

PUERTO RICO AND THE UNITED STATES: THE INCLUSION AND EVOLUTION OF LANGUAGE POLICY IN U.S. CONGRESSIONAL BILLS, 1989-2010

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ABSTRACT

From the beginning of the 20th century, language contact between Spanish and English has been a significant, and often polemical, aspect of the relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States. A series of legislative proposals presented in the U.S. Congressional bodies in the latter half of that century were aimed primarily at the clarification of political status of the Island in relation to the United States. Nevertheless, they also included language policy to be imposed in/on Puerto Rico. This paper analyzes the inclusion and evolution of these policy proposals in a series of bills that were presented in the U.S. legislative bodies during the period of time from 1989-2010. The analysis situates the development of these proposals within the sociopolitical framework of the growth and development of Official English movements in the United States.

KEY WORDS: language, language policy, Puerto Rico, political status, United States, plebiscite, official languages, legislation.

RESUMEN

Desde los comienzos del siglo xx, el contacto lingüístico entre el español y el inglés ha constituido un aspecto significativo y con frecuencia polémico en las relaciones entre Puerto Rico y Estados Unidos. Aunque una serie de propuestas legislativas del Congreso estadounidense se ha dirigido principalmente hacia la clarificación del estatus político de la isla con relación a los EEUU, tales propuestas también han incluido políticas lingüísticas que se impondrían en Puerto Rico. Esta ponencia analiza la inclusión y la evolución de las políticas lingüísticas en una serie de proyectos de ley que se elaboraron en el Congreso estadounidense en el periodo de 1989-2010. Estas políticas se sitúan dentro de un contexto no sólo de extensión del español como lengua pública en los Estados Unidos sino también junto al crecimiento de los movimientos del *inglés oficial* en este país.

PALABRAS CLAVE: idioma, políticas lingüísticas, Puerto Rico, estatus político, Estados Unidos, plebiscito, idiomas oficiales, legislación.



1. INTRODUCTION

The historical imposition of English has had an ongoing effect on the relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States. Since 1952, Puerto Rico has been a Commonwealth with its own constitution. Nevertheless, the political status of the Island has been the subject of continued debate, on and off the Island, with many advocating instead for U.S. statehood or independence. The U.S. Congress has intermittently examined the Island's political status more closely, and although a number of proposed bills originated with this focus, they have also included the assertion of language policy for Puerto Rico. This article examines how language policy has appeared in the text of U.S. House and Senate bills, as well as how the proposed policy has evolved from 1989-2010. The analysis is additionally situated within a broader context related to the growth of movements that have advocated for official English legislation at both the state and federal levels in the United States.

2. THEORETICAL AND CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORKS

2.1. LANGUAGE CONTACT AND POLICY IN PUERTO RICO

Following the Spanish-American War in which the United States claimed Puerto Rico as a territory, Puerto Rico's Official Languages Law of 1902 declared that "in all Departments of the Insular Government, in all the Courts of this Island and in all public offices, the English and Spanish languages will be used interchangeably" (Legislative Assembly of Puerto Rico "Official Languages Law"). The law indicated that translations and interpretations from one language to the other would be made as needed. This law preceded a half century of shifts in educational policy for elementary and secondary students (Algrén de Gutiérrez). Overt processes of Americanization, connected to the use of English as a required language of instruction in the Island's public schools, as well as its use in the federal court system on the island, were "founded on the presumed supremacy of American social norms and cultural traits" (Barreto "*Nationalism*" 22). Nevertheless, U.S. insistence on English in the educational system was accompanied by Puerto Ricans' active resistance to these policies (Simounet-Geigel). José de Diego advocated strongly for Spanish as the primary language of instruction through public and legislative advocacy, which was finally established in 1947 by Education Commissioner Mariano Villaronga (Muñiz-Argüelles).

Throughout the entire 20th century and into the present time, Spanish has continued to hold a central role in national identity (see for example, Clampitt-Dunlap; Delgado Cintrón; Duany; Dubord; Negrón-Muntaner; Vélez). The daily use of Spanish confirms this centrality, although English also serves various functions in ordinary life on the Island (Fayer et al; Mazak; Nickels) and is particularly relevant for those involved in a circular migration between the Island and the U.S. (Barreto "Speaking English"; Clachar; Kerkhof; Zentella). In 1991, under the leadership of the Partido Popular Democrático's (PPD) Governor Hernández Colón, the legislature designated Spanish as the only of-



ficial language on the Island, a decision that was reversed in 1993 by the Partido Nuevo Progresista's (PNP) Governor Rosselló, who reinstated English as co-official (Legislative Assembly of Puerto Rico; Vélez and Schweers). The preservation of Spanish is supported by all political parties (Rúa). Nevertheless, debates arise regarding the appropriate role of English. Torres González has proposed a "differential officialization" (391) that would clearly identify English as a secondary official language.

Officialization of one or more languages is one strategy that legitimates language (Bourdieu). However, there are other strategies as well. Van Dijk points out that speakers' daily decisions, or media coverage, are other ways in which language legitimation can occur. These are part of the public sphere, where various perspectives can be presented, debate held, and public opinion formed (Habermas). Although the topic of status and accompanying language policy, form the basis for numerous legislative proposals and discussions in the U.S. Congress over the past century, the parties present at that debate have been significantly restricted to voting members of Congress, which excludes active voting representation from the Island. The following section discusses the nature of this legislation.

2.2. U.S. CONGRESSIONAL ACTION 1952-1988

During the years following the establishment of the Commonwealth, U.S. Congressional members presented a series of proposals and actions related to the Island's status, most of which were not approved, including a proposal in 1976 by President Gerald Ford for statehood; one notable exception included the establishment in 1964 of a Commission on Status (Bea and Garrett). By January 1989, representatives of three of the Island's political parties highlighted this lack of attention in a letter, indicating that "the People of Puerto Rico wish to be consulted as to their preference with regards to their ultimate political status and the consultation should have the guarantee that the will of the People once expressed shall be implemented through an act of Congress" (Bea and Garrett 41). In his Administration Goals address on February 9 of that same year, President George H.W. Bush asked Congress to authorize a recognized process for Puerto Ricans: "I've long believed that the people of Puerto Rico should have the right to determine their own political future. Personally, I strongly favor statehood. But I urge the Congress to take the necessary steps to allow the people to decide in a referendum" (Bush 1989). This was the extent of his remarks, but Congress soon began to take a more proactive role, the momentum of which would continue to develop over the next two decades. By 2000, President Bill Clinton established a President's Task Force on Puerto Rico's Status, whose 2005 report recommended a plebiscite regarding whether Puerto Rico should continue as a territory or not (Bea and Garrett).

2.3. PLEBISCITES AND REFERENDA ON STATUS IN PUERTO RICO

On five occasions, the Island has conducted an official consultation regarding Puerto Ricans' status preferences. Results have varied, due partly to ballot wording and partly to what was considered to be a success. The Commonwealth received the



majority of the votes in 1967, but all three political parties celebrated: the PPD won, the PNP had improved its following, and the PIP had held an effective boycott (Bea and Garrett). A 1991 referendum focused on self-determination and rights, a vote supported by both PDP and PIP; the ‘no’ vote won. In 1993 none of the options received a clear majority vote. Although the commonwealth received slightly more votes than statehood, the U.S. Congress rejected the option presented on the ballot for the Estado Libre Asociado (Bea and Garrett). In 1998 five options were presented and subsequently critiqued for a lack of clarity; *ELA* supporters urged voters to choose ‘none of the above’. The most recent plebiscite in 2012 was also criticized; although statehood was proclaimed the winner, the wording and two-part structure of the ballot were perceived by a number of Puerto Ricans to have nullified this result.

3. METHODOLOGY

Due to the time that passed between the establishment of the *ELA* and U.S. renewed action on status, this study focuses specifically on the period from 1989 to 2010, during which there was increased congressional action in terms of the number of bills proposed. Overall bill content was examined to identify the terms of each (i.e., most called for a referendum or plebiscite on status, offered three or four options, and indicated two plebiscites, the second based on results of the first). The text of each bill was reviewed for references to *language*, *Spanish*, or *English* to identify whether language policy provisions were included in the bill, and if so, what policies or parameters were being proposed. Any language policy was analyzed with regard to the options for status—that is, to discover whether the policy varied according to a given status option. The bill texts were accessed through the U.S. Library of Congress’ THOMAS website. A list of the bills discussed in this paper can be found in Appendix A.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION: U.S. LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS 1989-2010

Each bill examined was overtly focused on addressing and resolving the question of political status of Puerto Rico, stating the need to ascertain the will of the Puerto Rican people and specifying the conditions that would apply for each of several options if chosen. During this time period, however, it is evident that language policy took on a varying role in the proposals, based on the sponsors’ goals and ideologies about language. During the first 9 years, from 1989-1998, nineteen bills were put forward, four of which moved from their respective committees to the greater House. Two were approved by the House, none by the Senate, although the latter did agree to a resolution on the topic. Following this initial period, there is a marked decrease in emphasis on language policy during the first decade of the 2000s, which then changes dramatically by the legislation proposed in 2010. In the next sections, we examine bills from each of these periods of time in more detail.



4.1.1. *The Puerto Rico Status Referendum Act*

The *Puerto Rico Status Referendum Act* (S.712, 1989)¹ was sponsored by Senator J. Bennett Johnston and inspired eight days of hearings (Bea and Garrett 42). During the discussion of this bill on the Senate floor and in committee, significant content was either altered or eliminated. The original text lays out several introductory statements in the section devoted to the statehood option that laid out the case for language policy under that option, statements which were later deleted from the text:

(1) [Struck out->] SEC. 17. The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico is assured of its reserved State right under the Constitution **to continue to maintain both Spanish and English as its official languages**, as well as of its right to preserve and enhance its rich Hispanic cultural heritage. However, **all records and proceedings** of all agencies, departments, offices and courts **of the United States Federal Government operating in Puerto Rico, shall continue to be conducted and kept in the English language as heretofore.** (S.712 Title II, §17).

The text referenced Puerto Rico's law of 1902 and its establishment of both Spanish and English as "official State languages" protected by the U.S. Constitution. It also included the protection of voting rights independently of language:

(2) [Struck out->] SEC. 18. The State shall never enact any law restricting or abridging the right of suffrage on account of race, color, previous condition of servitude, or **ability to read, write, speak, and understand any language sufficiently**; and the rights, privileges and immunities of citizens of the United States shall be respected in Puerto Rico according to the provisions of paragraph 1 section 2 of article IV of the Constitution of the United States. [~~Struck out~~] (S.712 Title II, §18).

Within this bill, different language policies were proposed according to the particular status option under consideration. Thus, as we have seen with the statehood option, both languages would be official and federal government proceedings would be carried out in English; the right to vote would be protected regardless of ability in

¹ The bills discussed in this paper were accessed online through the United States Library of Congress online resources, at Congress.gov. In this article, they are cited throughout according to the legislative body (H.R. or S), the bill number, and the year when they were first proposed. Additional information is provided for each cited text to locate the example within the bill's text. Bills can be located on the website by number/title and the number of the congress in which they were proposed (e.g., 101st Congress); it provides information on bill sponsors, text, actions taken, as well as links to the Congressional Record.



either language. The option for Commonwealth, on the other hand, simply confirmed the existing requirement that the Resident Commissioner, Puerto Rico's representative to the U.S. House, be able to read and write in English (Title IV Commonwealth, Subpart 14, §892). It affirmed specific language rights such as being permitted to request proceedings in Spanish in the court system (Subpart 15, §42) and to have voting ballots available in Spanish (Subpart II). For the Independence option, no language policy at all was indicated. Notably, however, following the initial introduction, later committee reports in 1989 and 1990 no longer included any reference at all to *language, Spanish, or English*, even for the statehood option. The bill continued to address a variety of issues related to all three options, but references to language had been withdrawn. This bill was referred to committee and received no further action on the Senate floor.

4.1.2. *The Puerto Rico Self-Determination Act*

During that same Congress, House Representative de Lugo introduced the *Puerto Rico Self-Determination Act* (H.R.4765, 1990). Like the Senate bill, it focused on a potential referendum with several options. In addition to independence, statehood, and an 'enhanced' commonwealth, a "none of the above" option was included (Congress.gov). No linguistic policy—protective or restrictive—was included in this bill. There was little recorded debate, particularly in comparison with that recorded for S.712; however, neither were there any provisions that would protect the language and culture of Puerto Ricans (Bea and Garrett 45). The House passed this bill.

4.1.3. *The United States-Puerto Rico Political Status Act*

There was little action on status in the 102nd and 103rd Congresses.² In 1996, Representative Young proposed the *United States-Puerto Rico Political Status Act* (H.R.3024, 1996). The original text references language twice, the first time in the context of the Independence option, as in (3) below, a section which was ultimately struck out, and replaced by a slightly altered version, with no mention of language, as in (4):

(3) "A path of separate Puerto Rican sovereignty leading to independence or freeassociation, in which—

"(A) Puerto Rico is a sovereign nation with full authority and responsibility for its internal and external affairs, **exercising in its own name and right the powers of government with respect to its territory and population, language and culture**, and determining its own relations and participation in the community of nations; (HR 3024 §4).

² S.244 and H.R.316 were introduced in 1991-1992, but neither passed.



(4) “The path of separate Puerto Rican sovereignty leading to independence or free association is one in which—

“(1) Puerto Rico is a sovereign nation with full authority and responsibility for its internal and external affairs and has the capacity to exercise in its own name and right the powers of government with respect to its territory and population; (HR 3024 §4).

The final bill provides no language policy, whether of protection or restriction, for the commonwealth or independence options. Subsequently the bill addresses statehood, which is the second time in which language was mentioned:

(5) “The path through United States sovereignty **leading to statehood is** one in which—

“(1) the people of Puerto Rico are fully self-governing with their rights secured under the United States Constitution, which is the supreme law and has the same force and effect as in the other States of the Union; ...omitted content...]

“(7) Puerto Rico adheres to **the same language requirement as in the several States.**” (HR 3024 §4):

First we observe that this bill clearly asserted a particular language policy should Puerto Ricans opt for statehood. Nevertheless, the requirement is ambiguous and imprecise. It is unclear what this “same language requirement” entails, nor in which states the requirement applies. In 1996, according to U.S. English, Inc., twenty-three states had Official English laws on the books under varying conditions, but there was not at that time nor is there currently a federally designated official language. Thus, the bill sent a message but the actual stipulations were not bound by legal precedent. The word *English* was never used in the bill’s text. Although the word *Spanish* appears twice, it is in the context of the phrase *Spanish-American War*; thus, it did not constitute recognition of the language spoken on the Island. This bill was reported by the Committee on Rules on September 18, 1996, but also did not pass.

In summary, these proposed bills from 1989-1996 focused nearly exclusively on political status. Alterations to the bill texts tended to delete references to language policy, and where policy was retained in the final proposal, it functioned to ensure that the statehood option, as opposed to other options, would match Puerto Rico with what was presumably the case in the United States, even though a consistent policy did not exist.

4.1.4. *The United States-Puerto Rico Political Status Act*

Representative Young proposed another bill by the same title the following year (H.R. 856, 1997). This bill also included no language policy for either Commonwealth or independence but this time the language policy for statehood was expanded:



(6) (b) OFFICIAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE.—In the event that a referendum held under this Act results in approval of sovereignty leading to Statehood, **upon accession to Statehood, the official language requirements of the Federal Government shall apply to Puerto Rico** in the same manner and to the same extent as **throughout the United States**.

(c) ENGLISH LANGUAGE EMPOWERMENT.—It is in the **best interest of the Nation for Puerto Rico to promote the teaching of English as the language of opportunity and empowerment in the United States** in order to enable students in public schools to achieve English language proficiency by the age of 10. (H.R. 856 §3).

There are several points of interest in this text. First, in (b), Young again asserts the existence of a (nonexistent) U.S. federal official language requirement, as well as the presumably unified and homogenous application of said official language policy throughout the United States. It is unclear whether the provision was intended for some future time in which such legislation might be enacted, or whether it was intended primarily to indicate that official English would be required for statehood. Nevertheless, the second point in (b) is predicated upon the first; both were invalid. Secondly, in (c), it is unclear whose best interest was being served —whether this was intended to refer to the United States or to Puerto Rico. Third, it is clear that English was presented as the “language of opportunity and empowerment in the United States”, although the bill was directed towards Puerto Ricans and their decision on status. These provisions are more extensive than what was included in previous bills, both in terms of a legal requirement for an official language as well as recommendations of promoting the English language. The inclusion of the Official English policy was reiterated elsewhere under the statehood option:

(7) **Official English language requirements of the Federal Government apply in Puerto Rico** to the same extent as Federal law requires throughout the United States.” (HR 856 §4).

The promotion of English language proficiency was also reiterated in this bill for the statehood option, additionally emphasizing the importance of teaching English in the public school system and promoting the use of English:

(8) (C) Additionally, in the event of a vote in favor of continued United States sovereignty leading to Statehood, the transition plan required by this subsection shall—

(i) include proposals and incentives to increase the opportunities of the people of Puerto Rico to **expand their English proficiency** in order to promote and facilitate communication with residents of all other States of the United States [...];

(ii) **promote the use of English** by the United States citizens in Puerto Rico in order to ensure — [...]



(III) the ability of all citizens of Puerto Rico to take full advantage of the opportunities and responsibilities accorded to all citizens, including education, economic activities, occupational opportunities, and civic affairs; and [...] (HR 856 §4).

This bill thus presents a departure from the emphasis of prior bills. In the text, *language* appears seven times, *English* appears nine times, and *Spanish* appears only one time, again in the context of the phrase *Spanish-American War* and not in any way connected to the language spoken on the Island. Unlike Young's previous proposal which included very little language policy, this one passed the House.

In summary, the 105th Congress focused again on the potential status change to statehood, indicating that, in the event that statehood were to be selected, federal laws (i.e., official language) would be applied, and the teaching, and use, of English, would be promoted. As before, the Commonwealth and Independence options did not receive accompanying English language policy provisions.

4.1.5. *The Puerto Rico-United States Bilateral Pact of Non-territorial Permanent Union and Guaranteed Citizenship Act*

In the following Congress, Representative Doolittle presented a bill (H.R.4751, 2000) to recognize Puerto Rico as a nation “legally and constitutionally” (§2). This bill twice asserted:

- (9) [...] the recognition that **Puerto Rico is a nation with its own history, national character, culture, and Spanish language.** (HR 4751 §2(2)).
- (10) [...] acknowledging that **Puerto Rico is a nation with its own history, idiosyncrasy, culture, and Spanish language.** (HR 4751 §3(2)).

The only place where this bill addressed the question of language policy was in the context of federal district courts, where Spanish and English would be designated as the official languages of the court (HR 4751 §3(20)). This bill differed from those discussed previously in that the text clearly asserted the Island's cultural and linguistic identity, a fact that, although seemingly relevant to previous bills, had regularly been overlooked or minimized in the bill texts. In Doolittle's proposal, this information is foregrounded from the beginning in §2 and repeated shortly thereafter in §3. Nevertheless, although the bill text was relatively devoid of language policy, in his opening remarks, Doolittle made clear that he was critical of the current relationship and the linguistic “separatism” that characterized the Island's relationship with the U.S.³ The bill was referred to committee, and no further action was recorded.

³ Doolittle indicated that he did not intend for the bill to become law but rather to “provoke an honest discussion of Puerto Rico's future and the truth about its current



4.2. U.S. CONGRESSIONAL BILLS 2000-2008: NO LANGUAGE POLICY

From 2000 to 2005, there was little action in the U.S. House and Senate on the status issue, but by the 109th and 110th Congresses (2005-2008), legislators showed renewed interest in a resolution to the ongoing question of the relationship between the Island and the United States (Bea and Garrett 2009). Four bills were put forward in 2006, two each in the House and Senate: the *Puerto Rico Self-Determination Act of 2006* (S.2304), the *Puerto Rico Self-Determination Act of 2006* (H.R.4963), the *Puerto Rico Democracy Act of 2006* (H.R.4867), and the *Puerto Rico Democracy Act of 2006* (S.2661). The first two were parallel proposals with significant overlap in content, although with some differences such as timing of the referendum and congressional approval. The latter two presented different scenarios regarding plebiscite structure. The following year three additional bills were introduced: the *Puerto Rico Democracy Act of 2007* (H.R. 900) and the *Puerto Rico Self-Determination Act of 2007* (H.R.1230), which were combined into a compromise bill, and the *Puerto Rico Democracy Act of 2007* (S.1936), which was related to H.R. 900 but presented different voting options.

Most importantly, in none of these seven bills do we find any language policy at all, whether protective or restrictive.⁴ All were referred to committee; none were approved or received further official action, as recorded in the online archive. In summary, following Young's 1997 proposal, much less attention was given to restrictive language policy from 1999-2008, regardless of the status options. Thus, although bills from 1989-1998 included some limited language policy in varying ways, a marked decrease in emphasis was seen from 1999 through the latter part of the first decade of the new millennium.

4.3. THE PUERTO RICO DEMOCRACY ACT OF 2010

The *Puerto Rico Democracy Act of 2010* (H.R.2499, 2010) signaled a clear change from this decreased emphasis on language policy with a clearly articulated language policy. During the consideration of the bill, three English language requirements were inserted into the text by way of the Burton Amendment.⁵ The amendment sought to ensure that the "full content of the ballot" would be printed in English, an erasure of the fact that Puerto Rico already requires ballots to be published bilingually. Additionally, the amendment inserted specific language policy and advocacy into the document:

status" and to end the current relationship (Congressional Record, 6/26/2000). He cited the lack of public English language education and "the creation of a Quebec-like enclave of linguistic separatism in Puerto Rico", among other issues.

⁴ As in other cases, this determination was based on whether the terms *language*, *Spanish*, or *English* were included in the bill texts, not whether these topics surfaced in the floor discussion.

⁵ See Shenk (2013) for an analysis of the floor discussion of H.R.2499 and the proposal of this amendment.



- (11) (2) inform persons voting in any plebiscite held under this Act that, if **Puerto Rico retains its current political status or is admitted as a State** of the United States, **the official language requirements** of the Federal Government **shall apply to Puerto Rico** in the same manner and to the same extent as throughout the United States; and
- (12) (3) inform persons voting in any plebiscite held under this Act that, if **Puerto Rico retains its current political status or is admitted as a State** of the United States, it is the Sense of Congress that it is in the best interest of the United States for the **teaching of English to be promoted** in Puerto Rico as the language of opportunity and empowerment in the United States in order to enable students in public schools to achieve **English language proficiency**. (§3(e)).

As discussed earlier, the United States has not designated an official language at the federal level. Thus, point (2) must be interpreted either as emphasizing covertly that there would be no official language requirement for the Island or, alternatively, that it was looking to the future when said requirement might be enacted. In either case, the point was irrelevant at that time. Nevertheless, this text clearly implied federal government control over the Island's language policy. There are parallel discourses present between this text and that of earlier bills, regarding English being *the* (not "*a*") language of "opportunity and empowerment" in the United States. Finally, there is a substantial shift in the conditions for these provisions—that is, both sub-points (2) and (3) above indicate that the language requirement and recommendations about the promotion of English teaching and language proficiency are no longer linked exclusively to the option of statehood, but rather would apply regardless of whether the voters chose in the plebiscite to retain current status (i.e., Commonwealth) or to alter that status (i.e., statehood—independence is not mentioned). The final version of this bill thus differs substantially from the series of proposals made from 1989 on and discussed above, in which language requirements were linked to the potential selection of the statehood option.

Thus, we can summarize the overall shifts in policy included in these bills over the period of time from 1989-2010 as follows. Given the impetus to clarify the way forward, nearly every bill discussed here proposed a referendum or plebiscite on status to be conducted in Puerto Rico, most with several status options; most suggested carrying out two related plebiscites, the second based on the first. From 1989 to 1999, language policy formed a relatively minor part of the bill proposals, and where it appeared, it was particularly oriented towards the statehood option. From 2000 to 2008, language issues took a back seat, with the primary focus remaining on political status. By 2010, language issues moved front and center, and this time policy was laid out independently of status options, to be applicable even if Puerto Rico were to retain its current status.

4.4. THE OFFICIAL ENGLISH MOVEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES

The inclusion and evolution of language policy in the congressional bills discussed in this paper must be situated within the broader sociopolitical context of the United



States. On one hand, the Spanish language has expanded its role and functions in the public sphere in the United States due to factors such as the proximity and shared border with Mexico, the generations of Spanish speakers who have been present since before the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, and a growing Latin@ population for whom Spanish is a native or heritage language. The role of Spanish in the public sphere has been recognized in the media and commercial sectors, which reach this population not only through Spanish itself but also through code-switching and the creation of bilingual linguistic landscapes.

Along with these realities, the United States has also experienced a relatively recent period of expansion in the Official English movement, with efforts expended at both the state and the federal levels. Beginning in 1981, official English legislation has been introduced in every session of Congress (González 625). Former California Senator Samuel Hayakawa was a particularly strong supporter of federal-level official English legislation proposals. Nevertheless, efforts to establish official language legislation at the federal level have been repeatedly denied in Congress.

At the state level the reality is somewhat different, with individual states holding the right to enact or resist the passage of Official English legislation. According to the records kept by U.S. English, Inc., thirty-one states currently have official English laws, twenty-six of which were passed between 1984 and 2010. This time period overlaps almost entirely with the years just prior to and during those included in the current study. Additionally, some cities, towns, businesses, and even schools have passed local ordinances or informal policies regarding the required use of English within the confines of those spaces.⁶ These movements are supported by organizations such as U.S. English, Inc., which published grade reports on Congress members in response to their co-sponsorship or votes on bills such as the *English Language Unity Act*; on whether legislators motioned to reconsider the English amendment to H.R.2499; and on whether or not they voted against final passage of H.R.2499. The organization currently offers an *Official English Pledge* to legislators to sign.

There is a relationship between the legislation discussed in this paper and the strength of Official English or English First movements. Muñoz-Argüelles argues that these movements in the United States are a worrisome trend in Puerto Rico due to the power that Congress has to pass legislation that impacts the Island. In the months leading up to the 2012 plebiscite, U.S. English's Board Chair Mauro Mujica visited Puerto Rico to advocate for English usage and teaching.

U.S. English's advocacy efforts in the passage of H.R.2499 were also evident when content from the organization's letters were introduced by legislators into the discussion on the House floor. The concerns of Muñoz-Argüelles and others regarding the role and strength of English on the Island are in some strange way mirrored by the fears articulated by U.S. English in its stark and negative portrayal of a potential future Puerto Rican state of the U.S.: "The acceptance of

⁶ See, for example, cases in Hazleton, Pennsylvania (Powell and García), Bogota, New Jersey (Baron "Official English"), Geno's Steaks in Philadelphia, PA ("English"), St. Anne Catholic School in Wichita, Kansas (Baron "Wichita's English-Only"), and Albertville, Alabama (Doyle).



an entire U.S. state where public schools, courts, and the legislature operate in a non-English language would drive a spike through the unifying power of English, our common language” (U.S. English). It is evident that movements for official English in the United States have inserted themselves into the debate on political status (and accompanying language policy) for the Island.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This article analyzes the inclusion and evolution of language policy proposals from 1989 to 2010 in U.S. congressional bills designed to clarify a resolution on Puerto Rico’s political status. It examines the ways in which language policy proposals have changed over time in these bill texts, with particular attention to the relationship between the proposed policies and the status option(s) under which they would apply. We have seen that although some bills during this time period focused exclusively on political status with no mention of language policy, the policies evolved from (a) fairly ambiguous policies across the board to (b) more specific policies laid out for the statehood option should voters make that choice, to (c) policies that would apply either for the statehood option or for ongoing status as a Commonwealth. The inclusion and evolution of policy is also situated within the broader U.S. sociopolitical context, suggesting that there has been significant interaction between the legitimation of Spanish in the public sphere and the hegemonic reaction of the official English movement, the latter of which has exerted pressure on congressional bodies to absorb the meaning and message of their own organization into the political relationship of the U.S. and Puerto Rico.

A half decade after the last piece of legislation discussed above, the question of political status for Puerto Rico continues to be debated actively both in the U.S. Congress as well as on the Island, and language issues continue to play an active role in the discussion. Response to the November 2012 plebiscite has been mixed, with different groups on the Island claiming unclear results, due to the wording and structure of the ballot options. The U.S. legislature has continued to consider several bills in the past several years including the *Puerto Rico Status Resolution Act* (H.R. 2000, in 2013, sponsored by Resident Commissioner/Rep. Pedro Pierluisi), the *Puerto Rico Status Resolution Act* (S. 2020, in 2014, Sens. Heinrich and Wyden), and the *Puerto Rico Statehood Admission Process Act* (H.R. 727, in 2015, Resident Commissioner/Rep. Pierluisi). These bills focus on providing for a federally authorized vote on the admission of Puerto Rico as a U.S. State and for subsequent executive and legislative follow-up action. The bill texts do not include language policy. Given that many of the plebiscite-oriented bills have been introduced in Congress and promptly referred to committee from which they do not emerge, the future of these bills is unclear. However, should one of them reappear and be passed by its governing body, the question of language policy and its potential inclusion in the text will merit close attention.

Reviews sent to author: 15 July 2015. Revised paper accepted for publication: 24 July 2015.



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APPENDIX A

SELECTED BILLS/CONGRESSIONAL ACTION 1989-2010⁷

CONGRESS	INTRODUCED	BILL NUMBER / TITLE	SPONSOR(S)	RESULT
101 st	4/5/1989	S.712 "Puerto Rico Status Referendum Act"	Johnston	Referred to committee
101 st	5/9/1990	H.R. 4765 "Puerto Rico Self-Determination Act"	de Lugo	Passed House 10/10/1990
104 th	1996	H.R. 3024 "United States-Puerto Rico Political Status Act"	Young	Amended by committee
105 th	2/27/1997	H.R. 856 "United States-Puerto Rico Political Status Act"	Young	Passed House 3/04/1998
106 th	6/26/2000	H.R. 4751 "Puerto Rico-United States Bilateral Pact of Non-territorial Permanent Union and Guaranteed Citizenship Act"	Doolittle	Referred to committee
109 th	2/16/2006	S.2304 "Puerto Rico Self-Determination Act of 2006"	Burr	Referred to committee
	3/15/2006	H.R. 4963 "Puerto Rico Self-Determination Act of 2006"	Duncan	Referred to committee
	3/2/2006	H.R. 4867 "Puerto Rico Democracy Act of 2006"	Fortuño	Referred to committee
	4/26/2006	S.2661 "Puerto Rico Democracy Act of 2006"	Martínez	Referred to committee
110 th	2/7/2007	H.R. 900 "Puerto Rico Democracy Act of 2007"	Serrano	Amended by committee
	2/28/2007	H.R. 1230 "Puerto Rico Self-Determination Act of 2007"	Velázquez	Referred to committee
	8/2/2007	S.1936 "Puerto Rico Democracy Act of 2007"	Salazar	Referred to committee
111 th	5/19/2009	H.R. 2499 "Puerto Rico Democracy Act of 2010"	Pierluisi	Passed House 4/29/2010

⁷ Full texts of bills prior to 1993 are no longer available on the Congress.gov website.