

King Felipe VI calls for greater promotion of Spanish in U.S.

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King of Spain Felipe VI offers a speech during the inauguration of the academic courses of Miami Dade College, Miami, Florida, on 17 September 2015. The royal couple of Spain arrived to Miami on their third day of official visit to the US. EFE/JuanJo Martin

Miami, Sep 17 (EFE).- Spain's King Felipe VI on Thursday called for greater efforts to promote the teaching of Spanish in the United States, as well as for its use in research and technology, and he appealed to the Spanish cultural heritage of this country to contribute to the building of a "more integrated and united" international community.

"Spanish - Castilian, as they like to call it in some regions of Spain and ... Ibero-America" - is a language that could be used "in more than 20 countries without it being foreign in any of them ... (but) it remains fascinating that it can sound right in a country which, in reality, has English as the national language," the king said in his first remarks delivered in Florida.

Faculty, administrators and students from Miami Dade College on a rainy Thursday afternoon at downtown Miami's Freedom Tower welcomed the king and Queen Letizia after their arrival in Florida and, in addition to presenting Felipe with the MDC Presidential Medal, they gave him the opportunity to speak at the school's fall commencement.

In a lengthy speech in his native language, the 47-year-old monarch hailed the importance of Spanish as a "substantial part" of the current United States and a "cardinal component" of its future, defending the existence of "a U.S. Spanish," with its own social and linguistic profile.

"Insofar as Spanish focuses its position on the United States, it acquires greater prestige in the world," he added, before going on to say that non-Hispanic children seem to be "clearly inclined" to learn the language but, to guarantee that Spanish continues to be a "useful and stable" tongue within the country, it must be promoted in school.

He therefore called for equipping students with this "linguistic instrument of international scope" with "greater attention" to bilingual instruction programs and for more efforts to ensure that in this country it goes from being an important language among technology consumers to being "a language used in the creation of technology," as well as in university research and training.

After proclaiming his confidence in the "hopeful future" of the Hispanic culture, Felipe closed his remarks with a call, in English, to take advantage of the culture shared by Spain and the United States with more than 20 other countries to contribute together to building "a more integrated and united international community with a greater spirit of diversity and solidarity."

More than 165,000 students from 185 countries are pursuing their studies at MDC, the institution that has acted as the host for the king and queen at the start of a visit to Florida focused on the recognition of the Spanish influence in the United States at the 450th anniversary of St. Augustine - a city the royal couple will visit on Friday - as the first European settlement on what is now U.S. soil.

Along those lines, after receiving a warm welcome from the 1,000 or so invited guests, the monarchs donated books and engravings by the painter Amado Gonzalez Hevia "Favila" on the life of Pedro Menendez de Aviles, the Spanish admiral who disembarked in 1565 in Florida and dubbed the region with the name of the patron saint of his birthplace.

MDC President Eduardo Padron, who called Felipe VI a leader of "a dynamic nation open to the world," acted as host at this first official event on the monarchs' agenda in Florida along with Miami Mayor Tomas Regalado, who later accompanied Felipe and Letizia on their visit to the emblematic Olympia Theater to preside at the Recent Cinema from Spain festival.