Teaching English in Puerto Rico without endangering Spanish[1]

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ABSTRACT

This paper considers how English and Spanish can be taught in a complementary rather than conflicting manner in Puerto Rico to develop and strengthen the students' overall linguistic repertoire. It departs from a number of basic premises regarding the normalcy of multilingualism, the commonalities and differences between first and second language acquisition, the advisability of establishing literacy in the child's vernacular before teaching literacy in a second language, the need to give priority to language arts in the curriculum, the equality of Spanish and English as world languages, and the political nature of statements regarding English as a "threat" to Spanish in Puerto Rico. It concludes with concrete solutions to the current conflict.

1.0 Introduction

Periodically in Puerto Rico (usually in election years), the issue of language

bubbles up to the surface of public consciousness. In May of 2012, Governor Fortuño

announced a plan to teach science and math in English in 31 public elementary schools

as a pilot for a more extensive language policy change that would eventually impact all

of the public schools on the island and create a "Bilingual Generation" by 2022 (Agencia

EFE, 2012; Alvarado, 2012; BBC Mundo, 2012). Some of the media hailed this as a

"great innovation" without considering any of the previous policies with regard to

teaching English in Puerto Rico. Among these were the English-only mandates of the

U.S. Commissioners of Education in Puerto Rico between 1898 and 1948 (Negrón de

Montilla, 1976; Algren de Gutiérrez,1983), the bilingual education programs for return

migrants during the 1980s (Vazquez, 1993), Secretary of Public Instruction Awilda Aponte Roque's attempt in 1986 to postpone English literacy training until the third grade, and Victor Fajardo's ill-fated Proyecto para Formar el Ciudadano Bilingüe of 1997 (Molina Iturrondo, 1999; Irizarry & Vázquez,1999). The historical amnesia that afflicts modern, industrialized societies is never more apparent than in the constant, repetitive, and contentious wrangling over language in Puerto Rico. The best corrective is careful study of the past (see Pousada 1999).

In this paper, I hope to clarify some aspects of the controversy and try to reveal ways in which Puerto Rican educators can build up children's language repertoires in both languages so that Spanish and English complement rather than conflict with each other. I will do this by exploring a number of key issues, namely:

- the normalcy of multilingualism on a global level,

- the commonalities and differences that exist between first and second language acquisition,

- the advisability of establishing literacy in the child's vernacular before teaching literacy in a second language,

- the need to give priority to language arts in the curriculum,

- the equality of Spanish and English as world languages, and

- the political nature of statements regarding English as a "threat" to Spanish in Puerto Rico.

I will conclude by recommending some concrete solutions to the current conflict that emphasize positive growth in both the students and in Puerto Rican society as a whole.

2.0 The multilingual norm

Multilingualism is the norm in most of the world. According to David Crystal (1997, p. 14), approximately two-thirds of the world's children are raised in multilingual environments. If we examine Table 1 (extracted from the Ethnologue data presented by Lewis, 2009), we see the distribution of the approximately 7,000 existing languages around the world (these include sign languages and pidgins and creoles, as well as varieties that might be considered as dialects by some scholars).

Table 1: Distribution of languages by area (www.ethnologue.com)		
Region	Languages	% of total
Africa	2,092	30.3
Americas	1,002	14.5
Asia	2,269	32.8
Europe	239	3.5
Pacific	1,310	19.0
Totals	6,912	100.0

When we consider that there are only between 189 and 196 countries in the world, the exact number varying according to the political agenda of the counter (U.S. State Department, 2012; World Atlas, 2012; Political Geography Now, 2012), it is abundantly obvious that most countries must contain more than a single language. According to the figures on the Ethnologue website (Lewis, 2009), the countries with the most languages

currently in use are: Papua New Guinea (830), Indonesia (719), Nigeria (514), India (438), and Mexico (291). However, about 40% of the world's people speak one of the eight most common languages as their mother tongue. These languages are Mandarin, Hindi, Spanish, English, Bengali, Portuguese, Arabic, and Russian. (It's important for us here in Puerto Rico to note that both Spanish and English are among the top 8 languages.)

Learning additional languages can be accomplished without displacing the mother tongue of a given population. A quick look at the European Union, India, New Zealand, and Singapore reveals how multilingual populations can maintain their vernaculars along with another national or official language plus languages of wider use from around the world, depending on the peculiarities of their particular history of contact with other cultures (e.g., trade, cultural and educational exchanges, colonialism, former union, etc.).

In Finland, for example, language rights are stipulated in the Constitution. Finnish and Swedish are both national languages, and Saami (the language of the indigenous, nomadic Laplanders) has protected status as a regional language. According to the Finnish National Board of Education (2012), Swedish immigrants account for 5.5% of the population and Sami speakers, for 0.03%.[2] Romani (the gypsy language) is also spoken by small groups in Finland (Institute for the Languages of Finland, 2012). Finnish and Swedish are languages of instruction at all educational levels, and all Finnish citizens are expected to master both languages as an act of Nordic unity. Most schools utilize either Finnish or Swedish as their medium of instruction, but there are

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[2] The goal of Finnish immigrant education is to integrate immigrants into Finnish society while maintaining their cultural integrity and fostering functional bilingualism.

also bilingual secondary vocational institutions and universities which use both languages. The study of the two national languages throughout the educational process is seen as a means of fostering internationalist perspectives and of facilitating the study of additional languages. Saami serves as the language of some basic, secondary, and vocational schools in the Saami-speaking areas, and it is possible for non-Saami speakers to take Saami as one of their foreign languages in school.

All Finnish children have to study at least one modern foreign language as well as the second national language. Instruction in the first foreign language begins in grades 1-3 and continues for at least 7 years. Teaching of the second national language begins in grade 7, if the student has not voluntarily studied it earlier, and continues for at least 3 years (Finnish National Board of Education, 2005, p. 39). While English has no official status in the country[3], it is the most frequently taught foreign language in the primary and secondary schools, so that virtually everyone speaks English to a certain degree. This is viewed as an extremely practical measure, since people in other countries are highly unlikely to learn Finnish.

Table 2 summarizes the language education policy of Finland.

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[3] Finland belongs to Kachru's expanding circle of English-speaking countries (Kachru, 1992).
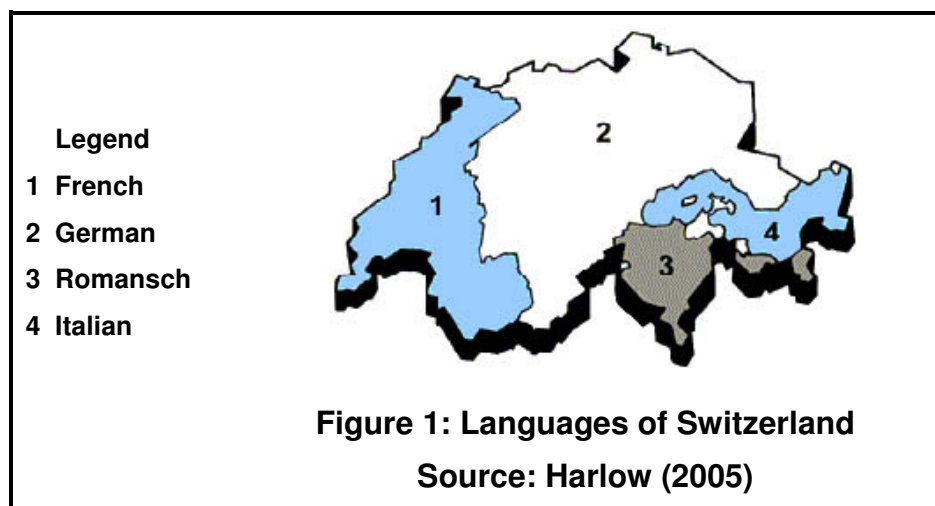
Grade	Age	% students	Language
1st	7	7%	A1 (1st foreign lg. [obligatory])
2nd	8	12%	A1
3rd	9	81%	A1
4th	10	5%	A2 (2nd foreign lg. [optional])
5th	11	95%	A2
6th	12		
7th	13	100%	B1 (2nd national lg. [obligatory])
8th	14		B2 (3rd foreign lg.[optional])
9th	15		B2
high school	16-18		B3 (4th foreign lg. [optional])

Table 2: Finnish language choices as function of learner age
Source: Finnish National Board of Education (2012)

In Switzerland, language policy is territorially-based, and different languages are used in different regions: (1) French along the French border, (2) German along the German border, and (3) Romansch (a Romance language) and (4) Italian along the Italian border (see Figure 1). Contrary to common belief, the distribution of the languages does not correspond exactly with the political divisions known as cantons, since there are three bilingual French and German cantons and one trilingual German, Romansch, and Italian canton. They also do not correspond to religious boundaries, since French and German-speaking regions are almost evenly divided between historically Protestant and historically Catholic cantons (Grin, 1998). For most

purposes, life in a particular region is carried out monolingually, with the exception of the Romansch-speaking areas which are language islands in the midst of German-speaking communities.
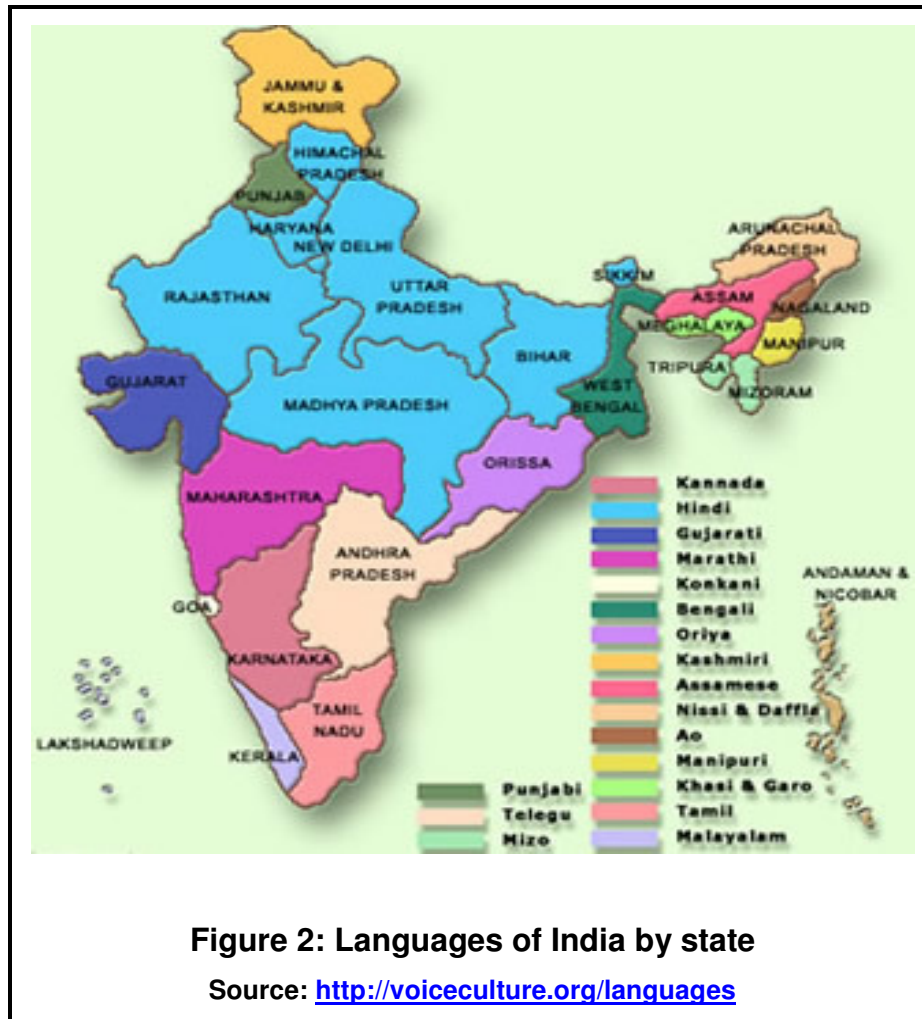
Approximately 64% of the Swiss speak German in standard or dialectal form, 19% speak French, 8% speak Italian, and less than 1% speak Romansch (Grin, 1998, p 1). The situation (which has been relatively stable for centuries) has recently experienced pressure from English as part of globalization. The result has been that many Swiss now consider it enough to learn English as the first and perhaps only foreign language and neglect the acquisition of another national language. This is particularly true in Zurich, the most economically powerful canton. Critics see this as a de-legitimization of the national languages

Nevertheless, Switzerland's language policy seems to be successful and a model for peaceful coexistence among linguistically diverse communities.

Legend
1 French
2 German
3 Romansch
4 Italian

Figure 1: Languages of Switzerland
Source: Harlow (2005)

In contrast, India was originally divided during the British rule into 24 States and 8 Union Territories which cut across ethnolinguistic, religious, and social lines and caused great conflict among the people. After modern reorganization, each state has at least one dominant linguistic group comprising more than fifty percent of its total population and several minority languages. Employment opportunities also foment internal migration, and this creates new linguistic minorities (Mallikarjun, 2004a). In addition, Hindi and English function as national languages. Children learn their local community language, and then do their studies in the official state language, with Hindi and English added as they progress through the grades. Being trilingual or quadrilingual is a normal state of affairs for an educated person (Mallikarjun, 2004b). Indian English is a distinctive variety with its own particular phonology (accent) and borrowings from local Indian languages. In 2004, according to Sahai (2009), 82,537 books were published in India, 21,370 in Hindi (26%) and 18,752 in English (24%).

Figure 2 shows the distribution of languages in India today.

Figure 2: Languages of India by state
Source: http://voiceculture.org/languages

Turning to the South Pacific, Singapore is a small nation located next to Malaysia (see Figure 3). It was a British possession for many years, but it is populated by ethnic groups from various regions of China, Malaysia, and India. As a result, it is a highly multilingual society. This is enhanced by its important role in international trade and banking. Its limited size and lack of arable land make it dependent on other nations for certain goods, but its economic specialization in "wealth management" allows it to buy the products it cannot produce.

Figure 3: Map of Singapore

Source: http://www.alsintl.com/resources/countries/Singapore/

In Singapore, there are four official languages: English, Malay, Mandarin, and Tamil. There are also speakers of other Chinese and Indian languages like: Hokkien, Teochew, Cantonese, Hakka, Hainanese, Malayalam, Telugu, Kannada, Hindi, Punjabi, and Gujarati. At home, about 51% of the people speak dialects of Chinese. Table 3 shows the language shift between 1990 and 200 among Mandarin and other Chinese dialects, as well as English, as home languages within the Chinese-origin population.

Table 3: Percentage of Singaporeans speaking specific languages as home languages

Sources: Lee Eu Fah (2009) & Singapore Census 2010

Home language	1990	2000	2010
English	19.3	23.9	32.6
Mandarin	30.1	45.1	47.7
Chinese Dialects	50.3	30.7	19.2
Others	0.3	0.4	0.4

English is the language of instruction in all government schools with the mother tongue or "ethnic language" (Mandarin, Malay, or Tamil) used for imparting moral education classes at the primary school level and as a "second language" at all levels. Most Singaporeans are bilingual in English and one of the other three official languages. This situation was arrived at after considerable language planning on the part of the government. There were "speak English" campaigns as well as "speak Mandarin" campaigns. The English spoken in Singapore is marked by elements from the other languages, and it is often known as Singlish.

We have seen briefly how four highly multilingual societies function. Each has elements that we should consider in planning language policy in Puerto Rico. Now let us turn to the second point of departure in our analysis of language teaching in Puerto Rico: the commonalities and differences between L1 and L2 acquisition.

3.0 Commonalities and differences between L1 and L2 acquisition

The processes of first and second language acquisition share a number of common features. In both cases, the process is gradual and cumulative, is motivated by the need to communicate, requires meaningful input, proceeds at the pace of the learner, and utilizes similar strategies (e.g, simple structures in beginning with over‐generalization of word meaning, regularization of irregular structures, and eventual identification of patterns).

However, there are key differences which must be taken into account. In the case of first language acquisition, the infant comes to the task with virtually no knowledge of the world, limited mental capacity, a short memory, and no access to literate skills. Acquisition occurs naturally (unconsciously) within the family environment with little teaching involved. Everyone around the baby is very tolerant of errors (even encouraging them at times). All phonological systems are accessible, and the infant regularly produces a wide range of sounds that are not present in the speech community in which he/she is being raised and later settles upon those that are part of the phonological repertoire of the languages spoken there.

In the case of second language acquisition, much depends on the age of the learner. When the L2 is acquired along with the L1 in simultaneous acquisition or bilingual first language acquisition (Grosjean, 2010), the process of L2 acquisition is virtually identical to that of L1 acquisition, the main difference being the access to two different grammars and two different lexicons. When the L2 acquisition occurs in late childhood, adolescence, or even adulthood, the learner is more experienced, knows

how languages work, can abstract patterns, and has an extended memory. Acquisition often occurs consciously in a school setting through direct instruction.

Ideally, all children would be exposed to two or more languages in the home from infancy. Bilingual first language acquisition has many benefits. Since the child is exposed on a daily basis to the two languages, he or she acquires the two phonologies as a native speaker and does not have a non-native accent in either language. Recent neuroradiological studies by Dr. Joy Hirsh at Columbia University indicate that when children acquire both languages together in infancy, they are stored in the same place in the brain (Language Bulletin, 2012). As a result, there may be an initial period of melding of the lexicon of the two languages which might appear to the uninformed observer to be a delay in the acquisition of vocabulary in a given language. However, when counts are made of words acquired (rather than concepts), bilingual children regularly outperform monolingual children in interpretation of ambiguous stimuli, cognitive flexibility (or divergent thinking), and metalinguistic awareness (Bialystok, 2001).

In Puerto Rico, bilingual first language acquisition is generally only possible for a small segment of the population which includes children with one or both parents who are bilingual, children whose primary caretakers speak a different language from that of the parents, and return migrant children who grew up surrounded by both Spanish and English in ethnic enclaves in the U.S. before arriving in Puerto Rico. For those families, bilingual education makes the most sense, since the children are equipped from the outset with skills in two languages, and to not develop these would be to waste a precious natural asset. Of course, such decisions are up to the parents, and they may

choose to educate their children in Spanish or English only, reasoning that the other language is already sufficiently well-developed in the child through other means.

For the great majority of Puerto Rican children, learning English will take place in school. However, those who attend bilingual pre-schools will have an advantage over those who do not. If the Department of Education is truly serious about creating a bilingual population, it should look carefully at the pre-schools which is where the foundation for linguistic skills is established. It should also look carefully at the use of cable TV and closed-caption DVDs as learning tools, since all indications are that the present generation of Puerto Rican children is heavily influenced by the English heard via these audiovisual media.

Let us now turn to consider the advisability of establishing literacy in the mother tongue before teaching literacy in L2.

4.0 Establishing literacy in L1 before teaching literacy in L2

As we have seen, most Puerto Rican children learn English in formal classroom settings, and research indicates that the best way for children to learn a second language in a formal setting is by building upon a solid framework of the native language. UNESCO has consistently supported the development of the mother tongue in schooling. In its 1953 guidelines, it states: "Mother tongue instruction is essential for initial instruction and literacy and should be extended to as late a stage in education as possible" and later, "every pupil should begin his [or her] formal education in his [or her] mother tongue." (UNESCO, 1953, p. 68) More recently, UNESCO's 2003 Education Position Paper titled "Education in a multilingual world," declares that:

>Studies have shown that, in many cases, instruction in the mother tongue is beneficial to language competencies in the first language, achievement in other subject areas, and second language learning. (UNESCO, 2003a, p. 15)

Later in the same paper, we find this statement: "UNESCO supports mother tongue instruction as a means of improving educational quality by building upon the knowledge and experience of the learners and teachers." (UNESCO, 2003a, p. 30). Also in 2003, UNESCO's bulletin *Education Today* asserts that:

>Years of research have shown that children who begin their education in their mother tongue make a better start, and continue to perform better, than those for whom school starts with a new language. The same applies to adults seeking to become literate. (UNESCO, 2003b, p. 1)

On the other hand, we also know that second language instruction should be initiated as early as material, social and educational conditions permit so as to favor the likelihood of a positive, enjoyable, and non-threatening learning experience (Singleton 1992). Thus the issue becomes one of balancing the full development of the vernacular with the development of the second language.

Because of serious economic limitations, public schools in Puerto Rico are often characterized by deficient infrastructure (broken windows, flooded classrooms, inadequate ventilation, etc.), lack of well-trained and consistent staffing, lack of teaching materials, etc. This makes learning anything, even in Spanish, problematic. Former Education Secretary, Gloria Baquero, has pointed out that many Puerto Rican teachers themselves struggle with English and are not in a position to impart content in that language (Maxwell, 2012). Francisco Moreno, academic director of Spain's Cervantes Institute, indicated during his May 2012 visit to Puerto Rico that locating trained

teachers would be a major obstacle in implementing the Governor's plan (Agencia EFE, 2012).

Given this situation, it makes sense to devote resources to providing a higher quality education in the vernacular, Spanish. A good preparation in Spanish develops the content knowledge and language awareness needed to make input in English meaningful. In addition, since the concept of "literacy" is only acquired once and then generalized to other languages, developing strong literacy skills in the language of daily communication (Spanish) helps to jumpstart the process of acquiring literacy skills in English. The similarity in alphabets, physical orientation of text, and overall literacy conventions further insure a transfer of literacy skills from Spanish to English.

5.0 Language arts as foundation of curriculum

Language arts must be given priority in the school curriculum because they are the basis for all other subjects. In fact, the entire process of pre-university education can be seen as a linguistic process in which students acquire the vocabulary and concepts which permit abstract thinking, academic discourse, and analysis. Without the language, you cannot impart the content associated with the other school subjects.

Language Arts as a field is generally taken to include the following components:

- **Oral Communication -** producing intelligible speech sounds, presenting ideas orally in an effective manner,

- **Phonics and fluency-** associating speech sounds with written symbols through letter recognition, blending, and decoding, sounding out familiar and unfamiliar words in text while reading which leads to fluency in oral reading

- **Vocabulary** – expanding general and academic lexicon, learning synonyms, antonyms, ambiguous words, prefixes, suffixes, parts of speech, and using context clues to expand oral, written, and spoken competence.

- **Grammar and Written Conventions** - developing skills in spelling, punctuation, parts of speech, verb tenses and sentence types which leads to superior reading writing, listening, and speaking proficiency.

- **Reading Comprehension** - Building critical thinking skills through pre-reading, reading comprehension, making inferences, asking questions, summarizing, comparing and contrasting, analyzing characters, and identifying cause and effect. All of these are necessary for interpreting literature.

- **Writing** - Applying the writing process, sentence and paragraph structure, sequencing, written conventions, genres of composition, response, analysis, and creative thinking. Such skills allow students to structure their writing.

In 1996, I wrote a paper titled "New routes to fostering bilingualism: Developing language awareness among the Puerto Rican people" which appeared in a volume titled *Rethinking English in Puerto Rico* (Fiet, Pousada, &, Haiman, 1996). In that article, I argued that language awareness had to become part of the Puerto Rican school curriculum, and I provided a list of the linguistic themes and competencies that could be

incorporated. (Pousada, 1996, p. 25) Today I'd like to present the list again, broken into

sociolinguistic and structural issues:

Sociolinguistic issues:

1. perception of language as a system of human communication
2. recognition of linguistic resources and their functions in different communities
3. awareness of the role of context in communication
4. appreciation of language variation both locally and world-wide
5. notions of standard language and norms and the limitations of these
6. language comparison and contrastive analysis as a learning aid
7. the history and contemporary significance of Spanish, English, and other languages

Structural issues:
8. coping strategies for dealing with new vocabulary,
9. fundamentals of language learning
10. techniques of translation
11. recognition and avoidance of grammatical errors
12. regularities of pronunciation and orthography
13. understanding of text types and textual cohesion
14. basic notions of sentence cohesion
15. rhetorical resources and their functions
16. analysis of speech intentions
17. exposure to metalinguistics (i.e. grammatical categories and technical terms)

It should be noted that these language awareness skills go across languages and need

to be developed in both Spanish and English if we are to take seriously the task of

creating bilingual citizens in Puerto Rico.

Let us now consider the relative status of Spanish and English world-wide and in Puerto Rico specifically. In contrast to the situation found in most of the countries described earlier, the two languages in contention are both world languages, and neither is in danger of extinction.

6.0 Two world languages in Puerto Rico

A *world language* or *language of wider communication* is a language spoken internationally which is learned by many people as a second language. It is typically characterized by a large number of native and second language speakers, as well as by a broad geographical distribution, and heavy representation in international organizations. By all these criteria, Spanish is a world class language, as is English. Spanish has at least 3 million native speakers in each of 44 countries, making it the fourth mostly geographically dispersed language after English (112 countries), French (60) and Arabic (57) (Ethnologue, 2009). Because of this reality, there is no reason to view Spanish as being endangered due to the presence of English in Puerto Rico. Just like English, it has a prestigious literature, about 358 million first language users and another 95 million second language users (Ethnologue, 2009), and an extensive presence globally. Spanish is the official language in twenty countries and spoken elsewhere as a second or third language (see Figure 5 below). It is also one of the six official languages of the United Nations and is employed as an official language by the European Union and Mercosur.

Figure 5: Spanish-speaking areas of world

Table 5: Countries in which Spanish is used regularly		
Official language	**Common L2**	**Common L3**
Argentina Bolivia Chile Colombia Costa Rica Cuba Dominican Republic Ecuador El Salvador Equatorial Guinea Guatemala Honduras Mexico Nicaragua Panama Paraguay Peru Puerto Rico Spain Uruguay Venezuela	Andorra Angola Aruba Belize Bonaire Brazil Curaçao Federated States of Micronesia Gibraltar Guam Marshall Islands Morocco Northern Marianas Palau Portugal Trinidad United States Western Sahara	France Germany Jamaica Philippines[4] South Sudan United Kingdom

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[4] Spanish was an official language of the Philippines from 1898 to 1973.

In each of these countries, Spanish is spoken somewhat differently. Dialect differentiation in Spanish mainly affects consonant pronunciation and lexical items. The variability in the ways Spanish speakers express themselves is one of the beauties of the language.

However, many people in Puerto Rico believe that there is a single correct way of speaking that is fixed and unchanging, and the highest form of Spanish is written, literary discourse. Commentators often decry the "degradation" of the Spanish language and point to the "linguistic impoverishment" and "transculturation" which Puerto Rican Spanish is supposedly undergoing (Seda Bonilla 1987, Rua 1987), presumably because of the nefarious influence of English.

I would like to state here clearly my firm conviction that Spanish in Puerto Rico has nothing to fear from English, provided that the people of Puerto Rico continue to teach it to their children at home and make sure their schools approach Spanish as the dynamic and ever-changing treasure that it is instead of preserving it as a museum piece, which is the surest way to turn children away from a language. Arguments against bilingual education based upon the notion of "threat" are groundless. We do not need to go into "red alert" simply because we are teaching English. Now, of course, any bilingual education programs that are developed need to be well-thought out, properly staffed with highly competent teachers, and stocked with appropriate, culturally-relevant materials and modern technology. I leave it to you to decide whether the current bilingual project meets these criteria.

7.0 The politicization of bilingualism in Puerto Rico

While all political parties in Puerto Rico ostensibly acknowledge the importance of learning English and support the maintenance of Spanish, there are clear differences when it comes to public policy. Given the celebration of a plebiscite this year to poll public opinion regarding the future status of the island, pushing English in the schools certainly fit in with the incumbent administration's larger goal of making PR the 51st state, and one can be forgiven for thinking that the hastily organized project was inspired more by ideology than pedagogy. This perception is confirmed by a post-election declaration by Mauro E. Mujica, the Chairman of U.S. English, the primary voice of the English-only movement, who saluted Puerto Rico and stated in an article subtitled "English is the next step to statehood":

> The will of Puerto Rico residents was made clear last week, when 61 percent of voters indicated support for the territory becoming a 51st state in the United States of America. Now, as Congress prepares to deliberate, Puerto Ricans should prepare for the linguistic and cultural changes that will result from this decision. Historically, when the United States has considered admitting a state with a large non-English speaking population, such territories first had to concede to language-related conditions. In Puerto Rico, more than 2.7 million residents, or 80 percent of the population, are considered limited English proficient. Seventy-one percent of households are considered **linguistically isolated** [my emphasis] meaning no one aged 14 and older speaks English very well. With a clear non-English speaking majority, Puerto Rico should expect to be no different when it comes to language requirements prior to statehood consideration.

> In order to ensure that Puerto Rico would work seamlessly with the other 50 states, the territory should prepare to function as an English-speaking state. Without English proficiency, a resident of the United States is not only unable to participate fully in the democratic process, but they are also less likely to achieve the social and economic success for which our nation is known. The United States cannot, and should not, accept a state in which a majority of citizens are unable to speak the common language in this country: English."

> (U.S. English to Puerto Rico, 2012)

These words should certainly give one pause for thought.

Now that the electoral tables have turned, as they regularly do in Puerto Rico, it remains to be seen what the new governor will do in terms of school language policy. Will the baby be tossed out with the bathwater? Will it be "borrón y cuenta nueva"? and back to the drawing board? More pause for thought.

8.0 Concrete solutions to the impasse

Based on my examination of the scholarly literature on multilingualism world-wide, I offer the following recommendations in order to depoliticize the language debate in Puerto Rico and base policies on the inherently positive aspects of knowing more than one language rather than on the inflexibility of partisan politics.

- Treat both Spanish and English as living, breathing organisms that must be nourished and allowed to develop naturally, rather than as museum pieces that must be preserved statically.

- Avoid placing the two languages in competition by assigning prestigious functions to one and not the other.

- Foment positive attitudes toward both languages so that children feel pride in each.

- Teach children to read and write in Spanish first, since it is far easier than English due to its greater symbol to sound correspondence. Later when written English is introduced, they will already have the notion of "sounding out words" and can begin to process the difficulties inherent in English spelling.

- Focus on play, art, and physical movement in the early grade English classes so the children begin to savor the sound of the language and view it as fun.

- Build oral English skills first and then add written skills.

- Help children become aware of language structure and function, so they can see the commonalities and differences in their two languages. This will open them to later acquisition of additional languages.

- Encourage older children to acquire disciplined language study habits, to use dictionaries independently, to be aware of their own learning styles and limitations.

- Expand the literature presented in the public schools to include the incredibly creative prose and poetry produced in the Anglophone Caribbean, so that Puerto Rican children can understand that English is not the sole property of the U.S.

- Utilize teaching materials created here in Puerto Rico, so that children can learn both English and Spanish in culturally relevant ways.

9.0 Conclusion

With that, I will close my comments. I hope that some of what I've offered here today will stimulate you to see new ways of articulating language policy in Puerto Rico without setting Spanish and English in opposition to one another.

Thank you.

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