THE SINGULARLY STRANGE STORY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN PUERTO RICO[1]

Alicia Pousada

Introduction

The history of the English language in Puerto Rico is a decidedly peculiar one, characterized by incessant conflict and chaotic change. English has long been viewed on the island as both a tool of liberation and an instrument of oppression. Children are told from the earliest grades that English will be vital for their educational and professional advancement, while they are also cautioned that learning it too well may endanger their Puerto Rican identity. Fostering English is linked in the minds of many Puerto Ricans with assimilationism, while defending Spanish is the hallmark of nationalism. Consequently, overt popular support of English acquisition coexists with covert popular resistance, complicating even further the teaching task.

As is often the case in situations of language contact, attitudes towards the language have blurred together with attitudes towards the people who speak it and the government behind them. Despite the role of English as a language of wider communication on a global scale, in Puerto Rico it is most often associated with the United States and its policies. As a result, to study the history of English on the island is to study the history of Puerto Rico's uneasy relationship with the U. S. and its political, economic, and cultural implications.

In this paper, I will review the historical development of English on the island, from the earliest contact up to the present time. I will utilize historical and policy documents as well as

different studies which have been carried out regarding the use of English, its influence upon Puerto Rican Spanish, and popular attitudes towards its role in Puerto Rican society.

English in Puerto Rico prior to 1898

When the Spanish colonized Boriken, as the Taino Indians called Puerto Rico, they brought with them the Spanish language which soon displaced the Arawakan dialect spoken by the indigenous population. Initially, before the rabidly genocidal policies of the conquistadores took their toll upon the Tainos, the Spanish and Taino languages coexisted. We know, for example, that in 1493 the Spanish soldier Juan González Ponce de León helped Capt. Juan Ponce de León converse with the Tainos, and he was not alone in this ability. However, by 1530, most of the Tainos had succumbed to the rigors of forced labor or had become fluent in Spanish. With the exception of well-documented loanwords referring to geographical place names, features of nature, and foods, the Taino language vanished along with most of its speakers (Álvarez Nazario 1991).

The early Spaniards, primarily from the southern part of Spain and the Canary Islands, brought their own particular dialect of Spanish to the island. Over the centuries, in the hands of the criollo population and with the added influence of the African slaves and their different languages, this southern-flavored Spanish evolved into the well-known Puerto Rican Spanish of today. While this is not the place to go into the particulars of the linguistic features of Puerto Rican Spanish, it is safe to say that it was sufficiently distinct from the Castilian dialect to provoke certain negative and disparaging comments both from the Spanish colonial powers (who should have known better) as well as the more ignorant American powers who came later.

During the Spanish colonial regime, Spanish was the uncontested language of the island, although there were speakers of other languages like French, Corsican, Russian, and even Chinese present in the population. English was originally spoken by only a tiny portion of the elite who engaged in international travel and diplomacy.

Many people think that relations between the U.S. and Puerto Rico began in 1898; however, there was a long history of cross-influence. The earliest contacts go back to the 15th, 16th, and 17th centuries and the struggle to colonize North America, in which English-speaking colonists were concentrated in the northern areas, while Spanish-speaking colonists took over the southern lands. During the 17th century, in particular, North American contrabanders prowled the waters of the Caribbean and had unofficial dealings with the island of Puerto Rico.

During the French Revolution of 1789, soon after the establishment of the United States as an independent nation, the Spanish government found its Antillean ports to be under attack by French corsairs. In order to obtain necessary goods, it was forced to open Cuban harbors to neutral ships. Many of these were from the U.S. While Puerto Rico was not officially included in the arrangement, Spanish diplomats in the U.S. took advantage of the opening and began to grant permits to U.S. merchants to export food and munitions to Puerto Rico (Santana 1972).

In 1796, Spain was involved in a war with England which severely interrupted trade in the Caribbean and eventually led to several attacks on Puerto Rico in 1797. (Interestingly enough, during these attacks primarily native-born Puerto Ricans, not Spanish soldiers, were involved in the defense of the island, evidence of a growing sense of nationality even at this early date.) The resulting lack of basic provisions led the Spanish crown to decree an opening of trade with neutral nations in the Atlantic. Of all the neutral nations, of course, the one which was most able to take advantage of the situation was the United States. As a consequence, active trading between the U.S. and Puerto Rico ensued, and from that moment on, the U.S. became an increasingly important element in the Puerto Rican economy.

Beginning in 1797, U.S. ships arrived in San Juan bearing gunpowder, grains, and other provisions in exchange for sugar, molasses, rum, coffee, tobacco, leather, and other tropical products (Fernández Méndez 1969). Many of these ships served as intermediaries among the European nations, bringing goods as well as communications. Spain was less than thrilled by these developments, and in 1799 revoked the earlier decree; however,

numerous special permits made it possible for some U.S. ships to continue trading with Puerto Rico.

In 1815 the Real Cédula de Gracias permitted Puerto Rico to sustain economic relations with countries other than Spain, and attention turned naturally to the United States. The Cédula provided for a 15% tax on imports from foreign nations, and U.S. boats had to pay an additional 8 reales per ton for entry into Puerto Rican harbors (Cruz Monclova 1969: 81). Throughout the 19th century, commercial contacts between Puerto Rico and the U.S. grew. By 1898, the U.S. had become the primary trading partner for the island.

These economic ties also brought cultural links. American consuls and their families could be found in every port on the island. Wealthy American merchants purchased haciendas and formed small English-speaking enclaves in the countryside. The embryonic but not insignificant ruling class of the island began to send its sons to the U.S. for higher education, rather than to the traditional sites in Spain, France, and Germany.

From another perspective, many Puerto Ricans exiled from the island by the Spanish throne for subversive activity ended up in New York City, from which they (along with their Cuban counterparts) organized political activity aimed at the liberation of the Spanish colonies in the Antilles. Small groups of Puerto Rican agricultural workers and cigar makers emigrated to Florida and the southern states to work during this period. Presumably, all encountered English and were influenced by the language.

Thus, we see that the initial contact between English and Spanish did not occur with the invasion of U.S. troops in 1898, but rather had its roots nearly a hundred years earlier.

English in Puerto Rico after 1898

Once the U.S. took over Puerto Rico in 1898 under the terms of the Treaty of Paris, then the contact between the two languages abruptly intensified. At the time of the Spanish American War, Puerto Rico was just beginning to establish a school system, and illiteracy was high. The island had a population of about one million. Of these, 44,861 individuals (about 4%) were enrolled in 529 public schools and 26 private schools. Secondary education was unusual but could be obtained in Provincial Institutes or private

high schools. Spanish was the medium of instruction at all levels of the school system (Cebollero 1945).

The military government installed under the command of General John Brook was charged by the Carroll Commission of the U.S. Congress with the task of establishing universal, obligatory, and free education on the island. The recommendation was that the teachers be North Americans and that they teach in English (García Martínez 1976: 59). In 1899, General John Eaton, who had been Commissioner of Education in the U.S., arrived in Puerto Rico to take over educational affairs. His mission, quite overtly stated, was to promote Americanization via the English language. Among his proposals were the mandatory learning of English by all teachers, the preferential hiring of English-speaking teachers, and the examination of high school and normal school candidates in English.

Eaton resigned after only one year, but his replacement, Victor Clark, was of a like mind. He dismissed Puerto Rican Spanish as a "patois" and pushed for a total Americanization of the schools in order to inspire an "American spirit" among the "passive and malleable" teachers and students. His fear was that if a deliberate plan of Americanization were not followed, then the French and Spanish models of education current on the island prior to U.S. occupation would prevail, and pro-U.S. sympathies would diminish. Not surprisingly, during these first two years, there was considerable opposition to the American schools. Various insular commissions were sent to Washington to bring about an end to the military regime and its proposed school system.

In 1900, the Foraker Act was passed which established a civil government on the island and created the Department of Public Instruction as regent of education at all levels (Mellado Parsons 1979:26). A long string of contradictory language policies ensued as a result. We will look at each in turn.

The first Commissioner of Education was Martin Brumbaugh, who recognized that it would not be a simple matter to impose English when the national vernacular was Spanish. His policy was to continue the teaching of Spanish while extending the English language until it became the commercial and domestic language of the island. In his Annual Report (1901: 65), he predicted (erroneously, as we now know) that the process in Puerto Rico would take much less time than it had in earlier acquisitions of Spanish-

speaking territories by the U.S. To this end, he hired many North American teachers, encouraged the celebration of U.S. holidays, named schools after American patriots, instituted the raising and saluting of the American flag and the singing of the American national anthem in school.

In 1902, the Official Languages Act was instituted, which declared that in all insular governmental departments, courts, and public offices, English was to be regarded as co-official with Spanish, and when necessary, translations and interpretations from one language to the other would be made so that all parties could understand the proceedings. The law specified that these provisions would not be applicable to any municipal offices or courts or to the police force. The law, while not directed toward the classroom, provided legal justification for the increasing inclusion of English in the island curriculum.

At this time, Samuel McCune Lindsay succeeded Brumbaugh and continued the same practices. Among his accomplishments as Commissioner were the training of 540 teachers at Cornell and Harvard in 1904, the creation of the University of Puerto Rico, and the testing of teachers in English in order to determine hiring priorities. The English test provoked massive protests on the part of teachers. They refused to take it, and the Commissioner was forced to launch a major campaign in the press to counteract this resistance (Negrón de Montilla 1990 [1976]).

In 1904, Roland P. Falkner succeeded Lindsay as Commissioner of Education. His policy can best be described as out and out suppression of Spanish. In 1905, he put into effect the Philippine Plan, inherited from the policy used by the U.S. in the Philippines. The plan consisted of preparing special English training programs, summer institutes, and mandatory weekly English classes for Puerto Rican teachers, granting $10.00 per month raises to teachers who were qualified to teach in English, testing teachers in content areas via the English language, and obligatory annual testing of teachers in English, with the suspension of those who failed. Any teacher failing for more than two years could lose his or her teaching license.

The effect of this policy was deadly. Teachers were forced to simplify curriculum because of their own limitations in the English

language. They became dependent upon the textbooks and lost the creativity so vital to good teaching.

In 1907, Falkner's successor, Edwin Grant Dexter, continued with the Falkner Plan and dedicated special attention to the Americanization of the rural schools. In 1909 he mandated the teaching of reading in English in the first grade, leaving Spanish reading until the second or third grade. He claimed in his Annual Report of 1908-9 to have established English as the medium of education in all Puerto Rican schools.

At first, popular reaction to the Falkner plan was moderate; however, by 1911, Puerto Rican parents and teachers were reacting violently to what was seen as a cultural colonization of the island. Edward M. Bainter, Commissioner of Education from 1912 to 1915, was petitioned by the newly founded Puerto Rican Teachers Association to change the policy to include Spanish as the medium of instruction in the first grade, with a division of courses between Spanish and English in succeeding grades up to the eighth grade. All high schools would continue to be in English. Rural schools would be exempt from the policy and teach exclusively in Spanish.

The situation became so heated that the Puerto Rican Legislature had to intervene and create the special post of Supervisor General of Spanish to oversee the teaching of Spanish in the public schools. The annual English classes and exams for teachers were abolished. In 1913, the Puerto Rican House of Representatives presented a bill ordering the teaching of all courses in Spanish up to the eighth grade with English as a preferred subject, a proposal generated by the Puerto Rican Teachers Association. The bill was vetoed by the Puerto Rican Senate, but it served to raise public consciousness regarding language matters. A strong wave of nationalist sentiment swept the island. Pro-English advocates were labeled as assimilationists, and pro-Spanish advocates were seen as separatists. The teaching of English was viewed as a manifestation of U.S. imperialism and a threat to Puerto Rican identity.

In 1915, a new language bill was introduced requiring the use of Spanish in all schools and judicial proceedings. Various schools supported the new bill. There was even a general strike at the Central High in Santurce. Unfortunately, this bill too was vetoed,

and public discontent grew. As a result, newly-appointed Commissioner W.A. Barlow resigned, and Paul G. Miller took over in 1916 as Commissioner of Education. Miller had been a teacher in the early days of the U.S. occupation and also principal of the Insular Normal School, so he was well aware of the special problems of teaching English in Puerto Rico. Miller enacted a policy establishing Spanish as medium of instruction in grades 1 through 4, both languages in grade 5, and English as medium of instruction in grades 6 on with Spanish as a required subject (Gómez Tejera and Cruz López 1970: 167). Miller's motto was "conservation of Spanish and acquisition of English" with the goal of making children bilingual. This new policy was not approved of by the Teachers Association, which annually petitioned for Spanish as sole medium of instruction at the primary level. However, in 1917, the passage of the Jones Act granting U.S. citizenship to Puerto Ricans undercut the protest and made the Americanization efforts seem more plausible to many.

The next Commissioner of Education, Juan B. Huyke, was the first Puerto Rican to occupy this post; he was nevertheless exceedingly pro-American. His philosophy of education is clearly apparent in the following excerpt from a 1921 article in the *Revista Escolar de Puerto Rico:* "Las escuelas son agencias de americanismo en todo el país, y deben presentar el ideal americano a nuestra juventud" (Huyke 1929). Among his pro-English measures were regulations requiring the use of English in all official school documents, in extracurricular activities, and during visits by supervisors, a mandatory oral English test for all candidates for high school graduation, the ranking of schools by the students' English grades, the organization of English clubs and a penpal program, the prohibition of materials written only in Spanish, and the mandatory testing of teachers in English with the forced resignation of those who failed (Negrón de Montilla 1990 [1976]).

As might be expected, protests among teachers and parents mounted to such an extent that the Legislature was forced to pass a resolution requesting a study of the school system. The famous Columbia Study of 1925-6 recommended that English not be used as medium of instruction until the seventh grade. Huyke chose to disregard this recommendation, which he termed "la supresión del inglés" (the suppression of English), since he felt that it was

precisely during early childhood that bilingualism could most easily be achieved. Since Huyke had the support of then-Governor Towner, the Columbia Study's recommendations were not put into effect. Nevertheless, many noted Puerto Ricans like Juan J. Osuna, Epifanio Fernández Vanga, Francisco Vincenty, and even Spanish linguist Tomás Navarro Tomás publicly defended the use of Spanish as medium of instruction.

Amidst all the hullabaloo, Huyke decided not to continue as Commissioner, and José Padín was appointed in 1930. Padín had a long track record of defending Spanish. Back in 1916, he had been Commissioner Miller's assistant and had carried out a study of English teaching under the Falkner plan in which he demonstrated that after eight years of English instruction, students still did not master the basic skills in the language.

Padín's educational policy had Spanish as the medium of instruction through the eighth grade, and English as a special subject. In high school, English was the medium of instruction and Spanish, a special subject. His attitude towards the two languages can be seen in the following quote: "Yo creo que el inglés y el español pueden ser buenos vecinos en Puerto Rico si tenemos cuidado de que ninguno de los dos abuse del otro..." (Padín 1916:95). This policy was in effect until 1937.

In 1937, José M. Gallardo was named Commissioner of Instruction by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who encouraged him to make all Puerto Ricans bilingual. In his letter appointing Gallardo, Roosevelt expressed his views:

> It is an indispensable part of American policy that the coming generation of American citizens in Puerto Rico grow up with complete facility in the English tongue...Only through the acquisition of this language will Puerto Rican Americans secure a better understanding of American ideals and principles...But bilingualism will be achieved by the forthcoming generation of Puerto Ricans only if the teaching of English throughout the insular educational system is entered into at once with vigor, purposefulness and devotion, and with the understanding that English is the official language of our country (cited in Osuna 1975:376-7).

To accomplish this, Gallardo threw out the Padín policy and instituted elementary education in both English and Spanish. In 1941, the 6-3-3 reform was passed which provided for 6 years of elementary school, 3 years of junior high, and 3 of senior high. Spanish was then made the medium of instruction in the elementary schools, and English, in the junior and senior high schools.

Repercussions were not long in coming. The 1943 U.S. Senate Chávez Committee criticized the fact that after 45 years of U.S. domination, Puerto Ricans still could not speak English. As a result, Gallardo was formally admonished. In 1946, a bill was presented in the Puerto Rican Assembly to make Spanish the medium of instruction at all levels, with special attention to the teaching of English. This was vetoed by interim Governor Manuel A. Pérez. The bill was then submitted to President Harry S. Truman but was retained by the Department of the Interior until the deadline for approval had passed. A lawsuit brought by an interested parent to force the passing of the bill was received favorably by the San Juan District Court but overturned by the Supreme Court.

After all this, Gallardo resigned, and Mariano Villaronga was named Commissioner of Education in 1946 by President Harry S. Truman. From the outset, Villaronga declared his intent to institute Spanish as the medium of instruction at all levels with English taught as a mandatory second language. Because of his views, he was forced to resign in 1947.

In 1948, Luis Muñoz Marín became the first elected Governor of Puerto Rico, and reinstated Villaronga as Commissioner of Education in 1949. Villaronga immediately instituted Spanish as the medium of instruction for all levels of education on the island, with English as a special subject, the policy still in effect today on the island. (Somewhat tangentially, it is worth noting that Muñoz Marín, architect of the current commonwealth status, was very critical of bilingual/bicultural Puerto Ricans whom he described as:

> neither Puerto Ricans nor Americans, but merely puppets of a mongrel state of mind, susceptible to American thinking and proud of Latin thought...going to a singularly fantastic and painless hell...a foretaste of Pan Americanism (cited in Algren de Gutiérrez 1987:98)

It is also worth noting that he himself was quite proficient in English and was educated in the United States.)

With the founding of the Puerto Rican Commonwealth in 1952, there was no change in the educational policy. The Constitution of the Estado Libre Asociado makes only one explicit mention of language. In Article III, Section 5, under the requirements for legislators, it indicates the following: "Ninguna persona podrá ser miembro de la Asamblea Legislativa a menos que sepa leer y escribir cualquiera de los dos idiomas, español o inglés." This is rather curious, since one would expect it to say: "ambos idiomas" (both languages) and not "cualquiera de los dos idiomas" (either of the two languages).

In 1965, the Puerto Rican Supreme Court ruled that Puerto Rican courts must use Spanish in their judicial procedures. However, under U.S. law, all federal court and Grand Jury proceedings in Puerto Rico are carried out in English, with court interpreters provided for those individuals who are not able to represent themselves in English (see García Martínez 1976). This truly absurd situation sticks in the craw of many Puerto Ricans and is a constant linguistic reminder of just who calls the shots on the island.[2]

More recent developments with regard to English in Puerto Rico

As we have seen, over the years the constant changing of language policy, the unquestioned application of U.S. approaches to a Puerto Rican reality, and the intervention of partisan politics in the resolution of educational problems caused great instability in the school system and dissatisfaction among both teachers and parents in Puerto Rico. Because of the imposed nature of English in the schools along with the unresolved nature of Puerto Rican political status, the issue of bilingualism continues to be debated hotly on a daily basis on the island. (For some of the arguments involved, see Rúa 1987.)

Beginning with the 1967 plebiscite (boycotted by most independentistas) in which 60% favored continued commonwealth status, and 40% favored statehood, language issues have

consistently been intertwined with political status positions. Simplistically-speaking, statehood supporters have been identified with English; independence advocates, with Spanish; and commonwealth backers, with bilingualism. Yet the situation is far more complex, as seen in the 1991 struggle over what should be the official language of the island. The Official Language Act of 1902, which gave coofficial status to both English and Spanish, was revoked by the Partido Popular Democrático (procommonwealth) party, in what many observers saw as a political ploy to gain votes in the following elections (Vélez 1991, Schweers and Vélez 1992). The new law (Law No. 4) declared Spanish to be the sole official language, although it recognized the importance of English on the island and did not alter the language policy of the schools. Nevertheless, in January of 1993, when the Partido Nuevo Progresista (statehood party) came into power, Governor Pedro Rosselló, fulfilling a campaign promise, promptly revoked the "Spanish only" law, and signed into effect Law No. 1 which reverts back to the stipulations of the original 1902 law. He did so, interestingly enough, asserting that Puerto Rico was not a nation, a statement which caused even more uproar in the press.

The emotional pitch of the controversy about bilingualism reached new heights in 1997 with the introduction of Secretary of Education Victor *Fajardos Proyecto para Formar un Ciudadano Bilingüe* (Project to Create a Bilingual Citizen). This seven point plan proposed to:

1. Initiate reading in English by the second semester of the first grade.
2. Assign 90 minute blocks of time for Spanish and English classes at the intermediate level.
3. Utilize English for the teaching of science and math (on a voluntary basis).
4. Provide an English immersion program for high school students, along with writing clinics in Spanish for seniors.
5. Provide opportunities and incentives for English teachers to become certified.
6. Create a teacher exchange program to allow Puerto Rican English teachers to improve their language skills by teaching in the States and to bring U.S. teachers to Puerto Rico to aid island teachers in improving their English.

7. Provide technical assistance under the direction of district English and Spanish Supervisors who would work with superintendents and teachers to facilitate professional development and multidisciplinary integration.

The project (in particular points 1 and 3) met with considerable criticism from organized teachers' groups, professors of various universities, the Academy of the Puerto Rican Language, and the general public. It is too soon to judge its effectiveness, but it will be very interesting to see the results of any evaluations that are carried out.

Given the lack of a defined political status for the island and the constant struggle around that theme, it is to be expected that the language issue will continue to be agressively contested *ad infinitum*. Regrettably, most of the debate goes on without the benefit of solid facts on which to base opinions. Partisan politics rather than research are the primary motivators of the discourse regarding language on the island. This might give the impression that no research has been done regarding English in Puerto Rico; however, this is far from the truth. The problem lies more with the lack of dissemination of the results. Let us turn now to an examination of some of the research which has been accomplished and which lies for the most part unheeded in numerous official file cabinets.

Studies of the situation of English in Puerto Rico

The first official investigation into the teaching of English in Puerto Rico was done by José Padín in 1916 when he was Inspector General in the Department of Instruction. The sample consisted of eighth grade students who had experienced English as medium of instruction throughout their academic careers. The results indicated that most were almost totally deficient in English spelling and composition, and that their knowledge of English did not justify the time and effort dedicated to acquiring the language. Padín criticized in particular the practice of using U.S. texts to teach reading, the teaching of reading in English before reading in Spanish, and the teaching of English as if it were the mother tongue of the students. However, these results were ignored until Padín became Commissioner of Education and incorporated some of them into his own language policy.

The second study (already referred to) was carried out in 1925 by a group from Teachers College, Columbia University. The Columbia Study agreed with the overall goal of bilingualism, but differed with regard to the time when English teaching should begin and the methods to be used. The study investigated the length of time students stayed in school, the quality of English learned, and the content of the school curriculum over all the grades. The results indicated serious deficiencies in all areas, and recommendations were made to delay the teaching of English until the seventh grade. Since such findings were in opposition to the official position of the U.S. government and its Puerto Rican appointees, they were ignored by the Commissioner of Education.

In 1929, the Brookings Institute, headed by Victor Clark, carried out a study of the social and economic conditions on the island, with special attention to public education problems. The study concluded that English should be taught during the primary grades in order to benefit a population that tended to drop out of school at an early age. All conclusions were subjective and unsupported by statistical evidence.

Another study was commissioned by José Padín in 1936. William S. Gray, professor of Education at the University of Chicago, examined the linguistic policies of the island and concluded that while bilingual education was good, the mother tongue should be developed first during the initial three grades. He recommended continual evaluation of the language policy in light of the social and educational needs of the children.

Somewhat later in 1936, Michael West, professor of English, was invited by Padín to interview supervisors, teachers, and students. While his study was not statistical in nature, he made some recommendations regarding the teaching of English on the island. In his opinion, Puerto Rico was a monolingual nation with a need to learn English, and thus English should be taught as a foreign, rather than a second language.

During 1943-4, Professors Herschel T. Manuel and Robert Herndon Fife carried out a research project regarding the teaching of English in Puerto Rico which was completed in 1949 and published in 1951. This study concluded that while bilingualism was an admirable goal that should be pursued, the principal goal of the school should be the development of the Spanish vernacular.

Another important study of Puerto Rican education was carried out by the Consejo Superior de Enseñanza under the direction of Ismael Rodríguez Bou. It was commissioned by the Puerto Rican House of Representatives in 1958 and published in 1961. Professors Ralph B. Long and Rosemary Bennett worked on the part related to the teaching of English. They visited schools, interviewed teaching personnel, and analyzed teaching materials. Their basic conclusions were that: the teaching of English was a technical and pedagogical problem which should only be dealt with by competent personnel; the educational authorities should explain the psychological, pedagogical, and linguistic bases of the language policy to the public; the teaching of English did not justify the abandonment of Spanish teaching or teaching in any other area; not all individuals would achieve complete mastery of English; constant, unnecessary, unjustified, and sudden changes in the teaching of English should be avoided; the poor teaching of Spanish was affecting the acquisition of English; the schools of the day did not offer the best stimulus for learning either English or Spanish; the responsibility for the accomplishments and failures of the language policy should fall upon the educational leadership of the country; and finally, every child should have the opportunity to learn English, but gifted students should be given the means to develop their abilities further.

Mellado de Hunter (1961/1981) studied the use of anglicisms in the speech of professionals in Puerto Rico and found that engineers, lawyers, and doctors used the most anglicisms of all professionals, and teachers used the least. Huyke (1973) found that the field of communications was the most vulnerable to English influence while the world of the professions was most resistant.

In 1988, a study of college graduates on the island carried out by the Education Committee of the Association of Industrial Workers of Puerto Rico found that 34% of industrial job recruits had problems in English—oral communication, 27%; writing, 29%; and reading, 13%.

López Laguerre (1989) investigated attitudes towards bilingualism among 477 San Juan high school teachers of all subjects, 26% of whom considered themselves to be bilingual. Informants were asked to indicate on Lickert scales their degree of agreement/disagreement with 42 statements regarding bilingualism. Based on the overall profile of responses, the sample was divided

into three groups: those positively inclined toward bilingualism, those negatively inclined, and those holding neutral or undecided views. While there are far too many findings to comment on here, five merit our special attention, particularly with regard to their relevance to the teaching of English on the island.

1. The teachers solidly supported the presence of English in Puerto Rican schools, even though there was no unanimity regarding its status within the curriculum. The sample was divided among those who preferred English as a required course (38.9%), as an elective course (34.3%), and as part of a bilingual program where it would alternate with Spanish as a medium of instruction (20.2%). Only 19 individuals out of the 477 (3.9%) preferred to exclude English entirely. This indicates that English has an assured place within the schools of Puerto Rico, at least among these teachers.

2. On the other hand, the data revealed that the teachers did not consider Puerto Rico to be a bilingual country and did not believe that English was displacing Spanish. That is, English was seen not as a second language, but rather as an auxiliary language. This implies a need to rethink the prevailing technique of teaching English as if it were a second language.

3. The informants agreed that reading in English was their best developed skill and that their capacity to speak it was very limited. This finding corresponds perfectly with our experience at the University of Puerto Rico.

4. The teachers with the most contact with English and the U.S. sustained the most positive attitudes towards bilingualism and characterized themselves as more proficient in English. It is not known if the fact of being more proficient in English attracted them more to interaction in English or if the experience in English-speaking environments stimulates them to acquire more English. Probably there exists a symbiosis in which the two nurture each other. In any case, it is likely that such individuals have a more integrative rather than instrumental orientation toward English which has positively affected their attitudes and proficiency. A basic problem in Puerto Rico is that English is usually pushed as a means of getting jobs, and few students are able to conceive of the language in a humanistic manner.

5. Lastly, a large percentage of teachers in the sample were categorized as neutrals, that is, they did not respond strongly in either a positive or negative way. This could indicate a lack of consciousness or conviction with respect to bilingualism, or (thinking more optimistically), it could indicate that these individuals are open to new sources of information.

The Puerto Rican Census is another source of research data on language use. According to the Census, in 1910, of a total population of 781,600 people, only 28,262 or 3.2% claimed to speak English. In 1970, of a total of 2,053,859 people, 877,074 or 42.7% claimed to speak English. The 1990 Census reports that there are some 55,000 monolingual speakers of English on the island, among them military personnel and their families, North Americans who are life-long residents, Puerto Rican return migrants raised and educated in the States, immigrants from the British West Indies, and foreigners of all kinds who use English as a lingua franca. However, only about 50% of the total island population of nearly 3 million claim to speak any English, and less than 20% feel they can communicate effectively.

In 1990, the College Board reported that Puerto Rican high school students attained a median score of 390 (out of 800) on the English test, evidence of significant problems in managing the language.

Torruellas (1990) investigated three different private schools, supposed bastions of English teaching, and found that the level of mastery of English depended upon the social rank of the clientele of the particular private school. Only students in schools catering to the elite were actively striving to succeed in oral and written English. Students in middle class private schools had developed a sort of "counterculture" of resistance toward the language and its teachers. Attitudes ranged from apathetic to openly hostile, and ridicule and mockery were used to censure students who attempted to excel. As Schweers and Vélez (1992) comment with regard to these findings, it seems that Puerto Rican youths are being infected by the public ambivalence and confusion that surrounds language and culture issues on the island. They suggest reaching the children at an earlier age before such attitudes are fixed and providing sufficient information to counteract the confusing information found in the press.

Between October 1 and November 8 of 1992, the Ateneo Puertorriqueño carried out a survey of language use in Puerto Rico using the same rigorous sampling framework as the federal Census. Respondents were asked questions orally in Spanish or English as they preferred. The results of the study (which was not circulated widely) indicated that 97% of the sample members preferred that the government communicate with them in Spanish; 96% preferred that street names be in Spanish; and 95% favored Spanish for instructions on official forms. Only 20.6% of the respondents considered themselves to be bilingual, and only 25% rated their English as good or excellent. Interestingly enough, only 15% of the respondents considered that officializing English would bring economic progress to the island, and only 11% reported using English at work frequently.

Other interesting findings—93% of the sample answered that they would never give up the Spanish language even if the island became a state and even if English were established as the sole official language. 91% considered themselves to be Puerto Ricans first and Americans next. 87% claimed to feel strong patriotic attachment to the Puerto Rican flag. 95% felt a strong attachment to the island (Del Valle 1993).

It should be noted that these results were released to the press in January of 1993 by the president of the Ateneo, Eduardo Morales Coll, who felt that it would be useful in the official language debate then raging. It was given quite a bit of press at the time; however, El Nuevo Día also came out with a survey which claimed that the majority of Puerto Ricans supported a bilingual language policy. This served to squelch the earlier results, and nothing further was made of them.

Cuadrado Rodríguez (1993) carried out an investigation of bilingualism among professionals in the eastern region of Puerto Rico. One hundred and forty-five professionals in the areas of business administration, education, health, industry, and social services were asked to respond to self-rating questionnaires. The goal of the study was to determine if Puerto Rico was a bilingual country; what percentage of the professionals were receptive bilinguals; which language skills were mastered most; if learning English was regarded as important; and which languages should be official in Puerto Rico. Results indicated that although 69% of the

respondents never lived or lived for less than a year in an English-speaking country, 72% claimed to speak English, with skills self-rated from excellent to poor. In every professional area, a correlation was found between the percentage of English speakers and the salary earned. The greater the percentage of English speakers, the higher the salary. For example, in the field of health, 100% of the doctors spoke English while only 53% of the nurses did;. in social services, 80% of the federal workers spoke English as opposed to only 37% of the local social workers; and in education, 87% of the administrators spoke English, in contrast to only 53% of the teachers.

Overall, 26% claimed to have command of all four language skills. The greatest percentage of respondents commanding all four languages skills was in industry (45%), where being bilingual is generally a pre-requisite to employment. As might be expected, the skill most often mastered was reading (69% of the sample reported being proficient at reading in English). The least mastered was speaking (30%). Listening and writing came in 42% and 40%, respectively. This points once again to the prevalence of receptive rather than productive skills. The majority of respondents felt that their oral English was poor. Only 30% considered their oral abilities to be excellent or good.

Cuadrado Rodríguez found that 98% of his sample considered English to be important and necessary in Puerto Rico. Among the most common reasons given were: job opportunities, professional and personal improvement, the political relationship between Puerto Rico and the U.S., the role of English as the world's commercial and technical language, the utility of English in the tourist industry, and general cultural enrichment.

Despite their relatively high self-ranking, only 65% felt that most professionals in the eastern region were bilingual, with the highest individual assessment going to industry and the lowest to education. In terms of language policy, 65% favored the use of both languages in schools and government. More than three-quarters preferred that their children learn English over any other foreign language.

Also in 1993, an interfaculty project at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras campus, titled *Desarrollo de competencias lingüísticas del estudiantado de la UPR,* Río Piedras, investigated

the development of English skills among undergraduate students who were finishing their two-year English requirement (Arzán 1994). These students re-took the English as a Second Language Achievement Test (ESLAT) of the College Board in Puerto Rico, and their post-test scores were compared to their college entrance scores. The results indicated that while students finishing their second year of English improved their original ESLAT scores, those who were placed into the two lowest level courses during their first year (ESLAT scores lower than 440 or 580) did not attain the level of achievement that the lowest of the upper three courses began with (ESLAT score of 580 or higher). In other words, those who started out behind, were still behind at the finish line; in fact, they did not even catch up to where the high scorers had started. Despite two years of English study at the university level, the lowest level students were graduating with extremely limited English proficiency.

This sad state of affairs was attributed to the negative experiences and fossilized errors in English brought from elementary and secondary levels to the college learning experience, the lack of continuity in curriculum between the first and second years, and the failure of many students to take the first and second years of English in sequence. Typically students with low levels of English proficiency put off their second year of English to the bitter end, thus erroding any gains they may have made during the first year of study.

In order to address these issues, in 1994 another interfaculty group was formed at the University of Puerto Rico in Río Piedras to work on the development of an English Institute. As a means of ascertaining student needs, a questionnaire was administered to 252 students who were finishing their second year English requirement in the Faculty of Humanities. Results indicated that more than half of the students had postponed their second year of English, most had to read course texts in English, nearly 100% wanted to improve their oral communication skills in English, and there was nearly unanimous support for the idea of a special intensive English Institute to help students advance their English skills overall (Krasinski 1996).

As a pilot for a future English Institute on the Río Piedras campus, the experimental PICI project (Programa Integrado de

Competencias en Inglés) was launched in the fall of 1997. Preliminary results reported in December of 1998 indicated that the PICI students (who took first and second year English simultaneously) obtained significantly higher scores on the English Placement Test and the pre-TOEFL (Test of English as a Second Language) than a control group of regular students who had the same number of hours of English instruction with the same professors and materials but distributed over the regular sequence of two years, rather than one intensive year. The key factor in the PICI students' performance appeared to be the intensity of their English experience.

There are many other projects which could be commented on, and this review of research is far from complete. However, it should dispel the common misconception that no research has been done around the issue of English in Puerto Rico. It has most certainly been done; however, just as certainly, it has not been used to create sound language policy.

Implications for the future

As we have seen, over the past 100 years, a great deal of time and effort has been put into the project of making Puerto Ricans "bilingual". While language policies have come and gone, they have all had one common element—the desirability of learning English. And indeed this message has not been lost on the Puerto Rican populace. Study after study point to nearly unanimous public approval of this goal. Nevertheless, Puerto Ricans keep dragging their heels in terms of actually learning the language. Medina (1994) brings up the point that language imposition often causes an ethnic group to develop an unconscious and universalized imperative against learning that language, a notion introduced by Giroux in 1983 and further developed with particular application to Puerto Rico by Resnick in 1993. In other words, Puerto Ricans have resisted learning English as a means of retaining their native language and culture, which they perceive as threatened by the United States. Medina also compares Puerto Rico to countries such as Singapore and India where English was successfully implanted. She clarifies that these countries are linguistically heterogeneous and have acquired English for diplomatic, commercial, and technological communications both within and without the nation.

For them, English is an ethnically neutral language that has not involved any threat to their nationality. In Puerto Rico, language planning has been viewed with suspicion as an attempt to usurp the vernacular.

Resnick's (1993) analysis of the "motivated failure" of Puerto Ricans to learn English is very valuable. He argues that Puerto Rican society has correctly assessed that language spread may lead to language shift which may then lead to language loss. As Joshua Fishman has amply demonstrated (cf. Fishman 1985), this very same trajectory has been followed by countless societies, and this is what Puerto Ricans fear. While English is perceived as a passport to economic opportunity, it is also seen as the forbidden fruit which would deprive them of their Garden of Eden. To quote Resnick (1993:269), "Puerto Ricans have deterred the spread of English by preventing its penetration into the home, where natural rather than academic bilingualism could have developed. " (The one exception to this is, of course, cable TV which brings the "invader" right into the bosom of the family; however, it remains to be seen what effect this technological intrusion will have. Perhaps Puerto Rican society will find a way to circumvent this threat, as well.) In short, what Resnick presents (and applauds) is the fact that the capacity of Puerto Rican culture to resist the encroachment of English has been more powerful than the ability of language policy makers to bring about the planned spread.

Where does this leave English teachers on the island? Awareness of history and current trends helps. A willingness to work on the "negative motivation" of students is a must, as is approaching students with respect for the deep-seated feelings of ambivalence and resistance with which they have been raised. It is not enough to talk cheerily about amorphous future jobs and assume that the rest will take care of itself. English teachers in Puerto Rico, as competent bilinguals themselves, must serve as models of success to show students that one can master more than one language and live to talk about it—in fact, live rather well in a specially crafted bilingual and bicultural identity. Teachers must also be honest in dealing with some of the psychological dilemmas and rejection faced by individuals such as themselves in Puerto Rico.

Perhaps even more important than how English is presented is how Spanish is presented. The linguistic insecurity of speakers

of Puerto Rican Spanish has been documented in various studies (cf. Betancourt 1985). Among Spanish varieties, it is often disparaged, mocked, and devalued by other Hispanics, for reasons other than the number of English loanwords present. Many Puerto Ricans feel that they do not speak "good Spanish" or that others speak better Spanish (e.g. Spaniards, Colombians, Argentinians, etc.).

Yet, Spanish as a symbolic category is warmly embraced by all Puerto Ricans since it wraps up feelings of nationalism and identity, nostalgia for the past (albeit another colonial past), and connection to a larger pan-Hispanic reality. It serves as an organizing banner for a people whose own flag must hang subservient to that of the United States. Spanish is a worthy adversary for English given that both are, as Strauch (1992) points out, fully modernized, mature, standardized languages of wider communication through which modern scientific and technological knowledge can be imparted. The fact that most of this knowledge is transmitted in English in Puerto Rico has more to do with the monopoly U.S. publishers have on the Puerto Rican market than with any intrinsic limitation in Spanish itself.

English teachers in Puerto Rico need to elevate Spanish and proclaim its beauty and utility. When students feel proud and secure in their native language, they do not see the learning of a foreign language (even that of a perceived oppressor) as a threat. It is vital to note that French, Portuguese, Italian, and other languages (which do not enjoy the protected status of English) are readily learned in Puerto Rico at the university level. They are not seen as threats, and learning them represents an unmitigated plus for the individual, unencumbered by the political or ideological baggage which burdens English.

What is needed is greater collaboration between English and Spanish programs at all levels of the educational system to develop generic competencies in written and oral communication.[3] Once this is accomplished, then perhaps Puerto Ricans can shed their ambivalence regarding English, and see it as a healthy complement to their communicative repertoire.

NOTES

1. Revised version of paper presented at NEH Summer Symposium on Rethinking English in Puerto Rico, University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras, June 5, 1996.

2. Those readers interested in more details concerning the early language policies and the debates in the press accompanying each should consult Negrón de Montilla (1990 [1976]), Algren de Gutiérrez (1984), and Meyn (1983). See bibliography.

3. This was the driving force behind the Competencias Lingüísticas project sponsored by the UPR in Río Piedras. It can also be seen in the Reconceptualización del Bachillerato project now in progress campus-wide. It has further popped up in the recent American Council of Education/ Kellogg Foundation committees at work on university reform on campus.

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