

Carmen E Nieves

Qualifying Exams Question #1: Thematic

Is there a true bilingualism in Puerto Rico when one considers that language patterns may simply be symptomatic of borrowing or converging across languages rather than the notion of knowing and using two very distinct grammars, lexicons, and the like?

Puerto Rico has been handling a language battle since the early twentieth century. The root of this struggle has been the imposition of English as the language of instruction, as part of an Americanization measure. Initially, the U.S.' intention was to eradicate the Spanish language since it was considered a handicap to all things "American". After years of inconsistently changing which grades would offer English as a subject or as the teaching language, an educational policy was passed in 1949, making sure all public schools taught in Spanish (Delgado Cintrón, 1993). However, the deal also included English as a subject course throughout all school grades, ensuring in a way the formation of a bilingual population. This policy hasn't been revised. It is worth mentioning that this event took place in a historical moment when Puerto Rico was starting an industrialization process (Operación Manos a la Obra), mass migration to the U.S. was becoming the norm, and many islanders enrolled in the military. Those leaving Puerto Rico one way or the other had the social and economic motivations to acquire English in order to fulfill their basic needs. On the other hand, those who remained began exposing themselves continuously to the English language, without necessarily becoming bilingual. This happened through the introduction of Cable TV, manufacturing, seasonal jobs, and tourism. Middle and lower class Puerto Ricans were officially in contact with

the American language, but negotiated its influence on their mother tongue. Out of this process, mostly loanwords, convergences, and syntactic calques have been transferred to Puerto Rican Spanish. Nonetheless, it continues to be Spanish. Isabel Yamin Todd found in an independent study in the 1990s that “si bien el inglés es un factor relevante en la producción lingüística de algunos hablantes, en términos generales no parece tener la importancia que en ocasiones se le ha atribuido” (1993, 10). A significant majority of islanders cannot carry a casual conversation in English, nor read or comprehend a sizeable amount of literature in the language. These facts make them monolinguals in contact with an L2.

Myers-Scotton provides valuable insight regarding bilingualism, its dimensions, and implications. She briefly defines bilingualism as “the term for speaking one or more languages” (2006, 2). The author understands how vague and loose the term can be and provides examples and degrees of bilingualism. For instance, “someone may be able to understand a certain L2, but not speak it, making him or her a passive bilingual” (44). This is highly representative of third generation Latinxs in the U.S., and to a certain extent, some Puerto Rican islanders heavily exposed to mass media. Donald Winford describes the latter individuals’ source of exposure to “be found in the spread of global avenues of communication such as radio, television, and the internet. These have facilitated the spread of vocabulary from (American) English in particular to many other languages” (2003, 31). It is important to highlight that this type of contact is an effect of globalization and not mere Americanization. Case in point, there are bilingual individuals in Puerto Rico, but they don’t necessarily represent the average Islander.

The reason why true bilingualism isn’t part of the islander’s cultural nationalism is that their negotiations with (or resistance to) the English language have allowed lexical borrowings and structural convergence that will not alter the overall Spanish matrix. Myers-Scotton

continues to explain that “persons who use some words from another language (lexical borrowings) in their L1 are not necessarily bilinguals” (2006, 45). Examples like *el parking*, *janguear* (to hang out), *mirar pa'tras* (to look back), *llamar pa'tras* (to call back), *la vacuum*, *saber inglés* (to know English), *la paila* (from “pail”) and many others are proof of this contact. Loanwords are immediately assigned a gender when incorporated into the Puerto Rican dialect. Silva-Corvalán sheds some light on this phenomenon:

Los factores que pueden motivar la asignación de género gramatical a los préstamos han sido estudiados por varios lingüistas... han propuesto, entre otros, los siguientes factores: (a) el género fisiológico del referente; (b) la asociación semántica con el lexema equivalente en la lengua que introduce el préstamo...; (c) la identificación de la forma fonológica del préstamo con una forma que requiere género masculino, femenino o neutro según las reglas de la lengua receptora. (2001, 288-289)

This way, words and expressions are incorporated into the language without overriding any grammatical rules. To clarify, borrowing and codeswitching are not the same, since they both require different levels of linguistic competence in two or more languages, and codeswitching can only be performed by bilinguals. In the Puerto Rican case, borrowings are isolated instances. Nonetheless, these linguistic varieties are nothing but the result “from only marginal contact with [English]... Loveday (1996) refers to these settings involving ‘distant’ contact with the external language. Typically... the recipient’s language community does not achieve bilingualism in the donor language, though some of its members may” (Winford 2003, 30-31). Bilingualism is, therefore, more of a personal endeavor to any islander rather than the norm.

It is worth mentioning that during the 1950s, institutions like the Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, the administration of Luis Muñoz Marín (1948-1964), and the Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño ran intensive campaigns to promote Spanish as part of Puerto Rico’s cultural nationalism, an ideology designed to preserve the islanders' identity separate from the Commonwealth’s bond to the U.S., defining Puerto Rico as an unassimilated “nation”. The

adverse side of it was the delegitimization of Puerto Rican migrants or born in the U.S. for their use of English. Myers-Scotton lays it as follows: “Different identities also are conveyed by speaking different languages” (2006, 63).

Can one truly produce a strict definition of bilingualism in Puerto Rico, today?

When speaking about bilingualism in Puerto Rico, the idea is to describe an individual that comprehends two languages and functions successfully as speaker and recipient in both of them. Based on that statement, one cannot produce a strict definition of bilingualism in Puerto Rico because most of the population has been exposed to both English and Spanish through various sources and with different motivations. One of the last reports from the U.S. Census shows that nearly 85% of PR’s inhabitants speak English “less than well” (2017). If anything, bilingualism could be observed at micro levels such as class, area of residency, place of birth, area of expertise, relationship to the U.S., just to mention a few. As early as the 1920s, researchers from the Teachers College at Columbia University acknowledged that children living in rural areas were better off learning social skills, hygiene and history in Spanish because their environment didn’t enable the preservation of the English language (1926). At the time, about 80% of islanders lived inland and didn’t attend school beyond third grade. However, those living in urban cities completed general education in English. This established a pattern that is still visible in the island. Families with more access to traveling, and to private and bilingual education, tend to live in the metropolitan areas and make sure their offspring learn both languages, plus send them to study in the U.S. or abroad. Having written this, it is clear that bilingualism takes place in certain spheres and with particular purposes. For instance, people

who work in the tourism industry are expected to be bilingual, while English teachers have consistently proven to be underqualified to instruct their courses. This is because the former generates income, while the latter implicates a “language problem” that requires funding. Pousada runs a fascinating discussion on what is known as “Puerto Rican English” (2017). Basically, it’s the dialect of those who’ve shown competency in the English language, with the interferences, convergences, and phonetic influences from their Spanish dialect. This English is observed mainly in people who grew up with Cable TV, parents who speak English or were born in the U.S., remain in constant contact with their relatives and/or friends in the mainland, have shown a personal interest in the language, or have enrolled in the military. It could be considered a type of advanced interlanguage or the early stages of an L2. In no way is argued that bilingualism is nonexistent in Puerto Rico, but that it is not a trait linked to their cultural nationalism, the islander’s daily lives, nor available to everyone’s pocket.

How do methods of language education foster or fail to foster the development of strengths in each individual language (e.g., Spanish and English) on the island today?

Till this day, the language of instruction in Puerto Rico’s public schools is Spanish, as stated back in 1949. English is taught as a subject from Kindergarten to High School. Over time, this has raised many issues when considering ways to create a bilingual Puerto Rico. First, teaching all other subjects in Spanish doesn’t allow students to gain literacy and relevance of the second language at all. Many times this situation has represented a problem when people pursue a degree in medical, scientific, or engineering fields. Therefore, students have a rough time learning and assimilating scientific jargon. Second, when planning classes and curricula, English

instructors rarely coordinate with teachers from other subjects to include their themes and topics in the L2 classroom. This happens because English is taught as a subject course and not a content one. Throughout their school years, children only see English as a language to learn, but not a language to learn from. According to the Carta Circular Num.: 8-2013-2014, the language methods and approaches the English Program uses to design its curricula are: Balanced Literacy Approach (developing all language skills simultaneously through literature), Natural Approach (acquisition), Oral Approach (oral production prior to reading), Communicative Approach (from prescriptive to descriptive), Functional-Notional Approach (guided by pragmatic use), Differentiated Instruction (individualization), and Project Based Learning (tasks and problem solving) (2013). It suggests using techniques like scaffolding, reciprocal teaching, critical thinking questions, direct instruction, sheltered instruction, hands-on experiences, oral cloze, think-pair-share, repetition and oral routines, small group discussions, language experience approach (students turn their narratives into literature), and role playing. Public schools across the island celebrate an English Week, in which many competitions and social events are performed in the target language. Competitions include Spelling Bees, Writing Bees, Pop Up Cards, and Posters, while events portraying American pop culture (dance troops, singing, and acting) are presented by the students. Indeed, these types of activities draw the young one's attention, but ultimately bilingual students or those who enjoy English participate. English Week is strictly a school activity, and typically the host community has nothing to do with it. At a larger scale, this secluded celebration represents the detachment of English from many islanders' social reality. When a target language is kept separated from a speaker's real life and the community in which it lives, the language is deemed to lose its relevance and pertinence. English rarely leaves the classroom, unless the student generates an interest in extracurricular activities in

such language. At times, when an English teacher is highly engaged with the student community, they will create an English Club that, again, won't depart from school. All of these scenarios are ways to incorporate these linguistic approaches that result in different outcomes depending on the student's background and interests.

An issue that hasn't been addressed is the incorporation of returnees (either born in the U.S. or that migrated at an early age) to Spanish speaking schools. Most of the time, they're lowered a grade or placed in the slowest group of their current grade. It occurs that this pattern is compatible to placing ESL students in Special Education, as it is still seen in places like Amsterdam, NY. Other than that, no approach has been designed to introduce English speaking Puerto Ricans to schools. As a consequence, these students suffer social and academic displacement, discrimination, and partial (if not total) loss of their English language skills. Kevin Carroll describes them as "the 'whipping boys,' so to speak, and they are deemed not to be 'real' Puerto Ricans if they do not speak the same variety as islanders" (2016, 180). A few bilingual schools that have shown a considerable amount of success shared their tips on performing so well. The most important one was the active participation of parents and the community in the bilingual education project. Parents were given incentives to learn English so they could help their children succeed academically. Within themselves, they created supportive networks and made themselves available to help in the classrooms or school grounds. One mother expressed: "Es un compromiso genuino tanto de la facultad como estudiantes y padres. Si esa integración no se da el proyecto no funciona. Para mí esto no es una escuela sino una familia" (Millán Rodríguez, 2012a). However, one principal disclosed how difficult it was to obtain books, literature, and updated technology that aided student's bilingual education for various reasons: most textbooks had to be purchased through private institutions, since the Departamento de

Educación hasn't developed anything on dual language education yet, the same Board is too lenient when it comes to hiring bilingual instructors (many aren't fully bilingual and pass on their mistakes to their students), and funding for technology and resources depended mostly on the administrative party at the moment (pro-statehood or pro-commonwealth), since English/bilingualism is highly politicized in Puerto Rico. A school principal shared her experience with this issue: "Las escuelas bilingües han tenido por una década un vaivén porque el Departamento responde a cada cambio de administración y cada plataforma de gobierno y conforme a esas plataformas se van formando esos planes de trabajo" (Millán Rodríguez, 2012b).

Because the Departamento de Educación hasn't worked on a dual language or bilingual education project, and its English Program has failed to meet unrealistic expectations, it can be said for sure that Spanish as a subject and as the language of instruction has secured its place in Puerto Rico's public education. It has been the nation's language for over 500 years, and continues to be so after 120 years of U.S. presence. Spanish in Puerto Rico has been exposed to an array of languages and dialects, only to introduce (mostly) semantic and syntactic variations to its vernacular. With this in mind, it is understandable that Spanish is the linguistic gear that moves Puerto Rican culture and society. The only place where English is used by default is at the Federal Court. Anywhere else, English will have a situational and independent appearance. Everything (except for English) is taught in Spanish. All the teaching approaches the English Program lists above apply to the Spanish Program, with the added benefit of it being the island's lingua franca. What students learn in this language will be used in their daily lives and in real situations. Even U.S. History is taught in Spanish. It is the language of their culture and history. It'll be (for most) their mother tongue and vehicle of expression.

Cited Work

- Carroll, Kevin S. "Language Policies in Puerto Rican Higher Education: Conflicting Assumptions of Bilingualism." *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 17 (2016): 3-4, 260-277. DOI: 10.1080/14664208.2016.1201186
- Columbia University. Teachers College. International Institute. *A survey of the public educational system of Porto Rico*. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1926. [https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.\\$b66121](https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.$b66121)
- Delgado Cintrón, Carmelo. "La lucha por el idioma". *El español: El dilema del idioma y la nación*. ed. Cesar A. Rey Hernández. San Juan: Centro de Investigaciones Académicas, Universidad del Sagrado Corazón, 1993. 25-39.
- Departamento de Educación. *Carta circular num.: 8-2013-2014*. 20 de julio de 2013. http://www.de.gobierno.pr/files/Carta_Circular_8-2013-2014_Ingles.pdf
- Millán Rodríguez, Yamilet. "Compromiso de la comunidad escolar con el inglés". *El Vocero*. 27 May 2012a: 5.
- . "Milla extra al enfrentar diversidad de retos". *El Vocero*. 27 May 2012b: 4-5.
- Myers-Scotton, Carol. *Multiple Voices: An Introduction to Bilingualism*. Malden: Blackwell Publications, 2006.
- Pousada, Alicia. *Being Bilingual in Borinquen: Student Voices from the University of Puerto Rico*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017.
- Silva-Corvalán, Carmen. *Sociolingüística y pragmática del español*. Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2001.

U.S. Census Bureau. "Language Spoken at Home." *2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates*. American Fact Finder. July 15, 2017.

Winford, Donald. *An Introduction to Contact Linguistics*. Malden: Blackwell Publications, 2003.

Yamin Todd, Isabel. "Algunas consideraciones en torno al español de Puerto Rico y a su situación de lengua en contacto con el inglés". *El español: El dilema del idioma y la nación*. Ed. Cesar A. Rey Hernández. San Juan: Centro de Investigaciones Académicas, Universidad del Sagrado Corazón, 1993. 4-12.

Carmen E. Nieves

Qualifying Exams Question #2: Geographic

By reference to the literature explain why Puerto Ricans on the island have generally not opposed “bilingualism,” yet they have resisted English language instruction.

Throughout various surveys and interviews, Puerto Rican islanders have made public their opinions regarding bilingualism. To summarize, most of the population believe in the academic, financial and global benefits bilingualism yields. Carroll (2016) observes how many statehood supporters are in favor of a dual language nation. A brief article from *El Vocero* (Millán Rodríguez, 2012c) shared Dr. Luis Zayas’ thoughts on how bilingualism offers more opportunities and income. However, bilingualism and English language acquisition are not interchangeable. When reading *Being Bilingual in Borinquen*, a collection of stories from multiple undergraduate students and their personal experiences with bilingualism, one realizes how English could be the real antagonistic element, and not the ability to speak two or more languages. Some of these stories highlight the enthusiasm of bilingual individual for learning more languages, or their interests in the linguistics field. The ones who returned to Puerto Rico suffered bullying and discrimination for being “gringos” (2017, 92). On the other hand, they aided many of their peers in their English homework and were rewarded for their participation in bilingual activities at school. This alone proves that bilingual individuals are valued for their skills, but rejected for their mixed identity.

The main reason why English has endured an ongoing resistance in Puerto Rico is because the language is highly politicized. Meaning that for decades, English has been tied to

partisan ideologies regarding the political state of the island. A perfect example of this dynamic would be when in 1991, Governor Rafael Hernández Colón (pro-Commonwealth) made Spanish the sole official language of Puerto Rico, which was revoked in 1993 when Governor Pedro Rosselló's administration was in place (pro-Statehood), reverting English to a co-official language. In the article mentioned earlier, Dr. Zayas disclosed how bilingualism has always been managed as a political issue and not an educational one. Therefore, one can conclude that various political campaigns have used the term *bilingualism* as a blanket word, meaning the incorporation of English in Puerto Rican society and not the use of two linguistic codes simultaneously in the island (i.e. Spanish and any other second language). According to Bischoff, statehood supporters know this well, since Governor Luis Fortuño argued against Rick Santorum's statements on Puerto Rico's adoption of English as an official language to become a state. The writer explains: "Here the representative of the colonizer is insisting on the use of English, as an indicator of U.S. national identity, and the representative of the colonized is insisting on a Puerto Rican identity grounded in *bilingualism*, and **not** Spanish" (2017, 289; author's emphasis). Back in 1997, "Rossello launched a program to incorporate more English-language instruction in the island's public schools. He said his aim is to make the next generation of Puerto Ricans bilingual citizens" (Padilla, 1997). Interestingly, as the journalist noted, this happened right before the 1998 status plebiscite was being revised and prepared. The same pattern was observed in a study including the multiple images English, bilingualism, and languages conveyed when the 2012 plebiscite was approaching. Shenk comments on this:

Notably, the phrases typically do not refer specifically to English itself but rather to 'bilingualism'. However, this paper proposes that *bilingualism* in many, if not most, of these examples, does not refer simply to proficiency in two languages but rather to *English* in particular, since the discourse points not to the Spanish language serving as a useful tool, but rather the learning and acquisition of English. That is, including when these discourses refer to bilingualism, the metaphor being accessed suggests that it is

English that will open doors rather than Spanish/English bilingualism. (2017, 329; author's emphasis)

While statehood supporters can be identified as using the term *bilingualism* in blanket statements, independence followers also have their share in demonizing English. The aforementioned study found out that the newspaper *Claridad* printed interviews in which English was linked to invasion, “*contamination, malign, influence, and corruption...* with the process of Americanization by way of education in English from the first half of the twentieth century” (331, author's emphasis). After reviewing these observations, it is clear that politicizing bilingualism has created a considerable amount of damage to how the population relates to it. It is so problematic that Delgado-Cintrón shared a quote from 1989, in which he and one of his peers commented on Senator J. Bennett Johnston's stance on including language and culture in plebiscites:

Agregaron que el Senador J. Bennett Johnston, Presidente de la Comisión de Energía y Recursos Naturales del Senado norteamericano, no incluye el asunto del idioma español porque sabe que de hacerlo, eventualmente la fórmula de estadidad quedaría destruida, porque contrario a lo que se dice, un estado cuyo idioma es el español es imposible en una nación homogénea como los Estados Unidos, que usan exclusivamente el inglés. (1993, 34)

When reading these arguments, it occurs that bilingualism could have a chance if it were not politicized. And this is true. Individuals and communities that have taken to their hands the implementation and maintenance of bilingualism without the political backlash have many success stories to share. First, *Being Bilingual in Borinquen* illustrates many scenarios in which students and their parents worked on maintaining their bilingualism. Their linguistic skills didn't come from political motivations, but from growing up in a bilingual family, moving back to Puerto Rico, or personal interest. Most of the subjects agreed that public education didn't provide

the necessary tools for bilingual maintenance; neither did the typical island environment (social, cultural, and political activities). Basically, using two languages or more was a personal goal or an inevitable aspect of their upbringing. Another example of independent efforts on bilingual practices is the very few public schools that offer bilingual/dual language education in the island. Millán Rodríguez wrote two articles that allowed faculty, parents, and students to voice their thoughts and experiences at these schools. In sum, everyone expressed their satisfaction with the programs and their gratitude towards it. An eleven year old student acknowledged “que su preparación académica y el dominio de ambos idiomas lo ayudarán a convertirse en un ingeniero de computadoras” (2012a). A mother became proactive by learning with her child: “Yo he aprendido con él y ahora yo le doy las tutorías... Es importante que estas escuelas las lleven a otros pueblos para que los niños tengan la misma oportunidad” (idem). Another parent expressed “Es un compromiso genuino tanto de la facultad como estudiantes y padres. Si esa integración no se da el proyecto no funciona. Para mí esto no es una escuela sino una familia” (idem). On the other article, the journalist made space to publicize some of the issues these schools face for walking away from the politicization of English and bilingualism, which include acquiring textbooks from private businesses, hiring qualified teachers and securing them Continued Education, and access to technology (2012b). One principal, Mrs. Hernández, exposed the reality of politicized languages and how they affect the schools’ performance: “Las escuelas bilingües han tenido por una década un vaivén porque el Departamento responde a cada cambio de administración y cada plataforma de gobierno y conforme a esas plataformas se van formando esos planes de trabajo” (idem). This explains why mainstream public schools fail to deliver a successful ESL learning experience: the goal of bilingualism relies on the state and isn’t relegated to the school community.

On the island, Spanish is perceived as vital for preserving Puerto Rican culture and national identity.(1) However, on the mainland, English language proficiency is necessary (2), and most second and third generation U.S. resident Puerto Ricans are English dominant.(3) However, dominance in English has not necessarily eroded their self-identification as Puerto Ricans.(4) Based on your readings, why is the acquisition of English language proficiency and its impact on national identity perceived differently by Puerto Ricans in the U.S. and in Puerto Rico?

Puerto Rican islanders are colonial subjects and are guided to view English as a disenfranchising element to their cultural nationalism. On the other hand, Puerto Rican mainlanders have become racialized subjects and view English as a common tool to connect with other minorities, a platform to social mobility, and as a stabilizing element within the society that has already formulated prejudices against them. Not to mention that English becomes the mother tongue of many third generation migrants in the US. “Spanish-English bilinguals in the United States typically form stable bilingual communities, and the tradition of language separation is enforced both by the pragmatics of survival in an English-dominant country and also by statute, particularly in schools and many work environments” (Lipski 2008, 240).

Regarding the islander’s subscription to the Spanish language, it is important to understand the dehumanizing and abusive statements enounced against their vernacular since the early 1900s by the U.S government. Delgado-Cintrón quotes Víctor S. Clark, an Education Commissioner sent to evaluate the Puerto Rican population: “Entre las multitudes puertorriqueñas no parece existir devoción por su idioma ni por ningún ideal nacional,... la mayor parte del pueblo de esta Isla no habla un español puro. El idioma es un patois casi

incomprehensible” (1993, 25). Another example comes from Rodríguez Juliá’s quoting of a different U.S official: “The Spanish language is the special obstruction to all that is to come from America. English must be acquired as the medium for all that the new conditions are to accomplish” (2006, 77). Once Muñoz Marín’s administration settles Puerto Rico’s permanent relationship with the United States, it launches an aggressive campaign for cultural nationalism. This term refers to Puerto Rican identity based on its culture and heritage, untying it from American nationalism. Duany provides the following insights:

In several speeches, essays, and notes written during the 1950s, Muñoz Marín developed his own blueprint for cultural nationalism. First, he held that the nation was a ‘natural space’ in which a people’s identity could flourish in the contemporary world. Second, he believed that it was possible to assert a strong, original, and well-defined personality without resorting to political nationalism. Third, he affirmed that Puerto Rico’s collective personality was compatible with Commonwealth status. Finally, he held that it was ‘natural’ that some traits of the Island’s culture would be modified in contact with the US mainland. (2017, 57-58)

In his other book, Duany explains that cultural nationalists saw the children of the diaspora as obstacles to consolidating the rational conciseness and growth of the Puerto Rican independence movement (2002, 20). These groups base their ideas on so called assimilation issues second generation migrants present as they lose their roots, the use of Spanglish, endangering the Puerto Rican culture with their hybridity (23-24). Migrants were also targeted for menacing the cultural heritage by living in the mainland, thus considering authentic the island born (184).

As a consequence of this rejection, migrants and mainland-born Boricuas’ self-identification as Puerto Ricans is more of a racial/ethnic characteristic of their identity, and it doesn’t compromise their national identity. In other words, their U.S. citizenship and place of birth don’t represent conflicts of interest with their ethnicities, thus one doesn’t disturb the others. As minorities, they already experience some level of exclusion from the U.S.’ social discourse and seek elements of cohesiveness within their communities. This includes shared

heritages (migration, culture, livelihoods), collective performances (parades, holidays, conferences), and social spaces (bodegas, restaurants, botánicas, cafés, etc.) Lipski discusses these scenarios: “Spanish has definitely been under siege by the dominant society. Often feeling estranged from their countries of origin -and stigmatized in these same countries by terms such as *pocho* and *nuyorican*- Latinos in the United States have struggled to forge a new identity beyond ‘life on the hyphen’ as Pérez Firmat (1994) has put it” (2008, 240; author’s emphasis).

Even though there’s no official language in the U.S., English has become by default the lingua franca of the nation. While using it doesn’t eliminate the minority status from Latinxs and other non-Whites, it offers them employment opportunities, upward social mobility, access to higher education, less exposure to discrimination and prejudice. That is, if the individual isn’t intending to live in marginal situations in which English proficiency isn’t a requirement. It has become a common trait of second and third generation migrants to lose their heritage language. Linguist Donald Winford states these individuals “usually become bilingual in the host language, or shift entirely to it, often by the third generation. In most cases, children born in the third generation acquire native proficiency in the host language” (2003, 237). This happens for a variety of reasons. First, these generations were born and raised in the host communities in which English is the linguistic gear of their social reality. Their schooling, jobs, social interactions, and mass media are primarily in English. Second, their parents didn’t teach them the heritage language. Many Latinx families (including Puerto Ricans) have kept their offspring from learning Spanish because they didn’t have the time to instruct the language at home (multiple jobs), they were afraid they would suffer discrimination, their own Spanish started to deteriorate and didn’t feel confident passing it down, they expected public education to take on the task, or they married someone outside their ethnic community that didn’t speak the language.

The Puerto Rican islander retains Spanish as its defense mechanism against an aggressive Americanization in the island. They reject the coloniality of English. However, Puerto Rican mainlanders suffer the rejection of the islanders, plus the racialization within American society. Stuart Hall sheds light upon the power within this internal identity migration: “it isn’t quite so framed by those extremities of power and aggravation, violence and mobilization, as the older forms of nationalism. The slow contradictory movement from ‘nationalism’ to ‘ethnicity’ as a source of identities is part of a new part of a new politics. It is also part of the ‘decline of the west’” (1987, 46). This decline can be interpreted as the U.S.’ failed attempt to annihilate Puerto Rican culture and identity, which continues surviving and reinventing itself, some places in Spanish, others in English, and in some decolonized shadows, in Spanglish.

Cited work

Bischoff, Shannon. "Is English a Language Barrier to Public Higher Education in Puerto Rico?" *Multilingual: Journal of Cross-Cultural and Interlanguage Communication*, vol. 36, n. 3 (2017): 281-311. DOI: 10.1515/multi-2016-0049.

Carroll, Kevin S. "Understanding Perceptions of Language Threat: The Case of Puerto Rico." *Caribbean Studies*, vol. 44, no. ½ (Jan-Dec 2016): 167-186.
<http://eds.b.ebscohost.com.libproxy.albany.edu/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=19&sid=0775257c-8dce-4164-b5e0-dc76adb84f96%40sessionmgr104>

Delgado Cintrón, Carmelo. "La lucha por el idioma". *El español: El dilema del idioma y la nación*. ed. Cesar A. Rey Hernández. San Juan: Centro de Investigaciones Académicas, Universidad del Sagrado Corazón, 1993. 25-39.

Duany, Jorge. *Puerto Rico: What Everyone Needs to Know*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.

---. *The Puerto Rican Nation on the Move: Identities on the Island & in the United States*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002.

Hall, Stuart. "Minimal Selves." *The Real Me: Post-Modernism and the Question of Identity*. ICA documents 6. London: The Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1987. 44-46.

Lipski, John M. *Varieties of Spanish in the United States*. Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2008.

Millán Rodríguez, Yamilet. "Compromiso de la comunidad escolar con el inglés". *El Vocero*. 27 May 2012a: 5.

---. “Milla extra al enfrentar diversidad de retos”. *El Vocero*. 27 May 2012b: 4-5.

---. “Piden fuera a la politización del inglés”. *El Vocero*. 27 May 2012c: 3-4.

Padilla, Maria T. “Hispanics Told to Learn English to Gain Foothold-Puerto Rico Gov. Pedro Rossello said being Bilingual is Imperative to Break Down Barriers.” *Orlando Sentinel*, METRO edition, September 13, 1997.

Pousada, Alicia. *Being Bilingual in Borinquen: Student Voices from the University of Puerto Rico*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017.

Rodríguez Juliá, Edgardo. *Puertorriqueños: álbum de la sagrada familia puertorriqueña a partir de 1898*. San Juan, P.R.: Editorial Plaza Mayor, 2006.

Shenk, Elaine. “El engaño y el cuco: Metaphors in the Nexus between Language and Status in Puerto Rico.” *Language and Intercultural Communication (LandIC)* vol. 15, no. 3 (August 2015): 324-340. DOI: 10.1080/14708477.2015.1015349

Winford, Donald. *An Introduction to Contact Linguistics*. Malden: Blackwell Publications, 2003.

Carmen E. Nieves

Qualifying Exams Question #3: Theory

How are metaphors or concepts useful to understanding colonialism in general and the Puerto Rican case in particular? Are some more useful than others?

A few days ago an acquaintance described Puerto Rico as being “the world’s oldest colony”. As fictional as it may sound, this is true when taking into account its first sighting by Columbus in 1493, its initial colonization in 1508, and its concession to the U.S. in 1898. Officially becoming the *Commonwealth of Puerto Rico* in 1952 didn’t change the dynamics of power and relations with its northern metropolis. There are still federal regulation, merchant marine restrictions, and second class citizenship among the island’s territory and population. In order to understand, discuss, and analyze this complicated colonial relationship, many theories come in aid as deconstructive agents of its multiple elements: the colonizer, the colonized, their motivations, resistance, and outcomes. The following theories, and their metaphors/concepts, are key to exploring these patterns; some more directly than others, but ultimately they highlight noticeable traits of colonialism and its thumbprint in Puerto Rico.

Frederik Barth engages in an insightful discussion about inclusive and exclusive boundaries, and how they set grounds for identification, difference, and negotiation. “Ethnic groups only persist as significant units if they imply marked differences in behaviour, i.e. persisting cultural differences... Thus the persistence of ethnic groups in contact implies not only criteria and signals for identification, but also a structuring of interactions which allows the persistence of cultural differences” (1969, 15-16). Colonialism works by defining *boundaries* in

different levels of the social experience (political, cultural, economic, racial, etc.) which colonizers use to contain those who are not like them (believed to be inferior or dangerous). In an interesting turn of events, Puerto Ricans have used the same concept to preserve their nationalism and identity through culture. A perfect example is the preservation of a mostly monolingual community of Spanish speakers on the island that, having marginal to moderate exposure to English, retain their dialect as proof of their unique heritage. This inclusive/exclusive boundary is considered a *resistance* against U.S. Americanizing efforts to make English the language of instruction.

Malkki explains in a formidable way how people use botanical metaphors for national identification. It is mainly based on images of *roots* or genealogical trees. Roots are used to validate the bond between culture, people, and territory. The tree image can also be seen as a strategy to naturalize culture, in a way that its soil symbolized “the old colonial designation of ‘peoples and cultures’” (1992, 26). In the colonial mindset, people inherited their idiosyncrasies from their place of birth, thus justifying their “unruly” practices. It is never discussed how the colonizers are uprooted for establishing themselves in a foreign land, but the opposite is argued about the colonized, especially if the subject moves from the periphery to the center. According to the author, this is because “One country cannot at the same time be another country” (26). This can be a bit problematic at times, picturing those in Diasporas or abroad as uprooted, detached, and lacking cultural foundation. They are considered pathologically problematic and incapable of proper behavior for losing their “moral bearings” (32). For this reason, the colonized is better kept at his birthplace, since its roots are not worthy of transplantation, at risk of decaying the host community, and sabotaging authenticity. These thoughts are reflected clearly in the ongoing relationship between the U.S. and Puerto Rico. In the early twentieth

century, Puerto Ricans were considered to be rootless subjects who spoke a gibberish version of Spanish, never assimilating fully the English language (given their inferior origins), and becoming highly racialized when partaking in the diasporas' experiences in the mainland, as a result of their *uprootedness*. This is part of the colonizer's visualization of the oppressed.

Both Bhabha and Rivera Cusicanqui are advocates of the highly discussed *third space*. In short, this concept uses space as a metaphor for the creation of hybrid and/or parallel identities generated by socio-historical contact. The same way languages accommodate for new entries, identities are constantly reinventing themselves depending on the impact and scope of the contact produced. Colonization expects to create cookie-cutter versions of their countries, if not improved ones. Once contact takes place between both parties, a new history and society are emerging. Bhabha argues that "It is only when we understand that all cultural statements and systems are constructed in this contradictory and ambivalent [third] space of enunciation, that we begin to understand why hierarchical claims to the inherent originality or 'purity' of cultures are untenable, even before we resort to empirical historical instances that demonstrate their hybridity" (1994, 55). Another way to view the third space is through its coexistence with alternate systems and beliefs, without dismissing each other. Indeed, this requires acknowledging what isn't part of A to identify B, in a contrasting fashion. Rivera Cusicanqui calls this *ch'ixi*:

The word *ch'ixi* has many connotations: it is a color that is the product of juxtaposition, in small points or spots, of opposed or contrasting colors... It is this heather gray that comes from the imperceptible mixing of black and white, which are confused by perception, without ever being completely mixed. The notion of *ch'ixi*... reflects the Aymara idea of something that is and is not at the same time. It is the logic of the included third. A *ch'ixi* color gray is white but is not white at the same time; it is both white and its opposite, black... The potential of undifferentiation is what joins opposites... *ch'ixi* combines the Indian world and its opposite without ever mixing them. But *ch'ixi*'s heteronomy also alludes in turn to the idea of muddling, to a loss of sustenance and energy... It parallels, then, this fashionable notion of cultural hybridity lite conforming to contemporary cultural domination. (2012, 105)

The incessant efforts of colonization to create a New World only birthed a multiplicity of third spaces around the globe. American dominion in Puerto Rico has shaped an individual that is a U.S. citizen of Puerto Rican nationality, who speaks Spanish but isn't fully integrated into Latin America, and lives in an unincorporated territory, even though it becomes a minority when moving to the mainland. Boricuas are a living and breathing *third space*, a result of colonization.

Stuart Hall shares an enlightening thought: "Those who hold that modern identities are being fragmented argue that what has happened in late-modernity to the conception of the modern subject is not simply its estrangement, but its dislocation" (1992, 285). This is true, particularly for the decolonized individual; since colonization's immediate consequence on the conquered was branding it as the *Other*. In the middle of an introspective voyage, Hall understood that his identity (together with many other subjects) had been spoon fed to him from the victor's perspective: "Identity is formed at the unstable point where the 'unspeakable' stories of subjectivity meet the narratives of history, of a culture. And since he/she is positioned in relation to cultured narratives which have been profoundly expropriated the colonized subject is always other than where he or she is, or is able to speak from" (1987, 44). The theorist has expanded on the problem of discovering oneself using the *Other* as a metaphor, while in the middle of the Metropolis, and how that disassociation initiates a process of fragmented identities, as he comments, "I believe it is an immensely important gain when one recognizes that all identity is constructed across difference. (45). When standing outside of the colonizer's gaze, our taught selves shatter into multiple fragments and independent units; the core one being the minimal self. Initially, this self will only conceive that it has been colonized, sold a story to maintain it subjugated, and start acknowledging its adjacent fragments. This is another result of colonialism, and Puerto Ricans aren't exempt from this process. For long they have been taught

to see themselves as U.S. citizens rather than *caribeños*, *latinoamericanos*, or even *black*. Many go through the same passage Hall visited once they become the minorities they weren't at home.

Part of the decolonization process includes questioning the foundations that kept the individual in that state. Luisa Capetillo constantly challenges the notion of oppression by contesting the monopolization of *nature* and depriving human beings of it. She considers:

There can be no virtue or morality nor honesty that is not included within the laws of nature. Herein lies the compendium of all virtues. Nature indicates to us the true path toward goodness, but we want to be wiser than nature, and herein lies the origin of all our errors, in wanting to modify the natural laws, which is where beauty, health, harmony, and truth are to be found. And where will these erroneous paths lead us? To crime, to prostitution, adultery, to the death of our spirit. (2005, 26)

Even though Capetillo wrote from a non-nationalist point of view, she did see the world as one host and one race. Colonialism crushes every aspect of nature listed above, from its laws to its ever-flowing course, because it destabilizes what the colonized knows and replaces it for what the colonizers think is best. As she writes, colonialism walks its slaves to the death of their souls. Capetillo fought these injustices from the very beginning: “And yet there is enough in nature to feed the mass of humanity that currently exists, without exploitation, fraud, or misery. The egoists and exploiters have the floor . . . ! Answer, hypocrites, who has deformed humanity this way? Filling it with vice and misery when nature is so bountiful? Speak, so you do not dare to respond ‘brothers’” (2005, 30). In this case, *nature* isn't only metaphoric for the possessed land, but its inhabitants as well, Colonial oppression is mostly interested in the gain and power it can acquire on the underprivileged people's expense. From the very beginning of U.S. colonial presence in Puerto Rico, the nation has aimed to control the land and its access to other countries. The islanders were forced to sell their assets, move to the mainland, or depend on government assistance when capitalism became the economic engine. Capetillo very well predicted what would happen to them by providing the profile of the colonizer.

One of colonization's characteristics is that it has a very well-founded purpose behind it. It isn't random, there's always a major motivation to save or redeem the Other, which is only possible through the Conqueror (Said 1994, 283). The previous statement summarizes Edward Said's meaning of *Orientalism*. "[It] responded more to the culture that produced it than to its putative object, which was also produced by the West. Thus the history of Orientalism has both an internal consistency and a highly articulated set of relationships" (22). These relationships include the siting of the *Orient* (or the Other), its study and portrayal, validating its performances through the West, and speaking on its behalf. "The Orientalist, then, sees his task as expressing the dislocation and consequently speaking the truth about [the Orient], which by definition -since its contradictions inhibit its powers of self-discernment- it cannot express" (281). *Orientalism* is a theory heavily used in postcolonial studies, areas of political oppression, and refugee scenarios. It also relies on the geographical placement of these areas, in this case, West Europe and the U.S. Their separate locations metaphorically translate to their different ideas, discourses, and societies. *Oriental* means backwardness, containment, and intelligibility. Examples of these condescending patterns are seen throughout the entire history of the U.S. in Puerto Rico: from early twentieth century anthropologists and photographers producing and sharing evidence of Puerto Rican's racial inferiority, to their claimed inability to survive efficiently Hurricane Maria in 2017. The Orientalist's (or colonizer's) prejudices are deemed facts. This is part of his profile.

Sylvia Wynter does a phenomenal job deconstructing the motivation of the colonizer. She describes him as the "Man, which overrepresents itself as if it were the human itself, and that of securing the well-being, and therefore the full cognitive and behavioral autonomy of the human species itself/ourselves" (2003, 260). The author paints a portrait of a *man* whose faith doesn't rely on God itself, but on the mission and vision God has chosen for him (just like the

encomienda system in the early sixteenth century). The new Adam will not replicate the sins or mistakes of the previous ones; he'll continue to name the creatures he finds in his surroundings.

Wynter's core arguments are the following:

However, at the same time as the West initiated the process by means of which the projection of extrahuman causation could no longer be mapped, in good faith, on the physical levels of reality, it would also begin, in the wake of its reinventing of its descriptive statement as that of Man in its first form, to identify as its Imaginary extrahuman Being the figure of "Nature," now represented as the authoritative agent on earth of a God who, having created it, has now begun to recede into the distance. So that as the earlier Spirit/Flesh master code was being relegated to a secondary and increasingly privatized space, the new rational/irrational master code, which was to be the structuring of the rearranged hierarchies of the now centralized political order of the modern state, was being projected upon another "space of Otherness". (306)

The "space of Otherness" mentioned above are the areas where the colonized lives and defends its territory. The fact that the colonizer believes his truth is universal doesn't mean all beings are in the same universal space, since he is the Man. The personhood of Puerto Ricans has been questioned by American imperialism since the 1900s. Early in the century their racial composition made them inferior (together with their language), their second class citizenship disables their voice in presidential elections and their presence in Congress, but drafting them to war makes them what many call "carne de cañón".

Ángel Rama's *La ciudad letrada* presents colonialism from a different angle: grids, elites, and languages. It presents the transplantation of European *cities* into the New World, seeking to do the same, culturally, with the colonized subjects. He explains: "Varias causas contribuyeron a la fortaleza de la ciudad letrada [, entre ellas], las exigencias de la evangelización (transculturación) de una población indígena que contaba por millones, a la que se logró encuadrar en la aceptación de los valores europeos, aunque en ellos no creyeran o no los comprendieran" (1998, 33-34). One particular aspect of Spanish colonization was the expansion of the Castilian dialect to control its subjects under one code. Interestingly, the U.S. started a

similar process by imposing English to the island's population since it was the gateway to everything American. Rama also discusses the Written City: "La ciudad escrituraria estaba rodeada de dos anillos, lingüística y socialmente enemigos,... El más cercano... era el anillo urbano donde se distribuía la plebe formada de criollos" (45). This last statement clearly exemplifies the twenty/twenty-first century Puerto Rico, which retained its first colonizer's language in the U.S.' newly colonized territory (metaphor of city and center/periphery). The islanders, described here as *criollos* and *plebeyos*, represent the reality of the unincorporated territory (the periphery) while the mainland is conceived to have the better language (the center).

Jonathan Rosa's article on *languagelessness* is key to analyzing colonizing acts of violence, discrimination, and power abuse upon the colonized. Together with Wynter's logic on dehumanization, and Said's image of the voiceless Oriental, Rosa introduces these "racialized ideologies of languagelessness [because they] call into question linguistic competence—and, by extension, legitimate personhood—altogether" (2016, 163). The colonizer uses language competence to challenge the cognitive handicap of the individual, and reject the "authenticity" of their dual identity. It is important to remember that he is an essentialist savior claiming a legitimate heritage. When subjects show initial signs of bilingual competence, they are stripped from their humanity by disregarding ALL of their linguistic skills. "Since these [individuals]' language use was not perceived as corresponding to standardized written English, they were understood as not knowing any legitimate language at all. This racialized ideology of languagelessness has led to the classification of thousands of Latina/o students as 'Non-nons'," (169). A normal process of language acquisition has placed the subject in a subhuman category by not possessing the ability to speak at all (non-English, non-Spanish). The only reason behind this, according to colonization, is its racial inferiority. The same happened when researchers

spoke about Puerto Ricans being better off learning English because their Spanish was unintelligible. The colonized has never spoken.

The theories presented and discussed above intend to show the various aspects of colonization, but particularly how they apply to the Puerto Rican case, from different standpoints. They present the territory as a colony, in the whole sense of the word, and confirm that approaching Puerto Rican colonialism isn't a simple task. Too many aspects of Otherness, dehumanization, and abuse are still imposed upon Boricuas here and there. Hopefully, the next migration they embark on is to their decolonized selves.

Cited Work

Barth, Fredrik (Ed.). "Introduction." *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1969.

Bhabha, Homi K. "The Commitment to Theory". *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994.

- Capetillo, Luisa. *A Nation of Women: An Early Feminist Speaks Out; Mi Opinión: Sobre Las Libertades, Derechos y Deberes de la Mujer*. Arte Público Press, 2005. ProQuest Ebook Central. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/albanyedu-ebooks/detail.action?docID=3115170>.
- Hall, Stuart. "Chapter 6: The Question of Cultural Identity." *Modernity and its Futures*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992. 273-325.
- . "Minimal Selves." *The Real Me: Post-Modernism and the Question of Identity*. ICA documents 6. London: The Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1987. 44-46.
- Malkki, Liisa. "National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity among Scholars and Refugees." *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 7, No. 1, *Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference* (Feb, 1992): 24-44.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/656519>
- Rama, Ángel. *La ciudad letrada*. Montevideo: Arca, 1998.
- Rivera Cusicanqui, Silvia. "Ch'ixinakax utxiwa: A Reflection on the Practices and Discourses of Decolonization." *The South Atlantic Quarterly*. 111:1, Winter 2012. 97-109. DOI 10.1215/00382876-1472612
- Rosa, Jonathan Daniel. "Standardization, Racialization, Languagelessness: Raciolinguistic Ideologies across Communicative Contexts." *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, Vol. 26, Issue 2 (2016): 162–183. DOI: 10.1111/jola.12116.
- Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1994.
- Wynter, Sylvia. "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument." *CR: The New Centennial Review*. Volume 3, Number 3, Fall 2003. 257-337. <https://doi.org/10.1353/ncr.2004.0015>