanish DECIR derives from medieval DEZIR. It was commonly spelled with <*z*> in various tenses (e.g. *dizes, dezia*, and with <*x*> in the preterit indicative (e.g., *dixeron*).

3.6.2. Modern Spanish HACER follows closely the etymological criterion while late medieval Spanish varies according to tense and finite forms, thus in the *Second Letter* both HAZER and FAZER are found as in *fize*, *fizo*, *fiziesse*, *faria*, *hazía*, *hezimos*, etc. The past participle *fecho* alternates with *hecho*.

3.6.3. In modern Spanish, the verb TRAER and its derivatives in the preterit (*contraer*, *retraer*) follow the etymological criterion, thus rendering *yo traje*, *tú trajiste*, *él trajo*, *nosotros trajimos*, *ellos trajeron*. In late medieval Spanish authors hesitated between *traxe* and *truxe* in the same sentence or in the same paragraph. The variation in spelling appears consistently in the *Second Letter*.
(a) *traxe* conmigo algunas personas principales (1)
(b) *truxe* cerca de quatrocientas personas entre hombres y mugeres (6)
(c) si alguna necessidad *traxessen* se podia reparar della (2)
(d) y *traxe*les a la memoria (8)
(e) *traxeron*me diez platos de oro (13)
(f) parecia que toda la tierra se caya abaxo: assí se baxaron y *truxeron* mucha nieve (14)
(g) *traxeron* al dicho Qualpopoca (20)
(h) otro dia me *truxeron* figurada en un paño toda la costa (22)
(i) me *traxo* una carta de un español (32)
(j) les dixe que me *traxessen* una canoa (38)
(k) de cansados nos *retruximos* a la fortaleza (40)

(l) me *traxo* una cama de madera (46)
(m) que se viniessen a sus casas y *traxessen* a sus mugeres (51)

3.6.4. Modern Spanish verb VER was VEDERE in late medieval. The conjugations were *yo vide*, *él vido* in the preterit indicative, and *yo via*, *ellos vían* in imperfect indicative. The examples below are from the *Second Letter*.
(a) donde no me *vian* (7)
(b) que bien *vian* que ellos tenian la culpa (7)
(c) Y que *vian* claro (8)
(d) por las señales que pa ello *via* (9)
(e) ya *vido* que mi determinada voluntad (13)
(f) una cerimonia que entre ellos se *via* mucho (17)

3.6.5. In modern Spanish the verb HABER is used exclusively as auxiliary + past participle or with the special impersonal HAY (for both singular and plural), whereas in Cortesian texts HABER is used with the meaning of TENER as in (a) to (e) and alternates with the verb TENER to indicate possession, as in sentence (f). Examples (a) to (f) are from the *Second Letter*, whereas an expression of time appearing in example (g) is from the *First Letter*.
(a) Vista la discordia y la desconformidad delos vnos y delos otros, no *oue* poco plazer (10)
(b) antes que *ouiessen* lugar de se juntar les queme cinco o seys lugares (6)
(c) y como dexaua aquellos pueblos de paz, *ouieron* mucho plazer (7)
(d) La qual lo dixo a aquel Jeronymo de Aguilar lengua que yo *oue* en Yucatan (11)
(e) E por aquella noche nos dexaron avn que casi al alua *ovo* çierto rebato (44)
(f) E me rogaua que le *tuuiesse* por amigo con tal condicion que los de Culua no entrassen en su tierra (22)
(g) Gerónimo de Aguilar contonos la manera como se había perdido y el tiempo que *había* que estaba en aquel cautiverio (15)

3.7 Verbal clitics

In modern Spanish, direct, indirect, and reflexive object pronouns are attached to the infinitive form of the verb, as in *para defenderlos*, *comenzó a decirles*. In the *First Letter* the same verbal clitics go before infinitives as in (a) to (h), only occasionally attached to them, as in (i).
(a) como el capitán tuviese necesidad de agua, hízose a la vela para *la ir* a tomar a otra parte (9)

(b) comenzó a tomar su agua y a *les decir* con el dicho faraute que les dieran oro (10)
(c) no tenía mucha razón de *se quejar* el dicho Diego Velásquez (11)
(d) teniendo deseo de haber más acordó sin *lo decir* ni hacer saber a los padres gobernadores (12)
(e) tenían necesidad para *se proveer* de cosas (...) para el viaje (12)
(f) El dicho cacique le respondió que él era contento de *lo hacer* así (14)
(g) Y luego quisiera ir con toda la flota con su persona a *los redimir* (14)
(h) Gerónimo de Aguilar les hizo entender como él no venía a *les hacer* mal ni daño alguno, sino a *les hablar* de parte de vuestras majestades (17)
(i) Fernando Cortés hablándoles por medio de una lengua o faraute, les dijo que *no iban a hacerles* mal ni daño alguno (13)

3.7.1. In modern Spanish, reflexive, direct and indirect object pronouns consistently appear before the conjugated verb. Examples: *se hizo*, *se acordó*, *se acercaron*, *le dijeron*. In the *First Letter* the same objects are attached to the conjugated verb as in (a) to (f). The stylistic variations (g) through (i) anticipate the change to modern Spanish since verbal clitics always go before the conjugated verb.
(a) [los indios] vinieron muy recatados y *acercáronse* a los navios (10)
(b) hizo salir a la gente de los navíos y *aposentáronse* en aquel pueblo (13)
(c) *parecióle* que se había rescatado poco (11)
(d) envió dos capitanes con hasta ciento hombres *y mandóles* que el uno fuese a la punta de la dicha isla y el otro a la otra (13)
(e) y yendo su viaje, *acordóse* de volver al dicho puerto o isla Santa Cruz (9)
(f) Echaron a tierra los tres indios, y *enviáronlos* a buscar a los españoles y *estuviéronlo*s esperando (15)
(g) Acabada de hacer la dicha armada, *se partió* de la dicha isla (12)
(h) y él *les rogó les dejasen* tomar agua y que luego *se irían* (10)
(i) Gerónimo de Aguilar *nos contó* la manera como *se había perdido* (15)

3.8 Stylistic and dialect variations

The letters by Hernán Cortés reveal not only the transitions from medieval to modern Spanish, but some of the regional, stylistic and dialect variations in both peninsular and New World Spanish that persist until the present. First, the use of direct object pronoun LE referring to [+ masculine + animate] objects represents a major departure from the etymological variant LO, which is older than LE, the pronoun clitic that replaced LO because LO also refers to [+ singular masculine – animate] objects. The trajectory of both pronouns has been examined

under the frameworks of historical linguistics, dialectology, and sociolinguistics. The Romance etymological system derived directly from Latin precedes the use of LE as direct [+ masculine singular animate] objects, a divergence emerging in Castile that has remained a distinctive trait of Castilian. The use of this Castilian variant is known as *leísmo*. Modern Latin American Spanish prefers the ancestral etymological distinction between feminine and masculine direct objects for both animate and inanimate objects as in LOS / LOS *encontré* ('I found him' or 'I found it' / 'I found them') and LA / LAS *encontré* ('I found her' / 'I found them'). In contrast, Castilian uses LE and LES for [+ masculine + animate] objects, including animals, as in item (i). Following these norms in the *Second Letter*, Cortés preferred the Castilian variant but occasionally he also used the variant LO, as in examples (a) and the first part of (d). In both cases LO is used with the verb *ver* ('to see').

(a) E viendo*lo* todos le dieron con vnas porras en la cabeça hasta que *lo* mataron (9)
(b) les dixo que no yuan a hazerles mal ni daño alguno, sino para ***les amonestar y atraer*** (13)
(c) Por no ***escandalizarles*** ni dar algun desman a mi proposito y camino (43)
(d) hize tomar uno de ellos desimuladamente, que los otros no *lo* vieron, y aparteme con el y con dos lenguas y ***amendrentele*** para que dixesse la verdad (46)
(e) Cuando salia fuera el dicho Muteeçuma todos los que yuan con el (...) le boluían el rostro y en ninguna manera ***le mirauan*** (31)
(f) aquellos dos señores que con el yvan me detuuieron con las manos para que no ***le tocasse*** (17)
(g) [Muteeçuma] boluia siempre muy alegre y contento al aposento donde yo ***le tenía*** (21)
(h) E me rogaua que ***le tuuiesse*** por amigo (22)
(i) nos mataron un cauallo, que aunque Dios sabe quanta falta nos hizo y quanta pena rescebimos con ***auer*** nos ***le muerto*** (42)

3.9 Indicative and subjunctive

In modern Spanish the imperfect subjunctive forms ending in –RA (–*ara* for the first conjugation and –*iera* for the second and third) are interchangeable with Spanish endings in –SE (-*ase* for the first conjugation and -*iese* for the second and the third). Hernán Cortés preferred the form ending in –SE as in *hablasse*, *quisiesse*, *sirviessen*, *dexasse*, *partiesse*. In the *Second Letter*, the use of indicative and subjunctive appears like in modern Spanish. The former is used for nar-

ration or vivid description of the places, things and peoples that Cortés discovered on his excursions. Subjunctive is used to express command, opinion, wish, need, petition, softened request, doubt, fear, etc. in the subordinate clauses that are normally preceded by a verb in indicative in the main clause (*decir*, *hacer*, *mandar*, *ordenar*, *rogar*, *temer*, *pedir*) that spontaneously generates the subjunctive. Because Cortés was consistently reporting in the past what were presumably the objective events, he overused imperfect subjunctive ending in –SE, the traditional forms of subjunctive with the meaning of [+ subjectivity] or [+ reservation] found in the Latin grammars. The redundancy of the forms in –SE is typical of the prose of the 16th century.

(a) me *dixeron* que yo lo *hiziesse* castigar (9)
(b) en tanto *fize* que la gente de los nuestros *estuuiessen* apersçebidos (12)
(c) me *rogaua* que le *perdonasse* porque no salia su persona a verme (15)
(d) me *rogaua* que si *fuesse* posible no *fuesse* alla (16)
(e) nos partimos con harto *temor* de que aquellos *quisiessen* perseverar en nos hazer alguna burla (14)
(f) Le *rogué* que me *mostrasse* las minas de donde se sacaua el oro (69)
(g) me *dixeron* que no *parasse* sino que me *fuesse* a otra ciudad (16)
(h) *pidiome* que le *diesse* españoles que *fuessen* con ellos pa que lo *viessen* sacar [oro] (21)
(i) les *dixe* que me *traxessen* una canoa (38)
(j) el dicho Muteeçuma les *auia mandado* que *matassen* a aquellos españoles (20)
(k) Yo *dixe* que *uiniesse* su capitan y que se *fuesse* con los nauios (2)
(l) para que *tuuiesse* por bien de le mandar rescebir a su real servicio, que le *rogava* me *diesse* algun oro que yo *embiasse* a vra. majestad (4)
(m) yo *hize* que los *llamassen* y que *uiniessen* y no *ouiessen* miedo (5)

3.9.1 Imperfect subjunctive in adverbial clauses

Imperfect subjunctive forms in –SE prevail in adverbial clauses describing the sequence of events. Several connectors may be used to express anteriority, co-existence, or cause-and-effect subsequence, for instance, *antes que*, *de manera que*, *después que*, *hasta que, para que*, *sin que*, and unknown antecedent, as in (i). The sentences below from the *Second Letter* illustrate the use.

(a) los auia embiado a ella *para que viessen* nuestro real (6)
(b) auiamos fecho lugar *para que* en nuestro real no nos *ofendiessen* (6)
(c) que *de ninguna manera* me *partiesse sin que* los señores de la ciudad *viniessen* aquí (10)

(d) *antes que ouiesse* lugar de se juntar, les quemé cinco o seis lugares pequeños (6)
(e) Muteeçuma su señor *les auia embiado pa que me esperasen* allí y m*e fiziessen* proueer de todas las cosas necessarias (15)
(f) *pa que* el dicho Diego Velasquez *pusiesse* nauios *pa que* la *tomassen* (1)
(g) me rogauan que *antes de que me determinasse* de perder su amistad y hazerle la guerra que dezia que me *informasse* bien de la verdad (13)
(h) *antes que amanesciesse* di sobre dos pueblos en que mate mucha gente (7)
(i) que *dondequiera* que yo *estuuiesse* le *embiasse* a pedir lo que yo *quisiesse* (13)

3.9.2 Imperfect subjunctive in translation

When he used the form ending in –SE derived from Latin pluperfect subjunctive AMAVISSEM, Hernán Cortés followed the patterns of late medieval Spanish; at the time –SE was the most common and frequent in the subordinate clauses preceded by a verb in the preterit or imperfect indicative, as in (a) through (e). Nonetheless, the main verb can be implicit as in sentence (f), where Hernán Cortés advised his men not to get into trouble.

(a) Y ellos de Cempoal vinieron a mi y *dixeron* me que *mirasse* que aquellos eran malos (6)
[the people from Cempoal came up to me and *told me to be wary* of the bad guys]
(b) *amedrente*le para que me *dixesse* la verdad (6)
[*I intimidated* him so *he would tell* me the truth]
(c) Yo les *satisfize* diziendo que *cognosciessen* como ellos tenian la culpa del daño que auian rescebido (8)
[I *placated* them by saying that *they should acknowledge* their own responsibility for the damages they received]
(d) [Moctezuma] me *dixo* que alli le *esperasse* (17)
[Moctezuma *asked* me to *wait for* him over there]
(e) que todavia me *rogaua* que no *curasse* de yr a su tierra porque era esteril (13)
[he even *begged* me not *to bother* to go to his land because it was sterile]
(f) que si yo era loco y me metia donde nunca podria salir, que no lo *fuessen* ellos sino que se *boluiessen* a la mar (7)
[that if I was crazy and I had gotten into a rut, that *they should not do* the same but instead *they should return* to sea]

3.9.3 Conditional sentences with –SE in translation

In conditional sentences made up of protasis and apodosis, the imperfect subjunctive is used in the former and the conditional indicative in the latter. In imperfect subjunctive the ending –SE appears in combination with the synthetic conditional as in (a) through (e), identical to modern Spanish. Variations to this pattern appear in both peninsular and Latin American social dialects, where the conditional is replaced by imperfect subjunctive ending in –RA in the SI-clause or protasis. All the examples derive from the *Second Letter*.

(a) creyendo que si alli los nauíos *dexasse*, se me *alçarian* con ellos (1)
[believing that if I *were to leave* the ships, *they would* riot against me]

(b) si sus nauios y gente *traxessen* alguna necessidad, les *socorrería* con lo que yo *pudiesse* (2)
[if their ships and people needed anything, I *would help* them with whatever means I could]

(c) si no *viniessen yria* sobre ellos y los *destruyria* (10)
[If *they did not come* I *would go* after them and *destroy* them]

(d) si assi no lo *fiziessen yria* contra ellos con todo el poder que yo *tuuiesse* (32)
[if they *did not do* it in this manner, I *would go* after them with all the power *I had*]

(e) si no se *fiziesse* grande y cruel castigo en ellos nunca se *remediaría* jamas (47)
[if *they were not* severely *punished* things *would* never *be remedied*]

3.9.4 Conditional sentences with –RA in translation

Forms ending in –RA are not too frequent in late medieval Spanish; they derive from pluperfect indicative AMAVERAM which gradually acquired subjunctive meaning and began to compete with the form –SE derived from AMAVISSEN. In conditional sentences –RA can appear in both the protasis and the apodosis, but the meaning in the apodosis remains indicative and is equivalent to modern conditional forms ending in –RÍA. It is assumed that the combination of –RA and –RA in conditional sentences, although scarce, spread to other contexts and gradually replaced the –SE form in Mexican Spanish (Acevedo 1997: 108). Also, in the *Second Letter* the ending in –RA appears occasionally with the contrary-to-fact phrase *como si fuera* ('as if it had been') or *si no fuera* ('if it had not been'), as in (e) and (f). While the form –SE clearly prevails in the *Second Letter*, the form in –RA is also used anticipating the modern preference of Mexican Spanish for frequent use of –RA in the protasis as in (a) through (d). The semantic convergence of AMAVERAM and AMAVISSEM in Spanish occurred after the 16th century.

Grammarians have assumed that in modern Spanish the two forms are equivalent and interchangeable as long as they maintain subjunctive meaning, but this distinction may be related to regional and social factors. After three centuries of colonial life and two of independent speech habits, speakers of Mexican Spanish are strongly inclined to use the ending –RA though occasionally they do use the forms in –SE.

(a) si en mi mano *fuera* boluerme, yo lo *hiziera* por fazer plazer a Muteeçuma (15)
[if *I could* return, *I would do* it just to please Moctezuma]

(b) Y temi que me *pusieran* fuego. Lo qual si *acaesciera fuera* tanto daño que ninguno ninguno de nos otros *escapara* (7)
[And *I was afraid they would set fire* on me. If *it happened*, *it would cause* so much damage that *none of us would escape*]

(c) se auian visto en mucho trabajo y peligro, y todauia los *mataran* si el dicho Muteeçuma no *mandara* cessar la guerra (38)
[they had been in a lot of trouble and danger, and *they would have killed* them if said Moctezuma *had not ordered* to stop the war]

(d) *si no ouiera hallado* alli socorro *se muriera* de sed y hambre (53)
[if *he had not found* help right there, *he would have died* of hunger]

(e) *como si fueramos* los unos infieles y los otros cristianos (35)
[*as though some of us were* infidels and others were Christian]

(f) nos rescibieron con tanta alegría *como si* nueuamente les *dieramos* las vidas (39)
[we were received with so much joy that it seemed *as though we had revived* them]

3.10 Extinct and current lexical items and discourse markers

Late medieval lexical items and a discourse marker appear in the letters written by Hernán Cortés. One adverb, *aína* ('rapidly' or 'fast') is no longer used in Mexico but has been documented in regions of the New World (e.g. Paraguay), where it may be considered archaic. In contrast, *asaz* ('sufficient') is almost extinct in Latin American varieties. Examples (a) through (d) derive from the *Second Letter*.

(a) me dixeron que deuia de ser lexos y que no podian venir tan *ayna* (3)

(b) era la mezquita mayor de aquella ciudad *asaz* fuerte (37)

(c) no acauaria tan *ayna* (29)

(d) podia tener manera de mas *ayna* sojuzgarlos (51)

3.10.1. The discourse marker, *dizque*, typical of medieval Spanish appears in the *Second Letter* rather infrequently. *Dis que* or *dizque* (< *dicen que*) is initially equiv-

alent to an impersonal report ("they said that") with the added subjective dubitative meaning. *Dizque* has high vitality in informal Latin American Spanish speech but may be making inroads into more formal domains such as newspapers and magazines. Examples are not abundant in the *Second Letter* (1522) but are identical to modern Spanish.

(a) los dos traya segun me dixo pa que fuessen testigos de cierta notificacion que *dis que* el capitan le auia mandado (2)
(b) *dizque* dixeron a los españoles que los naturales desta prouincia estauan confederados con los de Guacachula (49)
(c) el hijo de Muteeçuma que eredaba el señorio y otros dos hijos suyos quedaron biuos el uno *dizque* es loco y el otro perlatico (52)
(d) que *dizque* venia en busca dela gente que Francisco de Garay auia embiado a esta tierra (53)

Finally, the *Second Letter* offers examples of lexical items that are current in Mexican Spanish: the verb *platicar* 'to chat', instead of *charlar*, which is more frequent in Spain today, the diminutive of the adverb *cerca* ('near), and the noun *alberca* ('pond') instead of the widespread modern *piscina* ('swimming pool').

(a) acerca desto passamos muchas *platicas* y razones (20)
(b) *platicamos* muchas vezes la orden que se deuia de tener en la seguridad desta prouincia (48)
(c) muy *cerquita* de alli estaua mucha gente de Muteeçuma (11)
(d) alli mesmo *albercas* de agua dulce (16)
(e) Sobre cada *alberca* y estanques destas aues auia sus corredores y miradores (30)

3.11 Use of Taino borrowings

Taino borrowings appear in the Mesoamerican area in the *First Letter* (1520/2007). Cortés and other explorers had already appropriated the semantics of the objects, persons and foodstuffs that they encountered in the islands: *ají*, *cacique*, *canoa*, *jagüey*, *maíz*, *maizal* were familiar nouns that appeared without a definition (see Table 3.1), or with common Spanish modifiers. The most frequent Taino noun in the *First Letter* is the word *cacique* followed by the word *canoa* while the most common neologism is the word *indio(s)* with the meaning of native or *"natural de la tierra"*.

(a) Entraron veinte *indios* en una *canoa* (10)
(b) Se fue con ellos hasta un *jagüey* de agua (10)
(c) Fernando Cortes había hablado a aquel *cacique* (14)

(d) que hablasen a los *caciques* que topasen (13)
(e) les dijo que fueran a llamar a los otros *caciques* (13-14)
(f) y el dicho *cacique* respondió que era contento de lo hacer así (14)
(g) proveyó luego con enviar con ciertos *indios* en una *canoa* (14)
(h) sabían quién era el *cacique* (14)
(i) Se partió con su carta para los otros *caciques* (14)
(j) les rogaba que trabajasen de se soltar y huir en algunas *canoas* (14-5)
(k) vieron venir una *canoa* a la vela hacia la dicha isla (15)
(l) como el capitán reprendiese a los *caciques* de la dicha isla (16)
(m) vinieron ciertos *indios* en una *canoa* y trujeron ciertas gallinas y un poco de *maíz* (17)
(n) envió con ellos sus cartas a los *caciques* (19)
(o) aquellos *caciques* les rogaban que les perdonasen (20)
(p) la tierra es muy buena y muy abundosa de comida, así de *maíz* como de fruta (20)
(q) les dio para los *caciques* dos camisas (21)
(r) vino el dicho *cacique* como había quedado (21)
(s) Los mantenimientos que tienen es *maíz* y algunos *ajis* como los de las otras islas y *patata yuca*, así como las que comen en la isla de Cuba (25)
(t) sesenta hanegas de *maíz*, y diez de frijoles, y dos mill pies de *cacao* (22)
(u) *maíz* y algunos *ajís* (25)

3.11.1 Documentation of Taino borrowings in New Spain

Other Taino borrowings documented in the Mexican sources are the following: *barbacoa, batea, cazabe, guacamaya, guayaba, hamaca, hicotea, huracán, iguana, macana, piragua, tabaco, tiburón, tuna,* etc. These loans were not only vital and far-reaching in the 16th century but persist in contemporary Spanish and other European languages. Their vitality in the primitive lexical system explains their spread against other native forms, inasmuch as the explorers of the 16th century took them to other regions of the New World and used them to express the new realities they encountered (Lope Blanch 1979). The early appropiation of Taino and Carib by Spanish speakers before the discovery of Mexico was conducive to their integration into proto-Mexican Spanish or the earliest version of the Mexican Spanish koine. In the *Second Letter*, Cortés continued to use integrated and Hispanicized Tainismos without definitions and with the noun modifiers that are common in Spanish, e.g. *jagüey de agua* (10), *canoa a la vela* (15), *un poco de maíz* (17), *algunos ajis* (25), *maizales* (47), *cañas de maiz* (77), etc. Moreover, before 1555 Alonso de Molina had gathered the lexical entries for his *Vocabulario*,

Taino borrowings must have sounded just like Spanish to him inasmuch as they had been documented in other sources between 1493 and 1549. Table 3.1 is a short list of common words that were disseminated from the Antilles to Mexico in the early decades of the 16th century and later to the present territories of Central and South America (see Map 3.4).

Table 3.1: Tainismos in Molina's *Vocabulario de la lengua mexicana y castellana y castellana y mexicana* (1555 and 1571)

Item No.	Modern Spanish	First documented	English meaning	Assimilated loan
1	Ají*	1493	Hot pepper	Yes
2	Areito	Before Molina	Dance	No
3	Aura	1549	Bird of prey, vulture	Yes
4	Batata	1516-20	Yam, sweet potato	Yes
5	Batea*	1510	Track pan used to wash gold	Not completely
6	Batey	1535	Ball game played with hips and legs	Yes
7	Bohío*	1493	Hut	Not completely
8	Cacique	1492	Chieftain, nobleman	Yes
9	Canoa*	1492	Canoe	Yes
10	Caribe	1520	Very hot (pepper)	No
11	Coa*	1516	Sharp wooden rod used to till the soil	Yes
12	Cutara	1531	Sandal, sandal for noblemen	Yes
13	Embijar	1532	To dye someone or something	Yes
14	Enagua	1495	Female skirt	No
15	Hamaca	1492-3	Hammock	Not sure
16	Huracán	Unknown	Hurricane, storm	Not sure
17	Jagüey	1518	Cistern	Yes
18	Maguey	1515	Plant of the agave family	Yes
19	Maíz*	1493-1500	Corn	Yes
20	Maizal	1512	Corn field	Yes
21	Sabana	1515	Meadowland	Yes
22	Tuna	1514-16	Prickly fruit of the cactus	Yes

Source: E. Hernández Hernández (1996), *It appears in the edition of 1555

3.12 Pronouns of address

The pronouns of address in New World Spanish were significantly reduced due to the disappearance of the pronouns VOS (singular) and VOSOTROS (plural). Pronouns of address such as *Vuestra Majestad* or *Vuestra Señoría* [+ reverence] can be retrieved from literary and non-literary texts, official documents and the

like. In the *Second Letter* (1522), Hernán Cortés frequently used these formulaic pronouns in 3rd person singular to address the king of Spain. In contrast, the fictitious speeches given by Moctezuma to Cortés show the use of VOS (singular formal between men of equal rank) as in (a) through (c), while VOSOTROS (plural informal) is used between Moctezuma and his own vassals, as in (d) through (h).

(a) Y segun la parte que *vos dezis* que *venis* que es do sale el sol y las cosas que *dezis* dese gran señor o rey que aca *os* embio (18)
(b) E por tanto *vos sed* ciertos que *os* obedesceremos y ternemos por señor (18)
(c) Y todo lo que nosotros tenemos es pa lo que *vos* dello *quisieredes* disponer (18)
(d) *veys*me aqui que so de carne y huesso como *vos* y como cada vno: y que soy mortal (18)
(e) todo lo que yo tuuiere *teneys* cada vez que *vos* lo *quisieredes* (18)
(f) de mucho tiempo aca *vosotros* y *vuestros* padres y abuelos *aueys* sido y *sois* subditos y vasallos de mis antecessores y mios (24)
(g) E *vosotros* assi mismo *aveys* hecho lo que buenos y leales vasallos son obligados a sus señores (24)
(h) Y mucho *os* ruego pues a todos *os* es notorio que assi como hasta aqui a mi me *aueys* tenido y obedesçido por señor *vro*. (24)

3.13 General features of 16th century Spanish pronunciation

The period of conquest and colonization of the Spanish-speaking New World coincided with many ongoing internal changes. This fact may explain why there are residual variants in different areas of the Latin American sub-continent, to wit:

(1) Aspiration of initial /f/ represented by writing [h] was ongoing. Writers from northern Spain began to drop the [h] in speaking, which became silent while the same feature was still used in the south. Aspiration is still used with relative frequency in areas of Latin American such as the coastal regions. It has remained in Mexican Spanish at less frequent rates.
(2) The merger of affricates and fricatives was ongoing, but the contrast was resolved in favor of the fricatives, since the affricates lost one distinctive feature [+ occlusive]. In addition, the affricate phoneme from Nahuatl /tɬ/ was incorporated to Mexican Spanish via the use of toponyms, as in *Tl*alpan, Ix*tl*accíhua*tl*, etc. In modern Mexican Spanish turned into an allophonic variation [tɬ] with no distinctive meaning.
(3) The merger of the fricatives and affricates from medieval Spanish was completed in peninsular Spanish, and no traces of affrication are found in Latin

American Spanish, except in Mexico, where affrication of /s/ [ts] may be attributed to contact with Nahuatl. The merger of apico-alveolar fricatives and dorso-dental fricatives was completed in New World Spanish, but apical pronunciation of /s/ distinguishes central areas of Colombia. Residuals of *ceceo* reappear in different regions of Mexico and other countries (e.g. Venezuela, Nicaragua).

(4) Loss of voiced sibilants or devoicing was ongoing until voiceless sibilants became the norm. Except as allophones [mizmo], [dezde], there are no traces of voiced sibilants in any of the varieties of the Spanish-speaking world.

(5) Aspiration and/or deletion of final /s/ were advanced in Andalusia and remains along coastal and non-coastal areas of Central and South America but this trait is non-existent in the Mexican Central Highlands where the koine originated, though it may reappear along the coasts of the Atlantic and the Pacific.

(6) By the same token, the merger of voiced and voiceless palatals or de-palatalization was ongoing, and the contrast was resolved in favor of the voiceless, which lost the feature [+ palatal] and became velar represented by the letter *jota*. Common examples are modern Spanish *bajo* and *dijo* (< medieval Spanish *baxo* and *dixo*).

3.13.1 General features of 16th century Spanish: morpho-syntax

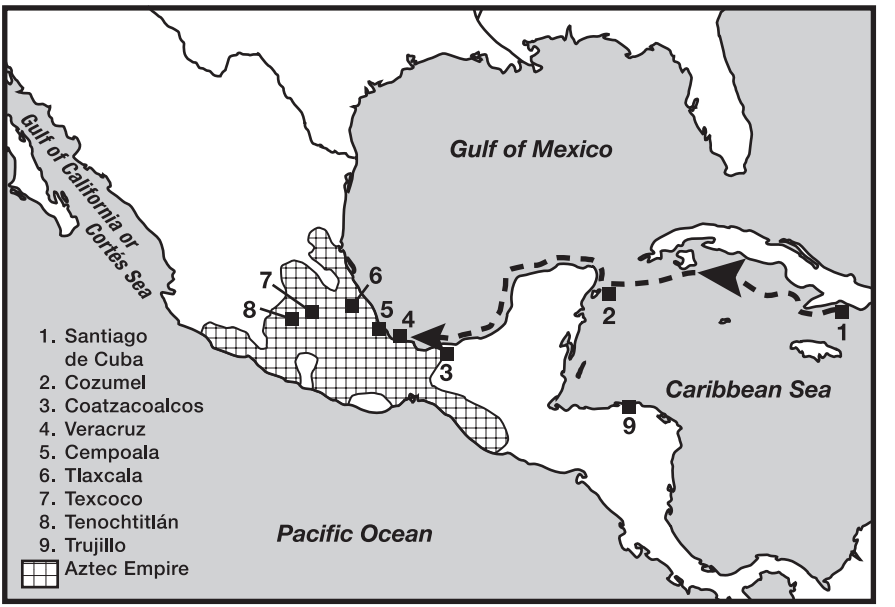
It is assumed that some of the most significant features of 16th century Spanish are present in all the areas of the Spanish-speaking world while some others are peculiar to New World Spanish. The primary traits that are general to Spanish and have evolved in the transition from late medieval to modern Spanish are the following: (1) The gender of MAR, PUENTE, CANAL and CALOR are no longer feminine. (2) The combination of indirect and direct object GELO has become SE LO in modern Spanish. (3) Reflexive, direct and indirect object pronouns have two positions: they go either before the conjugated verb or are attached to infinitives or gerunds. (4) Inter-dialectal use of 3rd person atonic pronouns was unstable; Castilian speakers used LE mostly for direct object masculine [+ animate] and another group used LO for the same category. At present, Latin American Spanish is mostly pro-etymological. (5) The pronoun of address *vos* was used for singular and plural [+ familiar] with identical verb conjugations. The New World innovation is known as *voseo*, a combination of forms of *vos* and *tú* for the extreme non-deference domain. (6) Use of *vuestra merced* (singular) and *vuestras mercedes* (plural) for second person was stable; there are however residuals of *su merced* in Mexican rural areas and also in South America. (7) Replacement of

vuestra merced with *Usted* and *vuestras mercede*s with *Ustedes* has been distributed along different domains; in modern Castilian the plural *Ustedes* indicates [+ deference], but it is ambivalent in the rest of the Spanish speaking Latin America since it can be used as plural for both formal and informal domains.

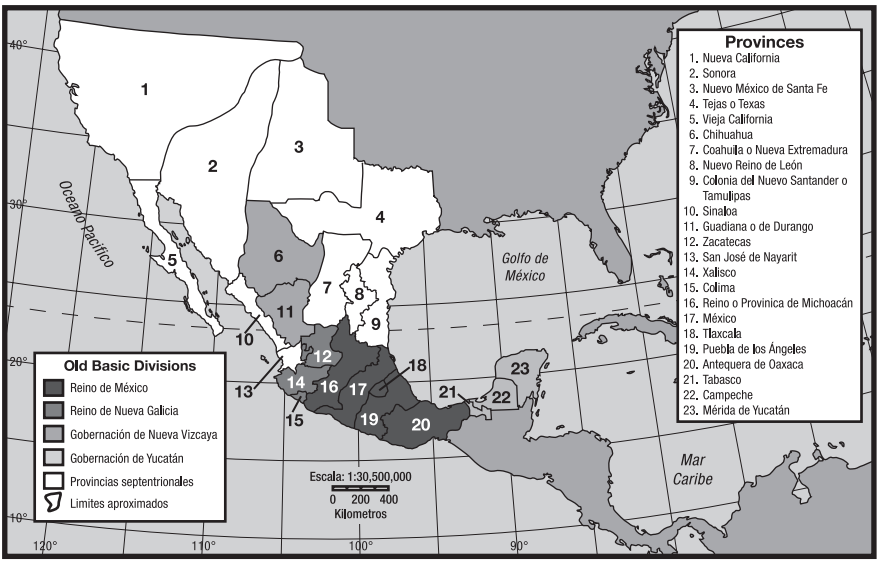
3.14 Conclusions

The origins of Mexican Spanish can be traced to the prose written by Hernán Cortés, a man of Old Christian lineage, active in military enterprises, and average education. His whereabouts in both the Old and the New World attest to the diversity of his regional contacts. His writings exhibit the features of late medieval Spanish, transitional choices, and lexical items from both Taino and Nahuatl. The contemporary scribes also exhibit mixed traits, similar to the Cortés' prose. Based on the data available in the *First* and the *Second Letter* this chapter has discussed features that belong to the general evolution of the Spanish language, changes in regional dialects and standard models, variations in 16th century Spanish, and variants that continued to be used in Latin America. The documentary evidence points to the existence of an earliest variety of Mexican Spanish or proto-Mexican Spanish that exhibited a combination of features derived from late medieval Spanish, Taino borrowings and Nahuatl loans (see chapter 4).

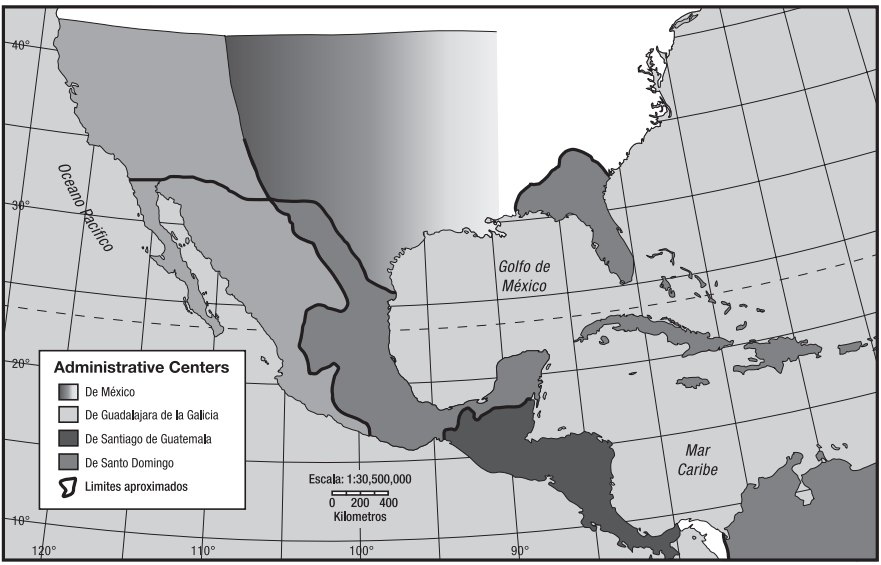
Features that were retained in Mexican Spanish and became components of the Mexican Spanish koine originated in the Central Highlands, particularly within the capital city, which was the Mecca of all social, commercial, and political activities since the early 1500's when Mexico City had more Spanish speakers involved in all kinds of pursuits. The magnificent capital turned into the centripetal force that attracted more immigrants from Spain and simultaneously the centrifugal force that propelled the dispersion of tendencies in the small surrounding cities and towns of New Spain. The spread of Spanish through koineization occurred before diversification via two simultaneous processes: (a) social stratification, and (b) vernacularization. Social stratification was first based on the caste system that was later transformed into a class system. The class system contributed to the distinction of hierarchical strata, which in turn established speech indicators that were reallocated along mostly rural or isolated spots when the normative style(s) finally took shape. The origin of residual variants that are herein considered popular (i.e. 'archaic') can be traced to the first part of the 16th century (e.g, *truje* < *truxe*, *vide* < *vide*), as exemplified in the *Second Letter* (1522).



Map 3.1: The Route of Hernán Cortés from Cuba to Mexico



Map 3.2: Old Division (Provinces and Kingdoms): 1550-1776. Source: *Nuevo Atlas Nacional de México* (2007). Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (Lámina H III 1A)



Map 3.3: Division in administrative centers, 16th-17th centuries. Source: *Nuevo Atlas Nacional de México* (2007). Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (Lámina H III 1B)

Map 3.4: The spread of *Tainismos* in the 17th Century. Source: Adapted from Mejías (1980: 156)