

# **BEING BILINGUAL IN PUERTO RICO**

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**In Puerto Rico, in spite of long-standing governmental designation of Spanish and English as co-official languages, bilingualism is a concept fraught with conflict.**



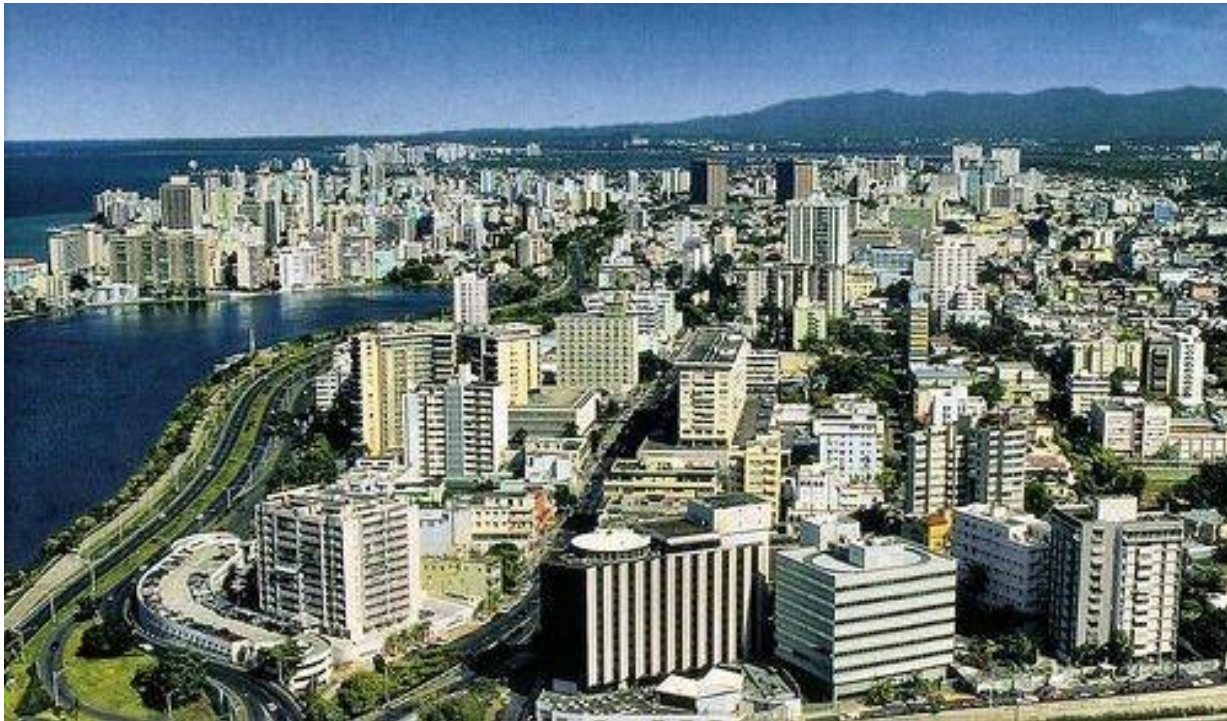
There are certainly many bilingual individuals, especially in academia, the professions, the tourist industry, and the world of business. However, Puerto Rico is not a bilingual society.

We need to keep in mind the basic differences between **individual bilingualism** and **societal bilingualism**.

In the 2000 Census, 82.4% of Puerto Ricans over the age of 18 claimed to speak English “less than very well.” This means that only 17.6% considered that they spoke English “very well.”



**In the immediate San Juan metro area, 20-42% of respondents reported speaking English “very well,” but this is not typical of most of the island.**





Outside of the San Juan metro area, the great majority of municipalities had only 10-14% of the adults reporting that they spoke English “very well,” and in the mountainous interior of the island, the level was only 0-9%.



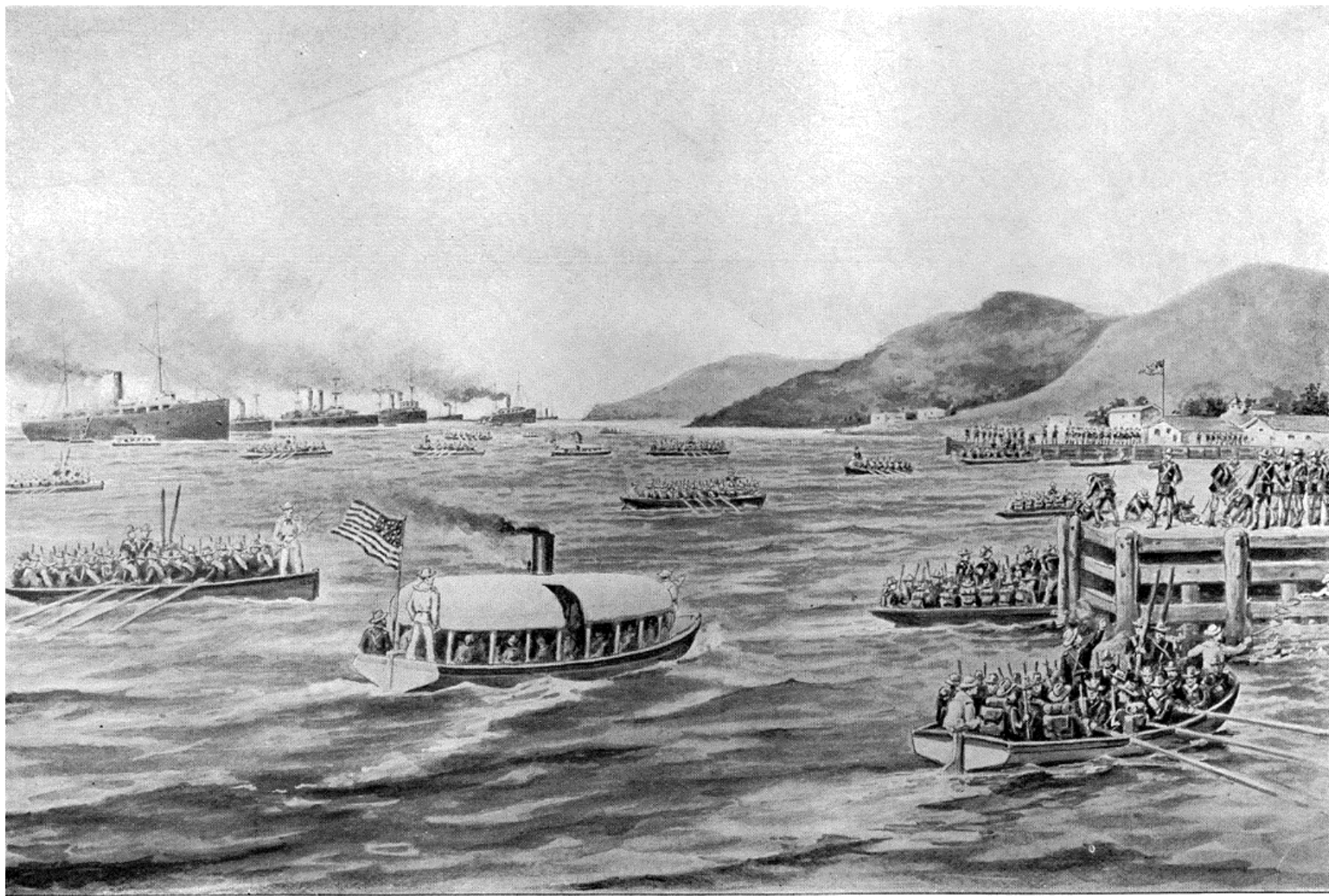
## Map 1: Municipalities with highest number of speakers who speak English "very well"



In order to understand the language situation of Puerto Rico, it is vital to consider the attitudes of the residents and the effects of the imposition of English back in 1898 when Puerto Rico was taken over by the United States.







THE INVASION OF PORTO RICO—LANDING OF THE ARMY COMMANDED BY GENERAL MILES, AT GUANICA,  
JULY 25, 1898.

**English in PR is positively viewed as:**

- useful in the modern globalized world;
- necessary for upward mobility;
- an enhancement of the repertoire of the individual.

## **English in PR is negatively viewed as:**

- a symbol of the island's rather schizophrenic relationship with the US;
- the potential usurper of Spanish and Puerto Rican culture at the societal level.

**This ambivalence towards English has long historical roots which must be kept in mind when teaching English or when discussing the benefits of bilingualism on the island.**



# **PR language policies (1898-present)**

**1898**--Puerto Rico ceded to U.S. under Treaty of Paris--military government and English as medium of instruction at all levels

**1900**--Foraker Act installs civil administration with governor and commissioner of education appointed by U.S.

**1902**—Official Languages Act passed—English & Spanish co-official

**1917--Jones Act declares Puerto Ricans to be U.S. citizens (although unable to vote for own governor or for U.S. president)**

**1917-1934--Spanish as medium of instruction in grades 1-8; English as medium of instruction in grades 9-12.**

**1934-1942--Spanish as medium of instruction in grades 1-2 with English as subject in grades 3- 8, Spanish and English with increasing emphasis on English in high school, English as medium of instruction with Spanish as subject.**



**1945-46--bills** proposing Spanish as sole medium of instruction passed by Puerto Rican legislature but vetoed by President Truman.

**1947--**Puerto Ricans given right to elect own governor

**1948--**Luis Muñoz Marín elected as governor and appoints Villaronga as Commissioner of **Education**

**1949-pres.--**Spanish as medium of instruction at all levels with English as mandatory subject

**1991--Official Languages Act revoked and Spanish declared sole official language of Puerto Rico**

**1992--Official Languages Act reinstated-- Spanish and English returned as co-official languages of Puerto Rico**



Nationalistic pride is very prominent in Puerto Rico. No matter what their views regarding the appropriate relationship to the United States, Puerto Ricans highly value their local language and culture and do not wish to give it up.





# English presence in PR

- newspapers
- magazines
- radio stations
- cable TV
- street and product names
- commercial signs



Sears

K  
kmart



OfficeMax®

JCPenney

BEST  
BUY

THE  
HOME  
DEPOT





# More English presence

- Federal Court
  - tourism
  - Hollywood movies
  - long-term US residents
- 
- professionals required to make reports in English (e.g. doctors, accountants, lawyers, architects, etc.)





# English in education

- Required subject from kindergarten until university in both public and private schools.
- Some bilingual and English-only schools
- Countless commercial institutes dedicated to English teaching









Instituto Nacional para el Desarrollo Curricular

# Curricular Framework



## English Program



Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico  
Departamento de Educación

# Inglés sin Barreras

El Video-Maestro de Inglés Conversacional

**Hable  
Inglés**

francés, alemán, español  
y otros.

**Berlitz**

**130 Years**  
*of innovation*

## ABRA SU MUNDO A UN NUEVO IDIOMA

- Método conversacional, instrucción individual en grupos.
- Cursos para niños desde 5 años en adelante.
- Cursos en EEUU, Canadá y Europa y programas para empresas.
- Cursos de Inmersión Total® (6 a 10 horas diarias)
- Más de 130 años de experiencia y 500 centros en 50 países alrededor del mundo.

### Nuevo:

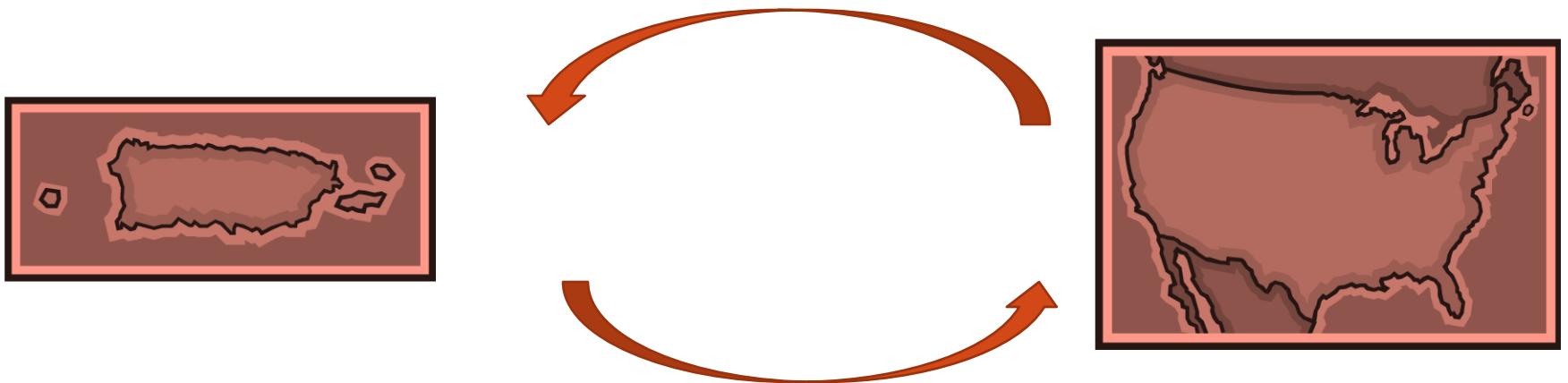
- Cursos de idioma Inglés por internet. • Cursos de preparación cultural.





# Circular migration

- Constant migratory flow between U.S. and PR
- Thousands of PRs relocate to States for periods of time, learn English, and then return to occupy positions which require using English on a regular basis.



When speakers of one language are in contact with another language, particularly if that other language is spoken by a politically or economically dominant group, it is completely natural for there to be cross-linguistic influences.



Bilinguals often mix elements of one language into another, creating new and innovative forms. Puerto Ricans are known among Hispanics for their tendency to incorporate English into their Spanish.





**Word borrowing, code switching,**  
and even the creation of a new  
variety of English (**Puerto Rican**  
**English**) are definitely taking place  
in PR.

This is viewed with alarm by many  
writers, teachers, and intellectuals.



## **AVISO IMPORTANTE**

### **Asegurarse de:**

Cerrar Cristales & Sun Roof

Bajar Antena o Quitarla

Apagar "Rain Sensor"

Pickups - Remover Todo Objeto  
del Área de Carga

### **NO SOMOS RESPONSABLES DE:**

Varetas o Bumpers Suelos o Con Golpes

Espejos Retrovisores

Racks

Wipers

Tablillas Decorativas o Adornos

Piezas Pegadas Previamente

Accesorios No Originales



*Tan buena como  
encontrar un parking  
frente al building*

**BUD LIGHT**

**BUD  
LIGHT**  
BEER

*Brewed with the finest  
ingredients for a*

**BUD  
LIGHT**  
BEER

*with the finest  
ingredients for a*

# REFRESCANTES Y SABROSOS COMPLEMENTOS

**0. PAY**

## REFRESCOS



**GRD**  
**1.75**  
**MD**  
**1.50**  
**SG**  
**1.25**



## JUGOS



**Tropicana**

**CHINA O MANTANA**  
12 oz.  
**2.15**  
16 oz.  
**1.65**  
18 oz.  
**1.45**

**FRUIT PUNCH**  
12 oz.  
**1.75**  
16 oz.  
**1.50**  
18 oz.  
**1.25**

## PAPAS FRITAS



**GRD**  
**1.79**  
**MD**  
**1.55**  
**SG**  
**1.10**

## MAC & CHEESE



**SG**  
**1.10**

## CHICHON BROS



**GRD**  
**1.89**  
**MD**  
**1.75**

## CHEEZY POPS



**7 pieces**  
**1.75**

## LECHE O CHOCOLATINA



**8 oz.**  
**1.00**

## BATIDAS

**VANILLA - CHOCOLATE**  
**FRUIT - BLISS**



**GRD**  
**2.99**  
**MD**  
**2.35**  
**SG**  
**1.79**

## CAFE



**CAPPUCCINO**  
**BARISTA - VANILLA**  
**GRD**  
**1.55**  
**MD**  
**1.20**  
**ESPRESSO**  
**GRD**  
**1.20**  
**MD**  
**.95**

## HERSHEY'S PIE



**1.65**

## GALLETAS



**1.10**

## CONFEITE



**1.50**

## APPLE PIE



**1.10**

## SEMOLE



**1.49**

## AYER



**1.55**



**GRD**  
**2.89**  
**MD**  
**2.49**



**CELEBRA TU CUMPLEAÑOS**  
**EN BURGER KING**  
**1-800-981-4731**



**HERSHEY'S**  
**PIE**



# NUEVAS TARIFAS POSTALES

A partir del 30 de junio de 2002

Los nuevos sellos  
de 37 centavos  
estarán de venta  
el 7 de junio

## First-Class Mail®

Cartas y encomiendas, peso máximo: 1 oz.	\$0.37
Onza adicional	\$0.25
Sobrecarga por envíos de tamaño irregular	\$0.12
Tarjetas postales	\$0.25
Tarjetas prefranqueadas	\$0.25

## Priority Mail®

1 lb. Peso máximo y sobres de tamaño único	\$3.85
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## Express Mail®

Peso máximo de 1/2 lb.	\$13.65
más de 1/2 lb., hasta 2 lbs.	\$17.65

## Servicios especiales

Correo Certificado (Certified)	\$2.10
Entrega restringida (Restricted Delivery)	\$5.00
Cupo postal (Money Order)	
Nacional (\$0.01 - \$500)	\$0.90
Nacional (\$500.01 - \$1,000)	\$1.35
Aviso de recibo (Return Receipt)	\$1.75
Aviso de recibo de mercancías	\$3.00
Confirmación de entrega (Delivery Confirmation™)	
Envío de Priority Mail	\$0.45
Envío de First Class y Encomiendas	\$0.35
Confirmación de entrega con firma (Signature Confirmation™)	
Envío de Priority Mail, First Class y Encomiendas	\$1.80
Seguro para correo ordinario (Insured Mail)	
Cobertura de \$50.00 máximo	\$1.00
de \$50.01 to \$100	\$2.20
de \$100.01 to \$5,000	\$2.20 más
	\$1.00 por cada \$100







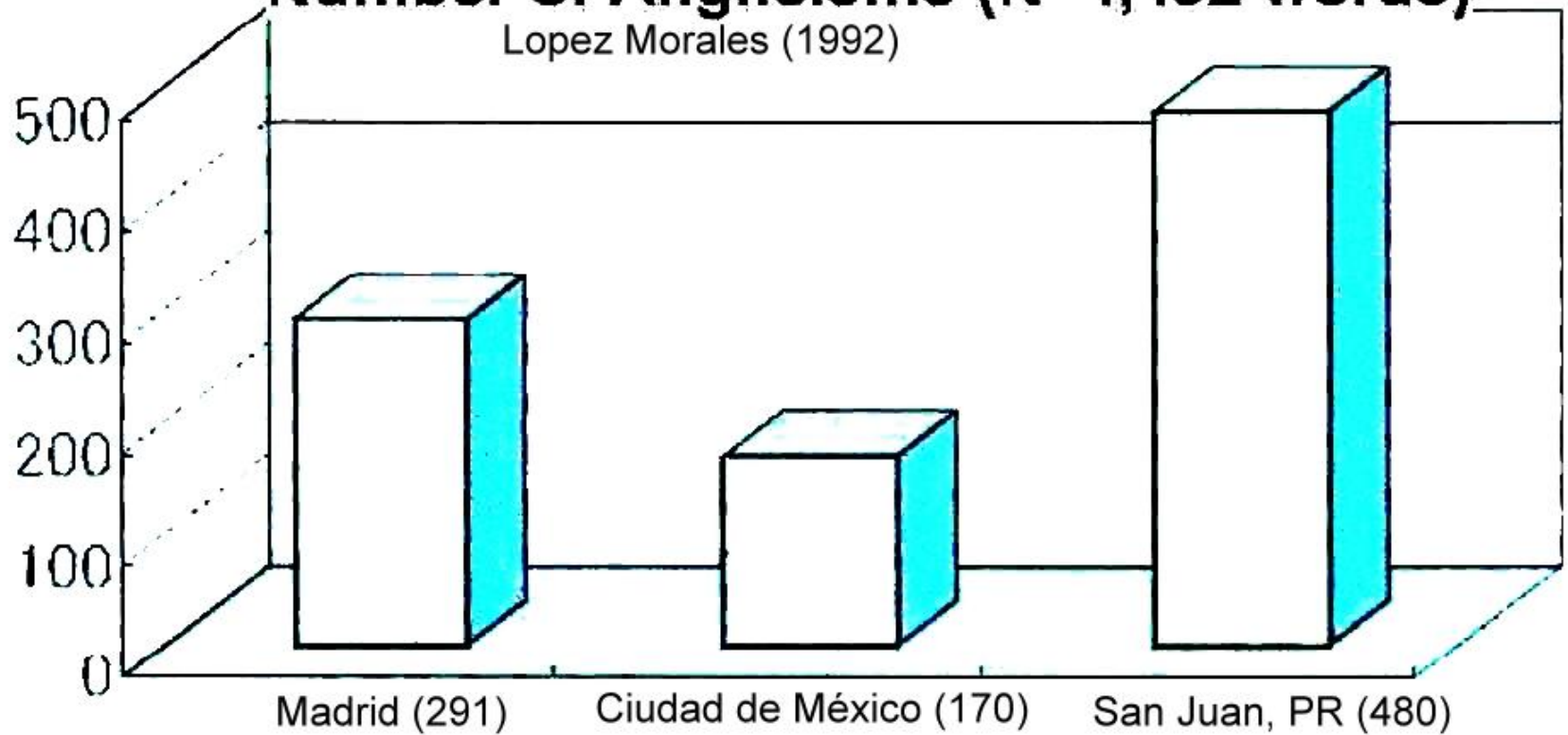
However, the reality is that this is a global trend and seen in virtually all Spanish-speaking countries to some extent.



Linguist Humberto López Morales did a comparative study of the use of **Anglicisms** in Madrid, Mexico City, and San Juan, PR in 1992.

## Number of Anglicisms (N=4,452 words)

Lopez Morales (1992)

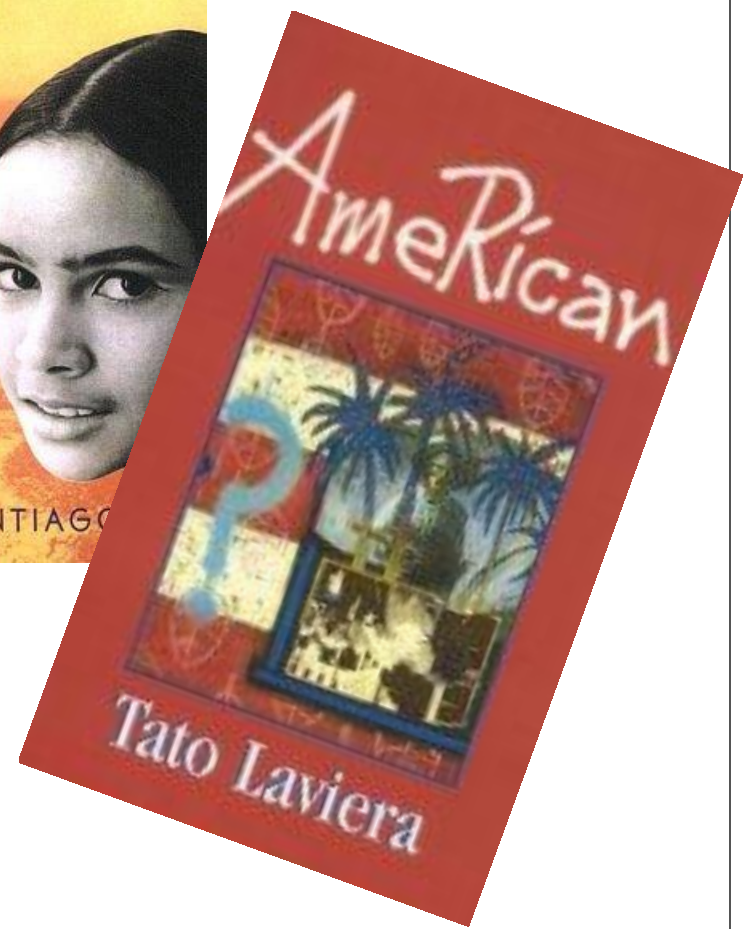
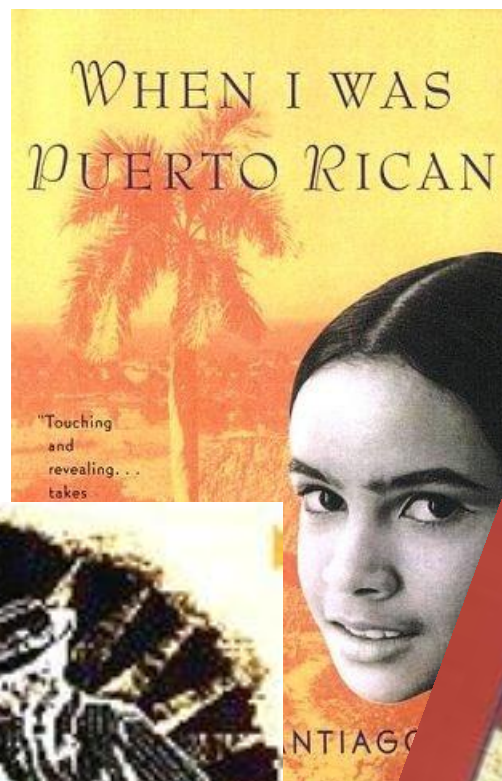




**Code switching** is a common part of being bilingual, but even monolinguals code switch when they alternate between casual and formal styles or when they integrate elements of other dialects into their speech.



A number of Puerto Rican **poets and writers** (both on and off the island) have opted to utilize both Spanish and English in their literary products. Good examples are: Ana Lydia Vega, Rosario Ferré, Luis Rafael Sánchez, Pedro Juan Soto, Pedro Pietri, Tato Laviera, Sandra Esteves, Esmeralda Santiago, Ana Castillo, Jack Agueros, Nicolasa Mohr, etc.



## **Excerpt from: Velluda: Alliterated y eslembao by Tato Laviera**

canela browned in deep tan caribbean  
sweet lips almost sabroso tasted by  
a cariñoso sentiment, y buena que estás  
en gusto affection that cries  
out loud: qué chévere tú eres,  
como canela brown warrior woman  
diplomática with her terms.



It would actually be more surprising if there weren't any English influence upon the Spanish of Puerto Rico, given the many ways in which English makes its presence felt on the island.

# Influence of English on PR Spanish



- Anglicisms are most common among doctors, lawyers, engineers, media and least common among teachers
- People involved in auto mechanics, sports, fashion /beauty, and computer technology are highly prone to using loanwords.





# Anglicisms in San Juan press

María Vaquero (1990)

1) Creating a Spanish-looking word based on an English word form instead of its Spanish equivalent, for example, *coincidentalmente* instead of *de forma coincidente*.





## 2) Using Spanish words with English meanings

e.g., *bloques* [building blocks] for “street blocks” instead of *cuadras*



3) Loan translation: translating literally from English into Spanish

*e.g., hacer sentido* to mean “make sense”



# Syntactic influences in PR

Lipski (1996: 358)

- ¿Cómo te gustó la playa? [How did you like the beach?]
- El problema está siendo considerado. [The problem is being considered.]
- Te llamo para atrás. [I'll call you back.]
- Él sabe cómo hablar inglés. [He knows how to speak English.]



# Commonly heard in PR

- *La guagua está supuesta llegar a las 11:15.* [The bus is supposed to arrive at 11:15.]
- Standard Spanish: *Se supone que la guagua llegue a las 11:15.*



# Amparo Morales (1986, 2001)

- Looked at use of present continuous verb *¿Qué estás haciendo?* [What are you doing?] instead of simple present: *¿Qué haces?*
- Is this due to the influence of English?

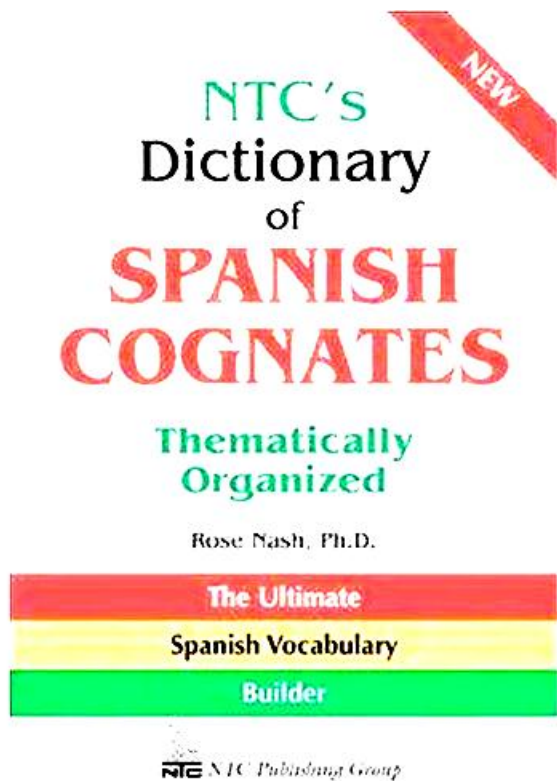




# **Morales' conclusions**

- Syntactic influences low in frequency
- Found in other Hispanic speech communities
- Sometimes occur where little or no English influence can be documented
- May represent older forms of Spanish
- Not every variation in syntax is automatically due to English

# Development of PR English



- Rose Nash (1971) coined term *Englañol* to describe English spoken by Puerto Ricans in PR
- Englañol has false cognates used in a Spanish manner, loan translations, and spelling pronunciations.

# Syntactic characteristics of PRE

Joan Fayer et al. (1998)

- Inverted word order  
e.g., *They tell me how important is the bill for them.*
- New lexical creations based on English forms  
e.g., *There are many urbanizations in Puerto Rico.*



- borrowings from Spanish, e.g., *I was stuck in the tapón.*



- hybrid compounds utilizing English and Spanish words, e.g., *Many people were arrested at the drug punto.*

Mixed language varieties are quite common and do not imply inferiority. Both standard English and standard Spanish descended from highly hybridized (even **creolized**) varieties. It is difficult to convince teachers of this reality, since they are entrusted with perpetuating standard language forms.





The ones who suffer the most from negative attitudes toward mixed varieties are **return migrant** children who were criticized in the States because they didn't speak standard English and are criticized in Puerto Rico because they don't speak standard Spanish.



# **Conclusion**

The politics of language is complex in Puerto Rico. There are no easy answers, just layers of nuances that need to be considered in each situation. Advocating bilingualism seems practical but is laden with political baggage.

The worst linguistic mistake that the U.S. government can make is to underestimate the language loyalty of the Puerto Rican people. **English-only** will not work as a policy in Puerto Rico. Even the most pro-American forces on the island will not support any moves that undermine the continued use of Spanish.



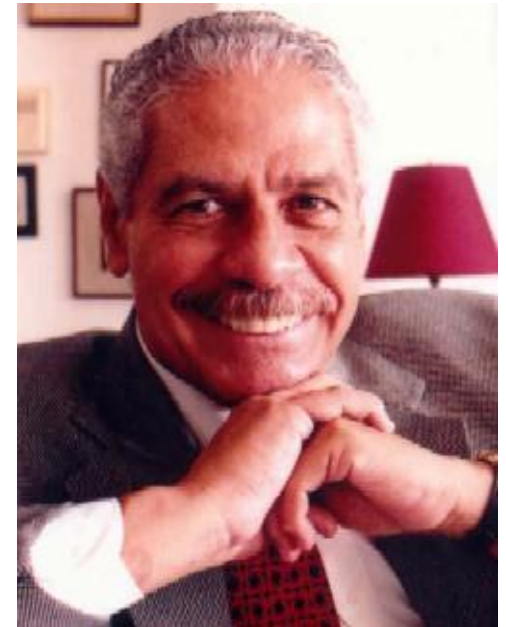
What's the difference  
between

**ENGLISH  
ONLY**

and

**WHITES  
ONLY?**

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of the situation in Puerto Rico is that **bilingualism is often feared as a step toward displacing Spanish.** Puerto Rican writer Luis Rafael

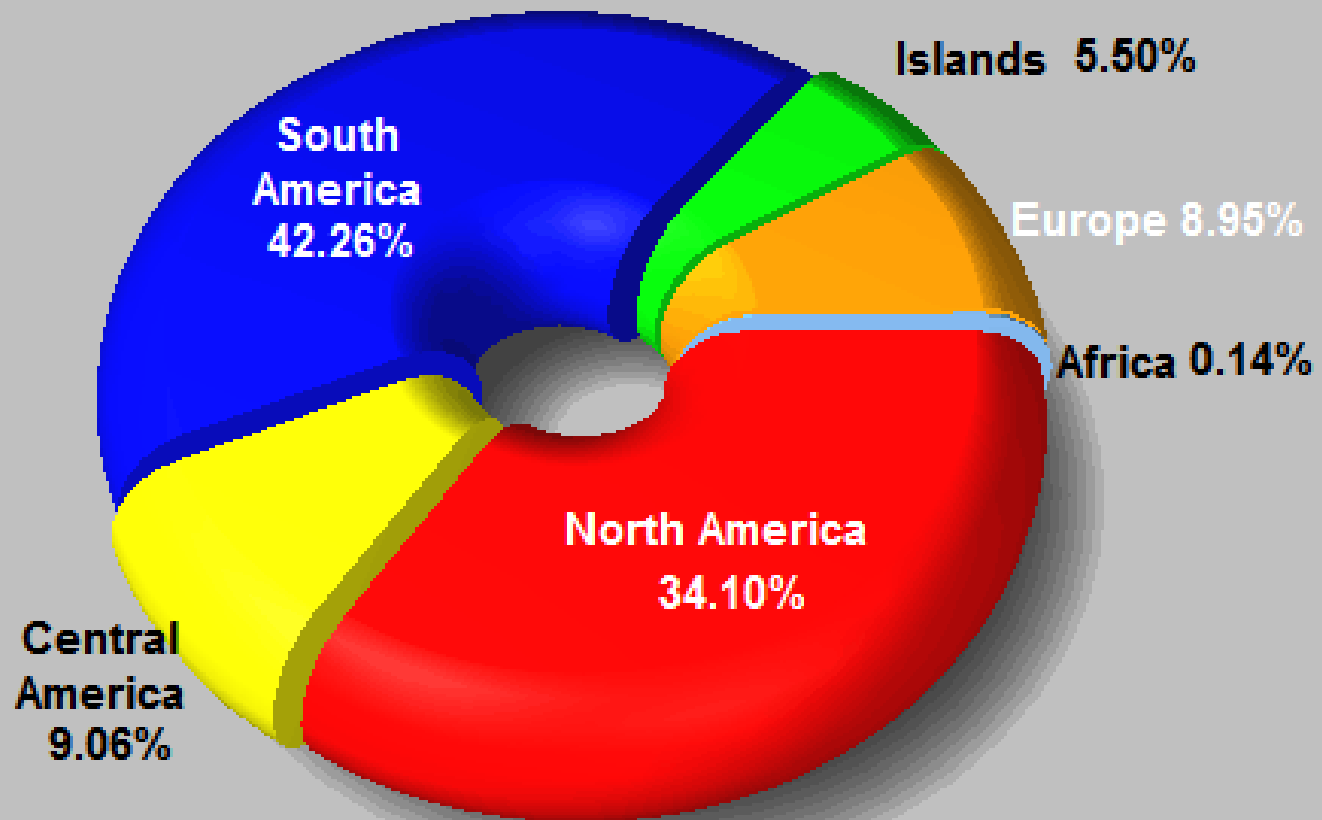


Sanchez has declared: "todo proyecto bilingüe se hace si se reafirma la lengua vernácula". (All bilingual projects will be supported if they reaffirm the native language.)

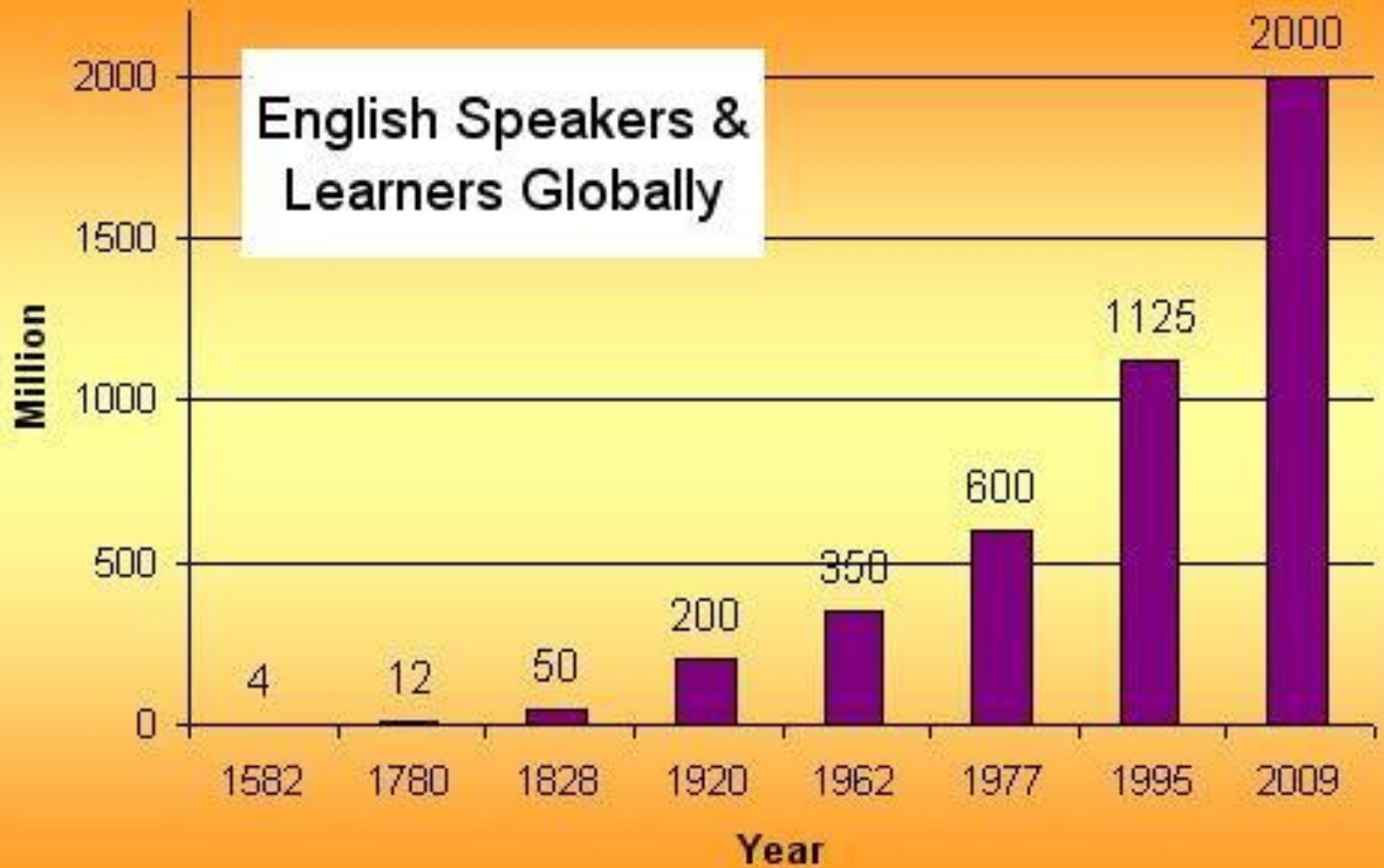
**The greatest contribution that linguists and language teachers can make is to defuse as much as possible the partisan politics related to bilingualism and keep the discussion focused on scientifically-verified findings regarding the personal and societal benefits of being bilingual.**



# Worldwide Spanish Speaking Population (by regions in percentages)



## English Speakers & Learners Globally



And, of course, we need to make it crystal clear that bilingualism means “two languages.” There is absolutely no reason why Spanish should be displaced or disrespected in the process of learning English.



**THE END / FIN**