

Journey With Language – Variations in Spanish (4) Puerto Rico

●Destination - Puerto Rico

Puerto Rico is an island located between the Atlantic Ocean (*Océano Atlántico*) and the Caribbean Sea (*Mar Caribe*) to the southeast of the United States. It is about half the size of Shikoku in Japan. Visiting the old town (*el Viejo San Juan*) and *El Morro* in San Juan, the capital of the country, it makes you feel as if you have arrived in the colonial period. If you like music, you cannot miss the Pablo Casals Museum (*Museo Pablo Casals*), and if you have extra time, you can also experience the natural world in the rain forest in the suburb of *El Yunque*, or you can enjoy the beach at *Dorado*.



【Picture 1: Children in El Yunque】

Politically, Puerto Rico is a “Free Associated State” (*Estado Libre Asociado*) of the United States, and American influence can be found in their language as well.

A lot of English words are taken into Puerto Rican Spanish, and a mixture of Spanish and English makes their language interesting. It can be found in the conversation of local people, signs in the city, shops etc.



【Picture 2: No Parking Sign in English + Spanish】

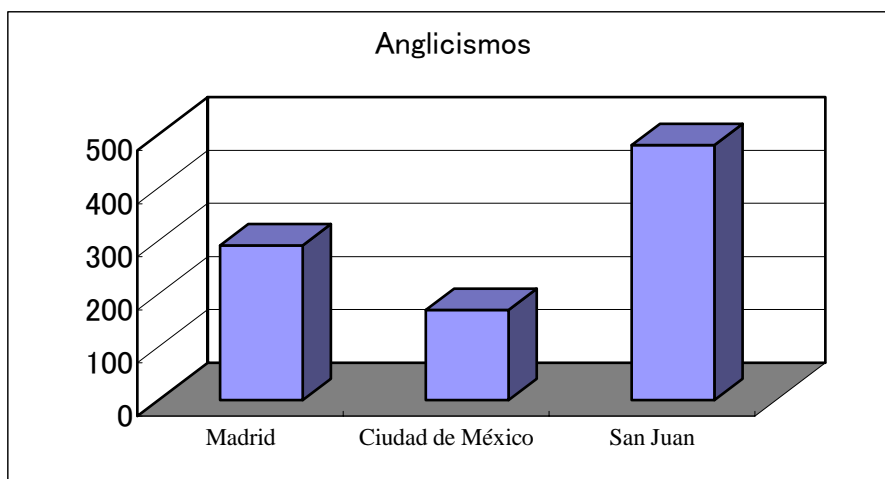
María Vaquero works on Spanish studies in Puerto Rico. In her studies, she has accumulated data on English influence (*anglicismo*) found in Puerto Rican Spanish and cited some notable phenomena as shown below.¹

- Using Spanish words with English meanings: using *bloques* for “(street) blocks” (*manzana* and *cuadra* are used in regular Spanish). E.g. *Yo tuve que dejar el carro lejos, como a tres bloques.* (I had to park my car three blocks away.)
- Using English word form: *coincidentalmente* instead of *de forma coincidente* (original form in Spanish) implies an influence of English “coincidentally”.

¹ "Anglicismos en la prensa: Una cala en el lenguaje periodístico de San Juan", *Lingüística Española Actual*, 12, 1990

- Calque or loan translation: *hacer sentido* in “*Lo que dijo no hace sentido.*” (“What he said doesn’t make any sense.”) is a calque from the English expression “make sense”. (We have discussed “calque” in May.)

Spanish has many loanwords from English in general, and it is especially true in Puerto Rican Spanish. Humberto López Morales is a leading sociolinguist of the Spanish language. The graph shows how many English loanwords there were among the 4452 words selected in different regions: 291 in Madrid, 170 in Mexico City, and 480 in San Juan.²



It is not always a simple selection of Spanish or English. For example, an English word, *magazine* is used to describe popular magazines for amusement, and Spanish *revista* is used for news magazines and journals.

● Pursuit of Language - Prescriptivism and Descriptivism

Intellectuals and teachers show their concerns over the situation, and often make suggestions on how “proper Spanish” should be used in newspapers and magazines . This is a prescriptive point of view (*posición*

² *El Español del Caribe*, 1992, Editorial Mapfre.

prescriptiva). On the other hand, linguists try to observe and study the reality of the language by making a record of people's conversations, asking which words are commonly used, and keeping track of the vocabulary being used in the mass media. This is a descriptive point of view (*posición descriptiva*), and they report their observations and findings in academic journals and publications.

It is difficult for us Spanish teachers in Japan (non-natives) to decide which position to take. It is necessary to teach "proper Spanish" in classrooms, but we cannot ignore the Spanish currently spoken by native speakers either. In my classes, I teach standard Spanish for beginners, and introduce regional variations for advanced students and in special courses.

In order to identify the difference between "standard Spanish" and "regional variations", we need to study numerous references and continue our research at the same time. It is necessary to cover all the variations to set a standard, so those two are interrelated with each other.

There are still a lot of things yet to be discovered about the Spanish language across the world, and we will continue to study through preceding studies and our own investigations. A collection of theses (*Estudios de Lingüística Hispánica. Homenaje a María Vaquero*) was published last year (1999) in commemoration of María Vaquero's retirement from the University of Puerto Rico. Inside the collection, you will find many studies on the Spanish spoken in various parts of the Spanish-speaking world reported by the researchers she had known worldwide.

● Language Variations - "Drive"

As we drove from San Juan in the northeast of the island to Mayagüez in the west, we saw a van with a campaign sign (see picture). It says "If you drink, don't drive", and the word "guiar" is used for "drive".



【Picture 3: No DUI Campaign】

We have seen *guiar* (**G** in map) used in Guatemala, and *conducir* (**C**) is common in Spain. *Manejar* (**M**) is widely used in Latin America, but *conducir* is also used in some countries. *Dirigir* (**D**) is rare, but was used in Lapas in Bolivia.



【Map: “Drive”】

***Assignment -4a**

Read Lipski (1996: 350-364), and explain the relationship between Puerto Rican history and the Spanish language.

***Assignment -4b**

Lipski (1996: 358) describes syntactic Anglicism (anglicismos sintácticos) in Puerto Rico. Study its geographic distribution using references and internet.

- *¿Cómo te gustó la playa?*
- *El problema está siendo considerado.*
- *Te llamo para atrás.*
- *Él sabe cómo hablar inglés.*

Corpus del Español: <http://www.corpusdelespanol.org/>, Google etc.

***Assignment -4c**

Describe regional variations of the word “drive” in Spanish.

Varilex: <http://gamp.c.u-tokyo.ac.jp/~ueda/varilex/>