

LA MANCHA DEL PLÁTANO:
THE EFFECT OF LANGUAGE POLICY ON
PUERTO RICAN NATIONAL IDENTITY IN THE 1940s

by

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Elise Marie DuBord 2004

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of

MASTERS OF ARTS
WITH A MAJOR IN LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES

In the Graduate College

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

2004

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to my husband, José R. Saavedra, who has always supported me in my studies and in my research his homeland of Puerto Rico. His insight has been invaluable to understanding many of the intricacies of language in Puerto Rico. I also thank Marcos López who graciously hosted me in his home while I conducted research at the University of Puerto Rico and my in-laws José A. Saavedra and Carmen Iguina who have always welcomed me in their home throughout all of my endeavors in Puerto Rico. My parents, Dick and Pat DuBord, have consistently supported my linguistic adventures and education. Gloria Prosper Sánchez at the University of Puerto Rico was very helpful in orienting me to resources at the university. I also benefited from conversations about language issues in Puerto Rico with Roamé Torres González at the University of Puerto Rico. At the University of Arizona, I am indebted to Elizabeth Oglesby who got me on the right track during the first semester of my master's degree. And special thanks to the members of my thesis committee for their continual support and insight: Glenn Martínez, Ana Maria Carvalho, and Richard Ruíz. The research conducted for this thesis was supported through funding from the Center for Latin American Studies and the Social and Behavioral Sciences Research Institute of the University of Arizona.

DEDICATION

Para Pepo

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables.....	6
Abstract.....	7
Chapter 1 – The Historical Context of Puerto Rican Language Policy	8
Chapter 2 – Language and Identity	25
Chapter 3 – Public Debate on Language Policy Conflict in the 1940s.....	44
Chapter 4 - Conclusions.....	82
Appendix.....	90
References.....	92

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 <i>Official Language of Instruction in Puerto Rican Public Schools</i>	21
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ABSTRACT

The present work seeks to identify possible sources of the persistent link between the Spanish language and national identity in Puerto Rico. By examining mass media discourse in the 1940s as a turbulent period of language policy conflict between the Island and the U.S. federal government, I suggest that the federal imposition of language policy without the consent or approval of local politicians or educators was influential in the construction of national identity that included language as a major defining factor. Local elites reacted to the colonial hegemony by defining Puerto Rican identity in opposition to American identity. The construction of identity in 1940s is characterized by a cultural conception of nation that redefined national symbols (such as language) in social rather than political terms in order to avoid disturbing the existing colonial hegemony.

**Chapter One:
The Historical Context of Puerto Rican Language Policy**

*Esa lengua, con la mancha del plátano, es la
que estamos defendiendo.*

- Rubén del Rosario (1958)

Many Puerto Ricans, such as philologist and defender of the Puerto Rican dialect of Spanish, Rubén del Rosario, take pride in the unique flavor of Puerto Rican Spanish. On the Island, the phrase *mancha del plátano* refers to the dark stain resulting from touching green plantains, but more importantly, alludes to having *jíbaro* roots in a shared cultural history that "stains" or marks Puerto Rican identity. By evoking imagery of the "*mancha del plátano*" in relation to Puerto Rican Spanish, del Rosario evokes the common belief that unity in the defense of Spanish is an identifying factor of Puerto Rican national identity.

I became interested in the issue of language and identity in Puerto Rico during the two years I studied at the University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez. Personal observation led me to believe that Spanish is a significant identity marker for Puerto Ricans on the Island. When asked about the possible implications of becoming the fifty-first state, many Puerto Ricans mention their fear of losing linguistic and cultural autonomy, in addition to other popular national symbols such as the possible loss of their own Miss Universe candidate and Olympic team, among many other national traits and traditions that Puerto Ricans recognize as threatened through U.S. annexation. Puerto Ricans' seemingly uniform pride in national heritage, apparently regardless of political affiliation, race, class, etc. fascinates me. This was remarkable to me because I believe that it contrasts sharply with the United States' more heterogeneous sense of nation and the implications of what

means to be a member of the nation. Although Puerto Rico is not a politically independent country, we can describe it as a nation using Ronald Schmidt's (2000) definition that explains that a nation is "a collection of people who share a sense of collective identity – as belonging together in some deep political sense – in distinction to the members of other national collectivities" (p. 42). This definition neatly defines Puerto Rico as a nation due to its markedly distinct collective identity in opposition to U.S. identity and nation.

The persistent presence of English affects the entire population, from Spanish monolingual housewives that must deal with English labeling when grocery shopping to college students faced with the challenge of taking classes that are taught in Spanish with textbooks in English. The language issue has greatly impacted Puerto Ricans and their educational institutions during the past century of the Island's relationship with the United States. Many people have received extensive English language education or have spent significant amounts of time in the United States and are rightly proud of their high level of bilingualism. From a young age, children study English in school and imitate English in their play; perhaps an indication of their early recognition of the desirability of learning English.

Many generations have debated the language issue and its relevance to the lives of students and the general population has been persistent throughout the past century. Numerous studies have shown that the Spanish language is a central component of Puerto Rican national identity. For practical purposes, we can look at Nancy Morris's (1995) study that names four common traits that Puerto Ricans use to define themselves as

members of this island nation: language, history, customs and traditions, and personality traits. This common perception of national identity begs to ask the question: Where does the definition of “*puertorriqueñidad*” or “Puerto Ricanness” originate? What were the cultural, historical, social, political, and linguistic factors that have led to the current definition of national identity that is closely linked to language?

These questions have been the impetus for the research leading up to and the writing of this thesis. Why is Spanish one of the most prominent factors that repeatedly surfaces when Puerto Ricans define their national identity? Has the threat of the imposition of English, both past and present, resulted in a link between national identity and Spanish that makes Puerto Rico distinct from its Spanish speaking neighbors? Recent studies on language loyalty and identity in Puerto Rico conducted in the last decades of the twentieth century confirm the privileged role that Spanish plays in defining the nation (for example Barreto, 1998 & Pousada, 2000). Yet, as Jorge Vélez (2000) confirms, the persistence of English in a secondary role does not currently threaten the role of Spanish as a dominant language on the Island. How did the two languages come to be relatively comfortable bedfellows? The population has become consistently more bilingual, with Spanish securely maintaining its place as the primary language and English as the secondary language. All of these issues fuel the continual debate on language policy, language pedagogy, official language, and other pragmatic language issues.

My research focuses on the historical period of the 1940s as a possible site of the production of national identity that relies on language for two reasons. First, it was the

last decade when school policy favored English over Spanish as the instructional medium. Second, it was an important transitional period when Puerto Rican nationals were beginning to gain more political autonomy than they had enjoyed during the first decades of the twentieth century. In the 1940s, Puerto Rican Commissioners of Education were becoming more lenient in their policies toward Spanish in the public schools. During this period the general public was increasingly aware that using English as the language of instruction in the schools had failed to create a bilingual population and had also failed to adequately educate Puerto Rican students. Pupils were receiving sub par education because language had proven to be a barrier to academic subjects.

This thesis outlines the history of language policy and its implementation in Puerto Rico by examining the political and pragmatic motives that have contributed to current policy and attitudes. My goal is to explore possible sources of the current language attitudes and how language ideology intersects with the definition of national identity. I will examine the print media, including but not limited to, newspapers, magazines, academic journals, educational reports, and anthropological investigations, as primary sources from the 1940s. These materials will be analyzed chronologically, tracing popular, political, and academic opinions about both English and Spanish in this important transitional period. This section will demonstrate how reactions to federally mandated language policies and U.S. language ideologies defined the Spanish language as a central component of Puerto Rican national identity. Defining language as a cultural trait was part of a broader social movement that articulated a unique Puerto Rican identity in opposition to American identity.

Popular debate on language policy in public schools at the time of the shift from English to Spanish medium education serves as a productive site of discourse on national identity based on language. The central question that has guided my research in Puerto Rico has been to determine to what extent opposition to the use of English in the public schools in the 1940s was a catalyst for the creation of a Puerto Rican national identity based on Spanish language heritage that has persisted to the present. My hypothesis is that local resistance to public school language policy that favored English over Spanish as part of a curriculum that promoted Americanization, led to the popular stance that Spanish was, and continues to be, an essential component of Puerto Rican national identity as defined in opposition to U.S. identity. I suggest that opposition to a distinct identity (American identity in the case of Puerto Rico) is necessary for the construction of a linguistic ideology that names language as a defining characteristic of national identity¹. Currently, little literature exists that explicitly connects language policy with national identity in Puerto Rico in the first half of the twentieth century during the Island's first five decades as a U.S. territory. The objective of my historical sociolinguistic research is to contribute to the existing literature on Puerto Rican national identity in relation to language by identifying the context of the link between the Spanish language and Puerto Rican national identity in the decade before language policy was reversed and Spanish was reestablished as the medium of instruction.

¹ Louis-Jean Calvet (1998) suggests that language conflict is inherent to multilingual situations.

Historical Context of the First Half of the Twentieth Century

The 1930s was the most radical national period of the twentieth century in Puerto Rico. Under the leadership of Pedro Albizu Campos the Nationalist Party became disillusioned with the possibility of Puerto Rico gaining independence through electoral means. Albizu then moved toward a position of armed revolution in order to achieve independence; the Party formed the Liberation Army of Puerto Rico that same year.

In 1935, the insular police assassinated four nationalists who were preparing to participate in a pro-independence assembly at the University of Puerto Rico in what would later be known as the Río Piedras Massacre. In the months that followed, two young nationalists attempted to assassinate Colonel Elisha Riggs, Puerto Rican chief of police, in retribution for the Río Piedras Massacre. Their failure resulted in their own deaths at the hands of the police. Albizu and seven other nationalist leaders were arrested and tried on charges of conspiracy to overthrow the government and as authors of the attempted assassination of Colonel Riggs. While their case was in appeals in 1937, a protest march was organized in Ponce. Police attacked the demonstrators, resulting in the Ponce Massacre (also known as the Palm Sunday Massacre), which killed approximately twenty people and injured two hundred (López, 1989). The Nationalist leaders were convicted and imprisoned at the Atlanta Penitentiary until 1943. Albizu did not return to Puerto Rico until 1947. The void of leadership in the Nationalist Party in the 1940s contributed to what Jaime Ramírez-Barbot (1973) refers to as the “quiet decade” from 1939-1949.

In 1938, Luís Muñoz Marín formed the *Partido Popular Democrático* (Popular Democratic Party - PPD) that sought to turn the Island's political focus away from the issue of status and work toward greater socio-economic changes while settling into an intermediary status between statehood and independence (Ramírez-Barbot, 1973). The PPD gained momentum in the 1940s and Muñoz Marín counted on the support of Presidents Roosevelt and Truman in gaining the right for Puerto Ricans to elect their own governor. In 1944, Roosevelt recommended that the U.S. Congress amend the Jones Act of 1917 and grant Puerto Ricans local elections, but Congress did not accept his recommendation. Two years later, the Puerto Rican legislature passed a bill that would allow for a plebiscite, a popular vote that would allow Puerto Ricans to determine their political status. Governor Tugwell, the last in a line of American mainlanders to occupy the post, vetoed the bill. Tugwell resigned in 1946 and President Truman named Jesus Piñero as his replacement, the Island's first Puerto Rican governor, but still a political appointee. Congress finally passed the Elective Governor-Act in 1947 and the following year Puerto Ricans elected Muñoz Marín as governor, with the power to appoint the members of his own cabinet, including the Commissioner of Education, a position that controlled the issue of language policy in the public schools.

Precisely when the Island was in the process of gaining the right to elect their own governor in 1947, Albizu returned to the Island and resumed his role as the president of the Nationalist Party, but the Party never regained the popular support that it garnered in the 1930s perhaps due to their increasingly violent tactics. In the following years the Nationalists resumed violent acts in protest of U.S. control of the Island. On October 30,

1950, the Nationalist Insurrection broke out across the Island, and most notably, Nationalist Party members attacked the governor's mansion in San Juan. The same year, Nationalists unsuccessfully attempted to assassinate President Truman at the Blair House in Washington D.C. and in 1954, they attacked the U.S. House of Representatives, wounding five members of Congress.

The decade of the 1940s saw increasing political autonomy in Puerto Rico that culminated in the creation of the *Estado Libre Asociado* in 1952 (or Commonwealth as it is referred to in English). Resistance to English language policy in the public schools drew to a close during this period as locally elected politicians enthusiastically supported Spanish as the medium of instruction in the schools. Previous policy resulted from U.S. mandated language policies in the public school systems as part of a program for Americanization (Negrón de Montilla, 1971). Yet the general public overwhelmingly supported language policy that favored Spanish. Continual resistance to English as an imposed medium of instruction in the schools cemented the commonly shared identification of Spanish as a part of Puerto Rican national identity.

While the 1940s were more politically moderate than the 1930s, Puerto Ricans were still adamant that Spanish should maintain a privileged status over English on the Island, yet there was little opposition to the actual teaching of English as a secondary language. This reflects the broader political climate of the 1940s that pushed for the creation of a politically autonomous state under the protection of the United States. There appears to be an attitude of accommodation of American culture and language in the 1940s, albeit secondary to Puerto Rican culture and language. The end of the 1940s

saw more Puerto Ricans occupying political posts, especially within the Department of Education. There were also extensive reports conducted by visiting scholars that showed that there was no pedagogical basis for previous language policies in the public schools that had favored English over Spanish. Both U.S. and Puerto Rican educators agreed that Spanish should be the primary language of instruction and that English should be limited to higher grade levels.

As soon as the first Puerto Rican governor was locally elected, a Puerto Rican Commissioner of Education was appointed who had the power to reverse language policy. In 1949, Spanish was designated the language of instruction at all levels, including higher education for the first time, and English was officially taught as a foreign language. Attitudes about language throughout the 1940s appear to reflect both growing understanding of the pedagogical reasons for using Spanish and the application of increasing autonomy through local election of high ranking officials.

Language Policy in Puerto Rico

Perhaps the only issue in Puerto Rican politics during its past century as a United States territory that has been more constantly debated than the use of English and Spanish is the definition of the Island's political status: whether it should become independent, maintain commonwealth status, or achieve statehood. Obviously, language policy and political status have been intimately interconnected in the discussion on Puerto Ricans' role as American citizens and the possibility of achieving statehood. Both Erwin Epstein (1970) and Edith Algren de Gutiérrez (1987) agree that the issue of language in Puerto

Rico will be resolved only when the Island's status is defined as either an independent nation or as an equal state in the Union. The remainder of this chapter will outline the political events and the resulting language policies in Puerto Rico from 1900 to 1950 that were crucial in the construction of current language ideologies.

On the eve of the United States' involvement in Puerto Rico, Spain granted Puerto Rico the right to elect an autonomous local government under the protection of the Spanish crown (Scarano, 1993). In 1898, just two months after the first Puerto Rican elections, U.S. forces landed in Puerto Rico, ending the Spanish American War. That year, the United States established a presidentially appointed military government that controlled the Island until 1900. These first two years of U.S. presence in Puerto Rico marked the beginning of changes in language policies. Francisco Picó (1987, p. 197) explains that the general population had an immediate interest in learning English as the quantity of advertisements for English publications and classes demonstrates. Algren de Gutiérrez (1987) credits the initial acceptance of English in government and in the schools to the popular belief that the military government was a transitional form of governance that would eventually lead to Puerto Rico's annexation and greater local autonomy that would restore Spanish as the language of government. Nonetheless, the first military governor, General George Davis' reaction to Puerto Ricans' ability for self-governance was quite the opposite. Citing the population's low educational levels, he states, "Puerto Rico [...] is not and probably never will be independent" (Negrón de Montilla, 1971, p. 15).

Two years after the U.S. occupation of Puerto Rico, the Foraker Act of 1900 dissolved the military government and established a civil government with a governor, upper house of representatives, and six commissioners (including the Commissioner of Education), all of whom were presidential appointees. The lower house of representatives would be popularly elected, but had less authority than the upper house. The first Commissioner of Education, Dr. Martin Brumbaugh faced the challenge of educating a population that was nearly 80% illiterate and where 92% of school-aged children did not attend school (Osuna, 1949, p. 341). In addition to these dismal figures, the military government's report indicated that Puerto Ricans did not speak pure Spanish but rather a "patois...with no literature and little value as an intellectual medium," fostering the belief that it would be just as easy to educate the people in English as it would be educate them in Spanish (Osuna, 1949, p. 342). The U.S. occupying government devalued the Puerto Rican dialect of Spanish as a means of justifying English language policy in the schools. Thus, from 1905 through 1917, English was the medium of instruction in all grades and Spanish was to be taught as a separate subject, as if it were a second language. The exception is found in the period of 1900-1903, when Spanish was the medium of instruction in elementary schools and English was the language of high school instruction (Algren de Gutiérrez, 1987, p. 30). Aida Negrón de Montilla's (1971) detailed study of the seven politically appointed Commissioners of Education during the first three decades of the 20th Century shows that this language policy was based not on pedagogical principles but rather represented a push from Washington D.C. and U.S. political appointees to promote Americanization and the

English language as part of an agenda to assimilate Puerto Ricans, despite the high cost of providing inferior educational opportunities to students.

The Jones Act of 1917 granted Puerto Ricans United States citizenship², and changes in terms of autonomy over local issues; the governor and two commissioners (including the commissioner of education) were still presidential appointees but the newly formed Senate and House of Representatives would be locally elected. The Puerto Rican Congress had to still submit itself to the power of veto in the executive branch by the governor, and ultimately by the U.S. president. It was virtually impossible for the Congress to pass a bill that was not favored by U.S. political appointees. All legislative attempts to establish Spanish as the medium of instruction in public schools were easily overruled. The pattern of oscillation between different language policies continued until 1949, when Puerto Ricans gained the power to elect their own political officials. It should be noted that language policies in the period between 1915 and 1949 favored the teaching of Spanish, especially in the primary grades³. This was perhaps due to a shift toward the nomination of Puerto Rican appointees to the position of Commissioner of Education as opposed to the previous trend of appointing educators from the mainland. Under Commissioner José Padín, Spanish was briefly established as the only medium of instruction in the elementary schools from 1934-37. This policy was not favored by U.S. officials, and ultimately led to Commissioner Padín's resignation and a direct letter from

² The U.S. Congress granted American citizenship to all Puerto Ricans without conducting a popular vote on the Island to determine if the people favored U.S. citizenship. Puerto Ricans had six months in which to denounce their U.S. citizenship and maintain the somewhat ambiguous status of Puerto Rican citizens, an option that less than three hundred Puerto Ricans chose (Scarano, 1993).

³ All instruction except for English classes were conducted in Spanish at the elementary level from 1934-1937 and 1942-1949.

President Franklin Roosevelt to José Gallardo, the Commissioner that replaced Padín, about the importance of the English language for Puerto Ricans in their role as American citizens (Rodríguez Pacheco, 1976, p. 131). President Roosevelt instructed the following in his letter:

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. It is the language of our Nation. Only through the acquisition of this language will Puerto Rico-Americans secure a better understanding of American ideals and principals. Moreover, it is only through thorough familiarity with our language that the Puerto Ricans will be able to take full advantage of the economic opportunities which became available to them when they were made American citizens [...] American citizens of Puerto Rico should profit from their unique geographical situation and the unique historical circumstance which has brought to them the blessings of American citizenship by becoming bilingual. (Leibowitz, 1970, p. 226)

Commissioner Gallardo interpreted Roosevelt's call for bilingualism as meaning that English should be included to a greater degree as the medium of instruction and he implemented a transitional language curriculum in grades three through eight, with each successive year including greater amounts of English instruction.

Gallardo's transitional bilingual model was not successful and English was gradually faded out of the lower grades until the policy was made official in 1942 that English would only be taught as a separate subject in the elementary grades and that English would be used at the high school level as the language of instruction. In 1949, the first locally elected governor, Luis Muñoz Marín, appointed Mariano Villaronga as Commissioner of Education, who immediately reversed the language policy and established Spanish as the medium of instruction in schools and reassigned English the status of favored secondary language in school curriculum, a policy that has persisted

until the present (Rodríguez Pacheco, 1976). Table 1 summarizes official language policy for the language of instruction in public schools.

Table 1

Official Language of Instruction in Puerto Rican Public Schools

Year	Spanish	English	Both
1900-1905	Grades 1-8	Grades 9-12	
1905-1915		Primary language (all grades)	
1916-1934	Grades 1-4	Grades 6-16	Grade 5
1934-1937	Grades 1-8	Grades 9-12	
1937-1942	Grades 1-2	Grades 9-12	Grades 3-8
1942-1949	Grades 1-6	Grades 9-12	Grades 7-8
1949-present	Primary language (all grades)	Secondary language (all grades)	

(Based on Leibowitz, 1970 & Algren, 1987)

Since 1949, when Spanish was officially declared the language of instruction in the public schools, every generation has continued to debate certain aspects of the language issue although school language policy has essentially remained the same. In 1963, the debate centered on whether or not accredited private schools had the right to teach in English (Epstein, 1970). In 1965, the Supreme Court determined that English could not be favored over Spanish in the commonwealth court system (Vélez, 2000). In 1991, the Puerto Rican legislature declared Spanish as the sole official language, only to see the law reversed two years later when both English and Spanish returned to share co-official status, as had been originally established in 1902 (Barreto, 1998). According to polls, co-official status was preferred by a majority of the population although this status

does not reflect the reality that only half the population is bilingual to different degrees and the great majority prefer to use Spanish in almost all contexts (Schweers & Hudders, 2000). In 1992, the pro-statehood government unsuccessfully promoted the creation of bilingual public schools (Barreto, 2001).

After Spanish regained its privileged position in the Puerto Rican educational system, the presence of English as a secondary language has gained greater acceptance. We cannot ignore the influence of English on the Puerto Rican population at present day, which reaches the Island via numerous sources such as: business, education, cable television, print media, music, movies, the internet, etc, in addition to high levels of geographic mobility between the Island and the continental United States. The English language seems to have achieved a greater level of acceptance during this period of passive U.S. influence than it achieved during the years of mandatory language instruction in the public schools in the first half of the twentieth century⁴. Puerto Ricans have become increasingly bilingual and the presence of English has become more pervasive in a multiplicity of social domains. Yet, highly proficient bilinguals still name Spanish as a defining identity marker, while accepting that speaking English does not diminish their Puerto Rican identity (Pousada, 2000). Despite the acceptance of English as a secondary language and a language of wider communication, Puerto Ricans on the Island are often critical of monolingual English speaking Puerto Ricans in the continental

⁴ We must also consider worldwide trends that have caused the spread of English, not only in U.S. territories such as Puerto Rico, but around the globe. Spolsky (2004) rejects the notion of a conspiracy of managed linguistic imperialism as causing the spread of English, and suggests that the spread of English is part of the broader process of economic imperialism and globalization. Speakers of central and super-central languages (i.e. Spanish), tend to learn other languages that are further up on the language hierarchy (i.e. English).

United States and returned migrants who have limited mastery of the Spanish language. While English is wholeheartedly included in the Island's linguistic repertoire, those who do not speak Spanish are excluded from being fully participating members in the Puerto Rican collectivity on the Island. In other words, English is welcome on the Island if, and only if, it does not displace Spanish.

Reaction to U.S. mandated English language policy appears to be one of the grounding pillars of why Spanish has become a central tenet of Puerto Rican identity. This position has persisted despite the fact that Puerto Ricans are becoming bilingual at rates that have continued to rise. Although English is no longer the primary language of instruction in the public schools, it is taught as a second language that is widely accepted as a necessary tool for academic and economic advancement. There is a general perception that bilingual individuals have greater employment and educational opportunities and therefore have a greater probability for upward mobility. Perhaps we can say that the most effective language policy for encouraging Puerto Ricans to learn English was through the construction of economic benefits that rewarded bilingual individuals through greater social and economic mobility, a mechanism that is fundamental to the global spread of English.

Many people think that Puerto Rico hovers between the developed and underdeveloped world, between the United States and Latin America, not only in a geographic sense but also in terms of economics, culture, and language. Puerto Rico defies easy definition because of its unique relationship with the United States. It is unique because it has resisted the establishment of English under U.S. domination, and

has maintained Spanish as the dominant language at all levels in a way that places such a Hawaii, the Southwest, and Guam have not done. Both geographic and demographic factors have contributed to the maintenance of Spanish on the Island; but what accounts for the strong sense of national identity that rests on the Spanish language, yet appears to be increasingly tolerant of English?

This introductory chapter has outlined the historical context of the first half of the twentieth century in Puerto Rico and the resulting language policy in the public school system. Chapter Two will examine the construction of national identity and the role that language plays in creating a unified sense of nation. Chapter Three will analyze publications from the 1940s (print media, academic journals, anthropological studies, and educational investigations) in order to reconstruct how the Puerto Rican population perceived the role of language as a marker of identity. Emphasis will be placed on the elite construction of national identity that used the Spanish language first as a symbol of political nationalism and then as a symbol of cultural identity. Finally, I will draw conclusions on the implications of early twentieth century language policy on current issues of language and identity in Puerto Rico.

Chapter Two: Language and Identity

*Cada pueblo lleva en su lengua el alma de
su raza.*

- Antonio S. Pedreira (1934)

Nancy Morris (1995) defines national identity as “an individual’s sense of belonging to a collectivity that calls itself a nation” (p. 14). While Puerto Rico cannot be classified as a politically independent nation, its people base their concept of identity on membership in what they perceive to be a distinct nation. Morris uses this definition to describe a perception of collective identity that distinguishes between “us and them” in Puerto Rico. Morris affirms that for Puerto Ricans, language is a defining element of national identity that makes them Puerto Ricans in a cultural sense, while being citizens of the United States in a political sense. Language contributes to the distinction between *us* (Puerto Ricans) and *them* (Americans) which in turn shapes Puerto Rican national identity. This chapter will examine the implication of linguistic ideologies, the concept of minority languages in the Puerto Rican context, the construction of national identity, and finally, identity and language policy. The literature review in this chapter serves as a theoretical framework to analyze the primary sources that will be discussed in Chapter Three.

Linguistic Ideologies

Susan Gal and Judith Irvine (1995) state that the daily use of “linguistic form” reaffirms language as a defining cultural trait, thus creating “linguistic ideologies” that are an index of socially constructed identities (p. 973). In this way, language reflects

broader cultural traits of a particular group or linguistic community. The Spanish language is shaped by a linguistic ideology in Puerto Rico because it is perceived as a marker of cultural and national identity.

Kathryn Woolard's (1998) discussion of one's mother tongue as a measure of the speaker's true self applies to Puerto Ricans' general perception of the role of the Spanish language. Although approximately 53% of the Spanish speaking population in Puerto Rico is bilingual and 96% believe that it is important and useful to learn English (Torres González, 2002, p. 312 and p. 317), there is a persistent ideology that speaking Spanish is an integral part of Puerto Rican identity. Despite the fact that half the population speaks English and almost the entire population supports the use of English, a sense of "true self" as part of national identity is linked to speaking Spanish. Virtually all the literature on the Puerto Rican language issue recognizes the general population's acceptance of the benefits of learning English as a second language (Algren de Gutiérrez, 1987; Flores-Caraballo, 1991; Barreto, 2001; Pousada, 2000; & Vélez, 2000). Yet, the Spanish language is the cultural aspect that Puerto Ricans most often use to define their national identity *vis-à-vis* American national identity as numerous studies have demonstrated (see for example Fonfrías, 1966; Flores-Caraballo, 1991; Berrios Martínez, 1997; Barreto, 1998, Clampitt-Dunlap, 2000; Pousada, 2000; & Vélez, 2000)⁵.

As Woolard (1998) explains, speaking a particular language does not in itself lead to the construction of identity; rather the ideologies that interpret language use lead to

⁵ This is not necessarily the case for Puerto Ricans in the United States and returned migrants in Puerto Rico, whose linguistic experience has restructured the relationship between language and identity. See Ana Celia Zentella (1990 & 1997) for a more complete discussion.

social constructions based on language. Spanish and English are both spoken in a tremendous variety of countries and by people that associate themselves with many different national identities and cultures. In Puerto Rico, the construction of national identity based on language is the result of a collective production of attitudes that use language as an identity marker in opposition to Anglophone America, regardless of bilingual proficiency. Glenn Martínez (Forthcoming) explains that language ideologies are used not only by the powerful, “but also [...] by the powerless in order to challenge the perpetuation of asymmetric power relations” (p. 9). While we cannot define Puerto Rico as completely powerless in its relationship with the United States, the ideology of language as a characteristic of national identity contests the asymmetrical relationship of power by constructing what Amílcar Barreto (1998) calls an elite construction of *counter-hegemony* that will be discussed below. It is important to recognize that the layers of hegemonic power in Puerto Rico include both the federal government as a colonial power over the Island and local elites that act as a hegemonic force on the Island but are excluded from the federal hierarchy⁶.

William Safran (1999) states, in his study of the role of language in constructing national identity, that language is an “important instrument for protecting collective identity and communal cohesion,” but it does not always result in “adopting a particular political ideology” (p. 80). In Puerto Rico, Spanish is a trait that defines in-group identity, a cultural definition that is shared across sectors with different political orientations to the Island’s relationship with the United States. Furthermore, Safran

⁶ Puerto Rico sends a Resident Commissioner to Washington that represents a “*voz sin voto*” (voice without a vote) in Congress.

explains that in Latin America in general, nationalism does not appear to be clearly linked to language partly due to Spanish's status as a world language and majority language in many countries (1999, p. 81). Yet, Ofelia García (1998) cites the use of Spanish as an important Latin American ethnolinguistic cultural marker in opposition to English speaking America (p. 230). Puerto Rico acts as a counter example to Safran's assessment of Spanish-speaking Latin America because of the perceived threat of loss of language under possible annexation on the Island. Puerto Rico probably also demonstrates the clearest example of opposition to English language imperialism in Latin American due to the Island's political relationship with the United States and its history of federal control over language policy. It has never been clearly established what the official language would be if Puerto Rico were to become the 51st state or whether the U.S. congress would place a condition on statehood based on English language competency or use (Clampitt-Dunlap, 2000).

Minority Languages

Both Nancy Dorian (1999) and Harald Haarmann (1999) explain the intricate connection between language and ethnic identity for minority languages; although it is difficult to strictly classify Spanish as a minority language in Puerto Rico. Nancy Hornberger (1998) explains that minority languages are defined to a greater extent in terms of power rather than number. Yet this distinction has two applications in Puerto Rico. In many ways, Puerto Rican Spanish cannot be defined as a minority language, due not only to its international status and shared linguistic heritage with a variety of nations,

but also because of Puerto Ricans' ability to use Spanish in virtually all public and private communicative domains on the Island. On the Island itself, Spanish is not a minority language, but it can be considered a minority language based on its subordinate relationship to English in the United States in general. More than 90% of Puerto Ricans prefer Spanish over English in a variety of communicative contexts such as with family, on the job, in the community, and in consuming local media, with slightly lower numbers for reading books and watching television, where Spanish was preferred 87.3% and 78.4% respectively (Torres González, 2002, p. 311). Despite the dominant role of Spanish in inter-island contexts, the issue of cultural autonomy and identity is intimately connected to language maintenance in Puerto Rico in a way that is similar to ethnic groups that speak minority languages. Under Puerto Rico's current status as a commonwealth, the Spanish language is not threatened by U.S. presence or language policy.

As Joshua Fishman states, the "economic sphere" is often the entry point of a dominant language over minority language groups (1999, p. 158). This has certainly been the case in Puerto Rico as U.S. economic and cultural influence has led to an increase in English lexical penetration (Fayer, 2000) and an ever increasing need for English proficiency across the business sector, but Spanish, as a primary language, is not currently under any real threat (Clampitt-Dunlap, 2000; Vélez, 2000). As García explains, the official language policy of bilingualism in Puerto Rico does not represent the reality of an overwhelmingly Spanish-speaking population who wants to maintain the Spanish language and who uses English in relatively few social contexts (1999, p. 239).

Amílcar Barreto (1995) and others (Clampitt-Dunlap, 2000 & Vélez, 2000) demonstrate that the Spanish language as the vernacular has never been seriously threatened on the Island. This is due, in part, to Puerto Rico's geographical separation from the mainland and a lack of significant native-English speaking immigration (Barreto, 1998, p. 86). In addition, mainland Americans have never comprised more than 4% of Puerto Rico's population (Vélez, 2000, p. 16).

Minority populations often push for a positive orientation toward language as a means of establishing the language's legitimacy for a particular population and also integrating it into the local construction of identity as a means of safeguarding the persistence and vitality of language. Language can serve to unify an ethnically diverse population, yet the imposition of language can destroy existing minority languages, especially where a dominant language is imposed on the minority language group. Preserving minority languages is often coupled with the preservation of a minority group's identity as a separate individual, ethnic, cultural, or national identity. The case of Puerto Rico is an interesting example in this regard because the entire population which is a numeric majority on the Island but a numeric minority in relation to the United States can be classified as speakers of Spanish as a majority *and* a minority language, depending on the context of the definition. Language maintenance can serve to preserve group identity, although a distinct language is certainly not a prerequisite to a distinct group identity.

Elites and the Construction of National Identity

In her book, *The Movement against Teaching English in Schools of Puerto Rico*, Edith Algren de Gutiérrez (1987) documents the rhetorical fight Puerto Rican politicians waged against English in the schools from the time of U.S. occupation until Spanish was reestablished as the medium of instruction in 1949. Algren de Gutiérrez's focus on the official political discourse in the language debate outlines politicians' rhetorical tactics as part of the larger movement for political autonomy. She addresses the idea that the Puerto Rican legislature's attempt to change school language policy in 1934 contested U.S. authority. This became part of a larger movement to define Puerto Rican national identity that continued through the 1940s. Between 1920 and 1940, the increasing rhetorical conflict surrounding language policy led to an anti-American discourse that categorized the Spanish language as a symbol of Puerto Rican national identity. Algren de Gutiérrez's analysis of the political motives and strategies in the fight against English in the schools provides a historical framework of concurrent political and cultural movements in relation to the language debate.

Barreto's (1998) study of the role of language in the development of national identity in the creation of nationalist movements demonstrates that the defense of Spanish was an attempt by local elites, such as politicians and teachers, to defend their privileged status from the threat of Americanization policy. Elites are defined in this context as not only the bourgeoisie, but also any group that controls access to "vital social and economic resources" such as education (Barreto, 1998, p. 142). Algren de Gutiérrez further explains that Puerto Rican politicians used language as a "wedge" between Puerto Ricans

and Americans as a means of maintaining their role as political translators between mainland officials and the Island's general population (1987, p. 142).

Members of the lower classes also find refuge in nationalist movements because they offer protection of their social status and their vulnerable access to resources and employment (Barreto, 1998). Barreto (1995) uses a "social friction" model to explain the initial rise in nationalism in the 1930s in Puerto Rico due to economic conditions during the Depression, but, he qualifies, this does not explain continued nationalist sentiment of the 1940s during relative economic prosperity. I will discuss below how the nationalist movement of the 1930s shifted to a nationalist movement centered on a cultural construction of national identity in the populist period of the 1940s. While the Creole elite articulated the tenets of Puerto Rican national identity that glorified the image of the idealized *jíbaro* (peasant) where the Spanish language figured prominently, they gained the support of all socioeconomic classes that felt that their cultural tradition was under siege (Guerra, 1998).

While elite groups are generally the origin of nationalist movements, they need the support of various social strata (Barreto, 1998). In Puerto Rico, local elites constructed a myth of national identity around the homogenous idea of the "*gran familia puertorriqueña*" (great Puerto Rican family) that erased racial and ethnic differences and served to unify the population across socioeconomic classes (Duany, 1996). Jorge Duany explains that elites were able to manipulate the formation of Puerto Rican national identity through their control of "literary journals, newspaper articles, political machines, and cultural institutions" (1996, p. 259). Chapter Three will examine the production of

the myth of national identity related to the issue of language policy through mass media and academic publications in the context of the historical and political framework of the 1940s.

Barreto (1998) focuses on three factors that have forged a connection between language and nationalism in Puerto Rico: 1) language serves as a social marker that distinguishes between in-group and out-group which elites utilize to maintain their social status, 2) elites' defense of linguistic nationalism is a reaction to the discriminatory practices from the English-speaking dominant society, and 3) these "peripheral elites"⁷ use the local political stage as a means for institutionalizing their own "counter-hegemony" that reinforces cultural uniqueness (p. 7-8).

According to Barreto (1998), peripheral elites use the local political stage as a means for institutionalizing their own counter-hegemony that reinforces cultural uniqueness in response to the dominant society's ideology. The articulation of national identity for both the dominant and subordinate sectors is culturally based and thus language is a possible site for the expression of nationalist sentiment. Elites use language in order to maintain the cultural and political hegemony that their privileged position on the top of the local social hierarchy allows them. Through this counter-hegemony, elites enforce language maintenance yet have the opportunity to learn the dominant language that allows them greater mobility within both the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic structures. The subaltern elites in peripheral societies have both the privilege and the burden of learning the dominant and subaltern languages. By acting as cultural go-

⁷ Peripheral elites are defined in this context as creole leaders in the colonial hierarchy that have financial and social status within the periphery (Puerto Rico), but not in the metropolis (United States).

between, elites control mass media and their population's relationship with the dominant society.

Finally, Barreto (1998) concludes that nationalist movements are most often formed and articulated by elites who are dissatisfied by the limitations they encounter in the face of the hegemony of the dominant society. Elites cling to nationalist rhetoric when their upward mobility is threatened or when they are targets of repression or discrimination. In this way, attempts by the dominant society to suppress nationalist movements will likely create greater hostility between peripheral elites and the dominant society that ultimately perpetuates nationalist movements and separatism. The following will discuss two periods when elites used different kinds of national rhetoric to promote the unified construction of national identity.

In the 1930s, Pedro Albizu Campos's nationalist speeches were influential in establishing political traditions based on Puerto Rican symbols that promoted patriotism in the creation of national identity in Eric Hobsbawm's sense of invented political tradition (Duchesne Winter in Duany, 1996). Albizu repeatedly spoke out against the presence of English as the language of instruction in public schools saying that English "*desorienta y embrutece a nuestra juventud, en grave perjuicio de nuestra personalidad cultural*" (disorients and makes brutish our youth, gravely harming our cultural personality) (Albizu Campos, 1979, p. 64). Albizu's numerous references to the imposition of English in Puerto Rico classified the English language as a threat to cultural and national identity and firmly placed Spanish as an integral element of the founding myth that defined Puerto Rican nationhood. Albizu feared cultural imperialism as

represented by replacing Spanish with English in the schools was detrimental not only to the learning process, but also to the local concept of national identity. The Spanish language was representative of the Iberian tradition that Albizu embraced as integral to Puerto Rico's national identity by reinforcing its historical and cultural connection with other Latin American nations.

Nationalist rhetoric changed during the populist period of the 1940s as Muñoz Marín emerged as the leader of the *Partido Popular Democrático* (PPD). The 1940s readapted the nationalist symbolism of the previous decade as part of the founding myth of national identity by distancing themselves from the more radical political nationalism that was violently repressed during this period (Duany, 1996). In the 1930s, the nationalist movement led by Albizu Campos used language as a symbolic marker of politically conceived national identity. National sentiment shifted in the 1940s as elites strove to remove language from its political context and establish Spanish as a part of a culturally constructed vision of national identity. Duany (1996) explains that in the populist period of the 1940s where the PPD⁸ clearly opposed political nationalism, "Puerto Rican identity was essentially constructed from above, in a paternalistic fashion" (p. 260) in an attempt to unify the people of Puerto Rico under a cohesive construction of identity.

⁸ Luis Muñoz Marín, leader of the *Partido Popular Democrático*, sought to distance the party's political platform from the debate on the Island's political status. Muñoz Marín himself had previously advocated for Puerto Rico's independence, yet in the 1940s the party became increasingly popular and powerful by making political status a non-issue and focusing on economic development.

National Identity and Language Policy

Joshua Fishman (1968) makes a distinction between *nationalism* and *nationism* where by the former corresponds with a sociocultural entity and the latter with a politico-geographical entity. Based on this distinction, the construction of Puerto Rican identity most clearly falls under the categorization of nationalism that is based on a myth of shared sociocultural homogeneity, despite its insular situation and numerous attempts at state formation that have relied on both sociocultural and geographic characteristics. Nationism promotes the construction of nationality within an often heterogeneous population as a means of unifying a diverse population that may maintain alliances with distinct nationalities within the borders of the nation. It could be argued that Puerto Ricans are unified under a sense of nationism based on its geographic borders as defined by its insular condition and its relatively autonomous government; yet political uniformity, (nationism) has not caught up with ethnic identity (nationality). Fishman (1968) clarifies that nationalism and nationism are often out of synch in their efforts to construct a unified sense of identity, although both entities often strive to move toward the other.

C. William Schweers and Madeleine Hudders (2000) explain that Puerto Ricans have a complex relationship with the English language because of its perceived threat to their identity and also to the status of the Spanish language. Because support of increased English in Puerto Rico is often associated with the pro-statehood political position, it is often rejected by those who reject the current relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States or favor continued commonwealth status. Yet, paradoxically, people from all socioeconomic groups and political orientations recognize English as a useful tool for

success in education, politics, and business and its presence as a secondary language is generally accepted and deemed to be desirable. Alicia Pousada's (2000) study of language attitudes of Puerto Rican bilinguals demonstrates that their ability to speak English does not diminish Puerto Ricans' sense of identity, while the ability to speak Spanish was closely related to family and emotions. For the informants in Pousada's study, English is acknowledged for its usefulness as a means of communication in professional and other situations, while Spanish is associated with personal expression and Puerto Rican identity. Eliot Flores-Caraballo (1991) echoes these findings in his study of Puerto Rican attitudes to English-language media. He concludes that Puerto Ricans want to learn English because it is perceived to be a useful skill, but he found marked resistance to the idea of American cultural and linguist assimilation.

Roamé Torres González (2002) promotes a three-pronged approach to his concept of liberal nationalism and its promotion of language in Puerto Rico that includes: 1) the development and preservation of Puerto Rican cultural and language, 2) the recognition and development of cultural and linguistic diversity, and 3) the need for greater political and cultural autonomy in order to achieve the first two to goals (p. 6). The author rejects the notion that globalization has made nationalism and national identities obsolete. He contends that the way in which distinct populations organized themselves effects the cultural, political, and economic structure of any society, although globalization has resulted in new social constructions and the hybridization of nations. Torres González uses Pierre Bourdieu's (1991) model of *linguistic capital* to demonstrate that while English is assigned tremendous linguistic capital in Puerto Rico, Spanish not only retains

linguistic capital, but is also firmly rooted as the Puerto Rican vernacular. In this sense, both English and Spanish are social resources that are valued by all socioeconomic groups despite unequal access to English⁹. Torres González explains the fact that Spanish has retained its value as linguistic capital is demonstrated by the elites' valuation of standard Spanish in addition to standard English.

Language often becomes part of identity, especially when identity or language is threatened. When U.S. policy forced English on the Puerto Rican population through education, there was an organized resistance against learning English and the cultural imperialism that it represented. The second half of the twentieth century has given Puerto Ricans greater cultural and national expression than they had under the U.S. controlled governmental institutions in the first half of the century. Pride in Puerto Rican symbols and the Spanish language represents an articulation of a distinct Puerto Rican identity. Earlier suppression of these identity markers appears to have given them greater significance today. At the same time, although English is acknowledged as a useful tool in professional and educational spheres, it does not represent part of the individual or societal construction of identity for the vast majority of Puerto Ricans. The initial imposition of English has increased the sense of a distinct Puerto Rican national identity that names language as one of its most important markers.

⁹ Torres González (2000, p. 321) notes that according to a 1994 Census, people in urban areas are twice as likely to speak English as rural residents. Bilingual ability is also economically stratified; with every increase of economic bracket, bilingualism also increases (94% speak English for those earning over \$50,000). The lowest income brackets have slightly higher levels of bilingualism than the groups that are immediately above them (43% speak English from those earning less than \$1,000 and 36% for those earning between \$2,000 and \$2,999), but are still significantly lower than higher income brackets. English proficiency is frequently associated with possibilities for upward mobility.

Stuart Hall explains that in post-modernity the concept of identity is not static because individuals are influenced by contradictory cultural sources (1995, p. 598). The multiplicity of cultural influences (which obviously includes language) continually (re)shapes individual perceptions of identity. Hall further states “All modern nations are cultural hybrids” and that groups use “symbolic markers” to differentiate themselves from other groups within the complexity of diverse societies (1995, p. 617). In the example of Puerto Rico, language is often used as an in-group marker. Speaking a distinct language identifies individuals as members of a specific group which can lead to common sense of solidarity between in-group members.

According to Dennis Ager (2001), identity motivates language policy as a means of creating or maintaining the idea of “nation”. While Puerto Rico has never been an independent nation, its language policy reflects political trends that have both pushed for more autonomous governance (i.e. the rejection of English as the medium of instruction in schools) and have also shown allegiance to the United States (i.e. co-official status of English and Spanish). Both of these trends are part of the construction of national identity that Benedict Anderson (1991) refers to as part of an “imagined community” that forges alliances between different groups. Anderson defines nation as a cultural construction that is part of social and historical processes that are significant for both the individual and collective society.

As Ager (2001, p. 39) suggests, the process of rejecting a colonially imposed language policy can establish language as a national symbol. As we have seen in the case of Puerto Rico, the rejection of English as a primary language has reaffirmed a separate

Puerto Rican identity, while the persistence of English language policy and as a secondary language acknowledges Puerto Rico's enduring relationship with the United States although English's status as a co-official language is largely symbolic because of the overwhelmingly Spanish dominant population. While opposing political parties have differed on the degree of necessity of English on the Island, all parties have used Spanish in the debate over Puerto Rico's political status as a defining element of Puerto Rican identity. Language and nationalism, in and of themselves, are not necessarily politically charged (Ager, 2001). Yet, language was and continues to be a political issue in Puerto Rico, as demonstrated by how language policy was couched in terms of political autonomy in the 1940s and how the three current political parties continue to use the language issue in defining the Island's political status.

As has been suggested by Richard Ruíz (1990), the promotion of an official language should not be "harsh" or threatening. Both Hilda Torres Ayala (1991) and Sharon Clampitt-Dunlap (1995) echo this sentiment, suggesting that Puerto Rico must choose its own language policy rather than suffer under an imposed policy that ultimately leads to greater resentment. This was demonstrated by nationalist reactions to the threatening imposition of language in the first half of the twentieth century with the case of English medium instruction in the schools. Puerto Rico did not accept the imposition of English in public schools, which in turn led to a construction of and adherence to an identity based on Spanish language and heritage that rejected Americanization policies. In the past half century, it appears that because Spanish has been the medium of instruction in schools and English is taught as a secondary language, there is greater

acceptance of English and half of the population is now bilingual to differing degrees (Torres Gonzalez, 2002), yet English does not figure into the general concept of identity for the majority Puerto Ricans on the Island, with the possible exception of Puerto Ricans who have spent extensive amounts of time living in the United States.

Jorge Vélez (2000) explains that Puerto Rico is unique in its relationship with the United States in that it has not succumbed to language shift as has been the norm for other non-English speaking populations that have been subject to U.S. domination. Vélez addresses the question of why Spanish remains the dominant language in Puerto Rico and has not suffered under U.S. linguistic hegemony. Vélez critiques the lack of scholarly attention to language maintenance and explains that it is most often seen as “the absence of language shift” (p. 8) rather than an active process of maintenance. He outlines five possible situations where language maintenance is possible: 1) the minority language has status and prestige, 2) minority speakers are a numerical regional majority, 3) the minority language is used for formal communicative functions, 4) the minority language is used for wider communication, and 5) geographic or social isolation of minority language speakers. Vélez proposes the need for a model for languages in contact that would predict either shift or maintenance.

Based on the economic, political and educational domination of Puerto Rico (especially in the first half of the twentieth century) Vélez (2000) contends that language shift or retention of both Spanish and English initially appeared inevitable. He cites the following reasons Puerto Rico has maintained Spanish as the vernacular: few students actually received intensive English education; politicians, teachers, and parents supported

Spanish maintenance; pronounced pride in Hispanic heritage; a sense of language awareness; and the demographic situation. Since the U.S. occupation of Puerto Rico, the Island has been densely populated and communities have always been in contact with each other due to relatively short distances between population centers. The Island is obviously geographically separated from the U.S. and there were very few English-speakers that came to the Island after the occupation. The biggest Anglo influence on the Island has come from returned migrants, the majority of whom also speak Spanish¹⁰. Immigrants have predominantly come from the Dominican Republic and Cuba, which has only contributed to the maintenance of Spanish.

Attempts at Americanization of the schools, and of the general population, only appears to have increased Spanish language loyalty and has helped define ideas of Puerto Rican nationalism and ethnicity. Vélez (2000) contends that this well defined sense of “Puerto Ricanness” is the result of a lack of a numerically significant English-speaking population, the fact that Spanish is a world language, the Island’s political autonomy, and the relatively peaceful relationship with the U.S. that has contributed to the maintenance of Spanish. Vélez defines the linguistic situation of Puerto Rico as being composed of a monolingual population with a large number of bilingual speakers.

The implication of Vélez’s discussion of language maintenance in Puerto Rico is that numerous factors are simultaneously at play in language maintenance. These factors include: political autonomy, attitudes toward the minority language, linguistic make-up of

¹⁰ Puerto Rican monolingual English speakers raised in the United States have faced significant discrimination on the Island due to their limited Spanish fluency. For more information on returned migrants and identity see Hernández Alvarez (1976), Zentella (1990), Flores (1993), Torre (1994), and Duany (2003).

the population, and geographic relationship to dominant language. It is interesting to compare the case of Puerto Rico with Hawaii, Guam, or the Philippines, other island nations that have faced U.S. linguistic domination that has seriously threatened the survival of minority languages. In the other islands there was a greater English-speaking population and the minority languages were not international languages. Clampitt-Dunlap (1995) explains that in Puerto Rico, intellectuals spoke Spanish and fostered nationalist movements that used Spanish as a nationalist symbol, while in Guam English was not perceived as a threat to national identity. Comparing the cases of island nations that have been subject to U.S. occupation could be an interesting point of comparison for studying language shift and maintenance as well as basis for developing a model that examines the factors that affect languages in contact.

This chapter has examined the connection between language and national identity, demonstrating that the elite in Puerto Rico were influential in constructing ideologies that used Spanish as a central factor in defining national identity to first promote political independence and later to promote associated autonomy with the United States. Resistance to language policies that favored English in the first half of the twentieth century has created an enduring link between language and national identity in Puerto Rico. The following chapter will closely examine mass media and academic publications from the 1940s that were influential in the elite construction of national identity that has persisted into the twenty-first century.

Chapter Three: Public Debate on Language Policy Conflict in the 1940s

A un pueblo así no se le puede arrancar su idioma como se arrancaría de raíz una planta en tierra inculta.

- Luis Muñoz Morales (1946)

The issue of language policy in the 1940s in Puerto Rico was marked by a call for cultural and linguistic preservation against the perceived threat of the English language and the continual pedagogical debate of how to best teach English in the schools that included the degree of English proficiency or bilingualism that was necessary. This chapter will discuss print media and academic publications from the 1940s as a site for public debate on the language issue and negative reactions to U.S. mandates. I argue that forced implementation of English medium instruction in the public schools led to greater self-identification with the Spanish language as a cultural and national trait for Puerto Ricans that served as a wedge that in part, caused Puerto Ricans to define their national identity *vis-à-vis* American identity.

As discussed in Chapter 1, during the first half of the twentieth century, the president of the United States appointed the Puerto Rican Commissioner of Education, who in turn mandated the public school system's language policies. Commissioners were threatened with losing their appointments when Washington disagreed with policies that favored Spanish over English as was the case with Commissioner José Padín in 1934. It was not until 1948 when Puerto Ricans elected their own governor, Luis Muñoz Marín, whose Commissioner of Education, Mariano Villaronga, was finally able to implement a

language policy that established Spanish as the language of instruction at all levels and English as a preferred subject.

Leading up to this important change in policy, the 1940s were a critical time in the development of language policy and public opinion regarding the role of language in public school education. Not only were the 1940s the last decade when school policy favored English over Spanish as the instructional medium but it was also an important transitional period when Puerto Ricans were beginning to gain more political autonomy than they had enjoyed during the first decades of the twentieth century. Puerto Rican Commissioners of Education were becoming more lenient in their policies toward Spanish in the public schools and it was widely recognized that using English as the language of instruction in the schools had failed to create a bilingual population and had also failed to adequately educate Puerto Rican students. Pupils received a sub par education because language had proven to be a barrier to other academic subjects.

I will examine public discourse throughout the decade, but focus more specifically on two historical events that threatened the limited local authority that Puerto Ricans had over the language issue in public education. First I will examine the public discourse during and after the Chávez Committee hearing held by U.S. senators in Puerto Rico in 1943. Secondly, I will discuss reactions to President Truman's Veto of the *Proyecto del Idioma* in 1946. Both of these events caused an outcry, not only in the education community, but also among politicians and in the general population. The periods before, between, and after the Chávez Committee and Truman's Veto are less antagonist in their discussion of the language issue, focusing on pedagogical language

teaching arguments and Puerto Rico's distinct Spanish language cultural heritage. I will use the metaphor of a hurricane to describe the cycles of conflict and reaction to language policy conflict.

Conflict and Language Policy

Simply stated, the conflict over language in Puerto Rico can be described as an effort from the United States government to assimilate Puerto Ricans into functioning members of the nation and a local effort to maintain cultural and linguistic autonomy from the United States. Puerto Ricans defended Spanish as their primary language as a rejection of U.S. policies of assimilation. Dennis Ager (2001) describes identity as one of several motivating factors in language policy and planning because language often signals membership in a nation. In the case of Puerto Rico, two conflicting forces vied for control over language policy, the U.S. federal government in opposition to the Puerto Rican government, educators, and public. U.S. pressure for Puerto Ricans to learn English attempted to make Puerto Ricans active agents in the realization of their U.S. citizenship. The persistent belief that named the Spanish language as a defining factor in Puerto Rican national identity rejected the U.S. conception of citizenship and language while reinforcing the separate identity of a Puerto Rican nation.

According to Richard Ruíz (1990), "language serves as a symbol for diversity and the diffusion of power; the perceived threat is not language, but language communities and their potential to disturb existing power relations in the society." (p. 23). Puerto Rico's refusal to accept English as a primary language questions U.S. absorption of the

Island and reinforces a distinct power structure on the Island that rejects U.S. intervention. Ruíz cautions that the promotion of a common language can be valid, but “it cannot be perceived as a threat to the survival of local languages, or conflict is almost a certain result” (Ruíz, 1990, p. 24). While English was constantly seen as a necessary tool for the Island’s socio-economic development, it was also perceived as a threat to the purity of the Spanish language. Federally mandated language policy threatened local political and educational authority in addition to devaluing the Island’s Hispanic heritage and serving as a barrier to access public education.

James Tollefson defines language policy as a “mechanism for locating language within social structure so that language determines who has access to political power and economic resources” (1991, p. 16). In the first half of the twentieth century, only an elite few had access to educational resources that allowed them to become fully bilingual in Puerto Rico. Both Barreto (1998) and Algren de Gutiérrez (1987) explain that local elites were able to maintain their privileged status as cultural and linguistic translators and thus benefited from policies that advocated for Spanish medium education. While it is doubtful that English medium instruction could have ever successfully created a mass bilingual population without other demographic changes, elites had much to gain by limiting access to English and maintaining control over linguistic resources. Tollefson further explains that:

hegemonic policies may not bring the stability which the dominant groups desire. Indeed, the effort by one language group to seek hegemony may contain within it the seed of a cycle of resistance and repression [...] The resulting struggle is not ‘ethnic conflict’ grounded in linguistic or cultural differences, but rather a conflict over power and policy resulting from the effort of one group to establish hegemony over others. (Tollefson, 1991, p. 197-198)

In the case of Puerto Rico we must consider the interests of two conflicting hegemonic forces: local elites and the federal government, each of whom had much to gain in terms of control of power as represented by the language issue.

Research Activities

The primary sources analyzed in this chapter as well as numerous secondary sources were collected the summer of 2003 at the Puerto Rican Collection at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras as well as other secondary resources from the following collections at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras: *Biblioteca General* (Main Library), *Seminario de Estudios Hispánicos Federico de Onís* (Hispanic Studies Collection), *Biblioteca de Planificación* (Planning Collection), and *Biblioteca Gerardo Sellés Solá* (Education Collection). Wanting to establish a qualitative overview of public discourse from the decade of the 1940s in print media, I began with the *El mundo*, the most established and comprehensive daily newspaper of the 1940s on the Island, as my point of reference for establishing dates when the most discourse appeared in print media. I scanned the headlines in each issue available from 1940 through 1943 and identified 93 articles related to language issues. Using the newspaper index that begins in 1944, I identified 76 articles from 1944 through 1950 for a total of 169 articles from 1940 to 1950 in *El mundo*.

Based on the dates where I found extensive coverage on language issues in *El mundo*, I identified the ten most productive months and examined four other daily newspapers that were not indexed (*El imparcial*, *La democracia*, *Puerto Rican World*

Journal, and *El día*) from the same time period. I scanned the headlines in the four other newspapers in order to identify articles for the following months: December, 1940; January, 1941; February, 1943; March, 1943; June, 1943; April, 1945; August, 1946; November, 1946; January, 1949; and August, 1949. I identified the following number of articles in each newspaper: *El imparcial*, 46 articles; *La democracia*, 19 articles, *El día*, 2 articles; and the *Puerto Rican World Journal*, 13 articles. The *Revista de la Asociación de Maestros* (Teachers Association Journal) was another productive source where I identified 46 articles related to the language issue from the time it began publication in 1942 until 1950. In addition to these periodicals, I included other journal and magazine articles and books on language policy and pedagogy. My corpus of primary sources is made up of: 251 newspaper articles, 72 journal and magazine articles, and eight books, all of which were originally published in the 1940s or the years immediately before and after.

A Brewing Storm

The beginning of the 1940s produced extensive discourse on the connection of Spanish to cultural roots based on Spanish heritage. The use of English as the medium of instruction in the public schools was seen as a threat to the purity and prestige of Spanish in Puerto Rico. Spanish was repeatedly portrayed as an identity marker of a distinct Puerto Rican personality. In this period, language policy discourse emphasized removing English from its privileged role as the language of instruction in the public schools while consistently promoting learning English regardless of Puerto Rico's political affiliation.

There is a marked shift in public discourse when events such as the Chávez Committee and Truman's Veto showed disregard for local educational and political authorities.

Threats against Puerto Rican autonomy in the language issue lead to increased national discourse that emphasized differences between the two nations. In the periods with relatively little conflict, discourse shifted from a focus on the emotional and cultural connection to the language (Spanish), to the economic benefits of learning a language (English), because of Puerto Rico's relationship with the United States and the Island's ability to serve as a cultural go-between for the United States and Latin America.

Throughout the decade, language pedagogy was a prominent part of the debate especially due to widely publicized studies conducted by educators such as Pedro Cebollero (1945) and Robert Manuel and Herschel Fife (1951). These and other educational studies from this period documented the language situation in Puerto Rico and suggested that the vernacular was the most pedagogically appropriate medium of instruction in Puerto Rico and that English should be taught as a preferred secondary subject.

In retrospect, a brief piece by Antonio Pedreira (1939) seems prophetic in its assessment of the language issue and the turbulent decade of the 1940s in terms of language policy. Pedreira, who authored *Insularismo*, a defining work on the distinct national and cultural personality of Puerto Ricans, commented that at the end of the 1930s that the influence of English had not seriously altered the purity and stability of Spanish. Yet, he insisted that Puerto Ricans needed to take action to avoid the stagnation of the Spanish language. Pedreira proposed that teaching in Spanish, with English as a preferential subject, was necessary to insure that Spanish would continue to have its

effect as “*La misteriosa levadura [que] hace fermentar diariamente el espíritu del niño*” (the mysterious yeast [that] causes the child’s spirit to ferment daily) (Pedreira, 1939, p. 305). Pedreira does not reject the teaching of English, but rather its effect on the purity and prestige of Spanish. In *Insularismo*, Pedreira (2001) defines Puerto Rico as being culturally defined as a Hispanic colony that produced a racially heterogeneous population that was limited by its political and geographic condition. His hispanophile perspective mirrors that of Albizu Campos in his reverence for the Spanish language.

Similarly, Babín’s (1940) attack on English medium instruction recognized the language problem as a both a political and pedagogical one. According to Babín, there needed to be a greater focus on promoting the Spanish language and including English as a secondary language. The objectives of “bilingual” education, which actually implied English medium instruction, threatened not only Spanish but Puerto Rican cultural values.

In June of 1940, the *Ateneo Puertorriqueño*, an institution that promoted the advancement and dissemination of Puerto Rican culture, hosted an open forum titled “*Problemas de la cultura en Puerto Rico*” (Problems of Culture in Puerto Rico) in commemoration of the seventy-fourth anniversary of the organization’s establishment. The *Ateneo* invited numerous Puerto Rican intellectuals to comment on what the organization considered to be a cultural crisis and its effect on religion, education, the arts, and the economy. Language and its role in education figured prominently in the discussion of Puerto Rican culture. The following discussion serves as measure of the

intellectual climate at the beginning of the decade and popular notions about language and culture.

Luis Muñoz Marín, Puerto Rican legislator and later the Island's first locally elected governor, spoke at the *Ateneo* on the ideals of democracy and culture and gave the following definition that emphasized the unique process that each culture follows in its development:

“[C]ultura, en su sentido más amplio, es la actitud hacia la vida y maneras de vivir la vida de una comunidad – actitud mala o buena, inteligente o torpe, pero real y espontánea – desarrollada por esa comunidad en el proceso de su formación como tal y en los antecedentes que precedieron a la iniciación de ese proceso. (Culture, in its broadest sense, is a community's attitude toward life and the ways to live life – bad or good attitudes, intelligent or clumsy, but real and spontaneous – developed by this community in the process of its own formation and in antecedents that preceded the initiation of this process.) (Muñoz Marín, 1976, p.269, my translation)

Muñoz Marín's words were a calculated attempt to validate cultural difference with its foundation resting on the historical legacy of distinct cultures. His vision of culture was a dynamic one, a vision anchored in the past but moving steadily forward as part of a continual “process”.

While Muñoz Marín's definition of culture accepts cultural change as a result of historical and social change, Babín criticized the cultural path Puerto Rico was taking due to its relationship with the United States:

“En esta encrucijada trágica del hombre y su cultura es preciso incorporar a Puerto Rico a la corriente de la cultura hispanoamericana para que no flote aislada en el Caribe, desgajada de su tronco natural”. (At this tragic crossroad of man and his culture it is necessary to incorporate Puerto Rico into the current of Hispanic-American culture and not to float isolated in the Caribbean, broken from its natural trunk.) (Babín, 1976, p. 206, my translation)

Babín called for greater unity with other Caribbean and Hispanic nations, without which Puerto Rico would isolate itself from its historic and geographic neighbors. The two views Muñoz Marín and Babín express are representative of the ebb and flow of different concepts of national identity that were often mirrored in the discussion on language. This raised the question as to what parts or how much of American identity should Puerto Rico accommodate and/or assimilate and how much of a distinct Puerto Rican identity that emphasizes its Hispanic heritage should define the nation.

At the *Ateneo*'s forum, the language issue was repeatedly cited as a vital component of Puerto Rican identity. Several participants in the forum, such as Gerardo Sellés Solá, José González Ginorio, and Antonia Sáez, attacked English language instruction in the schools and called for Spanish language instruction for the intellectual and educational development of students and the maintenance of a unique Puerto Rican culture. Many also drew connections between identity and language, often referring to a distinct "personality" of which language is an integral component:

El idioma es algo que crece con nosotros como nos crecen el pelo y los huesos, y negarle la primacía que le corresponde como vehículo de enseñanza es deteriorar los resortes psíquicos de nuestra personalidad y truncar una porción de posibilidades creadoras. (Language is something that grows within us like our hair or bones, and to deny the primacy that it deserves as a teaching vehicle is to deteriorate the psychic support of our personality and truncate a portion of creative possibilities.) (Rivera Matos, 1976, p. 174, my translation)

Here language is a functioning organ in the living organism of culture. Manuel Rivera Matos suggested that if Spanish did not obtain the appropriate role as the educational medium of communication, it would hinder the growth and development of the Puerto

Rican personality. This position portrays language as the basis of cultural expression; lack of Spanish would severely hinder Puerto Rico's artistic production.

Rivera Matos also called for defense of the Spanish language, a theme that reappears frequently when Puerto Ricans perceived the influence and status of English as encroaching on the domain of Spanish:

Defender nuestro idioma es defender nuestro espíritu, porque el día que éste se corrompa o degenera en una jerga híbrida habrá empezado nuestra decadencia espiritual, seremos unos tartamudos intelectuales. (To defend our language is to defend our spirit, because on the day that this is corrupted or degenerated into a hybrid slang, our spiritual decline will have begun, we will be stuttering intellectuals.) (Rivera Matos, 1976, p. 175, my translation)

Numerous authors repeated the sentiment that Spanish was under attack and that Puerto Ricans needed to defend themselves from the ominous effects of English, not only on the Spanish language but on the individual's cognitive processes.

Chávez Committee: The First Blast of the Hurricane

In February of 1943, the Chávez Committee, chaired by New Mexico senator Dennis Chávez and composed of U.S. senators Homer Bone, Allen Ellender, Robert Taft, and Ralph Brewster, conducted hearings in Puerto Rico to investigate social and economic conditions on the Island. The original focus of the Chávez committee shifted to the teaching of English in the public schools and the committee summoned numerous educators to testify on the state of education in Puerto Rico. The members of the committee favored English language instruction at any cost in sharp contrast with the testimony by Puerto Rican educators that almost uniformly advocated establishing Spanish as the medium of education as the most effective means of teaching English.

José Gallardo, Commissioner of Education, testified before the committee arguing that the Puerto Rican public school system faced numerous obstacles in English language instruction and meeting the committee's proposed goal of creating a bilingual population. He explained that only half of the school-aged population had access to public schools, many only received half a day of classes, and that of those who attended school, the average grade level they attained was through the fourth grade ("Gallardo discute ante el Comité Chávez el problema educativo", *El mundo*, 18 February 1943). Gallardo explained that regardless of the number of native English-speaking teachers that the Puerto Rican Department of Education employed, it would be impossible to foster the development of a bilingual population because of the minute number of native English speakers on the Island and the lack of social contexts where English was used.

Louis C. Richardson testified before the Chávez Committee representing the Puerto Rican Teachers Association. He responded to Senator Ellender's comment that Puerto Rico would never become a state in the Union as long as it maintained, what Ellender termed a "Hispanic culture" ("Giró sobre el inglés vista del Comité Chávez", *El mundo*, 20 February 1943, p. 2). The senator suggested that the Island should not expect economic help from the United States if Puerto Ricans did not demonstrate their loyalty to the United States by making an effort to learn English and creating the opportunity for children to learn English through participation in the public school system. In a testimony similar to Gallardo's, Richardson responded to Ellender, emphasizing the limited number of students that had access to public education and the limited time the majority of students spent in the school system. Richardson said:

El inglés debe enseñarse en Puerto Rico y debe enseñarse bien, pero la sabiduría de dedicar una gran parte del limitado tiempo escolar al inglés [...] es muy discutible desde el punto de vista del inglés mismo, desde el punto de vista de otras asignaturas y desde el punto de vista de la economía.” (English should be taught in Puerto Rico and it should be taught well, but the wisdom of dedicating a large part of limited school time to English [...] is debatable from the point of view of English itself, from the point of view of other subjects and from the point of view of the economy.) (*El mundo*, 20 February 1943, p. 2, my translation)

Richardson's comments are representative of the sentiment expressed by the majority of Puerto Rican educators before the Chávez Committee. Richardson argued that public school education suffered at the expense of teaching English because of the enormous amount of time and resources expended, when the most critical educational issue was that half of school-aged children were not enrolled in school and of those who did study, most only received four years of education. He did not question the need or desirability of teaching English, but rather its privileged position in the schools at the expense of meeting students' educational needs.

Richardson repeatedly defended his position that Spanish was the most pedagogically appropriate medium of education and teaching in Spanish would foster the acquisition of English. He argued that Puerto Ricans did not oppose learning English, but rather the methodology that favored using English as the language of instruction in the classroom. According to Richardson, language policy was not a political issue but an educational issue and that Puerto Ricans wanted to maintain their Hispanic culture in addition to acquiring the desirable parts of American culture. He concluded that as long as the Puerto Rican population was of Spanish heritage, Spanish would remain the dominant language and the only acceptable method to increase English speakers was to intensify English instruction, but not instruction *in* English. The committee's response to

Richardson's testimony was largely negative; they concluded that Puerto Rican educators had failed to teach English in their 45 years as a U.S. possession and that Puerto Rico would never become a state if its people did not learn English and acquire American cultural ideals as a proof of their loyalty to the United States ("Giró sobre el inglés vista del Comité Chávez", *El mundo*, 20 February 1943, p. 2).

When Pedro A. Cebollero, former sub Commissioner of Education who would later author *A School Language Policy for Puerto Rico* (1945), appeared before the Chávez Committee, he defended the language policy that gradually added English to the curriculum in more advanced grades ("Giró sobre el inglés vista del Comité Chávez", *El mundo*, 20 February 1943). Cebollero argued that there was no cultural or economic value to teaching more English in the schools. He also argued that Puerto Ricans could be loyal citizens without speaking English. When Senator Bone questioned how long it would take to substitute Spanish with English in Puerto Rico, Cebollero replied that it would take a millennium (p. 7). Cebollero's response to the committee is representative of other testimonies that suggested that it was unrealistic to believe that Puerto Rico could become a truly bilingual nation or that becoming highly proficient in English was necessary for the entire population. The testimonies focused on the fact that while learning English was certainly desirable, it should not overshadow the need to provide a quality education to the greatest number of students possible. Teaching in Spanish was repeatedly cited as the most efficient way to provide students with a thorough education and that speaking English was not a prerequisite to being a U.S. citizen. In an editorial Cebollero wrote for the Puerto Rican Teachers Association (1943), he criticized the

ignorance of the Chávez Committee on the pedagogical error of teaching in English. Cebollero argued that if maintaining the Island's culture would limit its possibility of achieving statehood, it was necessary to pursue other political options.

The Chávez Committee responded to the testimonies by Puerto Rican educators saying that they were disappointed with local sentiment that called for Spanish language instruction, despite the fact that that it was backed by widely accepted educational theory. The members of the committee also expressed their general perception that those who opposed English medium education wanted independence for Puerto Rico, although there is no indication in the testimonies of this tendency. Chávez himself stated:

“[Y]o creo en la estadidad para Puerto Rico, siempre y cuando que todos los ideales, todas las tradiciones y todo lo que representa el Tío Sam, sea comprendido por los portorriqueños¹¹” (I believe in statehood for Puerto Rico, as long as all of the ideals, all of the traditions and everything that Uncle Sam represents, is understood by Puerto Ricans) (“Chávez gestionará enseñanza sea en inglés”, *El mundo*, 20 February 1943, p. 1, my translation).

Reactions to the Chávez Committee's recommendations on the teaching of English were published in *El mundo*, *El imparcial* and *La democracia* in the months following the hearings. Not surprisingly, Puerto Ricans were outraged by the committee's disregard for testimony by local educators that consistently favored Spanish language instruction in the public schools. Jaime Benítez, president of the University of Puerto Rico, responded with a public letter to the U.S. legislature, published in *El mundo* on February 22, 1943. Benítez praised the virtues of the Spanish language and commented on its permanence and resilience saying that it was, “*un idioma sellado con*

¹¹ The spellings “Porto Rico” and “portorriqueño” were used officially until 1932 because they were perceived as being easier for English speakers to pronounce. The spelling “portorriqueño” continued to be used in the years that followed. (Negrón de Montilla, 1971).

signo de eternidad en América” (a language marked with the sign of eternity in America) (“Rector Benítez dice no es asunto político el idioma”, p. 1, my translation).

Despite the high value that Benítez places on Spanish, he said that learning English was desirable under any form of government, yet Spanish must be the language of instruction. He emphasized that language was not a political issue, but it would become one if Spanish medium instruction were prohibited in the classroom (*El mundo*, 22 February 1943). The majority of educators involved in the language debate tended to separate the language issue from its political context and focus on the pedagogical arguments to favored Spanish language instruction. Yet here, Benítez acknowledged the political implications of U.S. mandated language policy. His statement suggests that if Puerto Ricans had local autonomy over the language issue, it would strictly be an issue of pedagogy, but if the United States continued to deny local agency in language policy, Puerto Ricans would wage a fierce political battle. Benítez’s position here contrasts with his notably apolitical and highly criticized reaction to U.S. political intervention in language policy after Truman’s Veto that will be discussed below.

Virgilio Medina Deliz commented in an editorial in *La democracia* that the fact that the United States had monolingual Spanish speaking soldiers in the Southwest demonstrated English was unnecessary for these men to prove their loyalty to the armed forces because it was possible to defend the nation without speaking English (“La guerra y el idioma inglés”, 27 February 1943). He stated that liberty only requires pure language, not necessarily English, and the desire for freedom. Medina Deliz’s position counters the position of the Chávez committee, and the prevalent U.S. language ideology

that saw English as a prerequisite for democratic ideals and participation in American society. U.S. officials in Puerto Rico consistently used this argument throughout the first half of the twentieth century when advocating for English language education (Negrón de Montilla, 1971).

The *Consejo de Estudiantes* (Student Council) from the University of Puerto Rico drew up a declaration that sharply criticized the Chávez Committee that said the committee's remarks constituted "*la incomprensión, la ignorancia, y un espíritu imperialista ya anacrónico, y que constituyen una ofensa gratuita a nuestro pueblo*" (incomprehension, ignorance, and an anachronistic imperialist spirit, and that constitute an unsolicited offense to our people) ("Consejo de estudiantes discute asunto del idioma", *El mundo*, 1 March 1943, p. 4, my translation). The student organization also stated that the committee's remarks were contrary to the United States' Good Neighbor policy. They decidedly placed Puerto Rico within the Latin American community whose relationship with the United States was threatened by attitudes such as those demonstrated by the Chávez Committee. The response of the UPR Student Council is remarkably more confrontational than other commentaries and quite obviously treats the issue of language as a political one.

A stinging editorial by Carlos Rivera Robles accused the Chávez Committee of confusing the language issue with the economic problems that the committee came to investigate ("Tragedia del inglés y problema estadidad", *La democracia*, 5 March 1943). He denounced the Committee's suggestion that economic support from the United States could be determined by Puerto Rican progress in learning English by saying that was an

inhuman expectation. Rivera Robles asked what they would have to do to receive the economic help necessary to assure that all Puerto Ricans had enough to eat:

“¿[T]endremos que alimentarnos primero con el idioma y las costumbres, y la cultura de otro pueblo?” ([W]ill we first have to feed ourselves with the language, customs and culture of another nation?) (p. 3, my translation). He remarked that Puerto Rican language, culture, and customs have always been and will continue to be Hispanic.

An editorial in *La democracia* equated the loss of the Spanish language to the loss of a unique Puerto Rican personality (“Por nuestro idioma castellano”, 9 March 1943). It called for Puerto Ricans to defend Spanish as a means of honoring the Puerto Rican race and showing patriotism. War metaphors were prominent in the portrayals of the Spanish language as a cultural patrimony that Puerto Ricans needed to defend or risk cultural and linguist invasion.

Francisco M. Susoni, vice-president of the Senate, stressed Puerto Rico’s collective personality that had been constructed over four centuries and included language, culture, and race (“Susoni endosa la enseñanza en español”, *El mundo*, 1 April 1943). According to Susoni, the Chávez committee was mistaken in thinking that Puerto Rico could be easily assimilated by means of learning the English language. He also criticized the committee’s belief that Puerto Ricans could assimilate which ignored the Island’s unique historic reality.

Another response to the Chávez Committee came from the *Asociación de Maestros de Puerto Rico* (Puerto Rican Teachers Association) who reiterated the impossibility of changing the vernacular from Spanish to English. They held that Puerto

Ricans should maintain their longstanding Hispanic cultural tradition while enriching it with the best of American culture (“Directiva de maestros se pronuncia sobre idioma”, *El mundo*, 15 March 1943, p. 2). The Teachers Association approved an uncharacteristic political resolution that demanded the use of Spanish as the vernacular and called for a plebiscite to decide Puerto Rico’s political status. This is an unusual instance of the Teachers Association making a link between status and local control over local educational issues (Asociación de Maestros de Puerto Rico, 1943).

Archilla (1943) responded to what she deemed a laughable naiveté by the Chávez Committee in thinking that Puerto Ricans could easily substitute English for Spanish and ignore their cultural and spiritual legacy:

[E]s abolengo lo que mama nuestro niño de pecho, y es linaje lo que respire el niño de nuestro raza, y es historia lo que palpita en los adolescentes de nuestra estirpe, y es prosapia lo que abroquela el pecho de nuestros varones. (It is inheritance that our child nurses at the breast, and it is lineage that the child of our race breathes, and it is history that beats in the adolescents of our race, and it is family that shields the chest of our men.) (p. 5, my translation)

Here lineage and language are integral parts of Puerto Rican heritage that Americanization and language policy could never change.

An editorial by Nilita Vientos Gastón stated that the Chávez Committee had implied that “*El precio de la Estadidad es, pues, la negación de todo lo que somos*” (The price of Statehood is, well, the negation of everything that we are) (“La legislatura y el problema de la lengua”, *El mundo*, 21 March 1943, p. 2, my translation). She suggested that it was necessary to take a political approach to the language issue to deal with the apolitical issue of the teaching of English in Puerto Rico and defend the Island’s right not to assimilate American cultural and linguist values. Vientos Gastón challenged the

Puerto Rican legislature to pass a law requiring the Commissioner of Education to make Spanish the official language of instruction in the public schools as a means of being loyal to their own cultural heritage, a challenge upon which the legislature acted two years later.

The Eye of the Storm

After intense reactions to the Chávez Committee, public discourse on language returned to focus on classroom pedagogy. Pedro Cebollero, assistant commissioner of education under Commissioner José Padín, published a study entitled *A School Language Policy for Puerto Rico* in 1945 that was commissioned by the Puerto Rican Council on Higher Education. He concluded that Spanish was entrenched in all aspects of Puerto Rican life and that a bilingual language policy did not meet the needs of the majority of students, with special acknowledgment of the acute lack of access to public school education in the general population. Cebollero suggested that not all students needed to receive the same type of education or gain the same kind of English skills. Cebollero presented English as a tool for intercultural communication and for the access of information, but saw no need to create a fully bilingual population. While I believe that it was accurate to conclude that most Puerto Ricans living on the Island had little practical need for English in their daily lives in the 1940s, we can argue that Cebollero saw English as a means of maintaining the existing power structure that limited local access to English as suggested by Algren de Gutiérrez (1987) and Barreto (1998).

Cebollero also admonished attitudes from the federal government that advocated that learning English as a necessary component of Americanization while ignoring other more pertinent issues related to learning English:

If [...] the Puerto Ricans and the Americans who feel that learning English will be enough to turn the trick of making 'hundred per cent Americans' out of English instruction to change the attitudes of the population of the Island, they would realize that there are other more real and more feasible objectives to be accomplished in Puerto Rico through instruction in the language of the Nation. (Cebollero 1945, p. 111)

This message directly addressed the Chávez Committee's proceedings on the Island that abandoned their original objective of investigating social and economic conditions in favor of dissecting language policy in the schools.

On the roles of English and Spanish in Puerto Rico, Cebollero makes a distinction between learning English as a secondary language as opposed to the Chávez Committee's stated goal of making Puerto Rico bilingual:

English in Puerto Rico can have no other role than that of a second language designed to take care of the residual functions for which the vernacular is not sufficient. Spanish should be recognized as the vernacular, the language of the home, of religion, of the 'dear and intimate things,' the language of social intercourse and of literary production, the medium of instruction. (Cebollero, 1945, p.112)

Cebollero's suggested that language policy emphasized the different roles of Spanish and English on the Island and recognized that Spanish was and would remain to be the vernacular, while English would continue to have a limited sphere of use that made its acquisition necessary to different degrees for various segments of the population.

Blanco (1946) accused that Puerto Rican children were the victims of mental torture under the "bilingual system" and that everyone was an accomplice in the

implementation of an assimilation policy (p. 75). Teaching in English was an injustice not only to Spanish, but also to the English language and threatened the creation of High Culture. Many educators, such as Blanco, blamed high rates of academic attrition on English language education that created additional barriers to scholastic achievement.

The same month Rafael Arjona Siaca originally submitted the *Proyecto del Idioma* to the Puerto Rican Legislature in 1945 that will be discussed in the following section, Emilio Delgado presented a paper at Columbia University on the connection between language policy and the colonial condition. He stated that Puerto Rico had suffered under U.S. rule because the lack of a clear colonial policy had resulted in the lack of a feasible language policy. According to Delgado, a language policy for Puerto Rico must recognize the Island's status as a colony. As a result of unclear guidelines, the quality of the Spanish language had been bastardized in mass media, but had not yet penetrated into literary production. He claimed that one of the Island's biggest problems, overpopulation, had stopped the further spread of English due to the large segment of the population that did not have access to public education, and thus to English language instruction.

Delgado called for Puerto Ricans to have the full rights as citizens in order to solve the language problem:

Cuando los puertorriqueños podamos ejercitar libremente nuestros derechos ciudadanos en todas sus formas y manifestaciones, entonces este duelo de las dos lenguas, esta batalla inútil penosa en la que ninguno de los dos contendientes ha salido hasta ahora ganancioso, podrá resolverse en un diálogo cordial de las dos grandes lenguas, pero siguiendo cada cual su propio e independiente destino.
 (When, as Puerto Ricans, we can freely exercise our rights as citizens in all of its forms and manifestations, then this duel between the two languages, this useless, painful battle in which neither of the two contenders have come out winning; it

will be able to resolve itself in a cordial dialog between the two great languages, but each one continuing with its own and independent destiny.) (Delgado, 1945, p. 18, my translation)

Delgado rejected the possibility of Puerto Rico becoming a bilingual nation, stating that the friction between the two languages would only be resolved when they each took their separate path. The following sections will discuss Truman's Veto, another example of U.S. intervention in Puerto Rican language policy and the reaction that included increased discourse of cultural and political distancing of Puerto Rico from the United States.

Truman's Veto: The Storm Returns

As if responding to the challenge that Vientos Gastón made in 1943, the Puerto Rican legislature passed Law Number 51 in 1945 (popularly known as the "*Proyecto del Idioma*") that designated Spanish as the language of instruction in public schools and later amended the law in 1946 to specify that English must be included as a subject (not the medium of instruction) from the fifth grade forward. The law was vetoed by both Governor Rexford Tugwell in 1945 and later by interim Governor Manuel Pérez in 1946. The legislature overturned Pérez's veto and sent the law to President Harry Truman who in turn vetoed the law again citing the following reasoning:

I have not considered the merits of the pedagogical program which the bill would introduce into the insular public school system. I base my disapproval, instead, on the untimeliness of the measure and my feeling that the issue of Puerto Rican political status would be confused and its solution delayed by the adaptation just now of a new language policy. (quoted in Algren de Gutiérrez, 1987, p. 122)

President Truman regarded the implementation of locally mandated language policy as secondary to the resolution of Puerto Rico's political status. The reaction to Truman's Veto came in the form of organized protest and public debate. The resulting discourse that criticized both the president's disregard of advice from educators and for local legislative authority serves as a useful point of comparison with the reaction to the Chávez Committee.

In anticipation of Truman's Veto, Puerto Rican Senator Rafael Arjona Siaca, author of Law Number 51, sent a public letter to President Truman that was published in *El imparcial* ("Arjona expone a Truman conveniencia vernáculo como vehículo enseñanza", 26 August 1946). He pleaded with Truman to recognize the democratic value in allowing the Puerto Rican legislature to define the educational parameters of school language policy. The letter also insisted that children had the right to receive the best education possible, implying that education should be accessible through the medium of their native language. Arjona Siaca accused that federal control over Puerto Rican education was a continuation of the Spanish colonial system that ironically had not changed under the supposed democracy of the United States.

Students from the University of Puerto Rico began organizing an Island-wide strike to protest Truman's veto of the language bill and express their support of designating Spanish the language of instruction across all educational levels. One week before the student protest, University of Puerto Rico president, Jaime Benítez, together with eighty-two professors that opposed the student strike, signed a resolution that defined the language issue as purely pedagogic, ignoring the political implication of

Truman's Veto. Twenty-six professors abstained from the vote and thirteen opposed the resolution Benítez authored because of what they saw as an inherently political, in addition to, pedagogic issue (Torres González, 2002). José Emiliano González later publicly criticized Benítez for submitting the resolution to Secretary of the Interior Julius Krug, saying that the majority of the university faculty did not support the resolution and also criticized Benítez for not supporting the students with his presence during the strike ("Profesor dice la UPR no da respaldo al Rector", *El mundo*, 24 November 1946).

On November 8, 1946, the strike was held at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras with the participation of professors and local politicians as well as high school and university students in numerous cities. An estimated 100,000 students attended a rally in Río Piedras in addition to participation in: San Lorenzo, Isabela, Río Grande, Jayuya, Las Marías, Camuy, Arecibo, Orocovis, Junos, Cabo Rojo, Bayamón, Carolina, Fajardo, San Sebastián, Canóvanas, Guayanilla, Comerío, San Germán, Lares, Arecibo, Corozal, Juncos, and Sábana Grande ("Protesta por el veto de Truman fué [sic] ordenada", *El Mundo*, 9 November 1946 and "La huelga de estudiantes fue general: policía se opuso en alguno pueblos", *El imparcial*, 9 November 1946). There was overwhelming support for the student strike across the Island and in the media. All of the protests were peaceful. In Río Piedras, home of the University of Puerto Rico and the site of the main student strike, Mayor Agosto Álvarez gave a memorable speech, saying that Spanish was the soul of the people:

Somos un pueblo tartamudo, por la idiotez de los experimentados del Departamento de Educación. Nos harán unos tartamudos por algunos años, pero la fuerza no mandará siempre; llegará la hora de derretir las cadenas. (We are a stuttering nation due to the idiocy of the Department of Education's experiments.

They will make us stutter for some years, but force will not always rule; the hour will come to melt the chains.) (*El mundo*, 9 November 1946, p.3, my translation)

Mayor Álvarez suggested that an active uprising would be necessary to break from U.S. implemented policy in the Department of Education. His response also demonstrated that the general public was aware that language policy in the schools had been somewhat arbitrary in its methodology at the expense of the students' academic progress. Policy had changed so frequently that no one policy had proven effective.

Manuel Negrón Noguerras condemned Truman's Veto saying that it was an imperial act at the expense of pedagogy, democracy, and liberty ("Por nuestro idioma", *El imparcial*, 10 November 1946). He supported the strike, calling to action teachers with their sacred duty to defend the Spanish language and Puerto Rican culture. In both Álvarez and Negrón Noguerras, we see that while pedagogy still figured prominently in their rhetoric, there was an increasingly political tone to their argument that called for action to implement locally approved pedagogy. The language issue takes on broader implication of local autonomy.

In an editorial in the days leading up to the student strike, Emilio Escalante said that Truman's Veto would never change the fact that:

los puertorriqueños seguirán naciendo con el castellano bajo el brazo [sic] y después por más inglés que se le meta al igual que el aceite de castor, seguirán hablando, pensando y portándose como verdaderos hispano. (Puerto Ricans will continue being born with Spanish under their arm and then regardless of how much English they try to shove in like castor oil, they will continue speaking, thinking, and behaving like real Hispanics.) ("Pueblo hispano obligado a aprender el idioma ingles", *La democracia*, 7 November 1946, p. 4, my translation)

In this sense, Puerto Ricans are seen as having a separate identity from Mainland Americans that was intimately connected to language. Changes in language policy would

not increase the number of English speakers on the Island nor would they alter the relationship between language and policy.

Fernández Vanga argued that the worst damage that the U.S. government had done in Puerto Rico had been the destruction of Spanish (“El veto a la Ley del Idioma”, *El imparcial*, 6 November 1946). He said:

Yo no sé bien si este problema de idioma nuestro, en el país nuestro es un problema pedagógico o político o económico. Creo en verdad que es un problema vital [...] Tan vital para nuestras almas, como es vital el de la alimentación para nuestros cuerpos. (I do not know if this problem of our language, in our country is a pedagogic or political or economic problem. I think that the truth is that it is a vital problem. It is so vital for our souls, in the same way that food is vital for our bodies.) (p.5, my translation)

Like other before him, Fernández Vanga equates the Spanish language to food for the body. In this sense the nation is seen as a body, and language as its nourishment.

The *Asociación de Mujeres Graduas de la Universidad de Puerto Rico* (Association of Women Graduates of the University of Puerto Rico) expressed their support for the student strike with a letter to *El mundo* (“Graduados UPR condenan veto a bill de idioma”, 9 November 1946) denouncing Tugwell’s and Truman’s vetoes and asserting that Puerto Ricans had the right to receive an education in their vernacular and not in a foreign language. Arguments against English in the schools often referred to it as a foreign language as opposed to a second language. This reflected both pedagogical reasoning that language policy needed to recognize that English was not the vernacular on the Island and textbooks and methodology needed to reflect the reality of the situation. Defining English as a foreign language also served to politically and culturally separate Puerto Rico from the United States.

Puerto Rican senator Rafael Arjona Siaca stated that Truman's belief that learning English would solve the issue of political status was “*un pueril cuento para bobos*” (a childish tale for dummies) and neglected the pedagogic reasoning behind using Spanish in the schools (“Insubstancial y pueril el veto a proyecto de idioma”, *El mundo*, 10 November 1946, p. 7, my translation). He called the veto a simplistic answer to a complex political issue of which education should have no part.

In an editorial in *El mundo*, Dr. M. Quevedo Báez said that a nation must defend its vernacular, because it is the soul of the people. Without its soul (language), the people cannot express their love for the nation, “*que por medio del idioma, de ese pueblo*¹² *vencido y arrinconado*” (through the medium of language of this defeated and cornered people/nation) (“Por mi patria y su idioma”, 17 November 1946, p. 5, my translation). Quevedo Báez called on the legislature to take action and defend Spanish with all of its authority in the name of all Puerto Ricans.

Mirroring the stance of the *Partido Popular Democrático* and the Teachers Association that will be discussed below, Luis Muñoz Morales defined the language issue as a pedagogic issue, not to be confused with politics. He said in an editorial that while English was necessary to communicate with the metropolis, Puerto Rico was a Spanish speaking community that would maintain its language and culture, but should promote English as a second language regardless of its political affiliation (“El idioma y el status

¹² The *Real Academia Española* defines *pueblo* as “*Ciudad o villa, población de menor categoría, conjunto de personas de un lugar, región o país, gente común y humilde de una población, país con gobierno independiente*” (www.rae.es Feb 19 2004 1:55 pm). The word *pueblo* can be interpreted as meaning both the people of Puerto Rico and/or the nation of Puerto Rico. The ambiguity of the term makes it appealing for those arguing for language or political rights because each listener/reader can interpret it as they see fit.

político de Puerto Rico”, *El mundo*, 17 November 1946). He supported Spanish as the medium of education for both pedagogic and cultural reasons.

Babín (1946) responded to Truman’s Veto and to those who defined language policy as a pedagogical issue in her call for the defense of the Spanish language. She contended that English was corrupting the purity of Spanish and that Puerto Ricans needed to foster a love for the language as well as defend it. Babín deemed the language issue a political battle where the nation must fight and defend its language and culture.

Rubén del Rosario represents one of the few Puerto Rican voices from the 1940s that countered the claim that the presence of English was damaging to the Spanish language in Puerto Rico (1946). While del Rosario consistently defended Spanish medium instruction in the schools, his numerous historical linguistic studies on the Island led him to the conclusion that the presence of English in Puerto Rico was merely a case of linguistic accommodation. The process of linguistic change was due to various linguistics influences, such as African languages, Taino, Spanish, and English, that had led to the unique development of Puerto Rican Spanish. He reiterated the dynamic nature of both language and culture that were influenced by the Island’s relationship with the United States, but reassured that both remained essentially Hispanic.

Each time U.S. officials advocated for privileging English over Spanish in the public school curriculum in the hopes of promoting bilingualism in Puerto Rico, Puerto Ricans returned to rhetoric of national identity based on culture, language and traditions. Interestingly, there was no one that advocated for removing English from school curriculum. The presence of English as a secondary or foreign language was

overwhelmingly accepted in all responses to federal intervention in language policy. English was deemed as a necessary tool, regardless of the Island's political affiliation.

The Storm Subsides

Also in 1946, Truman named Jesús T. Piñero the first Puerto Rican governor, who in turn named Mariano Villaronga as Commissioner of Education. The U.S. Congress drew out the proceeding to confirm Villaronga because of a speech he made advocating Spanish as the medium of instruction. Villaronga withdrew himself from the confirmation hearings due to what the federal legislature deemed to be a controversial stance on language policy. Two years later when Muñoz Marín was campaigning for the first elections for governor, he made electoral promises that if elected to the governorship, he would appoint a Commissioner of Education that would mandate Spanish language instruction, again citing pedagogical reasoning for the implementation of the policy. And indeed, when the people of Puerto Rico elected Muñoz Marín as governor in 1948, he named Mariano Villarona as the Commissioner of Education and on August 10, 1949, Villaronga established Spanish as the medium of instruction through an executive order. Torres González (2002) suggests that the linguistic hierarchy that established Spanish as the medium of instruction and English as a “preferred subject” reflects the position of the *Partido Popular Democrático* that promoted a cultural and linguistic nationalism that distinguished between being an American citizen and being American (p. 171). In other words, Puerto Rican identity was primary and U.S. citizenship was secondary.

Teachers and Language Policy

In his 1950 report documenting the position of the *Asociación de Maestros* (Teachers Association) on the language issue, Luis Muñiz Souffront chronicles the consistency of the Teachers Association in using pedagogical reasoning to support the use of the vernacular in the public school classrooms. He described the Teachers Association as having a “militant attitude” in maintaining that the language of instruction must be Spanish, while teaching the subject of English, but not teaching *in* English (Muñiz Souffront, 1950, p. 14, my translation). Muñiz Souffront credited the Association for having a vital role in the resolution of the language issue when Spanish was officially named as the language of instruction in 1949. Despite Muñiz Souffront’s appraisal of teachers’ militancy in fighting for pedagogically based language policy, he painted an apolitical picture of the Teachers Association, insisting that pedagogy was the primary factor for their support for teaching in Spanish. Yet earlier in the twentieth century, under the leadership of Francisco Vincenty, the Association submitted a resolution in 1919 that suggested a more political stance saying that language was part of every country’s “*personalidad política*” and that Spanish should be the official language of Puerto Rico regardless of its political status (Muñiz Souffront, 1950, p. 36). In 1934, the Teachers Association submitted a statement to Commission of Education José Padín saying that using English in the classroom was intellectually and psychologically damaging to Puerto Rican students and the policy had little value for the majority of student who would never need oral English skills.

Throughout the decade of the 1940s, the Teachers Association relied on pedagogical reasoning to argue for Spanish language policy with the exception of its reaction to the Chávez Committee when the Association called for the preservation of Hispanic cultural and the need for local autonomy in educational matters (*Revista de la Asociación de Maestros de Puerto Rico*, 1943). The Teachers Association represented 90% of Puerto Rican educators in the 1940s and appeared to try to remove itself from the connection between the debate on political status and language, perhaps due to the range of political affiliation found within the organization. Yet, official communications from the *Asociación* repeatedly called for greater local educational autonomy, especially in regard to language policy. Attacks on local policy as demonstrated by the Chávez Committee and the triple veto of the *Proyecto del Idioma* questioned local educational authority and validity, which in turn caused vociferous reactions.

Although there is little documentation in official Teachers Association documents, popular literature from this period chronicled the difficulty teachers faced teaching in a language that they themselves did not know. While mainland teachers that were imported to teach English did not generally stay for extended periods of time, they received larger salaries than their insular colleagues. English exams for all teachers and the presence of mainland teachers surely threatened the authority and seniority of Puerto Rican teachers in the schools. Insistence on Spanish language policy in the schools was also a form of job security for monolingual Spanish-speaking teachers.

In 1947, Abelardo Díaz Alfaro published his popular book of short stories, *Terrazo* that chronicled rural life on the Island. “Peyo Mercé enseña inglés” humorously

depicts the difficulty a rural teacher faced trying to teach a language over which he himself had limited mastery. The story illustrates the ridiculous expectations from teaching supervisors to implement new teaching pedagogy in the instruction of English, where the subject matter has little concrete connection to the students' lives. Díaz Alfaro's story demonstrates the cultural incompatibility of teaching English to the children of *jíbaros* who had little need for a foreign tongue. His writing echoed the rhetoric of the PPD and the Teachers Association that stressed the cultural differences between Puerto Ricans and mainland Americans that made them two distinct nations.

Despite the Teachers Association's insistence that they were an apolitical entity, Fife and Manuel (1951, p. 39) suggest in their extensive study on the teaching of English in Puerto Rico that teachers represented a significant pressure group not only on the Puerto Rican legislature, but also on local authorities and in the media. The report concluded that teachers were a politically powerful group despite their limited economic influence. Fife and Manuel applauded the Teachers Association for bringing a needed balance to counteract the centralized organization that characterized the Department of Education (1951, p. 40). They also reiterated the Association's separation of politics and pedagogy and lauded their dedication to innovative experimental techniques and the corpus of materials produced for the teaching of English.

In his book, *Culture and Education in Puerto Rico* (1948), Ramón Mellado advocated for cultural changes in Puerto Rico that would embrace U.S. religious, cultural, and democratic ideals in order to achieve local educational goals. His educational philosophy reflected the moderate position of the Teachers Association. Mellado

proposed that Puerto Rican students needed a broad understanding of the history of the Americas and that both English and Spanish were necessary to nurture Inter-American relationships. While Mellado suggested that mastery of both languages was only essential for educated Puerto Ricans, he promoted Spanish language instruction with sufficient emphasis on English in all schools in order for it to become a second language. In imitation of the democratic ideals Mellado praised in U.S. society and educational institutions, he called for the “democratization of the government and school system of Puerto Rico” (Mellado, 1948, p. 133). Mellado utilized the federal government’s own rhetoric on democratic values to advocate for greater local control in the public school system in order to meet the goal of democratization.

In Osuna’s (1949) encyclopedic volume on the history of education in Puerto Rico, he recommended that while learning English was a necessity in Puerto Rico due to the Island’s relationship with the United States, educational efforts should be conducted in the vernacular and that Puerto Ricans must have autonomy over language policy in order to meet their goals. According to Osuna, the people of Puerto Rico should determine both policy and methodology in the teaching of English, including the training of Puerto Rican teachers who had proven to be the most consistent teachers of English on the Island.

After the storm

At the end of the 1940s there was less conflict over language policy and establishing Spanish as the language of instruction in the schools seemed inevitable as

Puerto Ricans gained greater political autonomy. In this period we see politically charged attitudes towards the Spanish language replaced by reverent eulogies to its virtues. Alberti Ruiz (1947) suggested that a love for the Spanish language must develop among the youth in order to rediscover the Puerto Rican soul, recognizing not only its lineage from the past but its future. Sassone (1948) praised the universality of Spanish in addition to its dialectal differences, such as those found in Puerto Rican Spanish, that constituted a “*patrimonio lingüístico*” (linguistic patrimony) as a marker of a collective soul (p. 12, my translation). Sassone equated taking away a language to taking away a person’s country or soul. After Villaronga’s language policy established Spanish as the dominant local language, there was much more romantic rhetoric on Puerto Ricans’ emotional relationship with the Spanish language. Arce (1949) calls for the defense of the purity of Spanish and the damaging effect of English not only on the structure of the language, but also on the sentiments and values. She concluded by saying that the preservation of Spanish was vital to the essence of Puerto Rico’s national culture (p. 62).

Conclusions

Algren de Gutiérrez (1987) names two critical moments in the language policy conflict when the Commissioner of Education and the President of the United States acted as oppositional forces on the language issue. In 1936, Commissioner José Padín resigned after the governor rejected his language policy of teaching in Spanish in the primary grades. José Gallardo replaced Padín and received the famous letter directly from Roosevelt that called for intensified English language instruction (see Chapter 1).

The second confrontation between the commissioner and president occurred when Truman vetoed the language bill in 1946 and Villaronga withdrew from the congressional confirmation hearings due to his stance on language policy.

Algren de Gutiérrez (1987) suggests that the *Partido Popular Democrático* (PPD) adopted a position in the 1940s that distanced the Party from the Nationalist movement of the 1930s. Muñoz Marín and the PPD sought to distance themselves from rhetoric that named the United States as a tyrannical force (p. 110). According to Algren de Gutiérrez, Muñoz Marín, as leader of the PPD, addressed two audiences in the 1940s; he addressed Washington with a conciliatory discourse for external policy that focused on internal development. He also appealed to nationalist leaders from the 1930s with a Hispanophile and Pan-American discourse of nation. Algren de Gutiérrez claims that this dual stance from the PPD reflected language policy on the Island throughout the decade that focused on principles of pedagogy rather than the relationship between language and political status.

The PPD likewise sought to avoid the issue of status through political rhetoric, promising the public that a vote for the Party was not a vote for a particular political status. Members of the PPD used the language issue as a demonstration of their separation from the politically radical movements of the previous decade and avoided making language a political issue by deferring to educational experts. Both the PPD and the Teachers Association agreed that learning English was necessary regardless of the Island's political relationship with the United States or as an independent nation. Algren de Gutiérrez explains that supporters of the autonomy movement:

redefined independence in socio-economic rather than cultural terms and adopted a less antagonistic rhetoric toward the United States, [while] the proponents of the movement against teaching in English argued for instruction in Spanish in pedagogical rather than nationalist terms. (1987, p. 115)

Thus Algren de Gutiérrez sees the language policy movement as rearticulating the autonomy movement that claimed to know what was best for the people of Puerto Rico by paternalistically advocating for the protection and intellectual development of children

The movement against teaching in English recognized the American belief that Puerto Rico should become a bilingual territory if it were to aspire to statehood, and therefore attacked the issue from a pedagogical perspective that avoided political confrontation. Attacks on English language educational policy also emphasized that it was unrealistic to transform the Island into a bilingual population from an educational point of view. Algren de Gutiérrez's interpretation of what she terms the "movement against English" accurately interprets the general attitude toward language policy in the 1940s but fails to explain the confrontational responses that resulted from U.S. threats to control or intervene in language policy that we saw in response to the Chávez Committee and Truman's Veto.

Torres González (2002) agrees with Algren de Gutiérrez (1987) that language policy in the 1940s mirrors the trajectory of the *Partido Popular Democrático* under the direction of Muñoz Marín. In the 1940s, the party distances itself from the political nationalism of the 1930s to a position of cultural nationalism¹³.

¹³ Torres González (2002) notes that an unintentional consequence of the U.S. effort to make Puerto Rico an English-speaking territory lead to tremendous expansion of access to public schools during the first half of the twentieth century. The most profound effect of this rapid increase in education was not the creation of a bilingual population but the dramatic increase in Spanish literacy that the Spanish government had not achieved during the nineteenth century.

This chapter has chronicled two distinct moments in language policy conflict in the decade of the 1940s in Puerto Rico, the Chávez Committee hearings and Truman's Veto of the *Proyecto del Idioma*. We have noted that the position of the most influential political party, the *Partido Popular Democrático*, and the Puerto Rican Teachers Association were politically moderate in their stance on language policy and focused on pedagogical principles in order to avoid political conflict when arguing for Spanish medium instruction in the schools. In the two major instances of language policy conflict, we noted a radicalization of the response to U.S. control of policy by educators, politicians and in mass media. Puerto Rican reactions to U.S. intervention in language issues resulted in responses that included increased references to political and cultural nationalism in opposition to the assimilation of U.S. cultural and linguistic traditions.

Chapter Four: Conclusions

*El idioma es la respiración del espíritu. No
hagamos asmática esa respiración. Con
asma no se puede repechar jalda arriba.*

-Luis Muñoz Marín (1953)

We have seen that the decade of the 1940s was pivotal, not only in the establishment of language policy, but also in the construction of Puerto Rican identity based on a shift toward cultural nationalism. The Spanish language was used as a nationalist symbol in the 1930s, but with greater reference to the cultural legacy of Spain and Puerto Rico's Latin American neighbors that was conducive to the separatist movement of the Nationalist Party. The politically nationalist discourse of the 1930s established the defense of Spanish as central to Puerto Rico's construction as an independent nation and rejected the political imperialism represented by unsolicited federal language policy. Political and educational leaders of the 1940s appropriated the symbol of language as a defining cultural element of Puerto Rican identity but redefined language as a cultural rather than political issue. The discourse on language policy in the 1940s was much less antagonistic than in the 1930s as demonstrated by the shift toward pedagogical arguments for favoring Spanish language instruction that allowed for the accommodation of English in the curriculum as a necessary, but secondary, language. By reaffirming that Spanish was and would continue to be the vernacular, Puerto Ricans rejected U.S. cultural assimilation and previous attempts at Americanization.

The nationalist movement of the 1930s found greater support from the general population who was discontent with the lack of local control over insular politics due to

the Island's colonial relationship with the United States. Populist leaders in the 1940s, such as Muñoz Marín, advocated for the redefinition of political autonomy, while maintaining the economic protection the United States offered. The PPD and its populist leaders took advantage of the historical moment when radical nationalists were forced into exile to promote a redefinition of coloniality that was pragmatic both economically and socially. Populist leaders appealed to the masses by assuring that Puerto Rico would maintain its cultural legacy, which included language as a prominent component.

Populists broke away from the romanticized nostalgia for the Island's relationship with Spain that nationalists had promoted and used democratic rhetoric that appealed to both Washington and Puerto Ricans. It would have been difficult for Washington to continue to ignore Puerto Rican demands for greater local autonomy, yet neither the federal government nor Puerto Ricans were convinced that becoming a state was a valid option.

By appealing to Puerto Ricans' sense of cultural uniformity, populists redefined the Island's colonial condition that rejected complete annexation, based in part on the Island's distinct cultural tradition. Greater political autonomy ultimately led to the creation of the *Estado Libre Asociado* in 1952, a new kind of coloniality that brought greater economic prosperity to the Island and allowed for a concept of national identity that emphasized cultural differences between Puerto Ricans and mainland Americans, acknowledging U.S. citizenship as a political identity that did not conflict with the local cultural construction of national identity. Puerto Rican national identity maintained precedence over American citizenship, a distinction that is still valid today. The struggle

for local autonomy in defining local language policy reflects the broader political and cultural climate of the era that defined the Island's relationship with the United States.

Using Barreto's (1998) three components of the elite construction of language and national identity that were discussed in Chapter Two, serves to summarize the articulation of the language debate in Chapter Three. First, language is a social marker of Puerto Rican identity *vis-à-vis* American identity. Using language as an oppositional identity marker allows for the somewhat simplistic distinction between cultural identities as defined by language. It should be noted that the elite classes that pushed for a homogenous construction of national identity were the most likely to be proficient speakers of English, Albizu Campos and Muñoz Marín serving as primary examples. Both of these men were highly bilingual due to their extensive educational training in the United States, yet both rejected a bilingual conception of Puerto Rican identity. The populism of the 1940s favored a culturally based construction of identity that clearly made an ethnic separation between Puerto Ricans and Americans while allowing for a political relationship that defined citizenship as a distinct entity from culturally conceived national identity.

Second, the discrimination Puerto Ricans faced due to federally mandated language policies in the public schools deepened national sentiment. Puerto Ricans resented not only the reality of classroom education that hindered academic progress through English language instruction, but their inability to control policy on a local level. Elites reacted against their exclusion from the political processes that determined

educational policy and the blatant disregard for local expertise on language pedagogy as demonstrated by both the Chávez Committee and Truman's Veto.

Third, peripheral elites reacted to discrimination at a local level by constructing counter-hegemony through local political vehicles. Here we see the local legislature's attempt to pass the *Proyecto de Idioma*, coupled by the mass student strike upon the bill's veto in 1946. Both of these events are representative of mounting dissatisfaction with U.S. intervention in what was deemed to be both a political and culture issue. The counter-hegemony is triumphant first with the election of Muñoz Marín as governor that led to Spanish language policy in the schools, and later the establishment of the *Estado Libre Asociado*. While these acts consolidated local elites in positions of greater power over insular issues, neither act represents a rearticulation of the hegemonic forces represented by the metropolis.

Institutionalization of Cultural Markers

While the 1940s relied on cultural symbolism and political rhetoric to establish the parameters of *puertorriqueñidad*, in the following decade local elites took measures to further legitimate cultural nationalism. The 1950s brought the institutionalization of two aspects of Puerto Rican national identity, cultural and language, through the creation of the *Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña* (Institute of Puerto Rican Culture) in 1955 and the *Academia Puertorriqueña de la Lengua* (Puerto Rican Language Academy), also in 1955. Margarita Flores Collazo explains the implication of the support of the *Partido Popular Democrático* for the establishment of the *Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña*:

La invención de lo nacional es una actividad social en virtud de la cual los individuos promueven sus propias construcciones simbólicas y compiten por hacerlas hegemónicas. (The invention of the national is a social activity in virtue of which individuals promote their own symbolic constructions and compete to make them hegemonic.) (1998, p. 177, my translation)

The creation of the *Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña* was an attempt by the PPD to crystallize their homogenous version of national culture that named culture, together with politics and the economy, as necessary elements for the modernization of Puerto Rico. While the focus of the ICP centered on elite artistic production as the official portrayal of autochthonous cultural representation, it did serve to unify differing political factions in the support of cultural development (Flores Collazo, 1998).

The *Academia Puertorriqueña de la Lengua* is significant not only because of its affiliation with the *Real Academia Española* but also because it was the last academy founded in Spanish speaking Latin America (“Será reconocido próximamente Academia Insular de la Lengua”, *El mundo*, 18 July 1952). The proceedings began for the formation of the *Academia* soon after the creation of the *Estado Libre Asociado* in 1952. The establishment of ELA marked the beginning of new political autonomy in Puerto Rico and the implications of this change spread to other social institutions. The formation of the *Academia Puertorriqueña de la Lengua* officially acknowledges that Spanish was the language of Puerto Ricans, uniting them linguistically with Spain and the other Spanish speaking nations of Latin America. The founding of the *Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña* and the *Academia Puertorriqueña de la Lengua*, together with the *Estado Libre Asociado*, marks the end of the first half century of U.S. colonization. Puerto Rico had gained greater political, cultural, and linguistic autonomy, but the

previous era's vision of outright independence was all but abandoned. The PPD's pragmatism did bring greater economic and cultural security to the Island, but it was at the expense of legitimizing prolonged colonialism under the United States.

Future research

The literature on language policy in the first half of the twentieth century in Puerto Rico has focused on the administrative and political actors that were influential in determining policy and those who maintained a direct dialogue with Washington. The few glimpses we find with reference to quotidian reality of language policy in the public schools are from literary works such as those by Abelardo Díaz Alfaro (1948) and René Marqués (1959). In order to gain a more comprehensive picture of popular attitudes and how language policies were actually implemented, conducting qualitative interviews with former students, parents, and educators who were affected by English language policy would shed light on the impact of language policy implementation. Due to the advanced age of this population, it would perhaps be challenging to identify informants, but compiling such information could be useful in evaluating the attitudes of people that were most directly affected by language policy that reflected broader sociopolitical trends. Examining grassroots reactions to language policy in the schools from the 1940 would be an opportunity to measure the dissemination of elite ideals to the masses. As a means of understanding the impetus behind U.S. language policy in Puerto Rico, examining both language attitudes in educational settings and the implementation of school language policy in the United States during the first half of the twentieth century would also

provide insight into the language ideologies that were played out through federal mandates in Puerto Rico.

Another possible area of research would be a survey of language and identity that examines Puerto Rican migrants in the continental U.S. as compared with returned Puerto Ricans migrants on the Island. Twenty percent of the Island's population is currently comprised of returned migrants. Their influence on the Spanish language itself and the assumed connection between Spanish language and Puerto Rican identity must be considered in the today's construction of Puerto Rican national identity (Zentella, 1990). This type of project could examine how life experience and different levels of bilingualism (or monolingualism in English) effect perceptions language and identity.

Lastly, Puerto Rico is often defined through its relationship with the United States rather than its geographic neighbors in the Caribbean. Other possible areas of investigation are comparative studies on language and identity that examines other island nations such as Cuba that went through a relatively parallel historical process in terms of its relationship with Spain until the end of the nineteenth century. Another point of comparison would be to examine language policy in other Caribbean island nations such as Aruba or Haiti that have faced the imposition of colonial languages and their favored status over creole languages as compared to Spanish in its role as an international language. It would also be interesting to conduct comparative studies of Puerto Rico with other former and current U.S. territories that spoke languages other than English at the time of U.S. acquisition such as Hawaii, New Mexico, the Philippines, and Guam.

Conclusions

In this thesis I have presented the construction of national identity in relation to the Spanish language as a product of elite efforts to define a national culture that was congruent with American ideals while maintaining a distinct sense of *puertorriqueñidad*. Language and identity are intimately interconnected. We have seen that identity based on language is dynamic due to ever-changing language policy, shifting attitudes and loyalties, and historical situations that dictate social control or domination. In the case of Puerto Rico, the threat of hegemonic language policies was perceived as a threat to the livelihood of the Spanish language, which cemented language's role as a symbol of Puerto Rican national identity.

Appendix

(Note: All appendix items found in the Colección Puertorriqueña,
Universidad de Puerto Rico, Recinto de Río Piedras.)

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