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Chapter 3

How Threatened is the Spanish of New York Puerto Ricans?

Language Shift with vaivén

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Introduction

TV viewers nationwide have been fascinated by the New York life portrayed in 'Seinfeld'. Unlike the violence or the glamour usually associated with New York in the media, 'Seinfeld' put us in contact with daily life in New York among white, middle class New Yorkers. But when the penultimate episode portrayed Kramer accidentally setting fire to the Puerto Rican flag and stomping on it to put it out, the Puerto Rican community in New York, joined by many other New Yorkers, demonstrated and picketed.

The protest was important not only because of the message it sent to the media and the public at large about Puerto Rican pride and presence in New York, but also because it tells us something about where the New York Puerto Rican community is in relation to the rest of the New York community in terms of social power and prestige, identity, and especially language.

In the last two decades, many Puerto Ricans in New York have become regular viewers of English language TV shows like Seinfeld. Rarely do they need the Spanish language TV of *Univisión, Telemundo,* and *Galavisión,* although they're still avid viewers of Spanish TV *novelas* [soap operas]. The bilingualism of Puerto Ricans, and even the shift to English of some, especially when compared to more recently arrived immigrant Latino groups, is pervasive. Yet, although they are increasingly English speaking, as we will see, they continue to self-categorise as Puerto Ricans, Hispanics or Latinos, using features of culture and language to do so. The Anglo majority also categorises them socially as Hispanics, using race, poverty, and colonial status to do so.

New York Puerto Ricans' use of the media and the way they're there

portrayed is indicative in this regard. Culturally, although many watch English language television, many Puerto Ricans continue to enjoy the *novelas* which some TV stations are now transmitting with English subtitles, and TV Spanish music shows which do not demand full competence in Spanish. Socially, the media continues to portray New York Puerto Ricans negatively, much like the angry mob of New York Puerto Rican paradegoers who overturned Jerry's car in the Seinfeld episode. It is the different direction that language takes from that of culture on the one hand and social prestige and power on the other that distinguishes the New York Puerto Rican community from other US ethnolinguistic groups in the study of language maintenance and shift.

Whereas many other US ethnolinguistic groups have achieved social and cultural integration as a result of their linguistic assimilation, the same has not happened with Puerto Ricans (see especially Urciuoli, 1997, Zentella, 1997a). Although increasingly English speaking, Puerto Ricans remain culturally and socially as separate from a US Anglo mainland identity, as the island, with its commonwealth colonial status, does from the United States. As a result of Puerto Rico's continuing colonial relationship to the United States, Puerto Ricans in the United States resemble, as Ogbu (1988) explains, a 'caste group', more similar to African Americans than to other immigrant groups.

Whether one categorises Puerto Ricans in the United States as a caste group or a 'colonised group' (Blauner, 1972), Puerto Ricans, along with Native Americans and African Americans, were forced into minority status through conquest and domination and face harsher and more persistent forms of discrimination than other racial and ethnic groups in the United States. Consequently, Puerto Ricans occupy a place in society from which social integration and assimilation becomes more difficult than for other immigrant groups such as European immigrants. These European immigrants are racially and culturally more similar to the dominant society and, to a larger extent, voluntarily come to the United States. Indeed, colonialism permeates the Puerto Rican experience. The colonial status of the island follows Puerto Ricans to the United States, where persistent discrimination and inequality are expressions of this status.

Yet, it is also the process of language shift itself that has distinguishing characteristics in the case of Puerto Ricans. As Puerto Ricans in the United States become bilingual and even English monolingual speakers, they hold on to selective features and signs of Spanish in different forms of discourse at different times, refusing to yield totally in semiotic character to English, the language of the coloniser. Although as we will see, shift to English is proceeding at the normal historical pace of three generations (see Fishman

1970, 1991; Fishman *et al.*, 1971), and Spanish language maintenance is not more than an ideal, the colonial status of the island is reflected in the linguistic *vaivén* (literally, coming and going, to-and-fro motion) of Spanish signs that continue to crop up in the English of New York Puerto Ricans who have shifted to English. The colonial status resonates in the effort English monolingual Puerto Ricans make to give linguistic expression to the *commmonwealth*, finding a *common way* of communicating, if only partially, with Spanish monolingual Puerto Ricans, and marking their distance from an Anglo identity.

Unlike ethnolinguistic groups who have completely relinguified, New York Puerto Ricans use this linguistic *vaivén* not only to mark their identity, but also to connect with the political reality of the island. This *vaivén* is also a product of the colonial stigmatisation to which New York Puerto Ricans have been subjected by the Anglo majority. Yet, like the steps of the *chá-chá-chá* of the 1950s which the word *vaivén* connotes ('*Cógele bien el compás, cógele bien el compás, cógele el vaivén, cógele el vaivén, de ese ritmo que se llama cha-cha-chá*' ['Get the beat right, get the beat right, get the coming and going, get the coming and going, of that rhythm that is called cha-cha-chá']), the linguistic *vaivén* neither brings about movement to a new space, nor harps back to an old space. The linguistic space of New York Puerto Ricans, even as English shift has occurred, continues to be marked by speaking English with Spanish linguistic and extra-linguistic signs.

This linguistic *vaivén* has little to do with the metaphorical code-switching of other US ethnolinguistic groups (see Gumperz, 1982), for besides acting as a cultural marker of identity, it acts as a societal and political marker, enabling New York Puerto Ricans to capture the physical world of their colonised island, while suggesting the distance kept by the Anglo majority. While metaphorical code-switching is usually associated with intracultural features of bicultural identity within a micro sociolinguistic framework, the concept of linguistic *vaivén* suggests intercultural sociopolitical shifts possible within a macro sociology of language framework especially as globalisation affects society in the new millennium and as oppression of ethnolinguistic minorities is increasingly recognised.

This paper contextualises the two related characteristics which define and distinguish the language space of New York Puerto Ricans from that of other US ethnolinguistic groups:

- The continued divergence between language on the one hand, and culture and social stigmatisation on the other; that is, language shift has not been always accompanied by cultural assimilation or structural incorporation.
- The continued *vaivén* of Spanish features after language shift, that is, the language shift of New York Puerto Ricans, recovers some common territory when in the presence of speakers of the ancestral language.

The question this paper then sets out to explore is whether this qualitative difference, created by a unique context in which colonised Spanish-speakers migrate back and forth, to-and-fro (both physically and emotionally), between their Spanish-speaking colony and one of the greatest English-speaking metropolises in the world, has any effect on the concept of language shift and of reversing language shift as proposed by Fishman in 1991. We turn first to an in-depth analysis of the colonial status of Puerto Rico.

Puerto Rico: 500 years of Colonialism – and Counting

A brief examination of the historical and present-day relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico provides insights into the many ways in which Puerto Rico's colonial status shapes the cultural and linguistic traditions of Puerto Ricans on the island and in the United States.

In 1493, on his second voyage to what is now known as the Americas, Columbus claimed the island of Borinquén, as it was known to the Taíno people, for the Spanish (Figueroa, 1977). Colonialism has persisted in Puerto Rico ever since. By the 1800s, Puerto Ricans, having developed their own cultural identity derived from native, European and African roots, sought to pursue their own political destiny separate and apart from Spain. But the island's autonomy from Spain achieved in 1897 through the Autonomic Charter was short-lived (Trías Monge 1977).

The United States, which had longed to possess Puerto Rico to gain military and economic advantage as part of its global expansionist strategy, took Puerto Rico as 'war booty' as a result of its war with Spain in 1898. Without consultation, Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans were passed on from one owner to another (Maldonado-Denis, 1972). General Nelson Miles, who gained considerable notoriety in his military campaigns against Native Americans, was placed in charge of establishing the US authority over Puerto Rico in 1898. According to Fernandez (1994), contrary to Miles' assertions that the US military had come to impart the benefits of the 'liberal institutions' of the US government, military rule and occupation replaced the political autonomy obtained under the 1897 Autonomous Charter and the island's name was immediately changed to 'Porto Rico' to

suit North American pronunciation. The Treaty of Paris, which ended the Spanish–American War, granted the United Stated Congress complete authority to decide the political status and civil rights of the inhabitants of the island – plenary power that many in the US Congress argue still resides with the United States (Trías Monge, 1997).

As with Native Americans, indigenous Hawaiians and Filipinos, the conquest of Puerto Rico by the United States included the forced assimilation and imposition of the English language. From 1898 to 1948 without consent of the Puerto Rican people, English became the official language of the public schools of Puerto Rico (Hernandez-Chávez, 1994; Karnow, 1989; Language Policy Task Force, 1992; Trask, 1993). Strong resistance to the English-only policy on the island and the decrease in literacy levels (Walsh, 1991) eventually led to the restoration of Spanish language instruction in the public school. The struggle to return to the use of Spanish language is indicative of the deep reluctance of Puerto Ricans to give up their linguistic and cultural identity. This strong cultural affinity continues to be reflected among Puerto Ricans in New York (as described in more depth later in this article) in their struggle for bilingual education, the establishment of cultural institutions, such as the Museo del Barrio and New York's Puerto Rican Day Parade, a parade which has grown to become the city's largest display of ethnic pride.

The island's political status as a colony inexorably results in a Puerto Rican population in the United States which has not necessarily made a clean break with the island, its people and its culture. The Jones Act which made Puerto Rican citizens of the United States in 1917, not only did not confer full civil and political rights to Puerto Ricans under the US Constitution, but it imposed citizenship on Puerto Ricans in spite of a unanimous vote by the Puerto Rican legislature to retain Puerto Rican citizenship (Fernandez, 1994). US citizenship – along with Puerto Rico's proximity to New York, as a major port of entry into the United States, the advent of air travel, and the availability of relatively low airfares – has permitted Puerto Ricans to travel to the United States with greater ease than those coming from other countries, connecting Puerto Ricans to their homeland in a manner that is unique to any other group that has come to the United States from any other land.

Commonwealth, the term used to describe the status of Puerto Rico since the early 1950s, did not substantively change the colonial nature of the relationship between the United States and the island. In considering the commonwealth designation, the US Congressional record is clear that the Congress' passage of a bill to allow Puerto Rico to adopt a constitution would not fundamentally change the political, economic and social relationship between the island and the United States (Fernandez, 1994, Trías Monge, 1997). Even after a constitutional convention, ostensibly an exercise in self-government, the US Congress retained the power to amend unilaterally Puerto Rico's constitution and eliminated a section of the constitution modelled after rights conferred under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Trías Monge, 1997).

The US asserts its sovereignty over the island and its people, including the power to legislate and exercise control over the most important decisions governing the lives of the people of Puerto Rico (Fernandez, 1994; Lewis, 1974; Maldonado-Denis, 1972; Trías Monge, 1997). Although the United States succeeded in having the United Nations approve the removal of Puerto Rico from the List of Non-Self-Governing Territories in 1953, the United Nations has since reopened the case of Puerto Rico. The United Nations Decolonisation Committee has repeatedly reaffirmed since 1973 'the inalienable right of the people of Puerto Rico to self-determination and independence' (Trías Monge, 1997: 138).

Puerto Rico's colonial status is a fact to which all political parties on the island generally agree (Trías Monge, 1997: 140). Hence, Puerto Ricans living in the United States not only parallel a colonial group experience similar to Native Americans and African Americans, they are intrinsically linked to an ongoing colonial reality in their homeland.

All political parties on the island presently call for the decolonisation of Puerto Rico, with options varying from independence, statehood, or some form of 'enhanced' commonwealth. Those on the island who assert statehood as the means of resolving Puerto Rico's colonial dilemma premise their argument fundamentally on the notion that Puerto Rico's culture can be preserved even as a state of the United States, an assertion that is fervently contested by the other political factions on the island. With respect to language, even the most ardent pro-statehooders want Spanish to remain the language of the people of Puerto Rico, much to the chagrin of certain US Congresspersons. Ironically, those most willing to submit to US sovereignty are adamant in maintaining Spanish as the language of Puerto Rico. Language and the ability to maintain Spanish in Puerto Rico is undoubtedly a critical issue in the debate about Puerto Rico's future political status, with no one on the island willing to concede its demise.

Colonialism has shaped the destiny of Puerto Ricans and has in large part been responsible for the large migration of Puerto Ricans to the United States. US supported economic development schemes such as 'Operation Bootstrap' and 'Fomento' relied on widespread migration of Puerto Ricans to the United States, and to New York in particular, as a form of 'escape valve' for the many rendered unemployed in the major economic transition

of the 1940s and 1950s (Maldonado-Denis, 1972: 312). Puerto Ricans have thus brought, and continue to bring with them, to New York and other parts of the United States the legacy and reality of Puerto Rico's colonial situation. Reflected in their experience is the ever-present sense of identity and culture integrally tied to language.

Studies of the Language Use by Puerto Ricans of New York

The language use of the Puerto Rican community in New York, especially that in East Harlem, has been carefully studied since the Language Task Force of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies was set up in the 1970s. In 1971, Fishman *et al.* published their pioneer work on bilingualism among Puerto Ricans in Jersey City. The study examined how Puerto Ricans used code-switching to mark their identity. Based on Fishman's use of diglossia (1970), the study predicted the complete shift to English of the Puerto Rican community studied, as it documented the lack of functional compartmentalisation of Spanish and English in that community.

The work of the Language Policy Task Force of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies 1980; Pedraza *et al.*, 1980; Pedraza, 1985 as well as the early work of Zentella (1982), challenged the concept of diglossia for Puerto Ricans of East Harlem as proposed by Fishman. It suggested instead that Spanish and English did not exist in separate domains in the East Harlem Puerto Rican community, and that code-switching was a stable mode of expression that did not signal language shift.

In 1980 and 1981 Poplack studied the code-switching of the East Harlem Puerto Rican community, focusing on its syntactic structure. At the end of the 1980s, Poplack (1988), comparing the East Harlem Puerto Rican community to that of Ottawa, argued that the frequent intrasentential switching of New York Puerto Ricans had less rhetorical importance than in Canada, and that it was an established permanent discourse mode in the community.

But in the 1990s, as the New York Puerto Rican community in East Harlem changed radically, follow-up studies indicated that language shift had indeed taken place as the speakers moved away, and as other Spanish speaking groups and African Americans moved into barrios that were once predominantly Puerto Rican. Most important in this regard is the work of Ana Celia Zentella. Her recent book *Growing Up Bilingual. Puerto Rican Children in New York* (1997a) reviews, extends and revises her previous work in the community. Zentella refers to the 'bilingual/multidialectal repertoire' that distinguishes the New York Puerto Rican community

(1997: 41). She identifies three Spanish dialects spoken by the New York Puerto Ricans she studied in East Harlem:

- Standard PR Spanish.
- Popular PR Spanish.
- English-dominant Spanish.

But it is the range of English dialects identified by Zentella that distinguishes the sociolinguistic context of Puerto Rican New Yorkers from other US ethnolinguistic groups:

- Standard NYC English.
- Puerto Rican English.
- African American Vernacular English.
- Hispanised English.

In the case of Puerto Ricans in New York, English is not only the language of power and of the coloniser; it is also the language of African Americans, equally poor and powerless, with whom they increasingly share their lives and their communities. This double identification of English, not only with power, but also with poverty and racial stigmatisation, is also responsible, as we will see, for the linguistic *vaivén* of the shift. The *vaivén* greatly distinguishes Puerto Ricans in New York not only from African Americans but also from other US ethnolinguistic groups who live in less intimacy with African Americans and for whom English is only identified with groups that hold power.

Zentella (1997a) places the East Harlem Puerto Rican community of the 1980s between Stages 5 and 6 on Fishman's Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale, blaming the greater language shift on 'the reluctance of parents to insist that they be addressed in Spanish, and the widespread use of English in all children's activities' (p.77). Based on the work she conducted in one block (*el bloque*) in the New York Puerto Rican community of East Harlem, and after following for 10 years four of the children of *el bloque* who had become mothers, she is surprised to find 'the shift of child rearing language to English primarily' (p. 240). According to Zentella (1997b), in 13 years *el bloque*'s children 'moved conclusively toward the English end of the language proficiency spectrum' (p. 187). But Zentella (1997a) also concludes that 'they [the toddlers observed] seemed to acquire the bilingual skills that would identify them as members of their community' (p. 241). Zentella cautions that one cannot study the parental language behaviour of the New York Puerto Rican community without understanding fears about racial, ethnolinguistic and economic subordination.

She concludes 'parental behaviors change as they pursue a better life for their children, but usually at the expense of Spanish' (p. 243).

An explanation of this phenomenon is given in Bonnie Urciuoli's *Exposing Prejudice: Puerto Rican Experiences of Language, Race, and Class* (1997). Urciuoli's revealing book explains the linguistic behaviour of Puerto Ricans with the concept of 'racialisation'. She claims that Puerto Ricans are seen in racial terms, and that therefore their use of Spanish becomes ideologically problematic in a white Anglo English-speaking world.

The shift to English of the New York Puerto Rican community, coupled with their maintenance of a separate identity and of features of the ancestral language and culture even after shift, is also confirmed in Lourdes Torres (1997) recent study of the Puerto Rican community of Brentwood (a suburb of New York City). Reporting results of a survey, Torres concludes 'across generations, Spanish is used less than English. At the same time, in most cases Puerto Ricans report using both languages rather than either Spanish or English exclusively' (p. 17).

As we approach the new millennium, scholars studying the New York Puerto Rican community continue to confirm the maintenance of their separate identity, a product of their colonial relationship with the United States and the 'racialisation' to which they have been subjected.

At the same time, scholars have been documenting the rapid language shift that is taking place in the community, although the *vaivén* of linguistic features continues, for many, to accompany their separate identity. For New York Puerto Ricans, however, the struggle between succumbing to total shift to English or maintaining Spanish features as a symbol of cultural affiliation and social resistance or even the product of stigmatisation, is an important one. If the language trend of shift continues and if the community gave up its linguistic *vaivén*, barring any change in the political status of the island, the New York Puerto Rican community could become more similar, linguistically and socially, to the African American community, with little promise of equality. The continued use of Spanish linguistic features, even after language shift has taken place among Puerto Ricans, leaves open the possibility of their *vaivén* to the island where they can experience to a large extent being like others, being a majority, being just Puerto Ricans.

We now turn to analysing aspects of the sociolinguistic context of New York Puerto Ricans in the last two decades.

The Early Spanish Language Context of the New York Puerto Rican Community

The early history of the New York Puerto Rican community has been

well documented in *Memorias de Bernardo Vega* (see Andreu Iglesias, 1984) as well as in Sánchez-Korrol ([1983], 1994). By the 1920s the 100,000 Puerto Ricans in New York lived predominantly in East Harlem, the Lower East Side (Loisaida) and the Greenpoint section of Brooklyn, around the Navy Yard.

There were many Puerto Rican clubs and associations in East Harlem and the Navy Yard (see Sánchez-Korrol [1983], 1994). By 1940 approximately 70% of the 61,000 Puerto Ricans in New York City lived in Manhattan, mainly in *El Barrio* as East Harlem became known (Zentella 1997a).

The Puerto Rican community in New York grew steadily in the 1940s and 1950s, at a time when there was little foreign immigration into the city as a result of the discriminatory Johnson-Reed Act of 1924, as well as the ensuing depression. In 1940, 88% and in 1950, 83% of Puerto Ricans in the United States were living in New York City (García, 1997). In 1950 there were 246,000 Puerto Ricans in New York City. By then, Puerto Ricans resided mostly in the South Bronx as a result of urban relocation policies (Zentella 1997b). Residential segregation kept the New York Puerto Rican community tightly organised around family and traditions.

It was in public schools where the two cultures and two languages came sharply into contact. In 1949 there were 30,000 Puerto Rican students in New York City schools. In 1956, Puerto Rican students represented one-eighth of the student population, and by 1965 that ratio had increased to one-fifth (*El Diario*, 1993). By the 1970s one-fourth of school children in New York were Puerto Rican, and their dropout rate was an alarming 60% (*El Diario*, 1974). At this time, there were very few Spanish-speaking teachers, and although special classes were formed for Puerto Rican children, many students continued to fail. In 1972 the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund filed a lawsuit against the Board of Education of the City of New York on behalf of 15 Puerto Rican schoolchildren and their parents. The suit resulted in court-mandated bilingual education programmes through the Aspira Consent Decree.

Puerto Rican Spanish was brought to the public sphere through bilingual education in an effort to teach children English and educate them bilingually. But as Puerto Rican Spanish made its entrance into the classroom, the Spanish of the schoolchildren themselves was beginning to change, as more and more children started coming from other Latin American countries.

The Immigration Act of 1965 abolished the national origin system, and an influx of other Spanish speakers, as well as immigrants from Asia and Africa, changed, as we will see, the New York City sociolinguistic land

scape (García, 1997). In 1970, Puerto Ricans made up 66% of all New York Latinos. By 1980 that figure had decreased to 61%, and 10 years later Puerto Ricans accounted for only 50% of New York Latinos, a proportion likely to be even less because of the large number of undocumented immigrants among other Latinos.

The Influx of Other Spanishes as Puerto Rican Spanish Undergoes Shift

In 1990 Spanish was spoken by one-and-a-half million New Yorkers at home, representing 20% of New Yorkers. In fact, there are more Spanish speakers in New York than in 13 Latin American capitals (García, 1997). Twenty-seven percent of those aged five and over who spoke Spanish at home (397,380 speakers) are Spanish monolingual speakers (García, 1997). This creates the Spanish language surround in which New York Puerto Ricans live and that Zentella so well documents in her study (1997a). When speaking about the homes in *el Barrio*, Zentella says that Spanish was always 'in the background' (1997a: 50). And she reports that children had at least receptive ability in Spanish because otherwise they missed out on what was happening in the home and in the community.

Besides being used extensively in homes and Latino neighbourhoods, Spanish is much used in public. There are four full-time Spanish language AM radio stations: WSKQ, WKDM; WADO and WJIT. A Spanish language radio show, '*El vacilón de la mañana*' on 97.9 FM, is the second ranking radio talk show in New York City. Full Spanish language television programming is provided by WXTV (Univisión), WNJU (Telemundo), and a cable channel, *Galavisión*. There are two Spanish language dailies in New York City, one of which *El Diario La Prensa*, published since 1913, calls itself '*El Campeón de los Hispanos*' ['The Champion of Hispanics']. Spanish is so prevalent in New York City that New Yorkers can do business in Spanish with Con Edison, the utility company, and NYNEX, the telephone company. And New Yorkers can find Spanish language services in most governmental agencies and the court system.

The vitality of Spanish in New York and its effect on its use by Puerto Ricans is most evident in the rich and dynamic music that is part of the New York Puerto Rican community. Puerto Rican music, and what is commonly referred as *Salsa*, has been a focal point for Puerto Rican cultural identity. For decades, New York City has been a breeding ground for the development of *Salsa*, a sound heavily influenced by the Puerto Rican experience in New York. Tito Puente, Ray Barretto and Eddie Palmieri are among the artists who have played a role in the development of the Puerto Rican

Table 3.1 Puerto Ricans and other Latinos in New York: 1980 and 1990

	Total population	*Latinos*	*% Latinos*	*Puerto Ricans*	*% Puerto Ricans*	*Other Latinos*	*% Other Latinos*
1980	7,071,639	1,406,389	19.9	852,833	12.1	553,556	7.8
1990	7,322,564	1,783,511	24.4	896,763	12.2	886,748	12.1

Source: Demographic Profiles. A Portrait of New York City's Community Districts from the 1980 and 1990 Censuses of Population and Housing. Department of City Planning, August 1992

musical scene. But it is a tribute to the strength of Spanish in New York that New York Puerto Rican singers such as Mark Anthony, La India, and Brenda K. Starr who started out singing in English have only become popular when they began singing songs in Spanish. Despite frequent attempts to popularise English lyrics with *Salsa* rhythms, *Salsa* primarily remains a linguistic and cultural domain where Spanish is most vibrant among New York Puerto Ricans.

Presently, Spanish in New York reflects the diversity of Latin American varieties, as migration from Puerto Rico has levelled off, while immigration from all Latin America has sharply increased. Besides Puerto Ricans, there are five other New York Latino groups with over 50,000 people. They are, in order of size: Dominicans, Colombians, Ecuadorians, Mexicans and Cubans. (For a complete breakdown of all New York Latino groups, see Zentella 1997b.)

Table 3.1 displays the demographic data for Latinos and Puerto Rican in the city in the last two decades, confirming both the vitality of Spanish speakers, as well as its increasing dialectal variation.

In the city as a whole, although the number of Puerto Ricans has remained fairly constant, it is the number of other Latinos that has grown by leaps and bounds. Whereas the number of Puerto Ricans has only increased by 5.2%, the number of other Latinos has increased by 60.2%, making Puerto Ricans barely half of the New York Latino population. It is also important to note that Puerto Ricans are increasingly native born. Whereas in 1970 almost 60% of the US Puerto Rican population had been born in Puerto Rico, in 1990 only 40% remained island born (US Census, 1970 and 1990).

Because most of the other Latino groups are more recent arrivals, they are generally Spanish speakers, helping to pull the Spanish of Puerto Ricans as they communicate with each other. In fact, Zentella (1990) has pointed to the lexical levelling that is occurring as Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Colombians and Cubans try to communicate with each other. At the

same time, English-speaking ability, or the inclusion of English features in their discourse, gives Puerto Ricans added status among other Latinos in poor Bronx and Brooklyn neighbourhoods, marking them as more knowledgeable of the ways of New York. So English-speaking ability and bilingualism act as status characteristics, pushing New York Puerto Ricans towards the English end of the continuum. It is this pull and push, this *vaivén*, pulled by the need to communicate with other Spanish speakers, pushed by the need to be a legitimate part of an Anglo world, that gives the shift to English of Puerto Rican New Yorkers unique characteristics.

Puerto Rican Neighbourhoods. Dislocation and Reshuffling as Spanish and English Invert Status

That Puerto Rican poverty can also be lived out in English is masterfully portrayed by Zentella (1997a) in her description of the dislocation of *El Barrio*. In the section meaningfully titled, 'The End of *el Bloque*: "Ahora la gente no se conocen"' ['Now people don't know each other'] Zentella explains:

> Between 1981–91, a series of events removed most of *el bloque*'s families. Suspicious fires accelerated the deterioration of two of the tenements and the city condemned them as uninhabitable . . . By the end of the decade only six of the 20 families with children remained . . . Most families were as poor as, or poorer than, they had been in 1979, and many had been devastated by divorce, disease, and drugs. Staying in *El Barrio* or in poverty did not guarantee their maintenance of Spanish, and some lost out on both economic and linguistic fronts . . . The break-up of *el bloque* dislodged the children from networks that had fostered bilingualism, and took each child down distinct paths of language development. (Zentella: 137–39)

The dislocation of East Harlem described by Zentella was repeated throughout many other Puerto Rican neighbourhoods in New York. For this paper, we conducted a series of interviews among Puerto Rican residents of Bushwick, Brooklyn, in a local Pentecostal church. The comments that follow are typical as they reminisce about what Bushwick was like and what happened:

> On Bushwick Avenue there were five-story tenaments with four apartments on the floor. There were no elevators and everyone who lived there was Puerto Rican. The row houses across the street were all Italian. But then gangs came in. Heroine was on the rise . . . At the same time, Reingold wanted to take over the whole vicinity to build a loading dock for the trucks. They destroyed the buildings, but there's nothing to this day. Everybody moved in different directions. (M, 2nd gen., 37 years of age)

> Los Puertorriqueños se fueron. Los dominicanos se están quedando con Brooklyn. Las bodegas de puertorriqueños son casuales. Hay una nada mas. (F, 1st gen., 56 years of age)
>
> [Puertoricans left. Dominicans are taking over Brooklyn. The Puertorican *bodegas* are unusual. There's only one.]

> En Grajam oía música típica [In Graham I listened to typical music] all over the place. En la Marqueta había *pasteles, alcapurria*. [In the Market there were *pasteles*, alcapurria.] Now it's the Market of Moore. I don't see pasteles, don't see music resound, don't see Puerto Rican flags . . . There were a lot of *cuchifritos*, a. . . lot. (M, 2nd gen., 28 years of age)

Just as the integrity of the traditional Puerto Rican neighbourhood has disappeared, so has the Spanish language for this last second generation male, except for his distinct switch to Spanish when he talks about music and food.

The cultural and linguistic dislocation is felt not only physically, but also spiritually and emotionally. One of the young men we interviewed explains it thus:

> Now nobody cares about anybody. It's like gang rivalry, but without colors. Before was more, '*Si come uno, comen todos*'. (M, 2nd gen., 35 years of age)
> [Before it was more, 'If one eats, all eat']

Significantly, this second generation young man switches to Spanish to repeat probably what his mother used to say to communicate the collaborative spirit of a poor but united community that characterised the early days of the New York Puerto Rican community.

The question remains, however, of where Puerto Ricans went. They left as one of the men told me, 'buscando algo mejor' [looking for something better], but his words are instructive of the different futures that awaited Puerto Ricans once they left Bushwick as well as the different linguistic features of second generation New York Puerto Rican discourse:

> They left *buscando algo mejor*. They gave up on the neighbourhood and decided to relocate. Our restaurants used to be Spanish. The *bodegas* sold out. *Los puertorriqueños se metieron a ser maestros* [Puerto Ricans went into teaching], *en* Auto Repair Shops, Liquor Stores. But the majority went independent. *Compran ropa y venden* house to house *por*

> *la calle* [They buy clothes and sell house to house on the street.] . . . The crime rates dropped. Everybody is in jail. A lot of people went back to Puerto Rico. The rest moved to Queens, Jersey. (M, 2nd gen., 37 years of age)

Although some were able to escape the poverty of Bushwick to find better things in Queens or Jersey, others ended up in other dark spaces, including jail.

In 1990 the Latino poverty rate in New York City was 43% compared to 33% for African Americans, and 12% for whites (Institute for Puerto Rican Policy 1996). And poor Puerto Ricans feel their separation from the rest of majority society. A 74-year-old woman we interviewed in Bushwick expresses it so:

> Uno es pobre, vive de ayuda pública. Para la sociedad no somos nadie. Somos insolventes. Se vive con esa mancha.
> [You're poor, you live on public assistance. For society, we're no one. We're insolvent. You live with that stain.]

Scarce economic resources is also the reason given for the decrease in Puerto Rican migration to New York. One informant explains:

> There are very few kids coming from Puerto Rico. They come, and then go back. There are no resources to help them. No language help. The government grants ran out. (M, 2nd gen., 34 years of age)

Yet another one explains:

> Los puertorriqueños siguen viniendo porque hay mas oportunidades. Pero ahora vienen a Atlantic City, a los campos también.
> [Puerto Ricans keep on coming because there are more opportunities. But now they come to Atlantic City, to the countryside also.]

But many younger English-speaking Puerto Ricans feel differently, and talk about how they have been able to escape their parents' poverty. Indicative of this is the following comments from two young former Bushwick residents: 'Puerto Ricans are up and coming. Everybody I know is a school teacher or cop. Not too many are on welfare.' And when questioned about the continuous poverty statistics on Puerto Ricans, they point to the aging generation of their parents as the culprits: 'The old Puerto community is older now and is on welfare and disability. But the young ones are up and rising politically and socially.'

Nevertheless, Urciuoli (1997: 58) has concluded that Puerto Ricans have the least contact with white New Yorkers, and the most contact with

African Americans and other Spanish speaking groups. But proximity and contact does not necessarily lead to good relations. Commenting on the tension between Puerto Ricans and African American males in the Bedford Stuyvesant neighbourhood to which the family moved from Bushwick, one of the second generation male informants recalls:

> We found a cheap apartment on top a Pentecostal Church in Bedford Stuyvesant. Inside the building everything was fine. But everyone else was African American. They used to call us the *miras*. There was a fight every day. At the junior high school, I started to get together with other Hispanics and started picking on the *morenos*.
> Then they used to call us, the crazy *miras*.

African Americans used the Spanish word 'mira' [Look], used to call attention and repeated frequently in public especially by mothers, to make fun of their Puerto Rican neighbours.

An analysis of where Puerto Ricans are living today can shed further light on how both Spanish and English have reversed roles in the Puerto Rican community, with Spanish, most often associated with poverty, being now linked also to middle-class status, and English, most often associated with prestige, being also linked to poverty.

Table 3.2 shows the residential pattern of Puerto Ricans and other Latinos in the five boroughs of New York in 1980 and 1990. Table 3.3 offers a summary of the percentage of change from 1980 to 1990 of Puerto Ricans and other Latino groups.

An analysis of Tables 3.2 and 3.3 reveals that the growth of the other Latino population has been most dramatic in the Bronx, a borough of traditional Puerto Rican settlement. In the Bronx, although the Puerto Rican population has also increased by 9.7%, other Latinos have grown by a dramatic 126.6%. Thus, although almost a half of Bronx residents are Latinos (44%) and although slightly over a fourth (29%) are Puerto Ricans, other Latinos, especially Dominicans, and more recently Mexicans and Central Americans, are rapidly making inroads.

Also significant is the fact that as Brooklyn, and especially Manhattan, lose Puerto Rican population, Queens and Staten Island continue to gain Puerto Ricans. This shift in Puerto Rican population suggests the attainment of more middle-class status, as the traditional *barrios* are abandoned. For example, the per capita income of Latinos in Jackson Heights and Elmhurst, the two Queens neighbourhoods where Latinos are concentrated, is $9,513, as compared to $5,943 in East Harlem, $5,457 in Williamsburgh (Brooklyn), and $4,696 in the Mott Haven section of the

Table 3.2 Puerto Ricans and other Latinos in the five boroughs: 1980 and 1990

	Bronx		*Brooklyn*		*Manhattan*		*Queens*		*Staten Island*	
	1980	1990	1980	1990	1980	1990	1980	1990	1980	1990
Total	1,168,972	1,203,789	2,230,936	2,300,664	1,428,285	1,487,536	1,183,038	1,951,598	352,121	303,081
Latino	395,138	523,111	393,103	462,411	335,247	386,630	263,548	381,120	19,353	30,239
% Latino	33.8	43.5	17.6	20.1	23.5	26.0	13.9	19.5	5.5	8.0
Puerto Ricans	318,138	349,115	275,758	274,530	166,302	154,978	80,909	100,410	11,499	17,730
% Puerto Ricans	27.2	29.05	12.4	11.9	11.6	10.4	4.3	5.1	3.3	4.7
Other Latinos	76,773	173,996	117,345	187,881	168,945	231,652	182,639	280,710	7,854	12,509
% Other Latinos	6.6	14.5	5.3	8.2	11.8	15.6	9.7	14.4	2.2	3.3

Source: Demographic Profiles. A portrait of New York City's Community Districts from the 1980 and 1990 Censuses of Population and Housing. Department of City Planning, August 1992

Table 3.3 1980–90 change of Puerto Ricans and other Latinos in New York City and the five boroughs

	% Change Latinos	*% Change Puerto Ricans*	*% Change Other Latinos*
New York City	26.8	5.2	60.2
Bronx	32.4	9.7	126.6
Brooklyn	17.6	–0.4	60.1
Manhattan	15.3	–16.8	37.1
Queens	44.6	24.1	53.7
Staten Island	56.2	54.2	59.3

Source: Demographic Profiles. A Portrait of New York City's Community Districts from the 1980 and 1990 Censuses of Population and Housing. Department of City Planning, August 1992.

Bronx, all three neighbourhoods of traditional original Puerto Rican settlement (Institute for Puerto Rican Policy, 1996).

But it is important to note again that income and language shift does not always correlate positively for Puerto Ricans and other Latinos. For example, in Mott Haven, the south Bronx neighbourhood with the highest poverty index in the city and with the lowest Latino per capita income, 27% of Latinos are monolingual Spanish speakers. Yet, in the more middle-class Jackson Heights and Elmhurst, 36% of Latinos are monolingual Spanish speakers.

This again is uncharacteristic of other US ethnolinguistic groups, although these figures mask differences between ways of language groups and ways of national groups. That is, although all Latinos have been 'racialised' by the majority, the experience of other immigrant minorities is clearly different from that of Puerto Ricans as 'caste' or 'colonised' groups.

Jackson Heights and Elmhurst have three times the number of other Latinos than Puerto Ricans. These other Latinos, although more recent and more Spanish monolingual, many times come with skills that help them achieve middle class status. They also have not suffered for long the inequities of living in a country that considers them a colonised inferior people and that subjects them to a marginal public education.

Puerto Ricans with middle-class status tend to move to more middle-class communities, sometimes white English-speaking communities, but mostly Latino middle class communities. The two Latino neighbourhoods in the Bronx with the highest per capita income among Latinos, West Farms and Soundview-Castle Hill ($9,739 and $10,121 respectively), also have the lowest percentage of Spanish monolingual speakers (19% and 16% of the Latino population respectively, with 59% of the popula-

tion in both neighbourhoods being Latino). These middle-class neighbourhoods, mostly Puerto Rican, pull toward English. But as in Jackson Heights and Elmhurst, there are also Puerto Ricans who choose to join other Latino middle-class immigrants. Those are constantly pulled toward Spanish.

The Puerto Rican community in New York thus finds itself in three different patterns of language use and proficiency and neighbourhood income:

(1) Those who live in middle-class Latino neighbourhoods with high community bilingual proficiency (that is, only one of approximately six speakers are monolingual speakers of Spanish).

In West Farms and Soundview-Castle Hill

(2) Those who live in poor Latino neighbourhoods with mid- community bilingual proficiency (that is, only one of approximately four speakers are monolingual speakers of Spanish).

Neighbourhoods are listed here beginning with those with the lowest per capita income: *In Mott Haven, Hunts Point, Morris Heights-Mt. Hope, Belmont, Crotona Park East-East Tremont, University Heights-Fordham, Williamsburgh, Highbridge-West Concourse, Lower East Side, East Harlem.*

(3) Those who live in middle-class Latino neighbourhoods with low community bilingual proficiency (that is, approximately one of two speakers are Spanish monolinguals).

Jackson Heights, Elmhurst

For Puerto Rican New Yorkers, both English language shift and Spanish language maintenance are associated with middle-class status.

Although as with other US ethnolinguistic groups, middle class status often brings Puerto Ricans into more contact with English, it can also bring them into more contact with Spanish. And although poverty is associated with many of the neighbourhoods in which Puerto Ricans live, Puerto Rican poverty, as we saw earlier, is also lived out in English.

Puerto Ricans with Spanish in the Heart and Dominicans with Spanish in the Mouth

A comparison of Puerto Ricans with Dominicans, the fastest-growing Latino New York group, allows us to analyse further the role of Puerto

Ricans as language agents in the New York scene. From 1980 to 1990 while the Puerto Rican community grew only 5.2%, the Dominican community grew by 165%. Yet, Dominicans officially account for only 19% of the city Latinos (332,713), as compared to the half of Puerto Rican ethnicity (896,763). So despite the fact that 96% of Dominicans claimed to speak Spanish at home in 1990, as compared to 87% of Puerto Ricans, there are many more Spanish-speaking Puerto Ricans in New York (780,129), than Spanish-speaking Dominicans (319,392). However, this fact, derived from the 1990 census figures, masks ability in Spanish or degree of use, directing us to recognise that the presence of Spanish in New York homes is still in the hearts of Puerto Ricans, although perhaps Spanish may be used there seldomly or haltingly.

Although census figures do not reveal information about Spanish-speaking ability, English-speaking ability is accounted for. We know that 71% of Puerto Ricans in 1990 spoke English very well (636,657), whereas only 38% of Dominicans claimed to do so (126,426). The numbers of those Spanish-speakers from both groups who do not speak English well then comes surprisingly close, with 260,106 Puerto Ricans and 206,287 Dominicans claiming not to speak English well. Yet, Spanish speaking Puerto Ricans who need to speak Spanish because of limited English proficiency are certainly not the majority of New York Latinos, especially when we take into account the entire Latino universe in New York. Although Puerto Rican New Yorkers continue to identify with the Spanish language and continue to hold on to aspects of it in a linguistic *vaivén*, other New Yorkers increasingly see them as English speaking, with Dominicans having taken their place as 'the Spanish speakers' of New York.

That Spanish is in the hearts, although not always in the mouths of Puerto Rican, also has to do with the outstanding growth of the native-born Puerto Rican population, a factor which also greatly contributes to the pull towards English language shift. In 1970 60% of Puerto Ricans in the United States had been born in Puerto Rico. That figure decreased to 42% in the 1990 census.

Spanish for New York Puerto Ricans, like the Puerto Rican flag, has taken on American ways. Commenting on the way in which he displays the Puerto Rican flag today, one of the second generation males we interviewed in Bushwick told us:

> I put my Puerto Rican flag on the rear view mirror. I never put it out the window, otherwise people say: 'Mira ese jíbaro con la bandera por la ventana.'
> ['Look at that hillbilly with the flag out the window'.]

Like the flag on the rear view mirror, the Spanish language is displayed only within American norms by second generation Puerto Ricans, with restraint and moderation, and communicating moving forward, although looking backwards. That is, like the discourse of this second generation speaker, Spanish is used within the context of English, reflecting, like the rear view mirror, an island reality that is always in the background and that is contained in the New York foreground.

Puerto Rican Identity and Language. 'Everybody I Know is like Spanglish'

The increased immigration from other Latin American countries clearly has diffused the original link that had existed between Puerto Rican identity and the Spanish language. One of the second generation men we interviewed complained about the lack of presence of Puerto Rican culture and speech in New York, as other Latinos took over the media and the schools.

> We're not exposed to Puerto Rican culture and of Puerto Rican language as we used to, even on TV. There are more transHispanic things on TV.

But in reality, the language-identity link between Puertoricanness and Spanish has been absent from the New York Puerto Rican community for a long time, as supported in studies by Attinasi (1979) and Zentella (1990c). In her recent book (1997a), Zentella explains how Puerto Rican identity was redefined in *el bloque* without a Spanish requirement in order to accommodate monolingual English youngsters. A second generation Puerto Rican we interviewed, working as a special education teacher in a school with a majority of Spanish speakers, had this to say when asked 'What makes a Puerto Rican in New York?'

> The music, the food, the way we talk, sometimes 'Mira Papi', like talking *con cariño*, sweet tone of voice. Traditions, *música típica*, you know, *lelolai, salsa, pernil, pastel, arroz con gandules.*

It is clear that the Spanish language is not listed as one of the components of Puerto Rican identity; although it is used intuitively, it is embedded in cultural expressions such as music, relationships, food, and ways of life. In the school in which this young man works, the majority of students are still of Puerto Rican descent, but Spanish is to them a second language. The Spanish speakers are now Hondurans and Mexicans. It is this young man whose words tell us a lot about how both Spanish and English and the mix between them is what defines a Puerto Rican New Yorker: 'Everybody I know *is* like Spanglish. *Un poquito español, un poquito inglés.*' ['A little bit Spanish, a little bit English.'] What makes this quote interesting is that this young man does not refer to the linguistic *vaivén* as something spoken, but as something lived, a Puerto Rican identity itself.

Asked if she thought that it was important to teach Spanish to her granddaughter who accompanied her, a 74-year-old woman who had lived in Bushwick since 1950 told us:

> A los muchachos les enseñamos nuestra cultura, nuestra bandera y Dios. Los llevamos a la Parada para que se sientan puertorriqueños. Y les hablamos de Dios porque Dios no tiene raza.
> [To the children we teach our culture, our flag and God. We take them to the Parade so that they feel Puerto Rican. And we talk to them about God because God doesn't have any race.]

This grandmother cannot consciously distinguish between the Spanish that she speaks, her flag, and God. But although she consciously takes her granddaughter to the Pentecostal church where she learns about God, and takes her to the Puerto Rican parade, she cannot externalise the language she speaks as an object that could be taught, she merely speaks it, it is part of her, her culture, and her beliefs, and that is the way she transmits it to her granddaughter, who, of course, speaks English to her.

This idea that Spanish is part of the Puerto Rican being, although it's not always in the mouth, is clearly expressed by the young Bushwick male who says:

> Spanish is always part of us. It's innate. When you're in New York, you don't even think Spanish. When you get off the plane, you don't speak English.

Some proficiency in Spanish is necessary for New York Puerto Ricans to continue the link to their island identity. One of the young males we interviewed put it this way:

> In Puerto Rico everybody is Puertorican. There's more warmth. El calor. [The heat.] I can communicate better with my own. There I speak Spanish to older family members, but I speak English to the younger ones because most have learned it some in school.

The above quote communicates the changing language situation in Puerto Rico, for although Puerto Rico is fiercely Spanish speaking, more and more of the younger generation are learning English at school. So although in the past, the emotional and real link to the island had to be done in Spanish, it is

becoming possible to a certain extent to speak English to island Puerto Ricans and to continue being 'Spanglish' even in the island.

This change in language situation in the island has major connotations for New York Puerto Ricans, for those who still come have much more familiarity with the English language than those who came before, and certainly more than other Latin American immigrant groups.

Spanish literacy and New York Puerto Ricans

The colonial status of Puerto Rico has greatly affected Puerto Ricans' ability to maintain Spanish or reverse their language shift. The past Puerto Rican migration to New York had low literacy rates in Spanish, a product of a colonised school system with a misguided policy of English language education for people who spoke Spanish only. This aging population remains trapped in poverty, unable to benefit from many adult English as a Second Language programmes or to connect with the Spanish language print that is now evident in billboards, and that appears as translations to the many governmental forms in an increasingly bureaucratic world.

Again, the degree of literacy in Spanish of the New York Puerto Rican population is also responsible for its differing linguistic *vaivén*. Spanish, in those homes, has always been the language of the heart and the home, whereas English (in the long-gone Puerto Rico they remember) was supposed to be the language of school and certainly of the literacy of the powerful United States (Walsh, 1991).

Although maintenance bilingual education in New York was the struggle of second generation Puerto Rican young adults in the early 70s, two factors weakened the effort:

(1) *'La lucha continúa'* ['The struggle continues'] most often referred to sociopolitical rights, rather than to language rights.
(2) They themselves many times lacked Spanish literacy, a product of going to school in English only and having lived in homes where Spanish was spoken, but neither read nor written.

Today, the use of Spanish print in Puerto Rican homes is scarce. The readership of *El Diario La Prensa* has shifted from being mostly Puerto Rican to mostly Dominican. Zentella (1997a: 214) confirms the predominance of English print in the homes of the former residents of *el bloque*.

Spanish in Schools for Puerto Ricans: From Schools for Shift and Maintenance to Schools to Reverse Language Shift

Nowhere is the shift of Puerto Ricans as Spanish speakers to Puerto

Ricans as English speakers with *vaivén* more evident than in the New York City public schools. In 1992–93, 355,889 Latino students were enrolled in New York City public schools, accounting for 36% of the total public school enrolment. Of these, 101,383 (28%) were identified as English language learners (Latino Commission on Educational Reform 1994).

As with the census, no quantitative data is available for the number who are Spanish speakers. But even more disturbing is the fact that the New York City Board of Education does not keep separate figures on Puerto Ricans, making it difficult to substantiate with quantitative data the change that has taken place.

Although bilingual education came into existence for Puerto Ricans as a result of the Aspira Consent Decree, few Puerto Rican children remain today in the transitional bilingual education classrooms, agents of language shift, where Spanish monolingual students acquire English. Transitional bilingual education classrooms today hold mostly Dominican and Mexican students.

In the 1970s maintenance bilingual-bicultural education programmes where Puerto Rican children were taught in both English and Spanish and where Puerto Rican culture and history were also taught were developed throughout the city. These programmes, staffed mostly by Puerto Rican teachers, and supported by the post-Civil Rights climate of the nation at large, had biculturism and bilingualism as goals. District 4 in East Harlem, for example, supported and developed a strong maintenance bilingual-bicultural education model. But as the political climate changed, as the Puerto Rican population became more dispersed, and more English speaking, and as other Latino groups, immigrants with a different sociohistorical connection to the United States, started to come into the city, maintenance bilingual education programmes started to take a turn.

Today, maintenance bilingual-bicultural education programmes have been mostly substituted by Dual Language Programmes where students who are fluent in English are taught with Spanish speakers who are not. The classic dual language model calls for half the students to be English-speaking and half not, with its primary goal being the full English language acquisition of those who have limited English proficiency, as well as their cultural assimilation. A secondary goal is to develop the second language of the English speakers. But a closer look inside those classrooms reveals a lot about the language shift that has taken place among Puerto Ricans in New York. Increasingly, the students who make up the English-speaking and non-Spanish-speaking population of the Dual Language Programmes are second and third generation Puerto Ricans, now lacking full fluency in Spanish. So, although on paper dual language programmes are integrated,

they mostly remain ethnically segregated, with Latino students of differing language ability making up the student body. For the most part, Puerto Ricans make up the English-ability half, and Dominicans, Mexicans, and Central and South Americans make up the other Spanish-ability half. Dual language programmes for New York Puerto Ricans are clearly agents of reversing language shift.

The shift in the goals of bilingual education in New York City, however, are indicative not only of a changing political climate, but also of the changing population. Today, for the first time, there is a lack of cultural congruence between the bilingual teachers, now mostly Puerto Ricans, and the students. In the 1970s and early 1980s bilingual teachers were recruited from Puerto Rico and from the *barrios*, where programmes to educate para-professionals from the community cropped up.

But as the student-body in those programmes became less and less Puerto Rican, the viability of developing biculturism became more difficult, on the one hand because of the cultural diversity of the Latino students themselves, on the other because although these teachers knew a lot about Puerto Rican culture and history, they seldom were knowledgeable of the Latin American world at large, having been mostly products of a US education. The parents have also changed, with immigrant Spanish-speaking parents who increasingly travel back and forth and who have not yet developed a sense of being an ethnolinguistic US group, showing less commitment to bilingual education than Puerto Ricans. In the 1990s, the goals of bilingual education programmes in New York have increasingly narrowed to include only English language acquisition, with English as a Second Language programmes increasingly taking over Bilingual Education programmes.

Only dual language programmes, possible mechanisms of reversing language shift for Puerto Ricans, give a glimmer of hope. But in the difficult sociopolitical climate that ushers in the new millennium, even dual language programmes are being questioned, and the enthusiasm of the Puerto Rican community for them is at best mild.

New York Puerto Rican Institutional Changes

The Puerto Rican institutions that were created as a result of the Civil Rights struggles of the 1960s and 1970s have been under political, social and economic pressures that have resulted in their change or disappearance.

Academic departments of Puerto Rican studies have been closed or are experiencing serious cutbacks. For example, in the early 1990s, City College

of New York changed the name of the Puerto Rican Studies Department to that of Latin American and Caribbean Studies. But this did not save it from losing departmental status and becoming just an academic programme.

Budgetary constraints have also been experienced in the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund and the Institute for Puerto Rican Policy. This has led these two organisations to merge in order to survive. As we said earlier, few maintenance bilingual education programmes, responding to community life, exist. A noted exception is the educational programmes in El Puente, a community-based group in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. But even its alternative High School for Social Justice has shifted from having a mostly Puerto Rican population to one that is mostly Dominican.

The move to new standards in education can be particularly destructive of Spanish language efforts supported by school and society. As of this year, all high school graduates will have to pass an English Language Regents Exam, effectively eliminating the possibility that anyone without near-native English skills will be able to have a high school diploma. This, coupled with the rippling and continuing effects of Proposition 227 in California, has seriously eliminated the possibility of developmental maintenance bilingual education programmes, where Latino students could develop their Spanish language skills.

Nowhere has this shift been more evident than in the attacks experienced by the bilingual community college of City University of New York's Hostos Community College. Increasingly, the population there has also shifted from a Puerto Rican one to a mostly Dominican one. But increasingly, academic courses are taught in English only, closing the possibility of an Associate's degree to those who do not have full English proficiency.

As Spanish recedes from academic settings organised and run by the majority, it has taken refuge in the Pentecostal churches that have continued to crop up in Latino communities. Urciuoli points out:

> The Spanish-speaking Pentecostal churches stand out as a strikingly grass-roots phenomenon, a place in which Spanish is performed with authority, ceding no ground to English or Americans. (Urciuoli, 1997: 95)

The Pentecostal church in which we conducted our Bushwick interviews certainly gave us a glimmer of that reality, with Spanish being the unifying factor among the old and the young, the first and second / third generations. And although English was heard often in informal association, Spanish was the language not only of the heart and interior prayer, but also of proclamations of faith, of the reading of the Bible, and of religious

instruction. In fact, the children, most in monolingual English classrooms, had learned to read and write Spanish during Bible study.

Conclusion: Shifting the Focus of Sociology of Language. From Language Shift/Language Maintenance to Reversing Language Shift

In 1991 Fishman's *Reversing Language Shift* turned the focus of language shift/language maintenance studies from mere descriptions of sociolinguistic situations to steps that can be taken by ethnolinguistic communities to do something about their weak sociolinguistic status. RLS, Fishman states, 'is an attempt . . . to adopt policies and to engage in efforts calculated to reverse the cumulative processes of attrition that would otherwise lead to the contextually weak language-in-culture becoming even weaker' (p. 81). Then, speaking of the New York Puerto Rican community, Fishman had warned that despite the large number of recently arrived monolingual Spanish speakers, one was left with 'the impression of a major language shift tidal wave underway under the surface' (p. 192).

Referring to Fishman's Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale, Zentella 1997a placed the New York Puerto Rican community of the early 1980s between Stages 6 (Intergenerational informal oralcy and its demographic concentration and institutional reinforcement) and Stage 5 (Spanish literacy in home, community, and schools, especially in own instructional arrangements). But the previous analysis leads us to believe that in the last decade, the New York Puerto Rican community not only may have abandoned efforts of Spanish language maintenance but may have slipped from being between Stages 6 and 5 to being between Stages 7 and 6, having given up on almost all efforts of Spanish literacy and moving toward Stage 7 where Spanish is used for cultural interaction with the community based older generation.

It is clear that the New York Puerto Rican community has experienced great physical and demographic dislocation, severe social dislocation, and harsh cultural dislocation, all identified by Fishman (1991: 57–65) as leading to language shift. The New York Puerto Rican community has lost its demographic concentration, weakening its language network. It has had no increase in the use of Spanish in any domain, not in the family, nor work, nor education, nor religion, nor entertainment and mass media, nor in any political party or governmental function. There has been little effort to foster intergenerational Spanish language maintenance, although there has been limited interest in dual language programmes where New York

Puerto Rican children have the potential to acquire at least oralcy in Spanish.

Yet, it is unlikely that the New York Puerto Rican community will completely face language death or slip toward Stage 8 where Spanish would be spoken only by socially isolated old folks. But the mechanism by which this is so has little to do with organised efforts of a US ethnolinguistic group moving towards their ancestral language, and more to do with a colonised situation that keeps a linguistic *vaivén* going. This linguistic *vaivén* not only enables speakers to connect with their two sociopolitical realities, but is spurred by the discrimination and inferior education to which colonised minorities are subjected. New York Puerto Ricans continue to use Spanish signs when speaking among themselves and other Spanish speakers, even while speaking English. Urciuoli, defending the idea that the language of racialised bilinguals does not equal culture expressed a similar idea:

> When bilingual siblings gossip or tease in English and Spanish, the pragmatics of English is much more like the pragmatics of Spanish than it is like the pragmatics of English spoken with an Anglo doctor. (Urciuoli, 1997: 6).

It is clear that the English of New York Puerto Ricans has been infused with the colonised meanings of Puerto Rican Spanish and the meanings of the Spanish of other New York Latinos. The New York Puerto Rican community is often comfortable with its linguistic *vaivén*, showing bilingual ability over other monolingual Spanish speakers, but also over Anglo monolinguals. Thus, its comfort makes prospects of reversing language shift uninteresting, since there's little attachment to Spanish as a symbol of identity or as an instrument of greater social benefit. Yet, when the New York Puerto Rican community interacts in public forums, especially in public schools and in written form, English monolinguals and Spanish monolinguals evaluate the *vaivén* negatively, promoting linguistic insecurity. This clash moves the New York Puerto Rican community along the language shift axis, while the stigmatisation of the majority prevents it from completely undergoing shift. It is this distinct sociolinguistic pattern, reserved for colonised groups, that distinguishes the models of language shift/maintenance/language shift reversal for New York Puerto Ricans, who, like the steps of the cha-cha-chá, continue to mark their own linguistic space, both mainland and island, both Latino and Anglo, and reflecting, in language use, the invented and unique status of the political *commonwealth*.

Note

* The term New York Puerto Ricans is used throughout this paper to avoid the negative connotations that have been associated with the term Nuyoricans. The authors wish especially to thank Juan Rodriguez from Long Island University who introduced us to the Bushwick Puerto Rican community. We're also grateful to Ana Celia Zentella for her reading of a previous version of this paper. Special thanks go to Nélida Pérez and Jorge Matos of the Library of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies for their helpful suggestions.

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