

# Being Bilingual in Borinquen



# Being Bilingual in Borinquen:

*Student Voices from the  
University of Puerto Rico*

Edited by

Alicia Pousada

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This book is dedicated to the many students who have passed through my classes at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras over the past thirty years. It is intended to give voice to their personal experiences and struggles in developing competence in multiple languages and cultures.



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## PREFACE

This book is intended to present bilingualism in Puerto Rico as lived by a group of successful language professionals, many of whom had never imagined they would be language teachers or translators/interpreters when they were children. It does not claim to represent in any statistical sense the bilingual experience of all Puerto Ricans, but the contributors do mirror the demographic diversity that one encounters on the island. They come from rural, suburban, and urban communities. Most were born on the island, but others were born in the U.S. or other countries and came to live in Puerto Rico. Their socioeconomic backgrounds range from working class through upper middle class. Many went to public schools, others were enrolled in private schools, and still others studied at both. The majority were schooled in Spanish; however, a number attended bilingual or English-only schools. Many had parents with varying degrees of bilingual skills, but some were the first in their families to develop more than functional competence in English or any other foreign language. They range in age from their late twenties to mid-forties. Most are women, which reflects the nature of higher education in Puerto Rico at this time. They are more well-travelled than the average Puerto Rican. They all feel that being bilingual has been advantageous, and they want to raise their children bilingually. Their similarities and their differences can be utilized in the forging of a nuanced language policy for the island, as is shown in the closing chapter.

The volume is aimed primarily at an audience of teachers or language professionals who can identify with the forces at work in the contributors' lives. In particular, Puerto Rican or Caribbean teachers (either in the region or the diaspora) will find much that resonates in the book. The opening and closing chapters and the appendices provide valuable basic information regarding the nature of bilingualism and language policy that can be utilized in teacher training programs and language awareness workshops. The book should also be of interest to language policymakers, school administrators, linguists specializing in multilingualism, and students contemplating future careers that employ their language skills.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the support of the English Department and the College of Humanities of the University of Puerto Rico at Río Piedras in giving me release time to edit this volume. Many thanks to my graduate research assistant, Ramón Valle Jiménez, for expertly tracking down needed sources. Thanks also to the editorial staff at Cambridge Scholars Publishing (Victoria Carruthers, Theo Moxham, and Amanda Millar) for their help in bringing the work to print. I would additionally like to acknowledge the patience and fortitude of the graduate student contributors as we went through the writing and editing process together. It has truly been a labor of love, and I hope that the volume will be interesting and useful to others who are curious about what it's like to be multilingual in general and, more specifically, how it is experienced in Puerto Rico.





# CHAPTER ONE

## WHO'S BILINGUAL AND WHY

### Introduction

Puerto Rico (Borinquen) is a semi-autonomous, unincorporated island territory of the United States located in the Caribbean about a thousand miles southeast of Miami, Florida. It is approximately 100 x 35 miles in area (161 by 56 kilometers) and consists of 78 municipalities (see Fig. 1-1). As of 2010, the population reached 3,725,789, making it the third most densely populated component of the United States, after the District of Columbia and New Jersey. Puerto Ricans have been U.S. citizens since 1917. The island is currently in debt to the tune of \$70 billion (Darie, 2017), and the economic crisis has resulted in considerable out-migration (89,000 Puerto Ricans left their homeland in 2015 alone, according to Velázquez-Estrada, 2017). More Puerto Ricans now live in the U.S. diaspora (4.2 million) than on the island archipelago itself (Collazo, Ryan, & Bauman, 2010).

Ever since the U.S. occupied Puerto Rico in 1898 after the Spanish-American War, the development of functional competence in English has been one of the stated objectives of the public education system (Torres González, 2002), and there is a strong consensus among the population that being bilingual in Spanish and English is advantageous, both for the individual and the society. Nevertheless, despite twelve years of obligatory English classes, no more than half of the island's residents consider themselves to have adequate English skills, and only 17.6% rate themselves as knowing English "very well" (U.S. Census, 2000). It would be erroneous to think of the island as a bilingual society; however, Barreto's description of Puerto Rico as "a sea of functionally unilingual Spanish speakers" (2001, p. 23) is also less than accurate since there are competent bilinguals scattered around the island and concentrated in the coastal and San Juan metro areas (Pousada, 2010).

Many reasons for the lack of mastery of the English language have been offered: resistance to an imposed language (Schweers & Vélez, 1992; Resnick, 1993; Clachar, 1997; Pousada, 1999), lack of any consistent

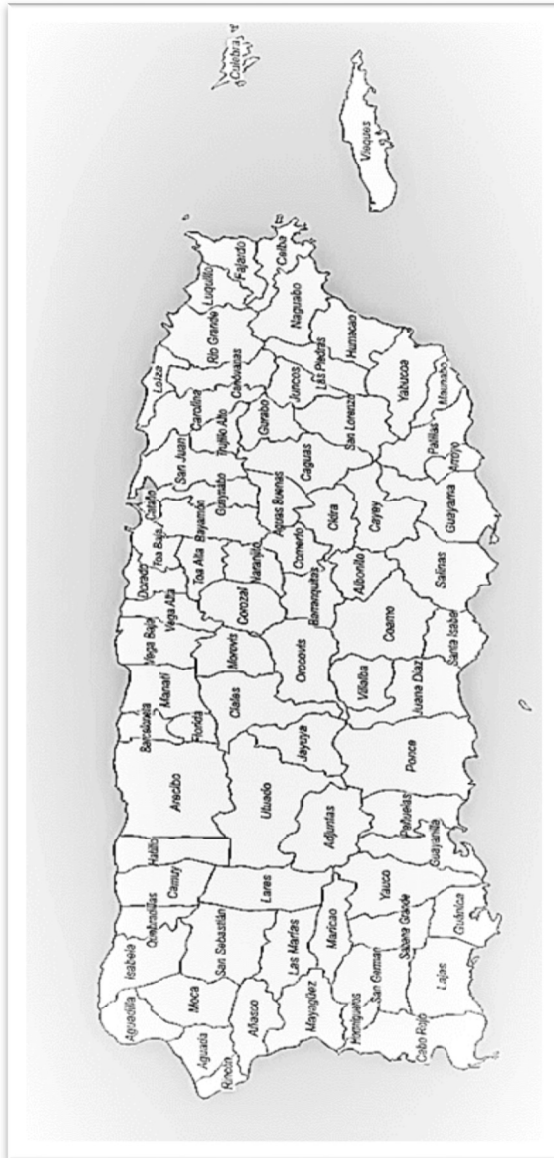


Fig. 1-1: Map of Puerto Rico's Municipalities  
<http://d-maps.com/m/america/usa/portorico/portorico11.gif>

language education policies (Pousada, 2008b; Schmidt, J., 2015), inadequate training of English teachers (Araújo Laracuenta, 2002), lack of sufficient certified English teachers (Alvarado, 2012), paucity of culturally relevant teaching materials in English (Muñoz Claudio, 2011; Torres Rivera, 2015), etc. The fact that many private schools are more successful in teaching English suggests that funding and parental expectations play an important role as well (Colorado Laguna & Corcino Marrero, 2014).

Despite this rather depressing situation, there is a significant group of Puerto Ricans who do become competent bilinguals (Pousada, 2000), including a number who become language professionals (English teachers, translators, interpreters, textbook writers, editors, teacher trainers, etc.). The present volume seeks to explore, in a qualitative, descriptive fashion, the factors in their lives that led them to develop their English and Spanish skills to such a high level. The hope is to isolate some of the variables that may be utilized in language planning to improve the language situation of all Puerto Ricans.

The volume is organized around twenty-five linguistic autobiographies prepared by graduate students enrolled in ENGL 6466: Studies in Bilingualism over the past decade in the English Department of the College of Humanities of the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras. Most are English teachers in public and private schools and universities on the island or interpreters/translators (see Appendix A for a list of the contributors and their current affiliations). A general list of questions about language-related life experiences was provided to guide them in the preparation of their linguistic autobiographies (see Appendix B); however, as will be observed, there is considerable variation in the manner in which they choose to present their linguistic development since birth and in the focus they give to particular phases of their lives. The concluding chapter of the book provides an analysis of the characteristics identified by the graduate students as being instrumental in their bilingual and/or bicultural development and suggests how these traits can be utilized in creating more nuanced language policies for the island.

## Basics of Bilingualism

Before presenting the linguistic autobiographies, it is necessary to review the basics of bilingualism and/or multilingualism<sup>1</sup> in order to contextualize the students' essays within the scholarly literature. The sections that follow consider the various definitions postulated, the different types of bilinguals identified, the conditions for successful language learning, the range of ways in which bilinguals grow up and live their lives negotiating their multiple languages and cultures, and the crucial distinctions between *societal* and *individual bilingualism*.

## Defining Bilingualism

A cursory look at the definitions of bilingualism proposed by different linguistic scholars immediately reveals the diversity of outlooks on the question:

- “native like control of two languages” (Leonard Bloomfield, 1935, pp. 55-56)
- “the practice of alternatively using two languages” (Uriel Weinreich, 1953, p. 3)
- “the point where the speaker of one language can produce complete meaningful utterances in the other language (Einar Haugen, 1969, pp. 6-7)
- “possession of at least one of the four language skills, even to a minimal degree” (John Macnamara, 1969, p. 82)
- “the alternate use of two or more languages by the same individual” (William Mackey, 1970, p. 555)
- “complete mastery of two different languages without interference between the two linguistic processes” (Oestricher, 1974, p. 9)
- “able to act in both language groups without any disturbing deviance being noticed” (Bertil Malmberg, 1977, pp. 133-136)
- “to function in two (or more) languages, either in monolingual or bilingual communities, in accordance with the sociocultural demands made of an individual's communicative and cognitive competence by these communities or by the individual herself, at the same level as native speakers, and ...to identify with both (or

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<sup>1</sup> In the rest of this volume, the terms “bilingualism” and “bilingual” will be understood to include multilingual speakers (speakers of three or more languages) as well.

all) language groups (and cultures), or parts of them.” (Tove Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981, p. 90)

- “Bilinguals are those who use two or more languages (or dialects) in their everyday lives.” (François Grosjean, 2010, p. 4)

All of these definitions point to speakers with varying degrees of mastery and use of more than one language code; however, it is the specification of the required proficiency in each language and skill area that sets them apart. Grosjean (2010) divides the definitions into those which demand strict native ability in both languages to the same degree across tasks (*maximalist* definitions) and those which are less stringent and more flexible in permitting varying degrees of fluency in varying types of discourse (*minimalist* definitions). Interestingly enough, monolinguals (who have significant experience with only one language) tend to favor the stricter native speaker model of bilingualism, while bilinguals (who have more pragmatic experience with language variation) tend to be more lenient.

Bilingualism is dynamic and ever-changing. Bilinguals go through distinct stages in their process of learning additional languages, and depending on the degree of exposure to the languages at different points in their lives, their proficiency in each may rise and fall over time. Such a tendency is clearly visible in the linguistic autobiographies featured in this volume.

## Types of Bilinguals

Given the dynamic nature of bilingualism and the various factors that can influence language acquisition, bilinguals range across a fluctuating continuum of language competence (Pousada, 2000). Figure 1-2 below illustrates the bilingual continuum.

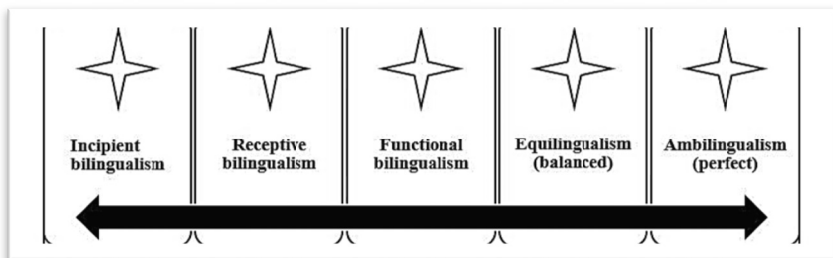


Fig. 1-2: Bilingual Continuum

*Incipient bilinguals* (Diebold, 1964) are just starting to make sense of the stimuli received in the second language and are creating mental schemata for understanding and using the new system. The native language is the sole point of reference. Poor learners often get “fossilized” at this stage, and their errors become resistant to correction. Many public school students in Puerto Rico, particularly those in communities with scarce resources or inconsistent teacher coverage, fall into this category with regard to English. Those who enter the UPR system end up in remedial English classes and may not be able to pursue majors which require extensive knowledge of English. Some of the students presented in this volume are incipient learners in third or fourth languages like French, Portuguese, or Italian.

*Receptive bilinguals* (Hockett, 1958) can read and understand second language input but have problems speaking or writing. Some remain at this stage all their lives when the second language is restricted to “passive” activities of listening and reading (very common in Puerto Rico). Receptive bilingualism is also commonplace in immigrant speech communities in which many language varieties are in competition. Again, some of the students featured in this book are receptive learners of third or fourth languages.

*Functional bilinguals* (Baetens Beardsmore, 1982) are able to carry out most social and communicative functions with ease in both languages. They may have vocabulary gaps in specific areas, depending on how much practice or exposure they get in each language. Thus a speaker may be able to translate utterances related to family matters but not be able to deal adequately with medical terms. There is generally influence or “interference” from the native language upon the second language, but they are completely intelligible. Their dominant language is usually easy to determine. Some of the bilinguals presented in this volume consider themselves to be merely functional in one or more of the language skill areas in English, particularly the “active” skills of speaking and writing.

*Equilingual or balanced bilinguals* (Baetens Beardsmore, 1982) may be indistinguishable from native speakers of the first and second languages and can move effortlessly between the two with equivalent skills developed in each language. There are only tiny traces of transfer from the first language in the second language. Such speakers are fluent and competent in both the structural and communicative components of oral, written, and non-verbal expression. A number of the individuals whose autobiographies appear in this book consider themselves to be balanced or nearly balanced bilinguals.

*Ambilinguals or perfect bilinguals* (Halliday et. al, 1970) are able to perform equally well in either language in all spheres of activity with virtually no cross-linguistic influence. They can move between their languages without hesitation. Perfect bilinguals are quite rare, since developing vocabulary to the same extent in all semantic fields requires a life in which one moves constantly between two speech communities. Many monolinguals (and some bilinguals) believe that only perfect bilinguals are truly bilingual, despite the rarity of the category. Such an attitude establishes an almost impossible standard for bilingualism that most speakers will never achieve. This is a particular problem in Puerto Rico since many people who have good skills in English disparage and underestimate themselves as bilinguals. None of the contributors to this volume classify themselves as perfect bilinguals, although several aspire to be.

Another way in which bilinguals can be categorized is based on the age at which they acquired their second or additional languages. Children who acquire two languages together from infancy are known as *simultaneous bilinguals* or said to have experienced *bilingual first language acquisition* (Ng & Wigglesworth, 2007). Other scholars term them *early childhood bilinguals* and contrast them with those who acquired their second language later on (*late childhood bilinguals* or *sequential bilinguals*). It is also possible to learn additional languages at various points in adulthood. Because of the required nature of English as a subject throughout all levels of the educational system in Puerto Rico, most Puerto Ricans are sequential, late childhood bilinguals. Since few schools in Puerto Rico provide foreign language instruction, those individuals who know a third or fourth language generally learned it in adulthood, either through college classes or through a period spent living abroad. The group represented in this volume contains all of the above acquisition types.

## **Conditions for Successful Language Learning**

In order to learn a new language, various conditions are necessary. First of all, the individual needs to possess the neurological and physiological equipment necessary for the processing and production of language. Any irregularity in this area (e.g., aphasia, autism, mental retardation, cleft palate, etc.) could have a deleterious effect on language development. Second, the specific characteristics of the individual have to be taken into consideration (age, sex, personality, cognitive capacities, previous experiences, etc.). Any attempt to intervene in the language learning of an individual must make provisions for the highly variable

particularities of the speakers. Third, the attitudes and motivations of the speakers are crucial in language learning. An individual who does not want to learn a language or who thinks that a language is inferior or odious will not learn it, regardless of the technique which is utilized (Prator, 1979). Last, and probably the most important, is the social context of the learning process. It is vital to know about the situation within the speech community, the need for using the target language, the benefits derived from using the language, any disadvantages that may accrue from learning it, the opportunities for learning the language, and the availability of materials, teachers, and speakers with whom to practice the language.

The general model created by Spolsky (1989) indicates that the learning process begins with the social context that provides opportunities for learning at the same time as it leads to attitudes that generate respect for the language and its speakers (see Fig. 1-3 below). These attitudes contribute to the learner's motivation which is then shaped by the personal characteristics of age, personality, capacities, and prior knowledge. The personal characteristics determine the way in which the learner deals with the different learning opportunities that the social context provides. The linguistic and non-linguistic results stem from the complicated interaction between the learner and his or her social environment. This interaction is patently visible in the linguistic autobiographies that we will examine in this volume.

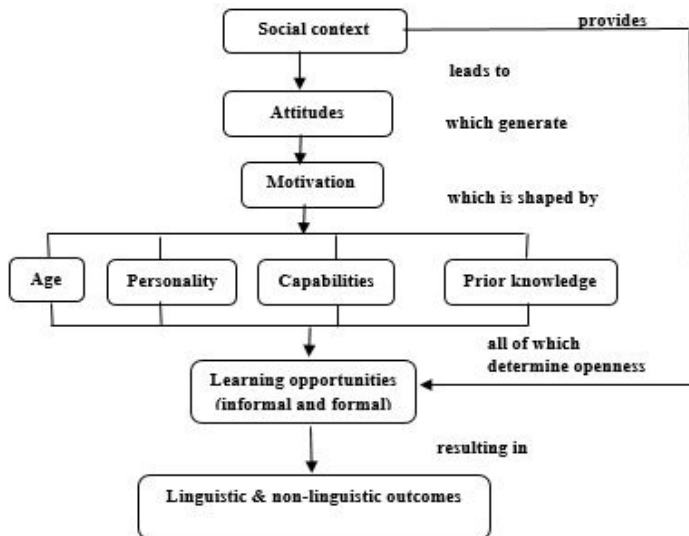


Figure 1-3: Spolsky's model of L2 learning



## Growing Up and Living Multilingually

For much of the world, using two, three, or more languages routinely is just the way one carries out one's daily activities (Stavans & Hoffman, 2015). For example, according to the statistics reported in *Ethnologue*, in Papua New Guinea, there are 840 living languages; in Nigeria, 520; in India, 447; in Brazil, 216; in the Russian Federation, 106; and in Colombia, 82 (Lewis, Simons, & Fennig, 2016). While no one individual speaks all of the languages, many employ several on a regular basis.

In highly multilingual societies, speaking each language like a native is usually not the goal. Incipient or receptive bilingual proficiency may be sufficient for a given situation, and the degree of competence in each linguistic code varies according to the social needs of the speaker and the opportunities afforded by his or her life (Grosjean, 1982). Mixed varieties (like Nigerian Pidgin English, Media Lengua in Ecuador, and Chabacano in the Philippines) may be common.

It is only in societies like the U.S., Australia, and Canada (the "inner circle" of Kachru's 1982 and 1985 model), where large geographic areas have relatively little linguistic variation, that residents perceive of multilingualism as a problem or impossibility. Such societies may even prohibit by law the use of other languages in public domains. The English-only movement in the U.S. is a prime example and has resulted in legislation, state constitutional provisions, or local regulations restricting the use of languages other than English in schools, government, and social services in 32 states as of 2016 (Pro English, 2016). It should be noted that despite considerable effort by groups like Pro English, U.S. English, and English First, no federal English-only legislation or constitutional amendment has been passed.

Opposition to the use of foreign languages often stems from negative attitudes or fears regarding the speakers of those languages. Whenever a nation's economic or political situation is weak, outsiders are seen as a threat. In the case of Puerto Rico, the reluctance to learn English is the historical by-product of the long period of imposed use of English as the language of instruction which was initiated by the U.S. in 1898 when the island was ceded by the Spanish and only ended in 1949 when Puerto Rico's first elected governor took office and Spanish became the medium of instruction at all levels (Pousada, 1999).

## **Societal vs. Individual Bilingualism**

In examining the linguistic situation in Puerto Rico, it is vital to distinguish between individual and societal bilingualism. *Individual bilingualism* refers to speakers who can utilize different language varieties within their speech repertoire for multiple purposes. Multilinguals can live in monolingual societies (where they would most often use only one of their languages) and give full rein to their linguistic abilities when interacting with foreigners or reading texts written in foreign languages. *Societal bilingualism*, on the other hand, refers to the existence of governmental or educational stipulations that require (or protect) the use of more than one language in all or some settings. Societal bilingualism can apply to all citizens of the nation or only residents of specific locales and tends to imply widespread individual bilingualism or at least a commitment to bilingualism as a national goal or value.

In Puerto Rico, despite the long-time designation of Spanish and English as co-official languages, bilingualism is controversial. Because of the unique politico-economic construction known as the Commonwealth, the English language has become a symbol of the ambivalent relationship between the United States and the island. While most Puerto Ricans acknowledge the utility of English and support the goal of individual bilingualism, many simultaneously view English with caution as a potential threat to their language and culture at a societal level.<sup>2</sup>

## **Bilingualism in Puerto Rico**

The residents of Puerto Rico are a primarily Spanish-speaking population who, because of the island's neocolonial relationship with the United States, are required to study English as a school subject from early elementary school through college. Their Spanish is Caribbean in nature (derived primarily from the speech of Spaniards from Andalucía and the Canary Islands and shaped by indigenous and African influences), a variety similar to that spoken in the Dominican Republic and Cuba. Nevertheless, it maintains a uniquely Puerto Rican character, particularly at the lexical level (Vaquero, 2001). Puerto Rican English is also distinctive and based not on Caribbean English models, but rather on various U.S. speech patterns available to the public via television, radio, and cinema and through interaction with American tourists, business

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<sup>2</sup> The concern expressed by intellectuals regarding the perceived neglect of Spanish in Puerto Rico can be seen in Duany (2003) and Hernández (2014).

people, members of the military, and Puerto Rican return migrants on the island (Walsh, 1994). Many Puerto Ricans also experience direct contact with English during periods of residence (for study or work) in the United States. As a result of the close contact between Spanish and English in Puerto Rico, both varieties evidence code-switching and borrowings, adding to their distinctiveness.

Spolsky's 1989 model for second language learning (presented earlier) can help clarify what being bilingual in Puerto Rico entails. In Puerto Rico, the *social context* includes the imposition of English in 1898 as part of a plan to create a territory loyal to U.S. interests (Osuna, 1949; Negrón de Montilla, 1970; Meyn, 1983); the rebellion of various groups of Puerto Rican stakeholders against numerous poorly thought out language education policies (Algren de Gutiérrez, 1987; Schmidt, J., 2014); and the reinstatement in 1949 of Spanish as instructional language. The historical resistance to using English co-exists contradictorily with positive attitudes toward the language due to its economic and political power. Since the language question is tangled up with the still undecided issue of the political status of the island (autonomous, independent, or state), this maintains public ambivalence toward learning English.

Another aspect of the social context is the distribution of English among the different social classes. The most competent speakers of English in Puerto Rico tend to be the professionals, the academics, and the military, whose social mobility and power are intimately linked with their English proficiency. As a result, the language is strongly associated with the privileged classes, although a complicating factor is the presence of thousands of working class Puerto Rican return migrants who know English. Interestingly enough, the knowledge of English among the upper classes is seen positively, while the same English skills among the working class return migrants call into question their legitimacy as "true" Puerto Ricans.

The class distinctions are also seen in student enrollment patterns. As is the case on many other Caribbean islands, Puerto Rico's educational system includes both public and private institutions. According to the 2013-2014 annual statistical report of the Department of Education, there were 1,464 public schools (62%) and 882 private schools (38%) (Disdier Flores & Cabán Rivera, 2016). However, since public schools tend to have larger classes, the actual enrollment of students in public schools is 423,934 (74%), while 148,919 (26%) attend private schools. Many students move between the public and private sectors depending on their grade level, location, enrollment of siblings, financial resources, and familial linguistic and educational goals.

Hermina (2014) found in her qualitative comparison of a public and private school in the northwest of Puerto Rico that social class was very important in determining parental attitudes and student access to English outside of the classroom. In her sample, the lower working class families with children in public school viewed English as a tool for obtaining a steady job, while the upper middle class families with children in private school saw English as a path to amassing cultural capital and achieving social mobility. The lower working class children primarily used English in the English classroom, while the upper middle class children had many extracurricular activities that involved the use of English.

There is a general belief that private schools teach English better than public schools, and indeed College Board scores in English would tend to uphold that conclusion (see Fig. 1-4 below). Nevertheless, going to a private school does not necessarily mean the student comes from the privileged class, since many families of more modest means sacrifice in order to send their children to private schools due to a conviction that the public schools are unable to provide an adequate education. Such parents are highly motivated and tend to motivate their children to succeed as well.

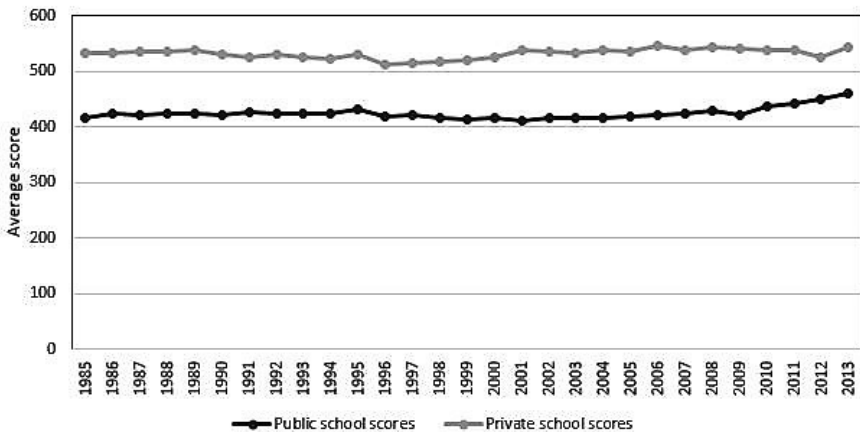


Fig. 1-4: College Board results in English (1985-2013)

*Motivation* for learning English in Puerto Rico is mainly *instrumental* and linked to getting jobs, traveling to the U.S., and getting maximal enjoyment out of the English-dominated electronic media (movies, TV, Internet, streamed music, video games). There is a growing group of

young people who may also have *integrative* motivation in that they want to emulate American cultural behaviors. It could also be argued that pro-statehooders are more willing to learn English because they wish to integrate the island into the U.S., politically and ideologically. However, many Puerto Ricans identify first as Puerto Ricans, and only secondarily as Americans, the latter identity stemming mostly from having U.S. citizenship (Latham, 2012).

Puerto Ricans are quite varied in their *personal characteristics* due to social class, religious, academic, migratory, and political differences. This complexity makes it difficult to predict their relationships with the English language. The linguistic autobiographies included in this volume supply ample evidence of the wide range of responses of Puerto Ricans to the social variables in their personal lives.

Finally, *opportunities to learn English* exist in Puerto Rico but may not be taken advantage of by all learners. There are groups of North Americans who have resided in Puerto Rico for many years and communities in which Puerto Rican return migrants predominate. English can be observed on commercial signs, on the packaging of U.S. products, and in the print and broadcast media. It can be heard in the tourist zones, shopping malls, hotels, and restaurants. It is also increasingly used in informal discourse among students on college campuses. English loanwords are common in Puerto Rican Spanish. Nevertheless, for many Puerto Ricans, English continues to be a foreign language which is only used when no other options exist. It is possible to live in Puerto Rico and use only minimal English, since there are subtitles on Hollywood movies, lots of Spanish TV and radio programs, and ample print media in Spanish, and most important of all, the majority of the population speaks Spanish. Even at the college level, many students continue to struggle with their English skills (Caratini-Soto, 1997; Pousada, 2005).

## **Languages in Contact in Puerto Rico**

As in all language contact situations around the world, Puerto Ricans move between the two languages in their language repertoires with varying degrees of proficiency and creativity. The sections that follow briefly describe the common practices of linguistic borrowing and code-switching which will also be evidenced in the linguistic autobiographies included in this volume.

## **Borrowing between English and Spanish**

As mentioned earlier, bilinguals often mix elements of one language into another, creating new and innovative forms, some of which catch on and become part of the two host languages and others which suffer the fate of most slang. Given the cultural, political, and economic penetration from the United States since 1898, it should not be surprising to learn that Puerto Ricans incorporate many English loanwords into their Spanish.

The phenomenon has been amply studied. Vaquero (1990) examined Anglicisms in Puerto Rican newspapers and found four distinct strategies for creating them (using existing Spanish words that are cognate with English words, translating English words literally into Spanish, creating Spanish-sounding words based on English root forms, and using English words to refer to a subset of meaning already covered by a Spanish word). Her work was later replicated by Cuenca Ramos (2004). López Morales (1992) carried out a comparative study of the use of Anglicisms in Madrid, Mexico City, and San Juan, PR and found that Puerto Ricans employed many more English loanwords in their Spanish (480) than residents of Madrid (291) and Mexico City (170). Morales (2001) compiled an entire dictionary of English loanwords in Puerto Rican Spanish. Beardsley (2004) showed that many of the same loanwords were used in Puerto Rican communities in the U.S.

An important aspect of word borrowing in Puerto Rico is the phonological and morphological integration of the English elements into the local Spanish, to such an extent that speakers are often unaware that they are using elements from another language. Integration is accomplished by recasting the English words into Puerto Rican Spanish phonemes and morphemes (e.g., *doughnuts* → *las donas*; *mattress* → *el matre*; *to fax* → *faxear*; *spark plugs* → *los espares*). The loanwords may be so successful as to completely displace the native Spanish equivalents. Part of being communicatively competent in Puerto Rico means knowing how to use English loanwords appropriately.

### **Code-switching**

The alternation of larger elements of two languages (phrases or clauses) in the same stretch of discourse is known as *code-switching*. It is very common among speakers who are socially mobile and in contact with other language users, either directly or through media. Switches can occur within a sentence (*intrasentential*) or between sentences (*intersentential*).