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The University of Puerto Rico: Colonialism and the Language of Teaching and Learning 1903 - 1952

Pablo Navarro-Rivera

Introduction

With the military invasion of Puerto Rico in 1898 the United States (U.S.) initiated a colonization effort that made English the official language of the island. Soon after the occupation, the United States took steps to control and expand the public education system in Puerto Rico, which included requiring English as the language of instruction.

The requirement of English as the language of instruction in Puerto Rico has been studied extensively. The scope of these studies, however, has focused almost exclusively on Catholic and public primary and secondary schooling.¹ I have not found research that has examined how the imposition of English was implemented at the University of Puerto Rico (UPR) and how it might have affected teaching and learning at this institution.

Language and Culture: Historical Context

Puerto Rico, a colony of Spain for more than 400 hundred years, was by the time of the Spanish- American War a country where Spanish was the vernacular. By 1898 Spanish was firmly rooted in the population of approximately one million Puerto Ricans living in a relatively small territory.² A language rich in history, Spanish was also one of the principal international languages, through which Puerto Ricans could be in contact with the world. It was also the language in which culture was communicated, its social and political thought, philosophy and education, and its literary tradition.

From 1898 to 1952 the U.S. implemented numerous, and often conflicting policies pertaining to the English language and education in Puerto Rico. The Commissioners of Education considered their policies the most effective way for students to learn English and the values expected of those living under the aegis of the U.S. Educators such as Cebollero³, Muñiz Souffront⁴, Benítez⁵ and Vientós Gastón⁶, on the other hand, found the policies confusing and detrimental to teachers and students.

The requirement of English responded to a context perhaps best explained in 1899 by Victor S. Clark, President of the Board of Education established in Puerto Rico by the

United States, when he indicated that:

If the schools are made Americans [sic] and the teachers and pupils are inspired with the American spirit . . . , the island will become in its sympathies, views and attitude toward life and toward government essentially American. The great mass of Puerto Ricans are as yet passive and plastic . . . Their ideals are in our hands to create and mold. We shall be responsible for the work when it is done, and it is our solemn duty to consider carefully and thoughtfully to-day [sic] the character we wish to give the finished product of our influence and effort.⁷

Language was a key element in the socialization process instituted by the United States. The policies regarding the English language in Puerto Rico were in important ways similar to those adopted for American Indians in the latter part of the 19th century. As observed by J. D. C. Atkins, Commissioner of Indian Affairs from 1885 to 1888, "A wider and better knowledge of the English language among them is essential to their comprehension of the duties and obligations of citizenship."⁸ To support his views, Atkins cites an 1868 report on the condition of Indians that stated:

Through sameness of language is produced sameness of sentiment, and thought; customs and habits are moulded [sic] and assimilated in the same way, and thus in process of time the differences producing trouble would have been gradually obliterated. ...they have not the Bible, but their religion, which we call superstition, teaches them that the Great Spirit made us all. In the difference of language to-day [sic] lies two thirds of our trouble . . . Schools should be established, which children should be required to attend; their barbarous dialect should be blotted out and the English language substituted . . .⁹

In his 1889 annual report as Commissioner of Indian Affairs Thomas J. Morgan was adamant about the need to socialize the American Indian in the "white man's ways" and the use of English in this effort. Morgan manifested that:

The Indians must conform to the "white man's ways," peacefully if they will, forcibly if they must. They must adjust themselves to their environment, and conform their mode of living substantially to our civilization. This civilization may not be the best possible, but it is the best the Indians can get. They cannot escape it, and must either conform to it or be crushed by it. The tribal relations should be broken up, socialism destroyed, and the family and the autonomy of the individual substituted. The allotment of lands in severalty, the establishment of local courts and police, the development of a personal sense of independence, and the universal adoption of the English language are means to this end.¹⁰

The effort to socialize Puerto Ricans also had the same two basic elements: substitution of the distinct cultural traits of Puerto Rico with those considered to define the "American" civilization. As it relates to the second element, language, the U.S. approved public education policies that regulated the use of English, and Spanish, in schools,

including the University. Such policies are relevant to this study to the extent that they might have influenced the administrative and academic affairs of the UPR. This is particularly important since English was the dominant language of the colony and its departments, such as the University, during the years covered by this research.¹¹ Instruction at the UPR, on the other hand, was offered in English until 1942, when the Superior Educational Council approved a resolution declaring Spanish as the preferred language of instruction at the University.¹²

The language policies are also relevant to this study because they communicate the different approaches instituted by the United States to socialize, or "Americanize"¹³, Puerto Ricans. Finally, the policies are important source material because they were formulated and implemented by the Commissioners of Education, a presidential appointee with enormous influence over the entire public education system, including the UPR.

Opposition to the Requirement of English

Puerto Ricans, even those who supported the presence of the United States in Puerto Rico, objected to the requirement of English as the language of instruction. Among those opposed to the use of English as the mandated language of instruction was the Teacher's Association of Puerto Rico. As early as 1912 this association expressed its concerns about the directives related to the language of instruction.¹⁴ The Teachers Association argued that the issue was not the coexistence of English and Spanish required by the new political status between the United States and Puerto Rico. The real issue, they insisted, was the effort to impose English as the vernacular of Puerto Ricans. The language used in the classroom should be determined by pedagogical reasons. Using a language not understood by both teachers and students they felt was detrimental to the educational process.¹⁵

Significant opposition to the requirement of English came from Puerto Rican intellectuals, in particular those involved in literature. Convinced that the requirement of English threatened Puerto Rico's national culture, they produced a significant body of work characterized by the affirmation and defense of Puerto Rican nationality and its culture. Paliques¹⁶, a book of essays by Nemesio R. Canales; the novel *La Llamada*¹⁷ by Enrique Laguerre and *Los Soles Truncos*¹⁸, theatre, by René Marqués are representative of the cultural reaffirmation effort by those who felt that the culture of Puerto Rico was in danger of being destroyed by the United States.¹⁹ An important work is the collection of short stories by Abelardo Díaz Alfaro, *Terrazo*²⁰, in which Díaz Alfaro not only defends Puerto Rican culture but directly attacks and ridicules the United States efforts to impose English.

The controversy surrounding the language issue extended to the legal and political forums. In the legal sphere we find that in 1905 the Supreme Court of Puerto Rico decided that, when in conflict, the English text of a law would prevail over the Spanish version.²¹ In 1948 this same court upheld a presidential veto of legislation passed by Puerto Rico's Legislature in 1946 ordering the Commissioner of Education to establish Spanish as the language of instruction, with English being a required subject.²³ The 1946 legislation, which included the UPR, the veto of such legislation first by the Governor and later by President Truman, and the ruling on this matter by Puerto Rico's Supreme Court reflected the impact that the language debate had in Puerto Rico. As it relates to the University of Puerto Rico the widespread support for the use of Spanish as the language of instruction resulted in the 1942 resolution by the Superior Educational Council establishing that instruction at the UPR should be offered preferably in Spanish.

From the literature examined by the author, the language policies and the political status of the island, were perhaps the most hotly debated topic in Puerto Rican society from 1903 to 1952. For some these issues were inseparable. The attempts by the United States to impose English as the vernacular in Puerto Rico and the response to this effort by the people of the island had extraordinary influence on the political, legal, cultural and educational panorama.

It could be argued that the language policies implemented by the U.S. failed to accomplish its intended objectives. Such failure was acknowledged by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in his letter of appointment of José Gallardo as Commissioner of Education in 1937. President Roosevelt informed José Gallardo that he, Roosevelt, was extremely frustrated with the situation of the English language in Puerto Rico. As he described it, after 38 years of Puerto Rico being under the American flag, and 20 years since United States citizenship was extended to its inhabitants, hundreds of thousands had little, if any, knowledge of English. President Roosevelt further informed Gallardo that the policy of his government was to have the next generation of Puerto Ricans fluent in the official language of the United States. The President concluded stating that this policy objective could only be achieved if the public school system actively pursued the teaching of English, and instructs Gallardo to do so.²⁴ The Roosevelt policy also failed.

The "English Problem"²⁵ and the University

The language policies adopted in Puerto Rico by the United States impacted the UPR in two distinct ways from 1903 to 1952. Although I have found official UPR correspondence and other institutional documents in Spanish, instruction was primarily conducted in English until 1942 and it was the language used between University officials and the United States government from 1903 to 1952. As the institution with primary responsibility for teacher preparation, on the other hand, the University played an important part in the teaching of English and the teaching in English in Puerto Rico's

public schools.

The part played by the UPR in the teaching of English in Puerto Rico was described by Dr. Juan José Osuna, at the time Dean of the UPR School of Education, in a 1942 report covering the language policies during the previous twenty years. Osuna authored the report "Memorandum on the Teaching of English in Puerto Rico",²⁶ in which he indicated that:

During the last twenty years the University has been very deeply concerned with the general educational problems of the island and specially concerned with the problem of the teaching of English. I beg to offer a brief summary of the part the University has played in connection with:

The Effort [sic] of the last 20 years on the teaching of English.

Future approach to the Problem [sic].

In the first part of his report, Osuna included the recommendations on the teaching of English in Puerto Rico made by the International Institute of Teachers College in its study of the education system in 1926. From this report Osuna cited the following:

Neither in reading nor in oral communication does the work now done in English in the first three grades reach a point which makes English a useful second language. Except for those children who will continue in school beyond the fourth grade, and except for those leaving the school earlier, to whom life outside of school may give practice and added skill in the use of the language, the English work in the first three grades is almost a total loss.

As cited by Osuna, the same Teachers College study added that:

The Survey Commission therefore recommends: that English be not taught in any schools below the fourth grade, and that the time thus released in the program of the lower grades be devoted to content materials, to the teaching of civics of a functional sort, and to instruction in health and development of health habits; that English, as a subject be taught intensively in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades and that it be used as the language of instruction beyond the sixth grade.²⁷

While the report prepared by the International Institute of Teachers College reflected optimism that in future generations Puerto Rico could offer a more fertile ground for the English language, it also observed that:

Furthermore, there is no probability that for more than a generation to come most of the young people now being trained in the lower grades to read and to speak English will have an opportunity to read English outside of the schools. The rate at which the reading of books, magazines, and newspapers, in English by Porto Ricans will be increased is exceedingly low.²⁸

This assessment did not dissuade the members of the Brookings Institution team that studied Puerto Rico in 1928 and 1929. The chapter on education in their 1930 report stated, responding to recommendations made by the International Institute of Teachers College, that "Notwithstanding this weightily opinion to the contrary, however, the members of the present Survey incline to the opinion that the teaching of English in the elementary grades should be continued." The report added that:

Moreover, English is the chief source, practically the only source, of democratic ideas in Porto Rico. There may be little that they learn to remember, but the English school reader itself provides a body of ideas and concepts, which are not to be had in any other way. It is also the only means which these people have of communication with and understanding of the country which they are now a part.²⁹

In 1934, Commissioner of Education José Padín agreed to adopt Spanish as the language of instruction in the elementary grades, up to grade eight. In subsequent grades, including higher education, English would continue as the language of instruction. His decision was in response to a 1933 resolution by the Teachers Association of Puerto Rico calling for Spanish to be the language of instruction in Puerto Rico, with English as a preferred subject.³⁰ To facilitate and monitor the implementation of this effort, Padín appointed a committee comprised of representatives of the Department of Education and the University of Puerto Rico. In 1936 Padín, who in addition to Commissioner of Education was president of the Board of Trustees of the UPR, hired William S. Gray, a reading expert from the University of Chicago and Michael West from England, an expert on the teaching of English in India.³¹ Gray produced a detailed report in March, 1936 on ways to improve the teaching of English in Puerto Rico. How this report influenced the teaching of English, and the preparation of teachers of English at the UPR could not be determined in this work.

West's findings were communicated to the Commissioner of Education in August, 1936. His conclusions, as cited in Osuna's December, 1942 "Memorandum on the Teaching of English in Puerto Rico", included the following:

There is no essentially [sic] bilingual problem in Puerto Rico, in the sense in which this term is used in Wales, South Africa, etc. In fact, the only bilingual problem in the Island exists among the American residents. There is in Puerto Rico a unilingual [sic] people who have a certain need of English, as have the French and many other peoples. The extent of this need and the best method of fulfilling it has unfortunately been made a political issue. As a result, the development of a language policy has been blocked; the system of English teaching in the schools has got out of date and out of touch with the facts of the present day. There is need of diffusion of ability to read and understand English, so that the contact may be maintained with American culture and ideas. It would be an evident

misfortune if Puerto Rico were linguistically shut off from the life and thought of the neighboring continent. Whatever the political future of the island may be, there is manifest advantage in maintaining that bond.³²

Professor Pedro A. Cebollero, advisor to the Commissioner of Education on language instruction issues, summarized West's work in the following manner:

The high points in Professor West's recommendations are a ratification of Padín's contention of 1916 that English in the Puerto Rican schools should be recognized as a foreign language and that the teaching of it should be organized in view of this recognition; . . .³³

The last involvement of the UPR in the teaching of English in Puerto Rico included in Osuna's report is the research effort initiated in 1940 by the American Council on Education (ACE).³⁴ Sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation, the ACE sent Columbia University scholar Dr. R. H. Fife and Dr. H. T. Manuel from the University of Texas, Austin, to examine "the English situation in Puerto Rico" and determine if further study was deemed advisable. Once Fife and Manuel recommended an extensive study, the UPR and the Department of Education of Puerto Rico took steps to participate in such effort, which included assigning staff to assist Fife and Manuel.

The purpose of this study, as stated by Osuna was:

To assist in the program of teaching the peoples of this hemisphere the language of their neighbors and thus to promote the attainment of democracy within the United States and throughout the hemisphere.

To stimulate and facilitate international cooperation in education and thus to lay the foundation for understanding and friendship.³⁵

One of the specific purposes of the study was:

To provide tools for necessary research in problems of teaching English as a second language and in the related field of bilingualism. For example:

What abilities in English are being attained in Puerto Rico after forty years of experience with a program of teaching English to Spanish-speaking children? How do these abilities in English compare with the abilities of the same children in Spanish and with the language abilities of monolingual children of similar age in other places?

How may English be taught as a second language to attain the greatest efficiency in both the vernacular and the second language?

How are the fundamental abilities of a child affected by learning a second language under different policies of language teaching?³⁶

Osuna cites Dr. George F. Zook, then president of the American Council on Education, to

describe the nature of the research:

In addition to the foreign language studies, the committee is active in a second area, the teaching of English as a foreign language. The preliminary work for an objective and detailed study of English teaching in Puerto Rico through the preparation of parallel tests in English and Spanish has been in progress since February 1941 at the University of Texas under the direction of H. T. Manuel. The tests, which have been designated Inter-American Tests, when completed will be available for administration in all countries of Spanish speech where English is taught. They are the first undertaking of this character.³⁷

Zook added that:

They are also the first standardized tests to measure large groups to determine the results of parallel instruction in school subjects through the medium of two languages in a bilingual situation. They will be used in Puerto Rico, where an effort is made to coordinate the teaching of the two languages.³⁸

The testing and evaluation effort by the ACE, promoted as a scientific and impartial, was expected to make Puerto Rico a significant laboratory for the teaching of English in Spanish-speaking America. The fact that Puerto Rico's "educators have had more than forty years of experience in dealing with the problem" was seen as an invaluable source of information to researchers.³⁹ In a letter to Osuna, Manuel observed that:

The whole Island is a laboratory for the study of the teaching of English. The practical problem of teaching a second language to two million people is a staggering one. And we must remember that Puerto Rico has a strategic position with reference to the meeting of the two American cultures.⁴⁰

Osuna was optimistic that this research effort was "evidence that we are now entering a period of scientific approach to the study of the English question in Puerto Rico, and that we are rejecting mere opinion or arbitrary authority". He concluded his Memorandum adding that:

With the good will and cooperation of the many agencies interested in this study, the University of Puerto Rico may become now a great center, and Puerto Rico a great laboratory, for the study of bilingualism with special reference to the teaching of English to Spanish-speaking children, and to the teaching of Spanish to English-speaking children. We hope that our University may avail itself of this great opportunity to contribute to a scientific approach of our own language problem and to hemisphere solidarity, in bringing together the two great civilizations of the American continent through a study of the prevailing languages of the peoples of the Americas and the preparation of personnel to teach these languages".⁴¹

English and Instruction at the UPR

For the most part instruction at the University of Puerto Rico was in English from 1903 to 1942. The United States had greater success in implementing the language policy at the UPR, including its sub-collegiate program, than in the public elementary and secondary schools throughout the island. This was due in part to the fact that up to the 1920's most of the UPR teaching personnel were native English speakers from the United States. A 1921 report to the Legislature by the UPR, for example, observes that "The University at Río Piedras has 53 teachers, of whom 24 are Porto Ricans and 29 continental Americans."⁴² Faculty members at the UPR from the United States increased to more than sixty percent in 1925.⁴³ This gradually changed and by 1942 the vast majority of the faculty were native Spanish speakers from Puerto Rico.⁴⁴

The presence of faculty members who could teach in English notwithstanding, opposition to English as the language of instruction was as, if not more, intense at the UPR than it was throughout the public education system. The use of English as the vehicle of instruction was seen as an obstacle to effective teaching and learning at the UPR. In addition to pedagogical concerns, opposition also came from those who objected to the colonial rule of Puerto Rico by the United States.

Having students and faculty engage in the learning process in a language that was not their vernacular was viewed as a problem that needed to be corrected.⁴⁵ At the urging of Chancellor Benítez, the Superior Educational Council in 1942 passed a resolution that was an attempt to remedy 39 years of requiring the use of English. The approval in 1942 of Spanish as the preferred language of instruction was received with great enthusiasm. It was also viewed as an important step towards the correction of the problems created by the use of a language of instruction that was foreign to teachers and learners. With the approval of the resolution courses could be taught in Spanish and textbooks in Spanish could be adopted. Even though some programs continued to offer their courses in English and faculty members whose language was English could continue teaching their courses in that language, English officially became a second language, albeit was required for graduation from the UPR.⁴⁶ The new challenge, according to UPR officials, was how to teach English effectively as a second language to UPR students.

That Spanish could become the language of instruction in Puerto Rico, including the UPR, was a source of concern in the United States. When the newspaper *El Mundo* reported in February, 1943 that United States Senator Dennis Chávez, from New Mexico, was considering filing legislation to have English as the required language of instruction in Puerto Rico, Chancellor Benítez responded to Chávez stating his opposition to any such legislation.⁴⁷ Benítez added that in his opinion, as well as that of the absolute majority of teachers in Puerto Rico, such legislation would be "an attempt against the creative potential, the spiritual development and the capacity of the children of Puerto

Rico to express themselves." He criticized Chávez for proposing policies that had already failed in Puerto Rico and which negatively impacted teachers and students, as well as the teaching and learning process. Benítez further noted that "A people cannot be uprooted from its language without mutilating the way they think."⁴⁸

In his letter to Chávez, Benítez indicated that the language issue was not a political one. According to Benítez the issue was pedagogical, a matter of basic respect to the challenges of the pursuit of learning. All Puerto Ricans, Benítez argued, from all political parties, understand the need to learn English, regardless of the political status of the Island. But Puerto Ricans, Benítez added, also considered that knowledge and understanding of the Spanish language and culture was a source of pride and a profound spiritual need. Even Commissioners such as Padín and Gallardo, who were enthusiastic supporters of a permanent affiliation of Puerto Rico with the United States, realized the need to adopt Spanish as the language of instruction.

Benítez emphasized that, at the time of his letter to Chávez, the support of Spanish as the vehicle of instruction was not politically motivated. Benítez did warn Chávez that it could become political if the United States insisted on prohibiting the use of Spanish as the language of instruction in Puerto Rico. The Chancellor concluded his letter assuring Chávez that his administration was committed to the development of new methodology that would improve the teaching of English in Puerto Rico's schools, including the University. That the new University administration, led by him as Chancellor, was equally committed to making sure that such a counterproductive language policy would not be again implemented in Puerto Rico.⁴⁹ This author has not been able to determine if Senator Chávez responded to Benítez's letter other than his March 8, 1943 acknowledgement of having received the Chancellor's correspondence.⁵⁰

Another United States official concerned about the use of Spanish as the primary vehicle of education was B. W. Thoron, Director of the Division of Territories and Island Possessions of the Department of the Interior. Thoron felt that English was being "pushed aside" in Puerto Rico. In a letter to Governor Tugwell on October 21, 1944, Thoron stated that:

I have just been looking over a mimeographed copy of the report of the Chancellor of the University of Puerto Rico. I was struck with the apparent pushing aside of English. As far as I can make out, English is entirely optional in the academic course and only one year of English is given in the School of Education. I do not see how the teaching of English in the elementary schools can be anything but a farce if the teachers have no better grounding than they will get from such a program.⁵¹

Tugwell sent Thoron's correspondence to Chancellor Benítez requesting the Chancellor's comments on such issue " . . . as soon as possible."⁵² On November 13, 1944, Benítez responded indicating that "I am pleased to advise you that Mr. Thoron's apprehensions

concerning the 'apparent pushing aside of English' at the University of Puerto Rico are unfounded."⁵³ After stating that his administration was committed to the teaching of English, as a required course, at the UPR Benítez added that:

I regret to say that I have no objection to raise against Mr. Thoron's use of the word 'farce' to describe English teaching in the elementary schools. This is not a possibility for the future, however, but rather an ever pressing and depressing reality. I feel very strongly that unless an extensive modification is made in the whole procedure and objectives of elementary English teaching in Puerto Rico, we will continue the past and present practice of dismally wasting time, energy, possibilities, and good will in a hopeless and fruitless endeavor.⁵⁴

In his correspondence to Tugwell on this matter, Benítez included a report by Maurice M. Segall, acting director of the UPR Department of English titled Memorandum on the Status of English at the University of Puerto Rico.⁵⁵ In this "Memorandum", Segall enumerated the actions taken by the administration to improve the teaching of English at the UPR. Segall informed Benítez that from 1942 to 1944 the ". . . staff of the English department has grown fifty percent, from fourteen in 1942 to twenty-one at present."⁵⁶ Other actions mentioned by Segall in his report are the following:

The first year basic course in English, required of all students, has been thoroughly reorganized and changed from three hours a week to four. In addition, the size of sections has been reduced from forty to twenty-five, . . .

Furthermore, . . . all sophomores, except those in science, pharmacy, and Normal work, are required to complete the second year course in English. The present administration has inaugurated a policy of inviting distinguished scholars and teachers to visiting professorships in many of the departments of the University. Such a policy implies, at least indirectly, the extension of the use of English on the campus. The visiting professors conduct their classes, deliver public lectures, converse with students and faculty, in English.

During the summer of 1944 the University invited Dr. Lee S. Hulstsen, expert phonetician, to explore the possibilities of improving the spoken English of the students. The report, we hope, will serve to guide the Department in meeting the sound language requirements of prospective teachers of English, whether Normal students or candidates for the bachelor's degree in education.

This year the Department is sponsoring the publication of a campus newspaper in English, written and edited entirely by students, and financed by University funds.

In 1943 the present administration set up a research organization known as the English Institute, whose chief purpose is to investigate methods, curricula, and program which will lead to the genuine improvement of the teaching of English on the elementary and

secondary school levels of the insular school system.

A committee consisting of members of the Department of English, the English Institute, and the College of Education have drawn up a report on recommendations for minimum requirements in English for admission to the University. On the basis of this report, conversations have been begun between this Committee and officials of the Department of Education with the ultimate purpose of bringing about closer integration of objectives in English instruction between the high schools of the Island and the University of Puerto Rico.⁵⁷ The policy of 1942 establishing Spanish as the preferred language of instruction at the University remained unaltered during the remaining period covered by this study. From 1942 to 1952 English was viewed by the UPR as an important second language, the study of which was a graduation requirement.

The Adoption of Spanish

The adoption of Spanish as the language of instruction of the UPR was a significant event in the history of the institution. It was seen as a recognition by the Federal and colonial governments that after 39 years of requiring English as the language of instruction at the UPR, Puerto Ricans still refused to accept English as their language of teaching and learning. Similar resistance came from the public elementary and secondary schools of Puerto Rico. Commissioners of Education, such as Padín and Gallardo, concluded that only after learning in their vernacular would students be able to learn English. The usage of Spanish as the language of instruction in Puerto Rico enjoyed widespread support at the UPR. This sentiment was expressed in the 1942 resolution by UPR trustees establishing Spanish as the "preferred" language of instruction of the UPR. An important issue before the Council was the harm that could result from using English as the language of instruction, in particular as it relates to faculty members whose vernacular was Spanish.⁵⁸

The support for Spanish became evident when President Truman communicated to Governor Jesús T. Piñeiro on October 25, 1946⁵⁹ that he was returning without his signature the bill passed by Puerto Rico's Legislature ordering "the exclusive use of the Spanish language for teaching in all public schools."⁶⁰ In its "Statement of Motives" the vetoed Act, which included the University of Puerto Rico, affirmed that:

When at the beginning of this century the present system of public education was first established, those responsible for its establishment made the big and very serious mistake of directing that all subjects in the schools of Puerto Rico be taught in English, on pretext that the students should thereby require a thorough knowledge of the language. With slight variations, the system of teaching in English continues practically the same. A theoretical and speculative political concept still prevails over the plain principles of pedagogy.

How absurd and antipedagogical said system is, because its repugnancy to common sense and to the very nature of the educational process, is clearly evident from the statements of eminent pedagogists, among which is found the following from the President of Columbia University, Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler:

If a child at a tender age has the great misfortune of having to learn a foreign language at the expense of a broader and more thorough knowledge of his vernacular tongue, and if the spontaneous and natural rhythm of his mental process is diverted inward instead of naturally outward, the most probable result will be an intellectual chaos causing incalculable injury and preventing innumerable beneficial possibilities from developing in the child's mental life.⁶¹

In reference to the numerous efforts by educators to modify the language policies imposed in Puerto Rico by the U.S., the Act added that:

Save for a brief period of time, all attempts on the part of pedagogists and sociologists who pointed out the absurdity of the system and urged its reform in order to conform it to the needs of nature, the demands of logic, and the dictates of common sense, were unsuccessful in view of the determination of the authorities responsible for the system, who remained impassive and continued to uphold a method of teaching unanimously condemned by the highest authorities on the matter.

The Legislature proceeded to enumerate some of the consequences of the imposition of English as the language of instruction. Such consequences were identified as follows:

The persistence in this absurdity for over forty years has caused the people of Puerto Rico incalculable financial loss since it prevented the full measure of success to be expected from the investment of the huge sums of money expended by the people in public education, by prolonging the period of learning and making it obviously fruitless to a great extent. It has likewise notably diminished the efficiency of the expensive and continuous official endeavors, aimed at a greater diffusion and betterment of popular education, by sacrificing the scope, intensity, and essence of the culture imparted in the classrooms, to an excessive zeal to subordinate the essential purposes of education to the learning of the English language, a goal which did not demand so great a sacrifice for its accomplishment.

The Act approved by the Legislature, and vetoed by President Truman mandated that:

Beginning with the school year 1946-47, teaching in the public schools, including the University, shall be conducted through the exclusive use of the Spanish language.

In special cases only, and in order to facilitate teaching at the University by eminent foreign intellectuals, shall it be permissible, as an exception, upon the previous special authorization of the Superior Educational Council, to teach any subject in any language other than Spanish.

The teaching of the English language in the public schools is hereby declared compulsory. The textbooks to be used in the public schools shall be written in Spanish, but present textbooks may nevertheless continue to be used until they are superseded in accordance with the provisions of this Act.⁶²

According to Truman, he did not consider "the merits of the pedagogical program which the bill would introduce into the Insular public school system, . . ." The veto was prompted by the "untimeliness of the measure" and Truman's feeling that the political status of Puerto Rico "would be confused and its solution delayed by the adoption just now of a new language policy. Important as the language question may be, I regard the reaching of a permanent and satisfactory solution to political status as of greater importance, and I cannot permit a measure to stand which in my opinion would jeopardize that solution."⁶³

Truman's veto was denounced by Puerto Rico's Teachers Association, as well as by organizations representing the faculty and students of the University. Arguments against the veto included the defense of Spanish as the language of instruction in Puerto Rico and a more narrow legal position which stated that the time provided for the President's consideration of the legislation had elapsed and therefore the bill had become law. In February, 1947, the District Court of San Juan sided with this interpretation, but was overruled in January, 1948, by Puerto Rico's Supreme Court, upholding the President's veto.⁶⁴

Days after the veto, on October 30, 1946, University students celebrated an assembly to protest the veto.⁶⁵ Students criticized Truman for vetoing legislation that was of great significance to the people of Puerto Rico. Students protested against what they considered to be a stubborn imperialist policy of the United States in its attempts to impose English in Puerto Rico.⁶⁶ They noted that the language bill had been approved twice by the Legislature of Puerto Rico, the second time to override the veto by the Governor. As stated by students, it was wrong for someone who was not elected by Puerto Ricans to veto legislation that enjoyed the unanimous support of teachers and which was approved by a popularly elected body. As a way to protest the veto, students called for a one-day stoppage at the University, from 7 a.m. on November 8 till 7 a.m. on November 9, 1946.

The University Faculty met on October 31, 1946 and approved a resolution protesting President's Truman veto. The approved resolution was presented to the University Faculty by Chancellor Benítez, and written in both English and Spanish, the former being the version cited here.⁶⁷ In addition to the Chancellor's resolution, several members of the faculty developed their own proposal for a resolution, which was presented to the University Faculty by Professor Margot Arce de Vázquez.⁶⁸ After an extensive debate, seventy-four voted in favor of the Chancellor's proposal, thirteen against and twenty six abstained.⁶⁹ The approved resolution affirmed, among other things, the following:

The University Faculty believes that as a general rule in Puerto Rico Spanish should be used as the vehicle of teaching save in special situations which makes an exception . . . advisable, and it furthermore believes that the teaching of English should be intensified.

On the basis of clear pedagogical reasons, the University Faculty believes that such educational proposals can be carried into effect only through the teaching of "content" subjects in Spanish and through the intensification of the teaching of English.

The University Faculty believes that departure from this norm has been, and is, highly prejudicial to public education, not only in respect to the teaching of "content" subjects, but to the teaching of English itself.

The University Faculty deplores the fact that President Truman, in vetoing Bill #51, has committed, in its opinion, the grave error of mixing considerations of a political nature—not in order in this case—with those of a pedagogical nature, to the detriment of education in Puerto Rico.⁷⁰

The proposal that was defeated condemned the veto in much stronger terms than the one proposed by Benítez and approved by the University Faculty. This proposed resolution called the veto antidemocratic, which ignored the will of the people expressed through its elected representatives. In this document it is stated that Truman did not consider the pedagogical merits of the bill because the President knows that Puerto Rico's situation is in fact a political one. In addition to calling for Spanish as the language of education at the UPR, allowing for exceptions, it called for Spanish to be the vehicle for teaching in both public and private schools. The proposal expressed its solidarity with the resolution passed by University students on October 30, 1946. The resolution also demanded the solution of the political status of Puerto Rico. The lack of sovereignty was viewed as a fundamental problem that needed to be addressed. Sovereignty was indispensable if Puerto Ricans was to be able to find solutions to the Island's problems, including the language problem.⁷¹

The approved resolution, as Benítez himself indicated before the University Faculty on October 31, 1946, was similar in substance to the resolution passed by the Superior Educational Council in 1942 establishing Spanish as the preferred language of instruction of the University.⁷² It was therefore the official policy of the UPR on this matter. The resolution approved in the student assembly and the one defeated at the University Faculty meeting went beyond pedagogical concerns, stating that the veto of the language bill in essence reflected a political problem.

An important difference was that while the approved resolution reiterated the notion that Spanish should be the preferred language of education, the other faculty proposal called for Spanish to be the required language of instruction, with exceptions to be considered on the merits of each case. The 1942 resolution did not mandate the use of Spanish. Professors could decide in which language to teach, and some programs continued to use

English as their language of instruction in Río Piedras, Mayagüez and in other academic units of the institution. The language bill approved by the Legislature actually required "the exclusive use of the Spanish language for teaching in all public schools", including the UPR.

The 1946 veto by the President postponed the solution of a problem that had been of great concern for the people of Puerto Rico since 1898. Until 1948, English was the official language of instruction in all public schools, with the exception of the UPR, where Spanish became the preferred language of instruction in 1942. The different language policies approved between 1898 and 1948 had a similar goal: to find the most effective way of instituting English as the language of teaching and learning in Puerto Rico.

We know that there was much resistance in Puerto Rico to these policies. It is known that such resistance manifested itself in the political, cultural, legal and educational arenas. From short stories written about the attempts to impose English in schools, for example, we have learned that teachers might have resisted by teaching in Spanish with the exception of those days that they expected school supervisors to visit their schools.⁷³ According to UPR professor Harry Bunker, in his participation in the University Faculty meeting on October 31, 1946, members of the faculty ignored the language policies and secretly taught in Spanish.⁷⁴

It is also known that, from the reports and official correspondence cited in this study, during the period under study English did not become the language of teaching and learning in Puerto Rico. The failure of the language policies was recognized by President Roosevelt in his letter to Gallardo appointing him Commissioner of Education in 1937.⁷⁵ The documents examined in this work could suggest that not only little English was learned during this period, but learning in general suffered greatly.

It seems from the examined documentation that what Chancellor Benítez stated earlier about the elementary level was also true for the other levels of the public education system, including the University. In reference to the University it should be noted that for the most part its students came from those very same schools where the quality of the educational experience in general, and the learning of English in particular, was questioned.

If not much English was learned during this period, the achievement of the political goals of the U.S. related to the English language, could be put into question. The opposition to the language policies reached its highest level in the 1940's. The frustration with this issue is evident in the correspondence of educators such as Benítez, as quoted above, and in reports such as Osuna's "Memorandum on the Teaching of English in Puerto Rico". The strong language used in Puerto Rico's Legislature Bill #51 of 1946 is evidence of the frustration in Puerto Rico with the language of instruction controversy.

Two significant events, which had repercussions on the language problem, took place in 1948. The colonial government of the island was modified to allow Puerto Ricans to elect the Governor. Secondly, the Governor was vested with the authority to appoint the Commissioner of Education. The elected Governor, Luis Muñoz Marín, appointed Mariano Villaronga, who by administrative fiat instituted Spanish as the language of education in Puerto Rico in the 1949- 1950 school year. For the first time since 1898, Puerto Rico had Spanish as the official language of instruction at all levels of public education. This policy remained unchanged for the remaining years of this study.

The changes in policy of 1948, as in 1942 when Spanish became the "preferred" language of instruction at the UPR, came after many years of a language policy imposed by the U.S. to serve the needs of a colonial effort that disregarded the will and needs of the colonized society. The fact that the clear purpose of colonialism is to colonize does not spare the colonized from the devastating consequences that this has on the conquered society. In the case of Puerto Rico, as it relates to this work, the decades long imposition of English had severe consequences on the teaching and learning process at all levels, including the University of Puerto Rico. As documented extensively in this work, mandating the use of English did not result in this language becoming the language of learning in Puerto Rico. Very little English was actually learned during this period. The quality of the educational experience offered under these circumstances was strongly criticized by most sectors of Puerto Rican society. It seems to the author that the imposition of English, and the resulting resistance, created an atmosphere that prevented any meaningful teaching and learning from taking place.

Notes

Cebollero, 1945; Muñoz Souffront, 1950; Negrón de Montilla, 1971; Beirne, 1976; Canino, 1981.

Puerto Rico is approximately 100 miles long and 35 miles wide.

Memorandum to Jaime Benítez, Chancellor of the UPR, from Pedro A. Cebollero, Dean of the School of Education of the UPR, February 27, 1945. Proyecto de Idioma, Rectoría, R-186, IV, 1941-1948. Also see A school language policy for Puerto Rico, Cebollero, 1945.

Muñoz Souffront, Op. cit..

Letter to Rexford G. Tugwell, Governor of Puerto Rico, from Jaime Benítez, Chancellor of the UPR, November 13, 1944. Rectoría, R-155 III. Archivo Central UPR, Río Piedras.

See Vientós Gastón in Zavala and Rodríguez, 1973, pp. 397-412.

Cited in Negrón de Montilla, Op. cit., p. 13.

Cited in Prucha, 1973, p. 197.

9 Idem., pp. 198-199.

Idem., p. 75.

Vientós Gastón, Op. cit.

"Resolución del Consejo Superior de Enseñanza relativa al idioma de enseñanza en la Universidad de Puerto Rico". September 25, 1942. As certified by Ismael Rodríguez Bou, Permanent Secretary of the Superior Educational Council, March 21, 1947. It should be noted that this resolution did not prevent University programs and faculty from using English as their language of instruction.

Negrón de Montilla, Op. cit.. For an alternative explanation of the phenomenon identified by Negrón de Montilla as "Americanization" see Navarro, 1977. In this essay "Educación en Puerto Rico: Adecuación y Plusvalía", Navarro argues that the United States did not intend to make Americans out of Puerto Ricans, but rather adapt them to the new social and economic order.

Muñiz Souffront, Op. cit., p. 25.

Idem., p. 26.

Canales, 1968.

Laguerre, 1935.

Marqués, 1970.

Navarro, Op. cit., p. 4.

Díaz Alfaro, 1948. In reference to the language issue see "Peyo Mercé Enseña Inglés" and "Santa Cló va a la Cuchilla".

The Laws of Puerto Rico are published in both English and Spanish. The 1905 case was Cruz vs. Domínguez, 8 D.P.R. 580. Cited in *El Tribunal Supremo de Puerto Rico y el problema de la lengua*, by Nilita Vientós Gastón. Published in Zavala and Rodríguez, 1973, p. 397.

Proyecto del Senado 51, 16a Asamblea, 2a Legislatura, Febrero 12, 1946. Proyecto de Idioma, Rectoría, R 186, IV, 1941-1948. Archivo Central UPR, Río Piedras.

Parrilla vs. Martin, 68 D.P.R. 90. Cited in Vientós Gastón, Op. Cit., p.403. In her essay, Vientós Gastón also refers to a 1956 Supreme Court decision against a Registrar of Deeds who had refused to record a deed written in English. In this case the Supreme Court referred to a 1902 law that stipulated, in the opinion of the court, that both English and Spanish were official languages in Puerto Rico (*R. C. Communications vs. Registrador*, 79 D.P.R. 77). According to Vientós Gastón the Puerto Rico Supreme Court recognized the significance of the language controversy in 1965, when it ruled that legal proceedings

in Puerto Rico must be conducted in the language of Puerto Ricans, which is Spanish (Pueblo vs. Tribunal Superior, 92 D. P. R. 596.

Cited by Vientós Gastón, *Op. cit.*, pp. 410-411.

El Mundo, April 18, 1937.

Educators Juan José Osuna and William S. Gary referred to the teaching of English in Puerto Rico as the "English problem".

"Memorandum on the Teaching of English in Puerto Rico", to the Chancellor and Superior Council of Education, from Juan José Osuna, Dean of the UPR School of Education, December 3, 1942. Rectoría, R-155, III, 18. Archivo Central UPR, Río Piedras.

The International Institute of Teachers College, 1926. Cited by Osuna in "Memorandum on the Teaching of English in Puerto Rico", to the Chancellor and Superior Council of Education, from Juan José Osuna, Dean of the UPR School of Education, December 3, 1942, p. 4. Rectoría, R-155, III, 18. Archivo Central UPR, Río Piedras.

Idem., p. 4.

Idem., pp. 4-5.

Idem., pp. 5-7. Also see Muñiz Souffront, 1950 and Vientós Gastón in Zavala and Rodríguez, 1973.

Osuna, "Memorandum on the Teaching of English in Puerto Rico". Rectoría, R-155, III, 18. Archivo Central UPR, Río Piedras.

Idem., p. 14.

Idem., p. 15.

34 *Idem.*, pp. 15-24.

Idem., p. 17.

Idem., p. 17.

Idem., p. 19.

Idem., p. 20.

Idem., p. 22.

Idem., p. 23.

Idem., p. 24.

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Acta de la Reunión del Claustro Universitario Celebrada el Jueves, 19 de Febrero de 1942. Rectoría, R-155, III. Archivo Central UPR, Río Piedras.

"Problemas Urgentes de la Universidad de Puerto Rico", paper presented by Gildo Massó before students and professors of the Agriculture and Mechanic Arts Faculty in Mayagüez, February 16, 1932. Published by the newspaper *El Mundo*, February 21, 1932.

In his "Memorandum on the Status of English at the University of Puerto Rico", Maurice M. Segall indicates that, in addition to a first year English requirement, all "sophomores, except those in science, pharmacy, and Normal work, are required to complete the second year course in English. It should also be noted that for the first time in several years the dean of the division of the Sciences will recommend that second year English be taken by Science Majors as an elective." "Memorandum on the Status of English at the University of Puerto Rico", to Jaime Benítez, Chancellor of the UPR, from Maurice M. Segall, Acting Head, Department of English of the UPR, October 28, 1944. Rectoría, R-155, III, 18. Archivo Central UPR, Río Piedras.

El Mundo, February 20, 1943.

Letter to Dennis Chávez, United States Senator from New Mexico, from Jaime Benítez, Chancellor of the UPR, February 21, 1943. Rectoría, R-155, III, 18. Archivo Central UPR, Río Piedras. Quotations from this letter were translated into English by this author.

Idem.

Letter to Jaime Benítez, Chancellor of the UPR, from Dennis Chávez, United States Senator from New Mexico. March 8, 1943. Rectoría, R-155, III, 18. Archivo Central UPR, Río Piedras. 51 Letter to Rexford G. Tugwell, Governor of Puerto Rico, from B. W. Thoron, Director of the Division of Territories and Island Possessions of the United States Department of the Interior, October 21, 1944.

Letter to Jaime Benítez, Chancellor of the UPR, from Charles O'Day, Secretary of the Governor, October 24, 1944. Rectoría, R-155, III, 18. Archivo Central UPR, Río Piedras.

Letter to Rexford G. Tugwell, Governor of Puerto Rico, from Jaime Benítez, Chancellor of the UPR, November 13, 1944. Rectoría, R-155, III, 18. Archivo Central UPR, Río Piedras.

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Idem.

Idem.

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Idem.

Idem.

Cable to Jaime Benítez, Chancellor of the UPR, from Emilio M. Colón, Executive Director of the Office of Puerto Rico in Washington, D.C.. October 26, 1946. Proyecto de Idioma, Rectoría, R-186, IV, 1941-48. Archivo Central UPR, Río Piedras.

Parrilla vs. Martin, 68 D.P.R. 90. Cited in Vientós Gastón, Op. cit., pp. 402-403.

El Mundo, October 30, 1946.

Idem.

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Récord taquigráfico de la reunión del Claustro de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, celebrada en el Teatro de la UPR, 31 de octubre de 1946, p. 5. Proyecto de Idioma, Rectoría, R-186, IV, 1941-48. Archivo Central UPR, Río Piedras.

See "Peyo Mercé Enseña Inglés", Abelardo Díaz Alfaro, 1948.

Récord taquigráfico de la reunión del Claustro de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, celebrada en el Teatro de la UPR, 31 de octubre de 1946, p. 35. Proyecto de Idioma, Rectoría, R-186, IV, 1941-48. Archivo Central UPR, Río Piedras.

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