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## The Never Ending Story of Language Policy in Puerto Rico

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# **THE NEVER ENDING STORY OF LANGUAGE POLICY IN PUERTO RICO**

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Por:  
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## **Abstract**

*This literature review addresses some of the issues discussed in the literature written about the controversial topic of English teaching in Puerto Rico. A deeper look into the language policies established in Puerto Rico since the island became a U.S. colony (1898) could lead us to understand why after more than a century of U.S. occupation, the majority of Puerto Ricans are still not bilingual in English and Spanish.*

## **Keywords**

*Bilingualism, Puerto Rico, English teaching, language policy.*

*\* D. Ed, Curriculum and Instruction, Language Teacher Education, ESL, Applied Linguistics. M.Ed, Bilingual/Multicultural Education.*

## **Resumen**

El propósito de esta revisión de literatura es presentar parte de los temas discutidos en los escritos sobre el tema controversial de la enseñanza de inglés en Puerto Rico. El explorar con más atención las políticas lingüísticas establecidas en Puerto Rico desde que la isla se convirtió en colonia de Estados Unidos, nos puede llevar a entender porqué luego de más de cien años de ocupación estadounidense la mayoría de los puertorriqueños no son bilingües en inglés y español.

## **Palabras clave**

Bilingüismo, Puerto Rico, enseñanza de inglés, políticas lingüísticas.



## Introduction

In 1898, Spain lost the war against the United States (Spanish-American War) and under the Treaty of Paris Puerto Rico was delivered as a price. Many Puerto Ricans accepted without complaints the new government with the hope that as Cuba, they were going to be given independence, something that did not happen. With the establishment of the new government, new laws and regulations were put into place. One of these regulations was the introduction of English as the medium of instruction in all grades. This was the first sign that the United States government was there to stay. As Negrón de Montilla, Meyn and Osuna (as cited in Pousada, 1996, p. 500) declare “English was forcibly imposed in Puerto Rico as a plan openly dedicated to the creation of a territory loyal to the United States interests.” Since 1898 seven different language policies have been implemented and none of them has accomplished the purpose of developing English-speaking and/or bilingual Puerto Rican citizens.

## 1. Theoretical Background: Language Planning and Language Policy

Before discussing the languages policies in Puerto Rico, it is necessary to define the concepts of language planning and language policy. Language planning is the process by which several choices are presented by “language entrepreneurs” to determine a policy that will affect how certain language(s) will be used for different social and government ends. Therefore, language policy is the choice made by these language entrepreneurs that affect how certain language(s) are employed (Schmidt, 2000). One method of studying these language policies is through Critical Language Policy Analysis (CLPA). It is Tollefson (2002) who defines the term “critical” as it refers to language policies stating that it is the “ability” that academics and students in language policy studies need to acquire to “read critically” language policies. With this he means the importance of understanding the “social and political implications of particular policies adopted in specific historical contexts” (p. 4). Tollefson clarifies that to have a “critical perspective” implies that the researcher needs to be aggressive exploring how language policies have an effect on the lives of individuals and groups who many times do not have any authority over the policymaking process.

For example, some researchers forget what Schmidt (2000) calls “domestic variables;” which he claims are also important to study in relation with the implementation of the language policies in Puerto Rico. Schmidt studied how one of these variables, people, influenced policies. He calls the participants involved in language policies, language entrepreneurs, and he groups them as insiders (teachers, administrators, parents), and outsiders (legislators, government officials, and politicians in general). Schmidt shows evidence of how insiders were instrumental on implementing, shaping, and changing language policies in Puerto Rico.

Teachers and other insiders should not be forgotten in the history of language policies. Unfortunately, many historical accounts have already made the mistake of not including these voices, making it difficult to find what their reactions were towards these policies.

## 2. Language Policies in Puerto Rico (1898-1947)

The first priority of the U.S. government was to “civilize” Puerto Ricans; and “to assimilate Puerto Rican political and legal system to the American system” was made their duty (Trías Monge, 1997, p. 32). Public education was chosen as the means to achieve this goal, especially through changing the language used as the medium of

instruction in the schools, from Spanish to English. As a result, since the beginning of the U.S. government in Puerto Rico, English was introduced as the medium of instruction in all grades. It is important to point out that as Pennycook emphasizes, this issue should be discussed beyond the topic of which language was used as the “medium of instruction” and also think of this issue “in terms of the social, cultural, political, or colonial implications of using one language or the other” (Pennycook, 2001, p. 195). Therefore, since 1898, seven different language policies have been implemented in the public education system. Algrén de Gutierrez summarizes these policies in her book *The Movement Against Teaching English in Schools in Puerto Rico* (1987). *Language Policy #1* (1898-1900) was implemented under Commissioners John Eaton and Victor S. Clark’s direction. The purpose of this language policy was to implement English as the medium of instruction in all grades. After Eaton and Clark, Commissioners Martin G. Brumbaugh and Samuel M. Lindsay directed *Language Policy #2* from 1900-1904. With this second language policy, Spanish became the medium of instruction in the elementary grades and English was a subject. In high school, this pattern was inverted. Commissioner Brumbaugh gave a strong emphasis to the organization of the elementary school in Puerto Rico. In addition, groups of Puerto Rican tea-

chers were sent to the United States to take English advanced studies, and a group of fifty teachers from the States was recruited to teach in Puerto Rico. The Commissioner also started Teachers' Institutes and Summer Schools to prepare teachers, plus organized "educational conferences" (Negrón de Montilla, 1977, p. 40). Brumbaugh invited North American educators to these conferences, who with the aid of an interpreter had the purpose of "accompanying him in the campaign to arouse the people's interest in their educational system" (Negrón de Montilla, p. 40). After these events, Brumbaugh established summer normal institutes to encourage teachers to take an examination to be certified to teach in Puerto Rico's public schools. Only 22 teachers of the 129 applicants were given the certificate (p. 41).

However, Brumbaugh's language policy gave importance to the use of Spanish as the medium of instruction in the elementary grades, but included the gradual acquisition of English. This policy did not receive the approval of the U.S. government and Brumbaugh ended his term in 1901 (Rodríguez-Galarza, 1997, p. 26). Brumbaugh's successor was Commissioner Samuel M. Lindsay (1902-1904). He believed that to Americanize Puerto Ricans, American institutions needed to be implanted in the Hispanic American understanding. To achieve his objec-

tive, Lindsay sent 540 teachers to Harvard University and Cornell University for summer study. With this same goal in mind he founded the University of Puerto Rico, which main goal was to prepare teachers in English. Lindsay organized a certification-testing program for Puerto Rican teachers (Rodríguez-Galarza, 1997, p.26). During Lindsay's incumbency *The Official Languages Act of 1902* (official law that governs language policy in Puerto Rico) was implemented. The law establishes "either Spanish or English to be used in government transactions" (Fernandez, Mendez, & Cueto, 1998, p. 187). Over the last century or so, this official language policy has been interpreted differently depending on the government in place. For example, during the first 50 years of American occupation (1898-1948), the language that was used in the majority of government offices, especially in education, was English.

Commissioners Roland P. Faulkner, Edwin G. Dexter and Edward M. Bainter changed the second language policy from 1904 to 1915. *Language Policy #3* went back to the Eaton-Clark policy of using English as the medium of instruction in all grades, with the exception that Spanish was taught as a subject. When their successor, Commissioner Roland P. Faulkner, took the administration of education from 1904 to 1907, his purpose was the "complete



fluency in English for all Puerto Rican teachers” (Solís, 1994, p. 61). This aimed Faulkner to start English courses for all teachers in Puerto Rico, summer classes in the United States for groups of teachers, economic rewards for those teachers who demonstrated excellent progress in English, and an annual exam to obtain a teacher certification. He changed the educational policy to make English the only language of instruction, and mandated the reading in English, even when he was aware that there were not enough English teachers in the schools. Later on, Edwin G. Dexter substituted Faulkner from 1907 until 1912. Dexter’s was highly criticized during his administration. His policy required for the first time that English had to be the medium of instruction in the rural schools and started military instruction in public schools. The biggest criticism that Dexter received during his administration was the lack of textbooks, methods, and teacher preparation. A change of commissioner occurred between 1912 and 1915, when Edward M. Bainter was assigned to substitute Dexter. The Puerto Rican society had accused Bainter’s predecessor of “participating in the destruction of Puerto Rican identity” (Rodríguez-Galarza, 1997, p. 27). To calm people’s resistance to the policy that Dexter had implemented, Bainter decided to permit the utilization of Spanish in the first four grades for the study of nature, health, and hygiene.

The language policy changed again from 1915 until 1934 with Commissioners Paul G. Miller and Juan B. Huyke. Through Language Policy #4, Spanish and English alternated as subjects and as the medium of instruction. The first four grades used Spanish as the medium of instruction; grade five was transitional with half of the core subjects taught in Spanish and the other half in English, and grades six through twelve used English as the medium of instruction. Paul G. Miller (1915-1921) was “greeted enthusiastically by both, the party in power and the Teachers Association” (Negrón de Montilla, p. 253). His slogan was “the conservation of Spanish and the acquisition of English.” During his incumbency the Jones Bill (1917), which imposed the American citizenship on Puerto Ricans, was approved. Many have argued that the reason of this bill was especially the need that the U.S. Army had for soldiers. As a consequence, Miller felt that as U.S. Citizens Puerto Rican children had to Americanize. Miller’s strategy was to build “lofty patriotism,” and turn teachers and students into “propagandists, ready and able to take part in the molding of public opinion along patriotic lines” (Negrón de Montilla, p. 255). Miller’s successor, Juan B. Huyke was the first Puerto Rican appointed as Commissioner of Education. Huyke equated Americanism to patriotism towards the United States. He believed that Puerto Ricans needed

to Americanize to finally merge into the United States life, enjoy the pleasures of it, and take its problems as if they were Puerto Rican problems (Negrón de Montilla, 1971, p.257). In his Circular letter No. 23 dated August 29, 1923, Huyke sent a clear message to all the teachers: "Any teacher unable or unwilling to teach in English may be asked to resign" (cited in Negrón de Montilla, 1971, p.192). If teachers did not agree to teach in English, Huyke believed they were against him, and American ideals. This may be one of the reasons why Puerto Rican teachers did not fight right away the implementation of these policies; they feared losing their jobs.

During his administration, Huyke ordered that all high schools students had to pass an English oral and written test upon graduation. Also, schools had to publish any materials in both English and Spanish, or in English, but not only in Spanish. In addition, Huyke is remembered especially as the founder of the Society for the Promotion and Study of the English Language. The students that belonged to this Society were eighth, ninth, and tenth graders. As identification, they had to wear the United States flag in their jackets and speak English among themselves. Huyke also encouraged a system of academic rewards for students that participated in English clubs through out the island. In addition, all official meetings were held in English. What's more, the

Commissioner established a system in which schools were evaluated and classified academically upon the results of the English examinations given to the students (Solís, 1994, p. 63).

The changes in the language policy did not stop in 1934. When Commissioner José Padín took the position of Commissioner of Education, he implemented Language Policy #5, which covered the years 1934 through 1937. With this policy, Padín went back to Brumbaugh's policy of using Spanish in the elementary grades and English in the high school as the medium of instruction. Dr. Padín favored Spanish as the medium of instruction, and English as an important language that needed to be included in the curriculum. This acknowledgment was the origin of ESL instruction in Puerto Rico (Rodríguez-Galarza, 1997, p.28).

The language policy changed again when José M. Gallardo became the Commissioner of Education. He put into place Language Policy #6, a policy that changed continuously from 1937 until 1945. This language policy progressed through various programs. Basically, Spanish was the medium of instruction in grades one and two with English as a subject. In grades three through eight, Spanish and English were used as the medium of instruction in varying subjects, coupled with a progressive increase in the time set to teach

English as a subject. Different approaches were followed for the teaching of and in English, in grades seven and eight. In addition, English became the medium of instruction in high school with Spanish taught as a subject. A reason for all these changes was that in 1937 Commissioner José M. Gallardo received direct federal government pressure from President Franklin D. Roosevelt to reinstate English as the medium of instruction. President Franklin D. Roosevelt addressed the issue to Gallardo in 1937, on his letter of appointment as Commissioner of Education. This was the first time a President of the United States expresses his thoughts on the issue of language in Puerto Rico. In his letter, Roosevelt expressed “the government’s language policy and the frustration it had produced” (as cited in Resnick, 1993, p. 263-264). The president emphasized the indispensability in American policy that the next generation of Puerto Ricans, who were American citizens, could grow up having English language competence. Roosevelt believed that it was only through language that Puerto Ricans could understand American ideals and principles, and make use of the advantages that their American citizenship gave them. Even though Roosevelt at a moment in his letter pointed out that it was not his desire to diminish the Spanish legacy, he considered that the new generations of Puerto Ricans “had to understand that the language

of the United States was English and as a result this language had to be taught purposely, vigorously, and with devotion to them.” However, President Roosevelt’s wishes were not completely accomplished, because in 1942 this policy reverted back to Padín’s policy.

During his incumbency as Commissioner of Education, Gallardo emphasized teacher training to a great extent. He wanted to improve teachers’ English proficiency. According to Osuna (1949) local English supervisors were appointed in almost all the school districts. The supervisors visited the schools and observed the teachers and the students, looking for the “most common errors” of both of them, and afterwards prepared a form with “suitable remedial work” (p. 378). The image of the supervisor is present on all of Abelardo Diaz-Alfaro’s stories about Peyo Mercé. Especially, in the short story Peyo Mercé teaches English (*Peyo Mercé enseña inglés*). This story introduces Peyo, a rural teacher at the end of the 1930’s, to whom Mr. Escalera, the supervisor, had given explicit instructions to start teaching in English once and for all, or he would lose his job. Peyo was extremely worried and decided to teach in English, but if he himself “could not chew it right,” how was he supposed to “make his students digest it?” Peyo’s thoughts as he teaches his lesson portray the situation of many other teachers who had to recur to

their English *goleta*<sup>1</sup> or broken English to teach it to their students.

In addition, Professor Harry Bunker of the University of Puerto Rico confirmed that members of the University faculty “ignored the language policies and secretly taught in Spanish” (Navarro-Rivera, 1997). This decision to use English only when the supervisor was visiting is an example of what Reagan and Osborn (2002) call “curricular nullification,” which is a “pedagogical strategy for instructional planning and delivery... to challenge curricular mandates that are opposed to or incompatible with the ends of social justice” (p. 87). Reagan and Osborn (2002) explain that teachers apply curricular nullification when the classroom door closes and they deliver their classes in the manner they believe more appropriate. Puerto Rican teachers exercise this “veto power,” which according to Reagan and Osborn “can be a tool of empowerment with immense socially transformative potential” (p. 85). Peyo Mercé represents those Puerto Rican teachers that may have exercised this veto power or used English only when the supervisor visited them.

Even though North American teachers were hired to teach English, and hundreds of Puerto Rican teachers were sent every summer to the United States to study the language, the goal of assimilating Puerto Ricans through the English language was not achieved. Nonetheless, neither Vélez (2000) nor Schweers and Hudders (2000) present the voices of those teachers whom they claimed did not teach in English. Some of the few mentions of the role of teachers in the debate over the first language policies are in unpublished doctoral dissertations or in books that are difficult to find. For example Clampitt-Dunlap points out the role of Puerto Rican teachers in defending the language and culture in Puerto Rico, particularly in the 1930's. During this decade there were several demonstrations in which teachers lowered the United States' flag in many schools and buildings all over the entire island, and replaced them with Puerto Rican flags. For example, an incident that occurred in 1937 was the dismissal of teacher Inés Mendoza after she refused to use English as the medium of instruction. It is important to mention that Inés Mendoza became in 1948 the wife of one of the most important political

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<sup>1</sup> Small ship in comparison with a large one (Caballero, Cole, Guiñals, López, Meléndez, & Molina, 2001, p.6).

leaders of all times in Puerto Rico, the first Puerto Rican elected governor and founder of the Commonwealth, Luis Muñoz Marín. Probably her mention in the language policy debate is due to her social and political recognition. Therefore, it is only through stories like “Peyo Mercé teaches English” that we are able to listen to some voices of teachers who had to teach in English at the beginning of the United States government in Puerto Rico.

In 1946 an important event in Puerto Rico’s history took place, for the first time in Puerto Rico’s history, Jesús T. Piñero, a Puerto Rican governor, was appointed by the President. This event created a momentum to start asking the U.S. government for new reforms. For this to happen, Luis Muñoz Marín, president of the *Partido Popular Democrático (PPD)* (Popular Democratic Party), redefined his political ideology from independence to permanent union with the United States, but with self-government. Muñoz and Piñero were able to achieve some of their reforms and in 1948 Puerto Ricans elected for the first time their governor; Luis Muñoz Marín became the first Puerto Rican governor elected.

In 1947, Mariano Villaronga, the new Commissioner of Education, openly supported the use of Spanish, not English, as the medium of instruction. For this reason his designation was never confirmed and he was forced to resign from his position as Commissioner. Two years later Governor Muñoz Marín reinstated him to his position. Shortly thereafter, Spanish was officially established as the language of instruction in the public schools of Puerto Rico (Clampitt-Dunlap, 2000).

### 3. Language Policy Under the Free Associate State (1952-Present)

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The new “Commonwealth”<sup>2</sup> or Free Associate State status was established in 1952, giving Puerto Rico the right to elect their own government, establish a legal system, have a Commissioner with voice, but no vote in the U.S. Congress, etc. It was clearly established that the colonial status of the island would continue, when the Congress made two amendments to the Puerto Rican constitution: 1) the federal authority over the island would continue as it was, 2) any changes made to the constitution needed to be attuned

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<sup>2</sup> *Free Associate State of Puerto Rico* is the direct translation for the form of government established in Puerto Rico. However U.S. officials decided to use the word “Commonwealth” to avoid any confusion with the word “state.” According to Fernandez, Mendez & Cueto “the State Department did not want anyone to think that Puerto Rico was, or would soon be, a state of the union” (1998, p. 143).

with the U.S. Constitution and Law 600<sup>3</sup> (Muntaner, 19990, p. 165). Spanish then became the official language for most government offices, with the exception of federal offices.

The controversies on the language issue or language problem in Puerto Rico did not stop after the Free Associate State was established. Muntaner (1990) argues: “Would it be valid to state that the Villaronga policy only partially settled the language problem in Puerto Rico by pushing the language question out of the limelight.” (p. 157). Moreover, it was during Villaronga’s incumbency that the English program office was created under the direction of Dr. Pauline M. Rojas, an American teacher who had established her home residency in Puerto Rico (p. 173). Muntaner also points out a very interesting fact: it was also during this decade that conversational English courses for prospective migrant workers were created. These courses were promoted among other personnel that were in contact with English (ex. officers, factory workers, and hotel and restaurant personnel (p. 177). Why would the Department of Education promote these English courses through newspapers, radio and other public media? Ada Muntaner explains that this strategy was part of a “master plan” directed to help the economic development

of Puerto Rico; “this ‘escape valve’ or ‘safety valve,’ as it is commonly called, is considered to serve as a control of the highly dense population of the Island and reduces the escalating double digit unemployment rates.” (p. 177). Economic analysts may better comprehend this practice, but this is a fact that helps us understand how ideologies work without us being able to identify them, because until this day, this type of “free” courses are promoted with the “good intention” of helping migrants in their acculturation process in the United States, and many are the people that rush to this opportunity without knowing the “real” intentions for them. Moreover, on August 16, 1960 Rene Marqués, a well-known Puerto Rican “author,” wrote an essay for the newspaper *El Mundo*, in which he criticized the newly appointed Secretary of Education, Mr. Cándido Oliveras. Marqués criticized Oliveras focus on “the problem of English teaching in Puerto Rico” and his statement that the teaching of English in Puerto Rico had to be intensified. Although Marqués recognized the teaching of English as a problem, he thought there were more serious problems related to

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<sup>3</sup> Law that allowed Puerto Ricans the right to draft the Constitution.

education and he suggested focusing also on renewing the teaching of Spanish in Puerto Rico, which he felt had been neglected with all the focus given to English (Marqués, 1976, p. 90-102). The influence of this author was such that Mr. Cándido Oliveras later on emphasized that during his incumbency he was going to reinforce the teaching of Spanish. Oliveras even “threatened to withdraw accreditation from private schools that continued using English as the language of instruction (Beirne, as cited in Resnick, 1993, p. 264). This statement generated a big debate among supporters and opponents of English language teaching in private schools. Nonetheless, after the implementation of Language Policy #7 the number of private schools that teach in English has increased.

North American researchers continued to be invited to Puerto Rico as educational consultants for the Department of Education. One of them, Dr. Charles C. Fries created a book series that was used extensively during the 1950’s and 1960’s, which was known as the “Fries Method.” Muntaner comments that not everyone was pleased with Dr. Fries’s series. Ms. Cyraetta Morford, a knowledgeable English teacher from Detroit who taught in one of the Island’s schools, wrote a report supported by 75 interviews she had conducted among English teachers. The report summed up some of the major problems tea-

chers found with the Fries Method. These findings included: 1) teachers felt Dr. Fries was considered a ‘god’ by the upper echelon of the Department of Education; 2) teachers who criticized or complained about the method were either replaced or fired by their supervisors; and 3) teachers felt that only the very intelligent or those in contact with people who used English as their first language could master the method. Moreover, according to these teachers, students were making very little progress in English. As Muntaner informs, Ms. Morford tried without success to discuss her findings with Dr. Fries. But, he refused to neither answer her calls or letters nor discuss the report with her (El Mundo, February 23, 1954, cited in Muntaner, p. 219). Why did he refuse to listen to this teacher? Did he consider himself such a “big authority” in his field that he could not listen to what happened when his method was implemented? We may never know the answer to these questions, because he never took the time to answer to the teachers’ concerns. Other programs to improve the teaching of English continued being tried throughout the following decades without much success, due to their lack of resources and short period of life.

In the political arena, the 1990’s were not an exception to the language controversy, especially in 1991 and 1993. The PPD was the party in the govern-

ment in 1991. This political party supports the present political status of the island (Commonwealth or Free Associated State). After a series of public hearings about the official language(s), Governor Rafael Hernández Colón revoked the Official Language Act of 1902, which had established English and Spanish equivalent official status. Several observers considered that this decision was a political strategy to win votes in the following elections (Schweers & Velez, 1992). The law established Spanish as the exclusive official language, although it accepted the significance of English, it did not alter the school language policy. However, with the change of government in 1993, the *Partido Nuevo Progresista (PNP)* (New Progressive Party), supporting statehood came to power. Governor Pedro J. Roselló had promised during his political campaign that he would reestablish the Official Language Act of 1902. As promised, he did, revoking the Spanish-only law (Pousada, 1996, p.502). Changes were fast in the English area, a new English Program Curriculum Guide was distributed in 1994, the English Program Standards were established in 1996, and in 1997 the Project for the Development of a Bilingual Citizen was announced.

At the beginning of 1997, the Secretary of Education, Víctor M. Fajardo presented what may one day be called Language Policy #8: The Project for the Development of a Bilingual Citizen. Many teachers organized protests to voice their discontent with this project, which aimed to intensify the learning of English in public schools through the extension of class time to 90 minutes, the use of textbooks in English for Math and Sciences classes, a special emphasis to reading and writing in English in grades 1-3; recruit and certify Puerto Rican teachers as specialists in English, and bring teachers from the United States to offer technical assistance under exchange programs. The Secretary of Education, Víctor M. Fajardo, stated that he was giving teachers the option of lecturing in both languages and that the Department of Education knew that English will always be the second language of education. Fajardo's goal was to introduce English in every course to create an environment where English is a "presence" (Navarro, 1997). For officials from the island's *AFT* and *NEA* affiliates "history is repeating itself. But this time, they say, English is not being imposed from the outside but from within" (Schnaiberg, 1997). The outcomes of this project were never evaluated and most of its initiatives were completely eliminated, as the PPD political party came back to the government in 2001.



When in January 2001, Sila Calderón came to the government representing the Popular Democratic Party; the language issue was raised again as senators from the *Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño* (PIP) (Puerto Rican Independent Party) and PPD presented petitions to reestablish Spanish as the only official language in Puerto Rico. PNP Political leaders criticized these petitions. Governor Sila M. Calderón strongly emphasized that the reestablishment of Spanish as the exclusive official language was not a matter of priority for her government program. On April 2002, the topic of Spanish as the official language of Puerto Rico resurged, when the Commission of Education, Science, and Culture of the Senate recommended the creation of the Institute for Language Planning to protect the use of Spanish, and promote the learning of other languages. The Commission recommended legislation in favor of recognizing Spanish as the only official language of Puerto Rico, and that this recognition is elevated at the constitutional level (Rodríguez-Sánchez, 2002). Once again, Calderón refused to touch this topic during her administration (Delgado, 2002). In addition, in January 2001 a new Secretary of Education was selected, Dr. César Rey. During his administration the English immersion school in Aguadilla was closed due to low enrollment. This decision brought a series of criti-

cisms on the political reasons behind it (Matías Torres, 2002a,b,c).

The controversies around the language policy of Puerto Rico continued to be discussed under PPD Governor Anibal Acevedo Vilá (2004-2008), but no changes were made to the official law. In 2008, the government changed to the hands of the pro-statehood party (PNP) and under Governor Luis Fortuño's administration the issue of English teaching continued to be discussed as he assigned several Secretaries of Education (three different ones) to implement changes to the education system in order to give more emphasis to the teaching of English and develop more bilingual public schools. Fortuño's plan to have more bilingual schools was not implemented until August 2012. The Governor announced that his goal was "all public school students to be bilingual within 10 years" or by 2022 (Associated Press, 2012, p.8). Fortuño argued that his plan was not related to his statehood goal for Puerto Rico, but that it was about "economic necessity, not politics" (Coto, 2012, p.4). Former Secretary of Education Edwin Moreno was assigned to oversee an initial \$15 million project to implement a bilingual curriculum in 31 schools and keep developing the bilingual curriculum in 35 other schools who already offered some courses in English (Ex. PE, Math). Teachers around the island

attended a summer course to strengthen their English language skills and develop curriculum in English. Expert educators argued that Fortuño's plan was being implemented way too quickly and that there were not enough teachers prepared to teach content areas like Math and Sciences in English (López, 2012). The educators went as far as predicting that in the same manner that it happened with the Project for the Development of a Bilingual Citizen back in the 1990's, this new plan was not going to succeed either. Fortuño's

plan proves that once again, whenever there is a change in the political party in charge of the government, the approach to the language issue changes.

Since January 2013 Puerto Rico has a new governor from the PPD party (Alejandro García Padilla), which means that Governor Fortuño's initiatives may not continue. Nonetheless, sooner or later, old and new controversies around the language issue will come to surface again.



## 4. CONCLUSIONS

The latest Census data (2010, <http://factfinder2.census.gov/>) shows how even with all the language policies implemented in Puerto Rico since 1898, only about 15% of Puerto Ricans report they speak English “very well.” This review presents part of the history behind why the language policies have not been successful. As Roamé Torres-González (2002) asserts in a utopian situation, one day all political parties would agree that both languages are important for our people, but always respecting Spanish as our native language. In Puerto Rico, because of its status of a colony that depends on the United States, this will mean challenging “the language of educational reform that echoes the language articulated by the metropolis, one in which the ideological relationship is preserved and the economic arrangement remains intact” (Solís, 1994, p. 22).

It is also important to find the voice of all those Puerto Rican English teachers who are not successfully represented in the literature and who “need to be more proactive and outspoken regarding important issues in the teaching of English in Puerto Rico.... Our story needs to be told and listened to by policy makers” (Vega-Nieves, 2002, p. 5). If we listen to what teachers are experiencing in their classrooms,

we will get the reality from insiders not outsiders of this specific discourse community. Outsiders cannot continue being the only ones with voice in the issue of English language teaching in Puerto Rico. If Puerto Rican teachers continue being unheard, their demands will not be recognized and the controversy will continue without an end. Pennycook cites James Gee (1994) as he offers teachers a choice either to cooperate in their own marginalization by seeing themselves as ‘language teachers’ with no connection to such social and political issues, or to accept that they are involved in a crucial domain of political work: Like it or not, English teachers stand at the very heart of the most crucial, educational, cultural and political issues of our time. (p. 23)

As Edmondson (2004) argues, there are three areas in which teachers could get involved in the policy making process, “1) engaging in critical policy study, 2) educating the public, and 3) imagining new possibilities” (p. 87). These are three areas in which Puerto Rican teachers need to be guided towards to make their voices be heard to be listened and have “alternative open spaces” (Pennycook, 2001, p. 215) to discuss language policy issues in Puerto Rico and imagine new possibilities as Edmondson encourages us to look for.

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