

THE COMPLEXITIES OF BILINGUALISM

Special Focus: Puerto Rico

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Introduction: Why be bilingual?



Defining bilingualism


“native like control of two languages”
(Leonard Bloomfield 1935: 55-56)

“the practice of alternatively using two languages” (Uriel Weinreich 1953: 3)



“the point where the speaker of one language can produce complete meaningful utterances in the other language (Einar Haugen 1969: 6-7)

“possession of at least one of the four language skills, even to a minimal degree” (John Macnamara 1969:82)



[when a child is] “able to understand and make himself understood within his limited linguistic and social environment (that is, as is consistent with his age and the situation in which he is expressing himself)”
(Wilga Rivers 1969: 35-36)


“the alternate use of two or more languages by the same individual” ”
(William Mackey 1970:555)

“complete mastery of two different languages without interference between the two linguistic processes”
(J. P. Oestricher 1974:9)

“able to act in both language groups without any disturbing deviance being noticed” (Bertil Malmberg 1977: 133-136)

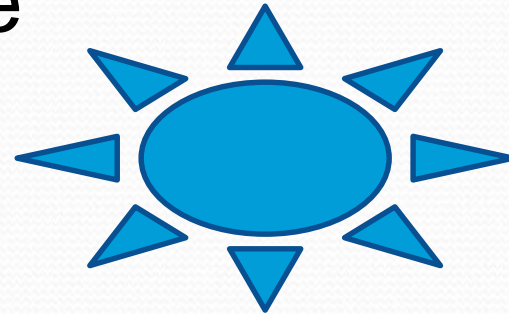
“A bilingual speaker is someone who is able to function in two (or more) languages, either in monolingual or bilingual communities, in accordance with the sociocultural demands made





of an individual's communicative and cognitive competence by these communities or by the individual herself, at the same level as native speakers, and who is able positively to identify with both (or all) language groups (and cultures), or parts of them." (Tove Skutnabb-Kangas 1981: 90)

Commonalities: a speaker with varying degrees of mastery of more than one language code



Divergences: the specification of the relative proficiency in each language and each skill

Bilingualism is

- fluid
- dynamic
- constantly changing.

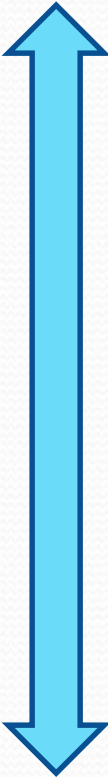


Speakers go through stages in their acquisition of additional languages.

Depending on exposure, they may see their proficiency in each language ebb and flow.

Types of bilinguals

- Incipient bilingual (Diebold 1964)
- Receptive bilingual (Hockett 1958)
- Functional bilingual (Baetens Beardsmore 1982)
- Equilingual or balanced bilingual (Baetens Beardsmore 1982)
- Ambilingual or perfect bilingual (Halliday, et. Al. 1970)



Growing up and living multilingually




For much of the world, bilingualism is the norm. Using two, three, or more languages routinely is just the way one carries out one's daily activities.

- ❖ Papua New Guinea (820 lgs.)
- ❖ Nigeria (510)
- ❖ India (415)
- ❖ Brazil (188)
- ❖ Russia (105)
- ❖ Colombia (80)

Child raised in:

- India
- Ghana





In highly multilingual societies, there is frequently little concern with speaking each language like a native.

Being an incipient or receptive bilingual may be enough in a given situation.

The important thing is to be able to carry out the functions associated with a given language.

Mixed varieties

Mixed varieties may commonly be utilized:

- Nigerian Pidgin English
- Palenquero in Nicaragua
- Media Lengua in Ecuador
- Chabacano in the Philippines
- Tok Pisin in Papua New Guinea
- St. Lucian French Creole
- Yinglish in New York Metro area

Hawaiian
Pidgin
English



Palenquero-speaking girls at school in Nicaragua



Example of Aruba

Papiamentu (a creole created from the merger of Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, and some African and Amerindian elements) is the national language utilized in everyday communication, the media, early education, religion, and now even the Aruban Parliament.



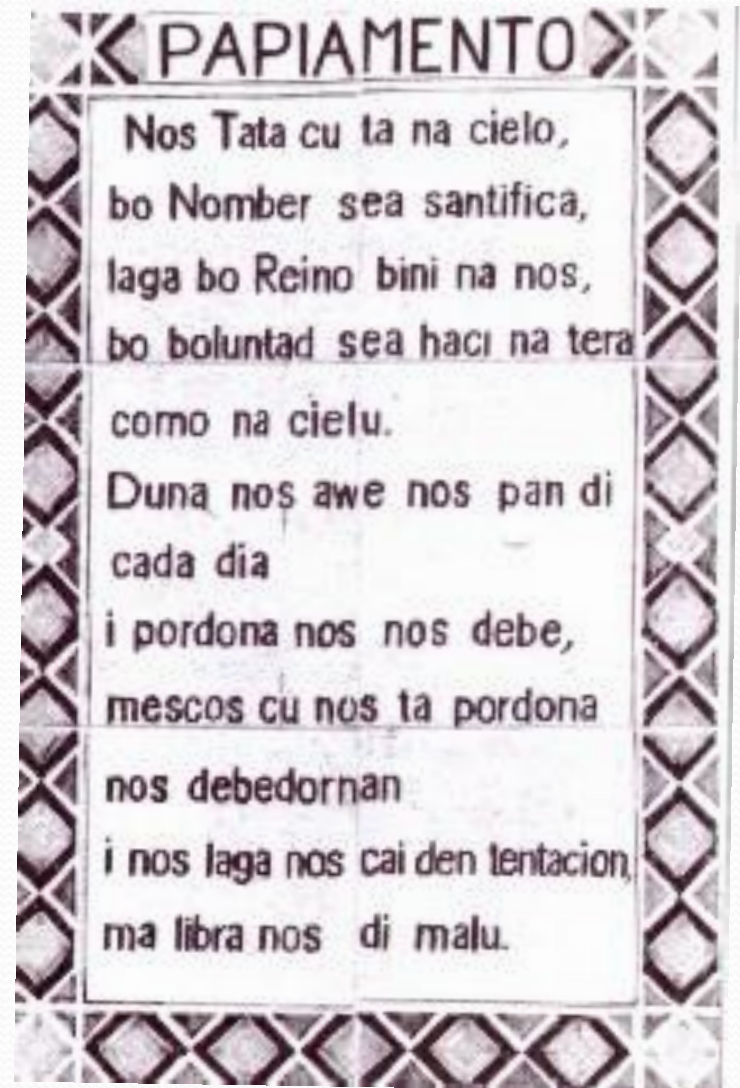



Dutch is the language of higher education.

English is the language of tourism and technology.

Spanish is the language of regional communication.

The Arubans are very proud of the fact that they can utilize three European languages with the outside world and still maintain a vernacular that is their own private treasure.

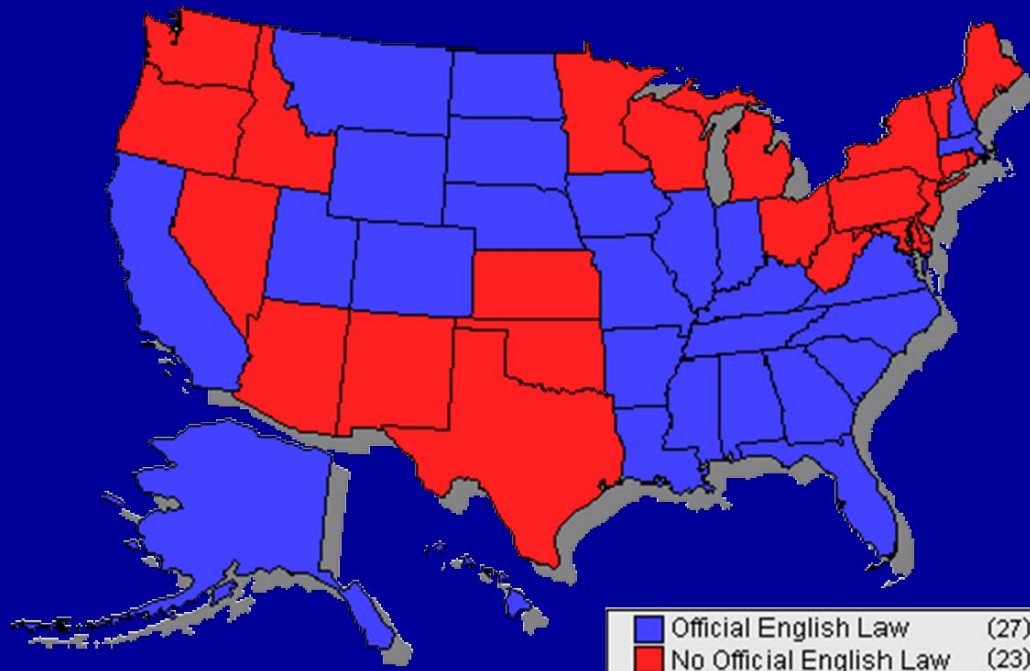





Only in societies made up of large geographic areas with relatively little linguistic variation do people consider using more than one language a problem or even an impossibility. Such societies may even go to the trouble of legislating against the use of other languages in public domains.

English-only in the U.S.

English as
an official language?





It should be noted that despite considerable effort by groups like U.S. English and English First, no federal English-only legislation or constitutional amendment has been approved.


Negative attitudes towards minorities and immigrants in U.S.

Historically, whenever a nation's economic or political situation is weak, immigrants or marginalized indigenous groups are seen as a threat, and their languages and cultures are targeted for elimination.



Individual vs. societal bilingualism

Individual bilingualism refers to the personal speech repertoire of a speaker (e.g. how many codes are used and for what purposes and with what interlocutors). An individual can be multilingual within a monolingual society and exercise his or her abilities outside of the nation or in interactions with foreigners or with foreign texts.



Societal bilingualism involves the requirement of the use of certain languages or the protection of the rights of minority languages in certain settings by official bodies like governments or school systems.

Bilingualism in Canada

In Canada, federal laws (Constitution Act of 1867, Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms of 1982, and Official Languages Act of 1988) protect minority languages, and care is taken to comply with laws regulating the size of letters in bilingual signage and product labels and the listing of one language first in advertisements.

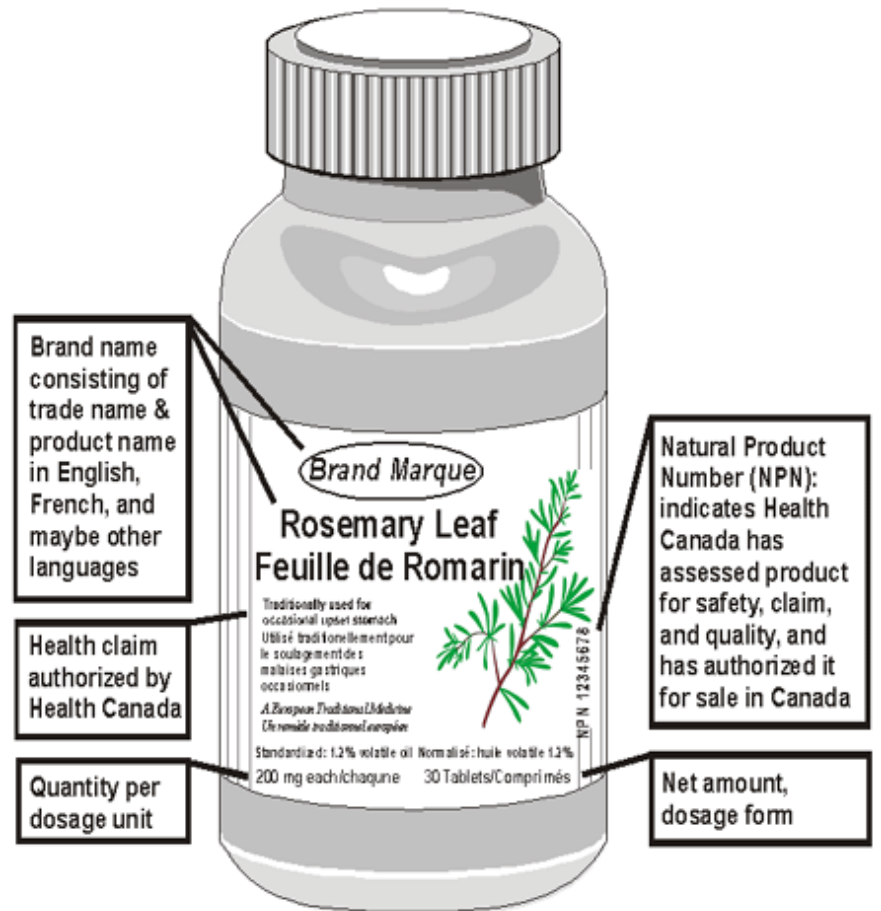
Bilingual street signs in Ottawa, Canada



Highway signs in Canada



Bilingual product labels in Canada





IMPORTED / IMPORTEE

QUEBEC: LE CONSOMMEUR A REVENIR
NETIUM FOR REFUND WHERE APPLICABLE /
CONSOMMEUR LA QUÉBÉC A LE REVENIR

AUSTRALIA: IMPORTED BY J. BOAG & SON,
21 SHIELDS STREET, LAUNCESTON, TASMANIA 7250

5c REFUND AT COLLECTION
DEBITS WHEN SOLD IN SA

APPROX 1.3 STANDARD DRINKS


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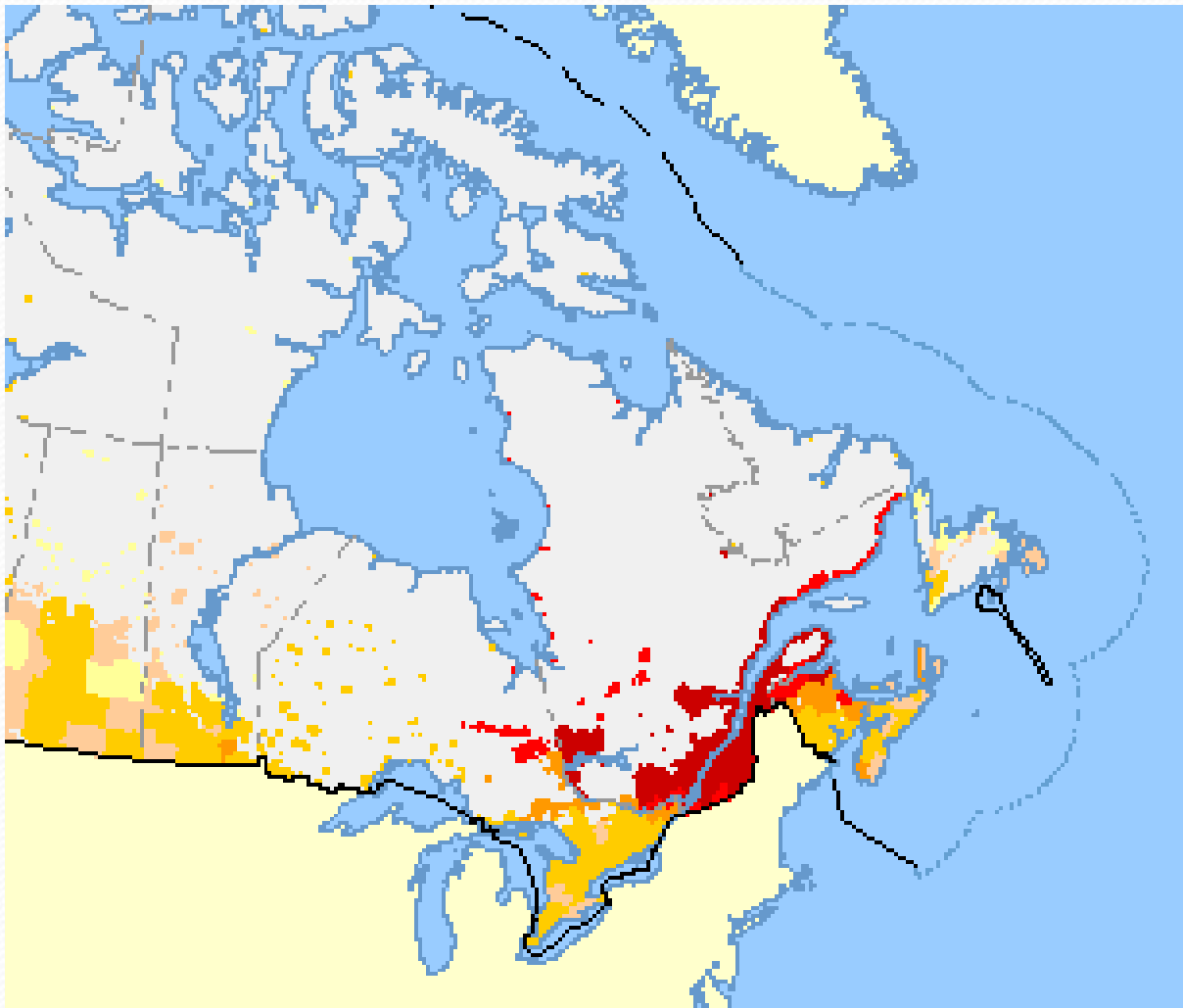
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+259382



However, the reality is that most Canadians who describe themselves as bilingual live in Quebec or in a narrow strip extending eastward from Quebec to New Brunswick and westward into Ottawa and Ontario. Only about 10% of non-Quebeckers consider themselves to be bilingual.

French Canada



**Percentage
that claim to
speak
French well**




20-59.9%



60-89.9%



90-100%



Societal bilingualism that is **territorially-based** means that the stipulations address only residents of specific locales (e.g. regions, provinces, townships, etc.) and do not apply to all citizens of the nation (e.g. Switzerland, Belgium).


In Switzerland, the languages one learns (French, German, Italian, or Romansch) depend greatly on the canton in which one lives. The educational system is decentralized and controlled by the cantons.



Switzerland



- German-speaking (63.7%);
- French-speaking (20.4%);
- Italian-speaking (6.5%);
- Rumantsch-speaking (0.5%)



Usually in large, primarily monolingual societies, it is the minority group that becomes bilingual, not the majority group, for clear reasons of politico-economic power.

When minority groups achieve power, it tends to be limited to certain regions or local bodies.

For example, in the former USSR, Russian-speaking minority speakers in the Asian republics of Kirgizstan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan rarely learned Kirgiz, Kazakh, or Uzbek, while the local majority speakers were required to learn Russian.



Commonwealth of Independent States - Central Asian States



Boundary representation is not necessarily authoritative.
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Puerto Rico

In Puerto Rico, despite the long-time governmental designation of Spanish and English as co-official languages, bilingualism is a concept fraught with conflict.



English in PR is viewed as:

- symbol of schizophrenic relationship with US
- of great utility in modern world
- appropriate as part of individual bilingualism
- potential usurper of Spanish and Puerto Rican culture at the societal level.

Bilingualism in action (data packet)

- linguistic relativity
- language policies in PR
- code switching and borrowing
- Jibaro English letter
- Anglicisms in Spanish of Madrid, Mexico City, and San Juan, PR
- street signs in various societies
- creative aspects of mixing languages (bilingual poetry)

Linguistic relativity

In 1920's, Edward Sapir and his student Benjamin Lee Whorf began putting forward ideas about the relationship between language and culture (or thought) based upon their anthropological observations among Native American groups.





Amerindian languages

- systematically different from European languages
- had unique way of encoding meaning and of communicating worldview
- distinctions not made in European languages did not translate easily

In the Native American language Nuuchahnulth (Nootka), spoken in British Columbia, and northern Washington State, the English sentence: *He invites people to a feast.* would be rendered as seen in the diagram that follows:



THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE



HE



INVITES



PEOPLE



TO



A FEAST

THE NOOTKA LANGUAGE



BOIL

TL'IMSH



RESULT

ED

YA



EAT

'IS



AGENCY

ERS

ITA



GO-FOR

'ITL



HE DOES

MA

IN PHONETIC WRITING :

ʔimšya-'isita-'iʔma

Sapir and Whorf noted that languages seemed to predispose their speakers to think about the world in certain ways and to behave accordingly. This can readily be seen in the way different cultures deal with colors.

English vs. Tiv (Nigeria)


English	Tiv
green	ii (high value)
blue	
gray	
brown	pupu (low value)
red	
yellow	
	nyian

High value=light colored; low value=dark colored.



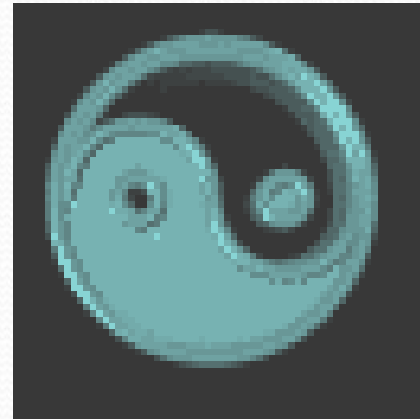
Sapir (1929) wrote:

...the 'real world' is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group...We see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation.



The **strong or deterministic view** of Sapir and Whorf's thinking has come to be known as the **Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis**. Today most linguists would advocate a more moderate view that sees **language as filtering and influencing our view of the world**.

In reality, a **dialectical relationship** exists between language and culture (or thought) in which they contribute reciprocally to one another.



Vocabulary for holes in Pintupi language of Australia (see data packet)

yarla--a hole in an object

pirti--a hole in the ground

pirnki--a hole formed by a rock shelf

kartalpa--a small hole in the ground

yulpilpa--a shallow hole in which ants live

mutara--a special hole in a spear

nyarrkalpa--a burrow for small animals

pulpa--a rabbit burrow

makarnpa--a goanna burrow

katarta--the hole left by a goanna when it has broken the surface after hibernation

[David Crystal. 1987. *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language*. Cambridge University Press, p. 15.)

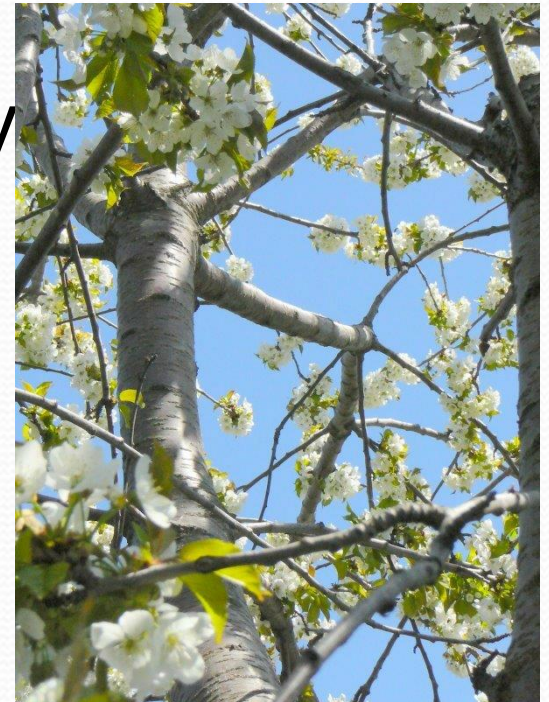


Vocabulary for aesthetics in Japanese

wabi--a flawed detail that creates an elegant whole

sabi--beautiful patina acquired through years

aware--feelings engendered by ephemeral beauty



shibui--beauty that only time can
reveal--reflects experience, memories,
personality

yugen--awareness of the unutterable
depth and profundity of the universe
that evokes deep and mysterious feelings

yoin--a moving experience that causes
profound emotion and nostalgia as one
re-experiences it mentally.

[Howard Rheingold. 1988. *They Have a Word for It*. Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, pp. 72-79, 111-112.]



Each language:

- represents concerns or ideologies of culture it encodes
- serves as repository of world-view of its speakers
- contains and expresses indigenous belief systems
- new belief systems are conceived of in relation to existing systems

While it is theoretically possible for any language to express any idea, it may take considerable circumlocution and paraphrasing in order to convey the nuanced meaning and connotations of a particular term in a given language.

Primos hermanos (Sp.) = when one of the parents or both of the parents of two individuals are brothers or sisters. (This was fairly common in rural PR until recently.) English does not have a term for this type of cousin.

Many times, language groups don't even try and simply borrow the term wholesale from the host language (cf. in English the following foreign terms which encapsulate complex cultural meanings: *mensch* (Yiddish), *weltanschauung* (German), *machismo* (Spanish), *taboo* (Tongan), or *joie de vivre* (French)).

For this reason, people often fight to retain their languages. Their languages are their:

- cultural property
- identity
- ancestral heritage
- special contribution to the fund of human knowledge and invention.



When languages die (as they are doing at an alarming rate nowadays), those unique perspectives are lost.



This is of considerable concern to Puerto Ricans as they face the onslaught of English in every aspect of their daily lives.

PR language policies (1898-1992)

1898--Puerto Rico ceded to U.S. under Treaty of Paris

1898-1900--military government and English as medium of instruction at all levels

1900--Foraker Act installs civil administration with governor and commissioner of education appointed by U.S.

(see data packet)

1900-1903--Spanish as medium of instruction at elementary and intermediate levels; English as subject --inverse at high school level.

1902--Official Languages Act declares Spanish and English as co official languages of Puerto Rico

1903-1917--English as medium of instruction at all levels with Spanish as subject

1917--Jones Act declares Puerto Ricans to be U.S. citizens (although unable to vote for own governor or for U.S. president)

1917-1934--Spanish as medium of instruction in grades 1-8; English as medium of instruction in grades 9-12.

1934-1942--Spanish as medium of instruction in grades 1-2 with English as subject in grades 3-8, Spanish and English with increasing emphasis on English in high school, English as medium of instruction with Spanish as subject.

1945-46--bills proposing Spanish as sole medium of instruction passed by Puerto Rican legislature but vetoed by President Truman.

1947--Puerto Ricans given right to elect own governor

1948--Luis Muñoz Marín elected as governor and appoints Villaronga as Commissioner of **Education**

1949-pres.--Spanish as medium of instruction at all levels with English as mandatory subject

1991--Official Languages Act revoked and Spanish declared sole official language of Puerto Rico

1992--Official Languages Act reinstated-- Spanish and English returned as co-official languages of Puerto Rico




Letter of a jíbaro



Because of the highly political nature of the debate over bilingualism in Puerto Rico, in 2001, Ernesto Ruiz Ortiz wrote a comical book titled: *Oh, blessed* (a literal translation of *Ay, bendito*, a typical Puerto Rican exclamation of pity). The subtitle is: *Carta in jíbaro English*.

The *jíbaro* is the hard-working and long-suffering archetypical peasant, who is seen as more “legitimately” Puerto Rican due to rural isolation. Since the rural areas were (and still are) the zones with the least amount of English penetration, the *jíbaro* is also associated with limited English skills





The letter in your data packet is written in an English which is a literal translation from Spanish, complete with idiomatic expressions and proverbs which do not fare well in the “translinguistic” crossing.

While the letter is exaggerated for comic effect, many of its structures are seen daily by English teachers in PR.



Those of you who know Spanish can check Sunday Fountains' English against the underlying Spanish which I've recreated via back-translation.

It should be noted that such language transfers occur whenever speakers move between two languages.

Mixing language elements

Bilinguals often mix elements of one language into another, creating new and innovative forms. Puerto Ricans are known among Hispanics for their tendency to incorporate English into their Spanish.



Ana Celia Zentella, Univ. of California, San Diego

Mixing languages is often done to express more fully a bilingual identity. In the following video clip, Dr. Zentella explains this phenomenon.

[Play movie clip](#)

Common PR loanwords borrowed from English



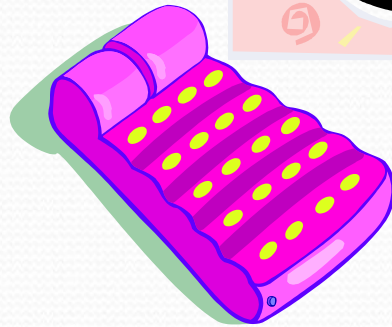
- *el closet*


- *la dona*



- *el matre*

- *el suéter*



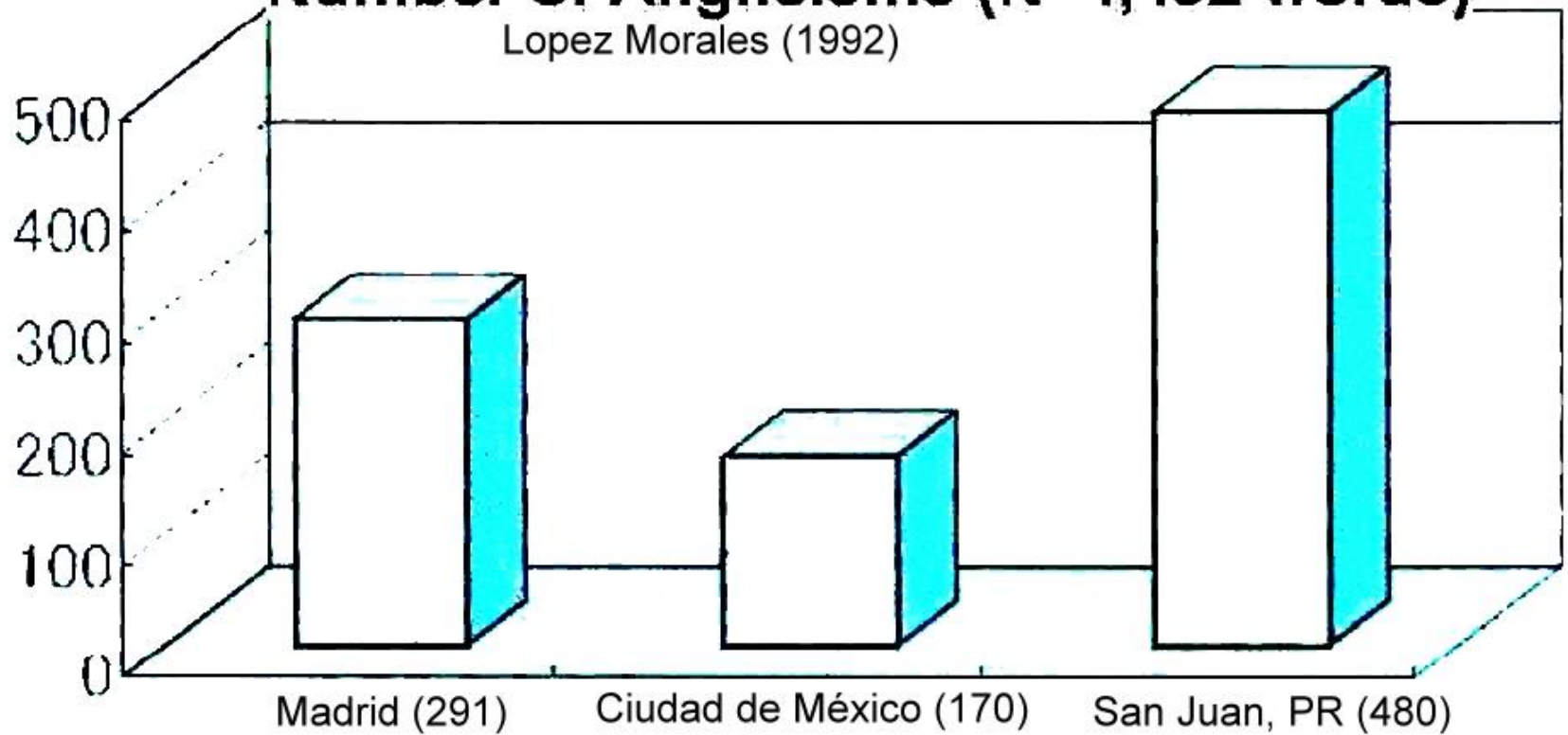


However, the reality is that this is a global trend and seen in virtually all Spanish-speaking countries to some extent.

Linguist Humberto López Morales carried out a comparative study of the use of Anglicisms in Madrid, Mexico City, and San Juan, PR. (see your data packet).

Number of Anglicisms (N=4,452 words)

Lopez Morales (1992)



Code switching

When larger elements of two languages (unintegrated chunks like phrases or entire sentences) alternate in the same stretch of discourse, we call this code switching. It is very common among speakers that are socially mobile and in contact with other language users either directly or through media.

Code switching is a common part of being bilingual, but even monolinguals are code switching when they alternate between casual and formal styles or when they integrate elements of other dialects into their speech.



Sample of PR code switching

SI TU ERES PUERTORRIQUEÑO,
your father's a Puerto Rican, you
should at least DE VEZ EN CUANDO,
you know, HABLAR ESPAÑOL.



See data packet for
more examples.

Bilingual signs around the world



Barcelona, Spain



Geneva, Switzerland



Vancouver, Canada



Rio Piedras, PR

Rio Piedras, PR



Japlish or Engrish

The Japanese are very enamored of English loanwords (as a sign of modernity) and love to incorporate them into every aspect of commercial enterprise. However, often the forms that are utilized on t-shirts, product labels, and public signs show clear misunderstanding of the English structures.

Examples of product labels



English on buildings



Food labels



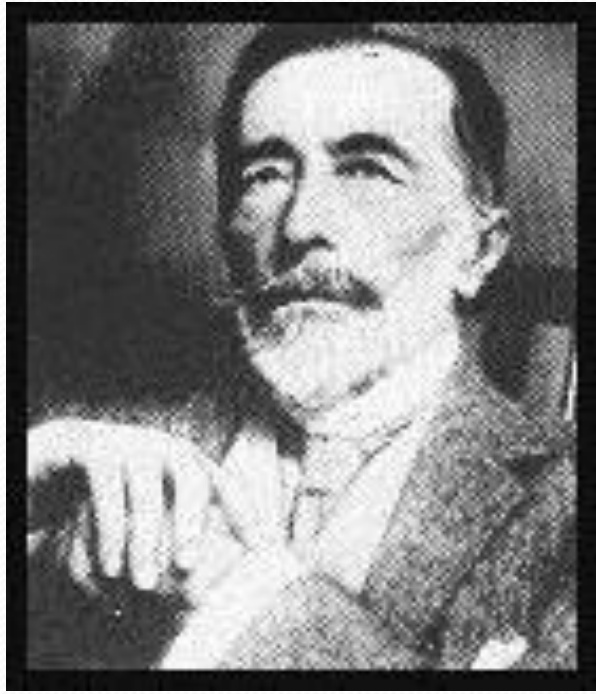
English for naming Japanese products

Try matching the product names in the left-hand column with the goods they represent in the right-hand column.

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Clean Life, Please | A. soft drink |
| 2. I've | B. chocolate candy |
| 3. Love-love | C. coffee creamer |
| 4. Volume Up Water | D. cigarettes |
| 5. Hope | E. cleaning gloves |
| 6. Mouth Jazz | F. electric razor |
| 7. Pocari Sweat | G. condoms |
| 8. Creap | H. mouthwash |
| 9. Meltykiss | I. hairspray |
| 10. Super Winky | J. shampoo |

Bilingual literary output

Being bilingual also affords an additional creative outlet: bilingual writing. Bilinguals often choose one of their languages to write in, depending on whether they are more interested in reaching a large audience or in enhancing their language group's power base. They may also choose to write bilingually.



Joseph Conrad

Conrad wrote in English which was his fourth language after Polish, French, and Russian. His prose is marked by certain Polish and French phrasing, and he hated to read his work aloud in public due to his strong Polish accent..

Code switched prose and poetry

Many U.S. Latino poets and writers have opted to utilize both Spanish and English in their literary products. Good examples are: Pedro Pietri, Tato Laviera, Sandra Esteves, Luz Maria Umpierre, Esmeralda Santiago, Ana Castillo, Jack Agueros, Julia Alvarez, Nicolasa Mohr, etc.

Excerpt from: Velluda: Alliterated y eslembao
by Tato Laviera

*canela browned in deep tan caribbean
sweet lips almost sabroso tasted by
a cariñoso sentiment, y buena que estás
en gusto affection that cries
out loud: qué chévere tú eres,
como canela brown warrior woman
diplomática
with her terms.*



giannina braschi

PELOS EN LA LENGUA

EL BILINGÜISMO es una estética bound to double business. O, tis most sweet when in one line two crafts directly meet. To be and not to be. Habla con la boca llena and from both sides of its mouth. Está con Dios y con el diablo. Con el punto y con la coma. Es un purgatorio, un signo gramatical intermedio, entre heaven and earth, un semicolon entre la independendencia y la estadidad, un estado libre asociado, un mamarracho multicultural. No tiene cláusulas ni subterfugios, no anda con gríngolas ni con muletas, no es artrítico, no se queja — aúlla como un perro al infinito y pide maná del cielo que caiga como lluvia — no se ahoga en un vaso de agua, no deja que le doren la píldora — no anda con yeso, saltando como un güimo con muletas de aquí pá allá — no es el canario que se balancea en el columpio dentro de la jaula comiendo los pistachos — se ha ido y se sigue yendo de todas las jaulas como Pedro por su Casa y no ha vuelto a mirar hacia atrás. No tiene 10 mandamientos porque no tiene pelos en la lengua, pero tiene huevos — yo los he venido poniendo desde toda mi obra que es una sola — y la llamo el manifiesto de los huevos poéticos — se hace mostrando los huevos, metiendo la pata, pisseedo aquí y pisseedo allá. Nace del fuego popular, del pan, de la tierra, y de la libertad. Es un perro realengo atravesando un puente entre el norte y el sur, entre el siglo XX y el siglo XXI, entre Segismundo y Hamlet, entre Neruda y Whitman, entre Dickinson y Sor Juana, entre Darío y Stein, entre Sarmiento y Melville — entre los dos yo's en choque está mi *Yo-Yo Boing!*

Conclusion

Bilingualism is indeed a complex phenomenon, and we have only scratched the surface of the topic. Given that the great majority of people in the world know and use more than one language, I encourage you all to read further in this area. I recommend the following introductory texts:

Grosjean, Francois. (1982). *Life with two languages: An introduction to bilingualism*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

Skutnabb-Kangas, Tove. (1981). *Bilingualism or not: The education of minorities*. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters Ltd.

Zentella, Ana Celia. (1997). *Growing up bilingual: Puerto Rican children in New York*. London: Blackwell Publishing.



THE END / FIN