



The Race of My Language

La raza de mi lengua

*The Islanders' Linguistic Identity and its Challenges
in the United States*

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Introduction

- ❖ *Spanish Teacher in Puerto Rico*
- ❖ *Research on DE Spanish Curriculum*
- ❖ *Discussion on Amsterdam*
- ❖ *Interviews in 2012 (Centro Cívico and Amsterdam High School)*

Objective of the Project

This dissertation will explore the extent to which monolingual Spanish-speaking Puerto Rican migrants experience racialization in the United States due to language. (Specifically Amsterdam, NY)

It will be about identifying and analyzing how and if they become othered bodies for being Spanish speakers in the U.S.



Relevance of the Study

94.4%

Puerto Rico's inhabitants speak Spanish at home

78.7%

U.S. population speaks only English

25%

Amsterdam's population is Puerto Rican



Historical Background

- ❖ *Language Battle since 1900s*
- ❖ *1949-Public schools to teach in Spanish*
- ❖ *Massive Migration from late 1940s on*
- ❖ *Cultural Nationalism from 1950s*
- ❖ *Language and Political Status*





Theoretical Frameworks

1

Bonnie Urciuoli *Racialization of language*

Explains why any racialized process has taken place as a result of language difference, and if Spanish monolingualism places the speaker in opposition to what their social spaces consider to be a successful individual.



Theoretical Frameworks

2

Ofelia García and Leah Mason ***Minoritization of Spanish***

Explains why Spanish monolingualism has the ability to minoritize an individual, and if they (or others) believe their class status is due to their mother tongue (if Spanish is indeed the language of poverty.)



Theoretical Frameworks

3

Jonathan Rosa *Languagelessness*

Explains why the personhood of a native Spanish speaker/ speaker of ESL may be questioned in order to validate or not their overall performance.

“When groups are seen in racial terms, language differences are ideologically problematic... Race discourses, or racializing, frame group origin in natural terms...Racializing discourses equate language difference with disorder, with images of illiterate foreigners flooding the United States and refusing to speak English or hordes of the underclass speaking an accented English with ‘broken’ grammar and ‘mixed’ vocabulary.”

—Urciuoli 1996, 18

“Spanish that Puerto Ricans have brought to the USA has also been minoritized, as it became characterized as the *language of colonized people*”

—García and Mason 2009, 82

“Racialized ideologies of languagelessness call into question linguistic competence —and, by extension, legitimate personhood— altogether”

—Rosa 2006, 163

Relevant Literature

Jorge Duany

Experiences of Puerto Rican subjects racialized and the roots of cultural nationalism in the 1950s



Bonnie Urciuoli

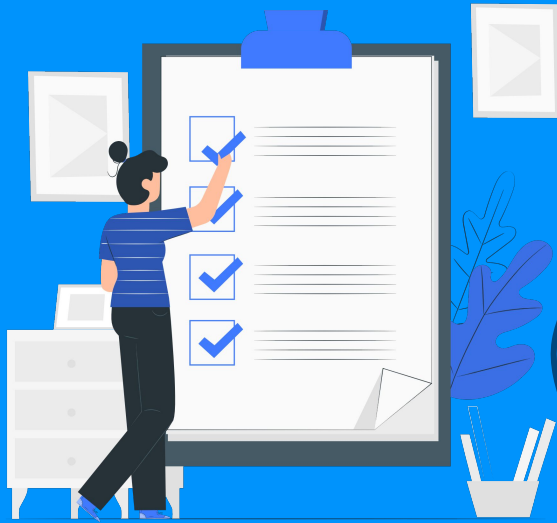
The basis on which Puerto Ricans are racialized based on language proficiency

Amílcar Barreto

Ties between Spanish monolingualism and national identity/community

Ellen Bigler

Previous study on Puerto Rican population in Amsterdam

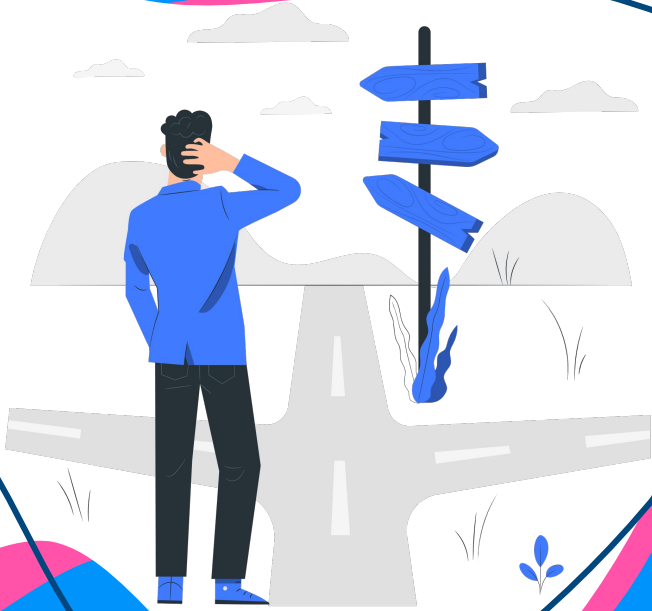


Research Questions

- ❖ *How does the lack of English proficiency become a racializing experience for Puerto Rican migrants in the U.S.?*
- ❖ *What linguistic accommodations are available to them?*
- ❖ *To what degree do Puerto Rican monolingual Spanish speakers may experience otherness or alienation as a result of language?*
- ❖ *How do these experiences affect their linguistic identity?*

Hypothesis

These islanders' identities become vulnerable to racialization for being Spanish-dominant speakers. Their linguistic experiences in the island do not translate in the mainland. Neither their American citizenship, nor their linguistic identity pair up with discourses regarding English as a crucial element of U.S. identity. Therefore, these migrants do not meet the linguistic standards of these discourses.



Research Subjects



Teachers

English, Spanish,
Math, Special
Education and ESL
instructors



Students

Eight Puerto Rican
Spanish-speaking
migrants in
Amsterdam High
School

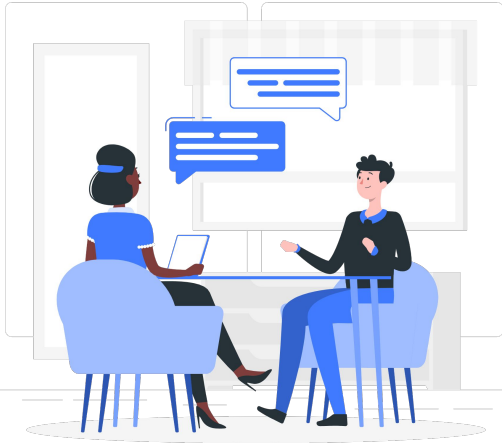
The students will be selected by controlling their nationality, gender, time of arrival (2010 on), and their ability to speak English (“well”, “not well” or “not at all”)

Methodology- Qualitative Study

- ❖ *Distribute Screening Questionnaire*
- ❖ *Questions based on the Census Questionnaire and Self Identification*
- ❖ *Research based on Rosa's study of Puerto Rican students and faculty in Chicago*
- ❖ *Two Semi –Structured Focus Group Interviews over Zoom: Students and Teachers*

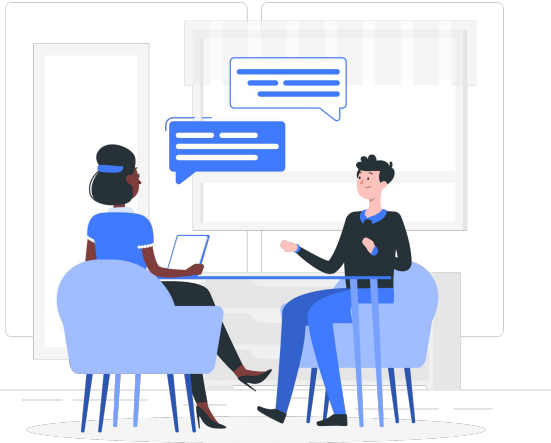


Potential Interview Questions (students)



- ❖ ¿Qué tan importante es el lenguaje como parte de tu identidad?
- ❖ ¿Cuál era tu opinión acerca del español cuando vivías en Puerto Rico?
- ❖ ¿Cuál era tu opinión acerca del inglés cuando vivías en Puerto Rico?
- ❖ ¿Cuál es tu opinión acerca del español ahora que vives en Ámsterdam?
- ❖ ¿Cuál es tu opinión acerca del inglés ahora que vives en Ámsterdam?
- ❖ Que sepas tú, ¿qué piensan otras personas acerca de tu español?
- ❖ Que sepas tú, ¿qué piensan otras personas acerca de tu inglés?
- ❖ ¿Cómo ha afectado tu experiencia educativa y social el hablar español?
- ❖ ¿Cómo ha afectado tu experiencia educativa y social el hablar inglés?
- ❖ ¿Continuarás hablando español?
- ❖ ¿Continuarás hablando inglés?

Potential Interview Questions (teachers)



- ❖ What role does language play in a person's identity?
- ❖ How does the lack of English proficiency affect the learning process?
- ❖ How have you been affected by the students' lack of English proficiency?
- ❖ What are the academic expectations for these students in English-dominant classrooms?
- ❖ Have any resources been suggested or provided for their academic and social benefit?
- ❖ What's the best option for these students (in terms of language)?
- ❖ How has the lack of English proficiency affected their social interaction?
- ❖ Is their Spanish useful in any way?
- ❖ Is their English useful in any way?

Potential Thesis Structure



Introduction

On the island's battle on language, Americanization, and migration



Information

Socioeconomic conditions, migration, and findings from 2012



Research

Contact, screening, interviews



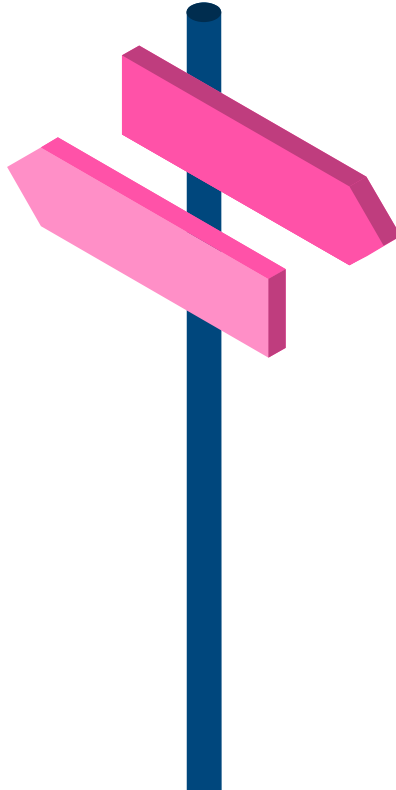
Findings

Potential options to consider in the U.S., and solutions to the Puerto Rican Otherness

Contributions to the **Field**

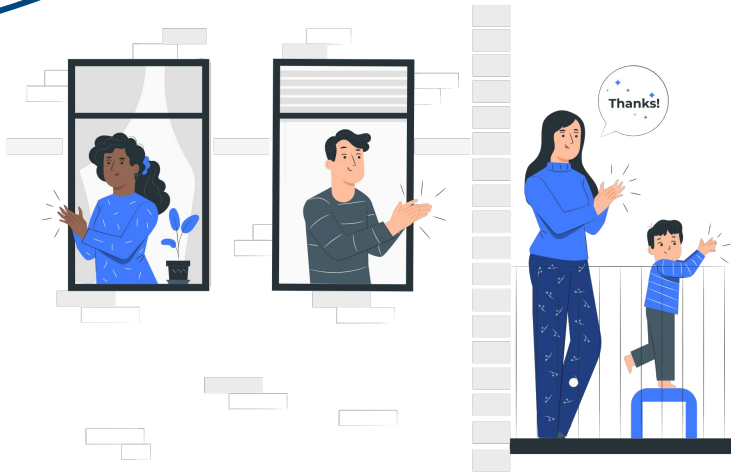
Provides insight on less recognized Puerto Rican communities away from New York City and other historical enclaves.

Sheds light on Puerto Rican migration waves after the 2010.



Informs regarding recent sociolinguistic experiences of native Spanish speakers in the U.S.

Offers an updated perspective on Spanish as a fundamental element of Puerto Rican identity.



¡Muchas gracias!

Your questions and feedback will be greatly appreciated to better improve this proposal.

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