

## Book Review

**Pousada, A. (Ed). (2017). *Being bilingual in Borinquen: Student voices from the University of Puerto Rico*. Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.**

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Documenting the complex relationship between Spanish and English on the island of Puerto Rico has been one of the primary foci of Dr. Alicia Pousada's career. The most published and well-known researcher in applied linguistics in Puerto Rico, Pousada has dedicated her career to documenting the different ways in which Spanish and English co-exist on the island, in an attempt to understand the interplay between language, policy, politics, identity and education. This recently published edited volume brings together the language autobiographies of twenty-five graduate students from her Studies in Bilingualism course in the Department of English at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras.

The book is broken into five distinct chapters: Pousada provides the introduction, titled "Who's Bilingual and Why," and the concluding chapter, "What's It All Mean"; the middle chapters are dedicated to the different contexts that students grew up in. Thus, Chapter 2 is titled "Made in Puerto Rico"; Chapter 3, "Nuyoricans and Other Early Childhood Bilinguals"; and Chapter 4, "Immigrants to the Enchanted Island." Together all five chapters provide an overview of the complexity of defining and documenting bilingualism on the island. While many islanders report that they do not feel comfortable using English, this collection of language autobiographies are a clear evidence that students of all backgrounds, social classes and life experiences have been successful in learning and maintaining at least two languages on the island.

In Chapter 1 Pousada provides the reader with a concise summary of language issues in Puerto Rico, citing some of the more seminal works, such as Resnick (1993), Schweers and Vélez (1992), as well as some more contemporary research with the likes of Schmidt (2015) and variety of recently published doctoral dissertations and theses. This introduction gives way to an essential overview of key points in the difficulty of defining bilingualism. After that, it highlights the importance one's social context has on learning languages. The second half is dedicated to topics of multilingualism and bilingualism on the island. Here, Pousada discusses key terms in current language debates, such as borrowings between English and Spanish, code-switching and translanguaging. Overall, the first chapter motivates the reader to learn exactly how all of these competing definitions of bilingualism manifest themselves in students around the island and provides a short and palatable summary of the key points and demographics that influence its linguistic context.

Chapter 2 comprises ten different linguistic autobiographies, grouped together based on individuals who “are products of a Spanish-medium educational system and have lived most (if not all) of their lives in Puerto Rico” (p.17). One of the overarching themes and takeaways from this section was the influence that the authors reported cable television had in their development of English. Access to this medium often came as a result of family sacrifices as students reported how their parents allocated sometimes very limited resources towards cable television, so their children would have access to English input. Unlike the authors with entries in Chapters 3 and 4, those in Chapter 2 shared how learning English has opened doors to them, both in their travels as students and adults as well as in the very competitive job market in Puerto Rico. An additional common theme was the role individuals had in authors' success. Ponce de León-Cruz talks about the sacrifices her older sister made to pay for cable television, while others like Heffelfinger-Nieves attested to the importance that English teachers played in their successful bilingual development.

Chapter 3, the longest with twelve entries, is titled “Nuyoricans and Other Early Childhood Bilinguals.” Individuals included in this chapter were raised on the island and often had exposure to Spanish and English from an early age. Growing up as balanced bilinguals or in some cases English-dominant bilinguals, the work of those published in this chapter speak to show how some individuals in Puerto Rico connect with U.S. culture, particularly after returning from a stint, albeit brief as it may have been, in the Mainland. Similar to Chapter 2, these authors reported access to cable television, and many had life experiences that allowed them to live in the U.S. or abroad. Their Spanish-English bilingualism also led many of them to develop proficiencies in a third or fourth language.

Chapter 4, “Immigrants to the Enchanted Island,” is the shortest within the book, and focuses on three native English speakers who are not Puerto Rican but decided to move to the island to live. These entries come from people who are English dominant bilinguals but have worked to embrace their new home and learn the language and culture on the island.

In the final chapter, titled “What’s It All Mean?”, Pousada synthesizes and provides the key takeaways from this collection of linguistic autobiographies. Here, she succinctly summarizes seven key themes that emerged across the entries: (1) Caring and supportive adults, (2) Ample opportunities for language and cultural acquisition, (3) Awareness of the instrumental benefits of being bilingual/bicultural, (4) Non-judgmental attitudes toward “otherness,” (5) Meaningful relationships with others that give purpose to the acquisition of another language, (6) Flexibility and openness to change, and (7) Ability or willingness to take risks (adapted from p. 146). In addition to identifying the salient themes that emerged from the entries, in this chapter, Pousada brings the reader back to a discussion of bilingualism in Puerto Rico and makes direct connections to the literature in language planning and policy. Ultimately, she argues that Puerto Rico would benefit from the adoption of the “Scandinavian model known as ‘parallel language use’” (Hultgren, 2016), whereby languages are not in competition but complement one another.

The reference section and appendices are another valuable resource to anyone interested in bilingualism and language policy on the island as the seminal texts are cited as well as many more recent publications, including a number of doctoral and master’s theses. Another helpful document comes in the form of Appendix C: “Excerpts from Language Policy-Related Laws in Puerto Rico.” The excerpts from the Official Languages Act of 1902, 1991, 1993 as well as Law 68 of 1990 and Law 149 of 1999 are a real gem for any researcher interested in language policy in that, for the first time, direct passages are published from all of the most influential language policies in one condensed version that is easy to read and find.

Editing the work of twenty-five different individuals was no doubt a daunting task, regardless of the clarity and precision that one writes. Pousada did an excellent job in ensuring that the book reads well, was concise, and that all of the entries had something positive to offer in better understanding bilingualism on the island. One of the only real downsides of this book is the price point at which the book is sold. Given that it is only published in hardcopy and probably because of the perception that it is targeted at a rather niche market, the cost of the book is often preventatively expensive for graduate and undergraduate students, particularly in Puerto Rico, who would benefit most from reading it. Overall, this book provides a significant contribution to

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the literature on bilingualism in Puerto Rico and will be a tremendous resource for academics and students interested in the topic.

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