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*Language and the Second Generation: Bilingualism Yesterday and Today*¹

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The language adaptation of second generation children is explored in the context of the history of linguistic absorption and bilingualism in America. Strong nativist pressures toward monolingualism have commonly led to the extinction of immigrant languages in two or three generations. Contemporary fears of loss of English dominance are based on rapid immigration during recent decades and the emergence of linguistic enclaves in several cities around the country. This article explores the extent of language transition and the resilience of immigrant languages on the basis of data from south Florida, one of the areas most heavily affected by contemporary immigration. Results from a sample of 2,843 children of immigrants in the area indicate that: 1) knowledge of English is near universal; 2) preference for English is almost as high, even among children educated in immigrant-sponsored bilingual schools; 3) preservation of parental languages varies inversely with length of U.S. residence and residential locations away from areas of ethnic concentration. Hypotheses about other determinants of bilingualism are examined in a multivariate framework. The relationships of bilingualism to educational attainment and educational and occupational aspirations are also explored.

"Where linguistic unity has broken down, our energies and resources flow into tensions, hostilities, prejudices and resentments. These develop and persist. Within a few years, if the breakdown persists, there will be no retreat. It becomes irrevocable, irreversible. Society as we know it can fade into noisy babel and then chaos."

—U.S. English policy statement

This paper examines the process of linguistic adaptation and the extent and determinants of bilingualism among children of immigrants, the new second generation spawned by accelerated immigration during the last decade. The setting of the study is south Florida, one of the areas most heavily affected by recent immigration. We review the findings in the context of the history of linguistic conflict and language assimilation that have accompanied U.S.-bound migration over the life of the nation.

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The present wave of immigration was triggered by the 1965 Immigration Act, as well as by subsequent changes in American asylum and refugee policies. The overall direction of the new policies was toward greater universalism, eliminating previous discriminatory racial barriers and opening the doors of the country on the basis of uniform criteria. Since 1965, occupational skills, family reunification and fear of political persecution have been the guiding criteria of U.S. immigration policy. As is well known, the result has been a rapid increase in immigration and an equally rapid shift in its origins from Europe to the Third World. Most of today's children of immigrants thus have parents who came from Latin America and Asia, and about half are phenotypically nonwhite (Portes and Zhou, 1993).²

The size of the new immigration has given rise to sizable language enclaves in several U.S. cities and parallel nativistic concerns about these enclaves' resilience. In particular, the growing use of Spanish by Latin American immigrants has triggered gloomy assessments of the future prospects of linguistic unity, as illustrated by the opening quote. Clearly, the decisive issue that would validate or refute the nativists' fears is language use and preferences among the second generation. In the past, almost every first generation's loyalty to their ancestral language has given way to an overwhelming preference for English among their children (Lieberson, Dalto, and Johnston, 1975). The extent to which this process will repeat itself today represents a central question, from both sociological and policy perspectives. south Florida is one of the areas most directly affected by contemporary immigration and the growing use of Spanish. Our sample of second generation students from this region will allow us to address the current scholarly and public debate about the future of language in America.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Language Assimilation in Perspective

The current controversy over language is best understood in the context of a cyclical trend in the history of the United States since colonial days. Descendants of earlier immigrants who had "dropped the hyphen" and considered themselves plain Americans have often looked upon later arrivals as the source of potential cultural disintegration. This was true even prior to the Revolutionary War. Benjamin Franklin complained as early as 1751 that German immigrants in Pennsylvania "will shortly be so numerous as to Germanize us instead of our Anglifying them, and will never adopt our Language or Customs, any more than they can acquire our complexion" (Franklin [1751], 1959:234). The notion of "one nation, one language" was

²This figure is arrived at by adding the percentage of Latin American immigrants estimated to be nonwhite on the basis of the 1990 census figures on the racial composition of the Hispanic population to Asian and black immigrants.

often idealized as a state of linguistic perfection to which the nation should return. This idea was discussed at length by philosophers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, including President John Adams, who contended that “language influences not only the form of government, but the temper, sentiments, and manners of the people” (Adams [1780], 1856 7: 249–251).

During the colonial and early independence period, the notion that the country and its citizens were defined by a common language was justified on two grounds. First, along with incipient American nationalism came the idea that American English both reflected and constituted the democratic and rational nature of the country. Second, the acquisition and use of English was seen as the litmus test of citizenship. Lacking a common culture or common history, the use of English became the essential part of “real” Americanism (Baron, 1990). The two rationales were related insofar as the ability to think logically, seen as necessary for a democracy, was only possible on the basis of fluency in English.

The perceived necessity for “Good English” has taken many forms throughout American history. In 1902, for example, New Mexico’s statehood was delayed until, in the words of one prominent politician of the time, “the migration of English-speaking people who have been citizens of other States does its modifying work with the Mexican element” (Baron, 1991: 8). Nebraska banned teaching any foreign language to students below the ninth grade in 1919 and organized formal “Good English” campaigns from 1918 to the early 1920s. At the time, language loyalty oaths were commonly extracted from school children (Dillard, 1985; Marckwardt, 1980).

In this and other ways, in schools and public life, monolingualism was linked to the idea of democracy, national unity and allegiance to the country. Although many parents of upper and middle class backgrounds encouraged their children to learn Latin, French or German, bilingualism on the part of recent immigrants was frowned upon. As today, that attitude was prompted by the existence of large ethnic communities which lay beyond the pale of the English-speaking population, out of sight but never out of mind.

The Shifting Implications of Bilingualism

During the early twentieth century, opposition to bilingualism derived strength from the then dominant scientific wisdom. Academic studies in the fields of education and psychology argued that bilingualism created failure, mental confusion and damaged the psychological wellbeing of immigrant children. Two schools of thought existed at the time: one which argued that lower intelligence caused the failure of children to acquire English, and another which argued the opposite. The first school (low intelligence: low English) based its conclusions on beliefs about genetic differences between races, arguing that heredity limited the ability of immigrants to learn. The

second school (low English: low intelligence) based its conclusions on beliefs about environmental factors, in particular the use of a foreign language at home. Intellectual failure was imputed by this school to the "linguistic confusion" of children exposed to two languages.

It was not until 1962 that these views were convincingly disproved by a methodologically sound study of the effects of bilingualism on cognitive ability. French- and English-speaking children in Canada were studied by Peal and Lambert (1962) who demonstrated that, if social class was taken into account, true bilingualism was associated with higher scores on a variety of intelligence tests (*see also* Cummins, 1981; Lambert and Tucker, 1972). True bilinguals, defined as those who could communicate competently in two languages, were shown to enjoy a greater degree of cognitive flexibility and an enhanced ability to deal with abstract concepts than their monolingual peers. Instead of creating "confusion," having two symbols for each object enhanced understanding.

Subsequent studies have generally supported the findings of Peal and Lambert's pioneer study. An analysis of a national sample of high school students in the United States, for example, found a positive correlation between academic achievement and bilingualism among Hispanic youth (Fernandez and Nielsen, 1986). More recently, a study of San Diego high school students also showed significant differences in academic performance between true bilinguals and monolinguals, as well as between true bilinguals (defined by the local school system as Fluent English Proficient) and semibilinguals (defined as Limited English Proficient). Again, true bilingualism was shown to have a positive effect on scholastic achievement (Rumbaut and Ima, 1988).

Despite accumulating factual evidence on the advantages of bilingualism, the United States is unique in the rate at which other languages have been abandoned in favor of English. Lieberson, Dalto and Johnston (1975) provide evidence showing that in no other country have foreign languages been extinguished with such speed. In the past, the typical pattern has been for the first generation to learn enough English to survive economically; the second generation continued to speak the parental tongue at home, but English in school, at work and in public life; by the third generation, the home language shifted to English, which effectively became the mother tongue for subsequent generations.

This pattern has held true for all immigrant groups in the past with the exception of some isolated minorities. As in previous periods of high immigration, the fear of nativist groups is that the pattern is about to be abandoned. Our analysis will address this issue. However, growing research evidence about the cognitive effects of bilingualism indicates that the obverse of that question should also be examined. That is, to the extent that knowledge of two languages has positive effects, it is also important to inquire

about the determinants of preservation of foreign languages. We explore both angles – English fluency and bilingualism – in the following sections.

THEORY

Possible outcomes of the clash of languages confronted by second generation youths are fairly clear. They can be arranged in a continuum ranging from full language assimilation (English monolingualism) to fluent bilingualism to full language retention (monolingualism in the parental language). Recent theoretical developments in the sociology of immigration can be brought to bear on the analysis of these outcomes insofar as they emphasize the significance of social class and social context in the adaptation of immigrant groups. Clearly, newcomers from more advantaged educational and occupational backgrounds tend to do better on the average, but often individual resources interact with the social context that receives them. Hence, immigrants who face an unfavorable governmental or societal reception may find their human capital skills seriously devalued, while those in the opposite situation may put their individual resources to full use. In addition, those who arrive into large and economically diversified coethnic communities may advance rapidly through use of the social capital that community networks make available (Massey, Goldring, and Durand, 1994; Portes and Sensenbrenner, 1993).

These general notions translate into certain expectations concerning the linguistic adaptation of second generation youths. Children growing up in sociocultural contexts where the native English-speaking majority is dominant or where immigrants from other linguistic backgrounds are most numerous will experience a faster process of home language loss and a rapid conversion to English monolingualism. Conversely, those raised in contexts where a large conational concentration exists will have greater probability of parental language preservation. In such instances, there will be a clear economic incentive to retain proficiency in that language, along with greater facilities for learning and practicing it within the community. The predicted outcome will be widespread bilingualism. Parental socioeconomic background will have contradictory effects on bilingualism because, while educated and wealthier parents may wish to transmit their language, they will also make available more opportunities for their children to enter the cultural mainstream. The prediction, in this case, is of a positive effect of family socioeconomic status on English proficiency along with an insignificant effect on parental language retention.

Finally, the passage of time will inexorably lead toward greater English proficiency and English preference and gradual abandonment of the immigrants' tongues. In this case, we draw on the American historical record to anticipate that, regardless of the size and economic power of the coethnic

community, the trend over time will be away from bilingualism. These arguments can be summarized in the following three hypotheses:

1. Language assimilation (English monolingualism) among the second generation will vary directly with demographic dispersion of the immigrant group and with length of U.S. residence.
2. Bilingualism will vary directly with demographic concentration and economic diversification of the immigrant community and inversely with length of U.S. residence.
3. Parental status will lead toward greater English proficiency, but not toward greater bilingualism due to its contradictory effects on children's cultural adaptation.

SETTING AND METHOD

The site of our study, south Florida, has been so transformed by recent immigration that several commentators have actually placed it as culturally closer to Latin America and the Caribbean than to the rest of the nation (Rieff, 1987). Miami, in particular, is home to more foreign-born residents on a proportional basis than any other American city. Cuban exiles have built a large and diversified ethnic community, which also serves as a cultural resource for other Latin American immigrants. Haitians have sought to do the same in Little Haiti, a neighborhood which lies directly adjacent to Liberty City, Miami's main African-American area. Many native-born whites have reacted to the immigrant influx and the emergence of the Cuban enclave by leaving the city or by militantly supporting the English-only movement. The result has been a debate over language more acrimonious than in other American cities (Portes and Stepick, 1993).

In 1973, county commissioners voted to declare Dade County officially bilingual. Seven years later, however, a grassroots-led referendum repealed that ordinance and replaced it with a new one stipulating that public funds could not be used to teach languages other than English or "promote a culture other than the culture of the United States" (Boswell and Curtis, 1984:121). In early 1993, however, the newly elected Dade County Commission, where Cuban Americans now comprised a plurality, rescinded the antibilingual ordinance mandating that public notices and brochures be printed in Spanish and, in certain cases, in French Creole, as well as in English. The decision triggered an immediate spate of lawsuits by opponents who argued that the county could not countermand the English-only amendment to the state constitution, passed two years earlier (Stewart, 1993).

There is little doubt that foreign languages, particularly Spanish, are widely spoken by first-generation exiles and immigrants in south Florida. This pattern parallels that followed by large immigrant groups in the past.

Italian, Polish and Jewish communities created by turn-of-the-century immigration also retained their home languages for a long time (Glazer, 1954). The central theoretical and policy question, however, is the language shift in the second generation and the effects on it of time, differential levels of ethnic clustering, and parental status. It is possible, as some nativists argue, that the extraordinary concentration of immigrants in this area is changing the historical patterns and creating instead a permanent linguistic enclave where Spanish is the predominant language. Alternatively, south Florida may simply be in the early stages of absorbing a large foreign influx which, in due time, will follow the time-honored pattern.

We examine this question on the basis of data from a survey of 2,843 eighth and ninth grade students in Miami (Dade County) and adjacent Ft. Lauderdale (Broward County) schools. Inclusion of schools in Ft. Lauderdale was dictated by the need to compare highly clustered immigrant communities in Miami with a nearby area where immigrants and their children are far more dispersed among the native population. The sample included children from the most diverse national origins although, reflecting the composition of the immigrant population to the area, the largest contingents come from Cuba, Nicaragua, other Latin American countries, Haiti and the West Indies. The survey defined "second generation" as youths born in the United States with at least one foreign-born parent or children born abroad who had lived in the United States for at least five years. The sample is evenly divided between boys and girls, and the average age is 14.8 years. The sampling design used for the survey included both inner-city and suburban schools and targeted schools where children of particular immigrant groups were known to concentrate, as well as those where immigrants of diverse nationalities were dispersed among a majority native-born population.

The questionnaire included an extensive array of items on family and individual characteristics such as the child's age, sex, national origin, place of residence, length of residence in the United States, education of the father and the mother, occupation of the father and the mother, home ownership, and class self-identification. We explore how these characteristics affect the children's proficiency in English, their knowledge of the parental language, and their overall linguistic preference. The measure of English proficiency is constructed from the students' reported ability to speak, understand, read and write English. Previous studies have indicated that self-reports of language ability, unlike other individual characteristics, are both reliable and valid (Fishman, 1969; Fishman and Terry, 1969). Students chose their ability rating from four categories (Not at All, Not Well, Well and Very Well), which were converted into an overall proficiency score. Other related questions asked about retention of the parental language and language preferences. Knowledge of the parental language is measured

with the same four self-reported indicators as knowledge of English, coded identically. Language preference is tapped with an attitudinal question asking what language the child mostly prefers to speak.

With a sample size this large, almost every relationship turns out to be statistically significant. To discriminate between substantive and trivial relationships, we use instead a coefficient of strength of association, Cramer's V^2 , selected because of its fixed range between 0 and 1. Only associations where V^2 is greater than .12 (significant at the .001 level) will be considered of empirical import. Multivariate analyses involving determinants and consequences of language proficiency employ both least square and maximum likelihood methods, described in the following sections.

RESULTS

Bivariate Relationships

The first question of interest is the extent to which today's children of immigrants coming from different national origins become proficient in English. On this point, the evidence is unmistakable. For the sample as a whole, 73 percent report that they are able to speak, understand, read, and write English "very well" and an additional 26 percent "well." This leaves the sum total of those knowing little or no English at just 1 percent. Table 1 presents cross-tabulations of English proficiency with ten characteristics. Only age, national origin and length of U.S. residence are significantly related to English proficiency. It is important to note that such differences exist only between the "well" and "very well" categories, signaling relative minor variations in English knowledge. In agreement with the first hypothesis, length of U.S. residence has the strongest association with this dependent variable. Slightly over half of foreign-born children with less than ten years in the country report knowing English very well; the figure climbs to more than 80 percent among the native-born.

National origin also has a strong correlation with English ability. In this area, the large Cuban-origin group is divided into those attending Latin-oriented bilingual private schools in Miami and those attending public schools. Differences between both groups on English knowledge are minimal. Over 70 percent of each category report knowing English very well. Highest proficiency is associated with children of European and Asian origin, grouped in the "Other Nationalities" category, and with those of West Indian parentage. The latter result is a natural consequence of the fact that most West Indian parents come from English-speaking countries such as Jamaica, Trinidad, Grenada, and the Bahamas. Second-generation Nicaraguans have the lowest English proficiency. This result is related to the relative recency of Nicaraguan migration. Very few of our Nicaraguan respondents are U.S. born and most have been in the country less than ten years.

TABLE 1
LANGUAGE KNOWLEDGE AND PREFERENCES AMONG SECOND-GENERATION YOUTHS IN SOUTH FLORIDA: 1992

Characteristic	English Proficiency				Foreign-Language Proficiency				Language Preference "I generally prefer to speak:" ^a				Totals ^b (N)	
	Not at All/ Not Well (%)	Well (%)	Very Well (%)	V ^a	Not at All/ Not Well (%)	Well (%)	Very Well (%)	V ^a	English (%)	Other Language (%)	English (%)	Other Language (%)		V ^a
Sex														
Male	1.30	28.80	69.90	0.066 (0.010)	36.00	36.90	27.10	0.064 (0.010)	81.10	18.90	81.10	18.90	0.022 (0.240)	1,367
Female	1.30	23.10	75.60		33.40	33.60	33.00		79.40	2.60	79.40	2.60		1,476
Age														
13 or younger	0.70	19.50	79.80		34.20	37.90	27.90		86.10	13.90	86.10	13.90		549
14	1.20	23.70	75.10		33.00	36.20	3.70		79.90	2.10	79.90	2.10	0.087	1,286
15	0.70	31.10	68.20	0.120 (0.001)	36.30	32.50	31.20	0.038 (0.250)	78.80	21.20	78.80	21.20		804
16 or older	5.90	35.80	58.30		39.20	31.90	28.90		72.10	27.90	72.10	27.90	0.001	204
National Origin														
Cuban (private school)	1.20	27.30	71.50		11.00	51.20	37.80		98.50	6.50	98.50	6.50		172
Cuban (public school)	0.60	23.90	75.50		27.50	4.00	32.50		81.00	19.00	81.00	19.00		991
Nicaraguan	3.10	41.70	55.10		22.10	36.40	41.40		73.90	26.10	73.90	26.10		321
Other Latin American	1.00	26.60	72.40		27.00	38.20	34.80		74.60	25.40	74.60	25.40		692
Haitian	4.60	25.70	69.70		67.80	2.40	11.80		85.50	14.50	85.50	14.50		152
West Indian	0.80	17.90	81.30	0.126 (0.001)	7.60	15.60	13.70	0.265 (0.001)	83.30	16.70	83.30	16.70	0.132 (0.001)	262
Other nationality	1.20	18.60	8.20		58.10	24.90	17.00		85.50	14.50	85.50	14.50		233
Length of U.S. Residence														
Five to nine years	2.90	4.10	57.00		24.50	32.70	42.70		7.80	29.20	7.80	29.20		660
10 years or more	0.80	28.30	7.90	0.157 (0.001)	35.40	35.20	29.40	0.120 (0.001)	77.60	22.40	77.60	22.40	0.155 (0.001)	724
U.S.-born	0.80	18.20	81.00		38.90	36.30	24.90		85.80	14.20	85.80	14.20		1,459
Place of Residence														
Miami (Dade County)	1.30	26.90	71.80	0.063 (0.010)	31.50	36.90	31.50	0.177 (0.001)	8.90	19.10	8.90	19.10	0.043 (0.030)	2,504
Fort Lauderdale (Broward County)	1.50	18.30	8.20		57.50	22.40	2.10		75.50	24.50	75.50	24.50		339
Father's Education														
Not high school graduate	1.70	3.00	68.30		3.90	36.80	32.30		77.60	22.40	77.60	22.40		634
High school graduate	1.00	25.00	74.00	0.061 (0.010)	35.50	35.50	28.90	0.031 (0.300)	81.10	18.90	81.10	18.90	0.048 (0.060)	1,010
College graduate	0.70	21.50	77.80		32.90	35.20	31.90		82.60	17.40	82.60	17.40		767
Mother's Education														
Not high school graduate	1.50	3.70	67.80		33.50	35.10	31.40		76.00	24.00	76.00	24.00		678
High school graduate	1.40	24.30	74.30	0.062 (0.001)	34.60	35.70	29.70	0.015 (0.890)	82.20	17.80	82.20	17.80	0.066 (0.010)	1,319
College graduate	0.30	22.10	77.60		32.70	36.00	31.30		81.20	18.80	81.20	18.80		633

TABLE 1 (Continued)
LANGUAGE KNOWLEDGE AND PREFERENCES AMONG SECOND-GENERATION YOUTHS IN SOUTH FLORIDA: 1992

Characteristic	English Proficiency				Foreign-Language Proficiency				Language Preference "I generally prefer to speak:"			Totals ^b (N)
	Not at All/ Not Well (%)	Well (%)	Very Well (%)	V ^a	Not at All/ Not Well (%)	Well (%)	Very Well (%)	V ^a	English (%)	Other Language (%)	V ^a	
Father's Occupational Status ^c												
Lower	0.90	30.10	69.00		33.80	35.40	30.80		78.30	21.70		957
Lower-Middle	0.90	21.60	77.50		36.00	37.30	26.80		82.50	17.50		467
Upper-Middle	0.70	18.50	80.80	0.080	28.30	34.90	36.80	0.057	81.40	18.60	0.067	421
Higher	0.70	21.10	78.20	(0.001)	34.20	38.80	27.10	(0.03)	85.20	14.80	(0.020)	436
Mother's Occupational Status ^c												
Lower	1.10	30.60	68.30		35.00	35.30	29.70		77.30	22.70		836
Lower-Middle	0.70	26.90	72.40		31.90	38.40	29.70		81.20	18.80		417
Upper-Middle	0.50	16.50	83.00	0.098	44.70	30.70	24.60	0.071	84.70	15.30	0.083	394
Higher	1.30	19.30	79.50	(0.001)	31.30	38.00	30.80	(0.010)	84.80	15.20	(0.010)	400
Class Self-Identification												
Working class or poor	2.20	33.10	64.70		32.40	35.70	31.90		74.30	25.70		586
Lower-middle class	1.50	26.70	71.90	0.079	34.10	36.10	29.80	0.023	80.30	19.70	0.079	963
Upper-middle class	0.80	21.90	77.30	(0.001)	36.10	34.20	29.70	(0.550)	82.80	17.20	(0.001)	1,294
Totals	1.30	25.90	72.80		34.60	35.20	30.20		80.20	19.80		2,843

^aCramer's V². Probability levels in parenthesis.

^bTable totals exclude missing data.

^cSEI occupational prestige scores collapsed as follows: Lower 40%="Lower;" next higher 20%="Lower-middle;" next higher 20%="Upper-middle;" top 20%="Higher:"

Associations with father's education, mother's education and class self-identification are not significant by our criterion, but they consistently follow the pattern predicted by Hypothesis 3. In every case, the higher the parental position, the better the reported command of English. Though not supporting the hypothesis, they provide some indication of a tendency in the expected direction. More counterintuitive is the relationship with age since older children show less proficiency. This pattern is attributable to the tendency of recently arrived immigrant youths to enter school at grades lower than the respective native-born age cohort. In this sample, older students generally come from non-English-speaking countries and are among the most recent arrivals. Nicaraguan children are heavily represented in this group.

However, the key story in Table 1 is the overwhelming dominance of English knowledge among children of immigrants and its strong positive association with length of residence in the United States. There is little variance in widespread fluency among the second generation, and whatever variance exists is highly responsive to the passage of time. A very different story emerges when we consider preservation of parental languages. As indicated above, foreign language proficiency was measured in an identical manner to English knowledge. The second panel of Table 1 presents cross-tabulations of this variable with the same set of individual and parental traits.

The bottom row of the panel indicates that one-third of students in the sample are already English monolinguals. The absolute number of such cases ($N=984$) far exceeds the number of children of West Indian and other English-speaking nationalities, indicating a rapid loss of parental language among non-English-speaking groups.³ Yet a comparable proportion of respondents report knowing parental languages "very well" and, hence, it is worth examining possible determinants of this difference. Among the set of potential predictors in Table 1, national origin has by far the strongest association with foreign language fluency. There is a clear difference between Latin American nationalities, on the one hand, and Haitian, West Indian and Asian/European nationalities, on the other. Reported English monolingualism among West Indian-origin students and respondents grouped in the "Other Nationalities" category is again a straightforward consequence of many of their parents being English speakers. The same is not the case, however, for Haitian-origin youths whose home language is French or Creole. Almost 70 percent of this group reports little or no

³The cutoff points for the language categories in this case are slightly below those in the first panel of Table 1, where the strong rightward skew of the English Proficiency Index led us to classify into the "well" and "very well" categories only those reporting very high proficiency. The more balanced Foreign Language Proficiency Index allows less extreme cutoff points. If the same cutoffs were used, the proportions of those reporting themselves as English monolinguals (left-most column of Table 2) would increase by 7.4% and those declaring full command of a foreign language (right-most column) would decline by 15%. The patterns of association with potential predictors in Table 1 would hold.

knowledge of these parental languages, and only 12 percent declare themselves proficient in either.

The opposite is the case among Latin American groups where foreign language loss affects only about one-fourth of respondents and drops to only 11 percent among Cuban students in private schools. Retention of the parental language (Spanish) is in part a consequence of the recency of some migrant flows such as Nicaraguans. More significantly, however, it reflects the presence of a large and diversified ethnic enclave where Spanish is the language of daily intercourse for all kinds of transactions. Respondents in private bilingual schools are mostly the children of middle-class Cuban exiles who represent the core of this ethnic economy. It is not surprising that they have the lowest propensity to give up Spanish. Combined with the pattern of responses in the first panel of Table 1, these results indicate that Cuban and other Latin American-origin youth in south Florida are mostly bilingual. These results lend support to Hypotheses 1 and 2 insofar as they predict positive effects of immigrant concentration and a diversified ethnic economy on language preservation.

The originally Cuban and now pan-Latin enclave is located in Miami (Dade County). Hence, it is possible to predict that preservation of Spanish will be significantly greater among second generation youths in this city than in adjacent Ft. Lauderdale where no similar phenomenon exists. This expectation is borne out by the results. Place of residence has the second strongest association with home language retention, with Miami respondents being almost twice as likely to be bilinguals (reporting knowing the parental language "well" or "very well") as those living in Ft. Lauderdale. The very strong influence of ethnic concentration is counteracted, however, by the passage of time. As shown in the second panel of Table 1, there is a clear monotonic relationship so that the longer the child has resided in the United States, the stronger the tendency toward English monolingualism. Among recent arrivals, 43 percent report full command of a foreign language, a figure that falls to just one-fourth among the native born. This result again supports the first and second hypotheses' prediction of a significant negative effect of time on bilingualism.

Parental education, occupational status and class self-identification have essentially no association with foreign language fluency. This result supports Hypothesis 3 which attributes it to the contradictory effects of family status on linguistic adaptation. Interviews with a sample of immigrant parents of our respondents in Miami indicate that they are consistently in favor of English language acquisition, but not at the cost of giving up their mother tongue. Those with greater resources are in a better position to implement this bilingual project, but their efforts are frequently neutralized by greater exposure of their children to mainstream culture which the same resources make possible.

Overall, these findings are in close agreement with the theoretical argument outlined previously. Children of relatively isolated immigrants – such as those living in Broward County or Asians and Europeans grouped in the “Other Nationality” category – experience a faster language transition toward monolingual English; children of relatively prosperous and highly concentrated immigrants, such as Cubans, are far more likely to retain their parental language. The passage of time significantly increases language proficiency and undermines bilingualism. Education and occupational status of immigrant parents, which could have reasonably been expected to have the opposite effect, fail to do so because of seemingly contradictory effects on linguistic adaptation.

A final variable of interest is the child’s attitude toward speaking English versus speaking the parental or other foreign language. Just because children of immigrants know English well does not guarantee that they will use it, given the choice. The evidence on this point is presented in the last panel of Table 1. Preference for English is overwhelming: 80 percent of the entire sample endorses it. Length of U.S. residence is strongly and positively correlated with English preference, but even among the most recent arrivals over 71 percent opt for English over their home languages.

National origin is also associated with language preference, but the trend here differs from those found previously. Children of Haitian and West Indian parents, as well as those grouped in the “Other Nationality” category, lean strongly toward English in a fashion congruent with their weak retention of other languages. Cubans, however, also have a very strong preference for English, in particular those attending private schools. Despite their greater reported knowledge of Spanish, over 90 percent of Cuban-origin youths prefer communicating in English. This result means that even among youths educated in bilingual schools at the core of an ethnic enclave, linguistic assimilation is proceeding with remarkable speed. Somewhat lower attachment to English is found among Nicaraguans and other Latin Americans, a probable consequence of their recency in the country, but even among these groups three-fourths endorse their new country’s language over native Spanish.

No other predictor has a significant association with this final dependent variable, although there is a clear tendency for children of better-educated and higher-status parents to prefer English. Again, however, these differences take place in the context of overwhelming language assimilation. An eloquent indicator of the trend is the absence of significant differences between students in Dade and Broward schools. This finding indicates that, whether second generation children live in an English-only environment or in one where use of Spanish is widespread, their ultimate preference for the language of the land will be the same.

Determinants of Bilingualism

The principal difference observed in our sample pertains to parental language retention rather than English acquisition. In other words, the central difference among immigrant youths is not whether they know and prefer English, but the extent to which they retain some command of the parental language. As seen previously, past studies have reported benefits of bilingualism in terms of cognitive development and academic achievement. Yet, the preceding bivariate results offer only a preliminary approach to an analysis of determinants of bilingualism since several of the predictors are themselves highly correlated.

To establish the net effect of each predictor controlling for others, we ran multivariate regressions with two different versions of the dependent variable. The first is the Foreign Language Proficiency Index, constructed in this case as the logarithm of the sum of responses to the items measuring different aspects of language ability.⁴ The effect of this logarithmic transformation is to render unstandardized regression coefficients (when small) interpretable as a proportional increase/decrease in language fluency, net of other factors. The second indicator is a dichotomous variable where "Bilingual" is defined as a respondent who is fully proficient both in English and in a foreign language.⁵ This restrictive definition seeks to identify "true" bilinguals, differentiating them from both monolinguals and those with a lesser command of a second language.

Both indicators are regressed on the same set of predictors. The first panel of Table 2 presents results of an ordinary least squares regression of the logarithmic index. Raw regression coefficients indicate the net proportional gain associated with each predictor. The second panel presents results of a logistic regression of the dichotomous indicator of bilingualism on the same array of independent variables. Coefficients in this case represent the net increase/decrease in the logarithm of the odds of being fully bilingual associated with each predictor. To clarify the meaning of these results, the column labelled Δp presents the associated probabilities.

Results in the first panel of the table reveal clearly the forces arrayed for and against bilingualism. The most significant factor in the pro-bilingual side is national origin. Latin American nationalities display, without exception, a much greater probability of retaining their parental language. The corresponding coefficients represent the approximate net gain/loss in foreign language proficiency relative to a reference category constituted, in this case, by "Other Nationalities." Cuban-origin students in public schools have, for instance, a significant advantage in foreign language knowledge

⁴The untransformed Index ranges from 1 to 12 (high).

⁵The variable is coded 1 for respondents falling into the "very well" categories in the English Proficiency and Foreign Language Proficiency panels of Table 1; all others are coded 0.

TABLE 2
DETERMINANTS OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AND FLUENT BILINGUALISM,
SECOND-GENERATION STUDENTS IN SOUTH FLORIDA

	Foreign Language Proficiency (Logged)				Fluent Bilingualism		
	b	s.e.	B ^a	p	b	s.e.	Δp ^b
Intercept	1.600	.216			-1.835	.849	
Age	-.003	.014	-.003	n.s.	-.062	.054	n.s.
Sex ^c	.118	.023	.088	.001	.467	.094	.09
City of Residence ^d	-.254	.043	-.108	.001	-.076	.1744	n.s.
Father's Education	-.007	.010	.014	n.s.	.001	.040	n.s.
Mother's Education	-.014	.010	-.029	n.s.	.650	0.39	n.s.
Father's Occupational Status ^e	-.0001	.0007	-.003	n.s.	-.0003	.003	n.s.
Class Self-Identification	.022	.025	.016	n.s.	.041	.072	n.s.
Length of U.S. Residence	-.148	.016	-.180	.001	-.196	.062	-.03
Immigrant Nationality							
Cuban (private school)	.741	.072	.219	.001	.966	.167	.21
Cuban (public school)	.532	.045	.381	.001	.526	.096	.11
Nicaraguan	.453	.055	.221	.001	.143	.141	n.s.
Other Latin American	.475	.047	.306	.001	.486	.099	.10
Haitian	.020	.064	.006	n.s.	-.959	.256	-.13
West Indian	-.683	.057	-.272	.001	-.720	.187	-.11
R	.578						
R ²	.334						
N	2,840				2,840		
-2 Log Likelihood					2,837.19		
Model Chi Square					127.42		
df					13		
P					.001		

^aStandardized regression coefficients.

^bProbability increase or decrease, computed on statistically significant coefficients only.

^cFemale=1; male=0.

^dFort Lauderdale=1; Miami=0.

^eDuncan's Socioeconomic Index Scores.

relative to statistically comparable children of other nationalities. The advantage increases among Cuban-American students attending bilingual private schools. Nicaraguan-origin children and those of other Latin nationalities are also strongly inclined to preserve their parents' Spanish. The strong negative effect of West Indian origin is again interpretable as a direct result of their coming from monolingual English households.⁶ Arrayed against foreign language knowledge are time in the country and spatial

⁶The nationality coefficients in the first panel of Table 2 are not interpretable as percent change in bilingualism for each group. This is because they are computed relative to a reference category and because they are excessively large. Their appropriate interpretation is indicative of the direction and relative strength of the effect associated with each national group.

dispersion. Children living outside of Miami have a 25 percent disadvantage in knowledge of a foreign language relative to comparable youths residing in Miami's concentrated ethnic communities. The corresponding disadvantage for the native born is 30 percent in comparison with more recent arrivals.⁷

The only unexpected effect in these results is that of gender, which indicates that girls have a significantly greater propensity for retaining the parental language than do boys of comparable characteristics. We may speculate that this result is attributable to the greater seclusion of female youngsters in the home environment which exposes them to greater contact with parents. That interpretation would represent an extension of the logic of the argument about the linguistic effects of concentrated ethnic communities, underlying Hypotheses 1 and 2.

Overall, this multivariate analysis shows that the effect of national origin is not a spurious consequence of other individual or family characteristics. There is something unique about the character of specific immigrant communities which leads to different propensities to retain their home language. This influence persists even after controlling for length of U.S. residence and location. On the other hand, as predicted, effects of parental education and occupational status are consistently insignificant. These tendencies are buttressed by results in the second panel of Table 2. They may be interpreted as influences on "true" or fluent bilingualism, defined by speaking both languages very well. Results confirm the overwhelming importance of nationality, which again has the strongest effect on this dependent variable.

In this last analysis, individual nationality effects are not computed relative to the omitted category but relative to the average effect for all categories. Looking at the probability column, we see that Cuban Americans in private schools are 21 percent more likely to be fluent bilinguals, while Haitian and West Indian-origin youths are 13 and 11 percent less likely to be so relative to the average. The Haitian effect is actually stronger, possibly reflecting less fluency in English. Similarly, Nicaraguan-origin children who, as seen above, are significantly more likely to retain their parents' language are no different from the average in their bilingual skills. As with Haitian Americans, this result reflects their greater difficulties with English. Another major difference in these results is the failure of place of residence to affect the dependent variable. This finding indicates that, while living in a less ethnic environment reduces the likelihood of retaining a foreign language, it does not by itself reduce the probability of becoming fluently bilingual. It is the character of the immigrant community – its internal

⁷As shown in Table 1, length of U.S. residence is coded as a 3-point scale: 1 = foreign born with 5 to 9 years in the United States; 2 = foreign born with more than 10 years in the United States; and 3 = native-born. Each point in this ordinal scale is associated with approximately a 15% reduction in knowledge of a foreign language.

diversity, history and cohesiveness – that seems to hold the key on whether second-generation children successfully combine two languages. On the other hand, length of residence in the country again decreases the probability of bilingualism. Jointly, these results lend qualified support to Hypothesis 2.

Finally, there is a resilient gender effect in the same direction as found previously. Among children of similar national origin and length of U.S. residence, girls are significantly more likely than boys to retain their parents' language and to become fully bilingual. This strong and unanticipated effect points to the potential importance of families and differential socialization by sex on the linguistic adaptation of immigrant youth.

Effects of Bilingualism

As seen previously, the past literature on bilingualism and its effects on academic achievement registers considerable debate. While there has been a shift from predominantly negative views toward a more positive stance, the issue has generally been researched among older immigrant groups or in other countries. There is so far little information about the potential academic effects of bilingualism among the new second generation in the United States. We approach this issue by considering the relationship between fluent bilingualism and four dependent variables. The first two are individual scores of our respondents on the Stanford mathematics and reading performance tests, drawn from school records. The others are educational and occupational aspirations measured by items in the survey questionnaire.

All variables were measured contemporaneously, and hence it is not possible to speak strictly of effects of bilingualism since the direction of causation is not always clear. However, the key issue in the literature has been the net sign of the relationship between communicating in two languages and academic performance, and this can be addressed with the data at hand. We approach the question through a multivariate framework with a focus on the net relationship of each dependent variable with fluent bilingualism, controlling for other predictors, including knowledge of English. Table 3 presents the results of this analysis.

The first columns of the table present the relationship between the latest available math scores for each respondent, in Stanford test percentiles, and the independent variables. For this analysis, the Knowledge of English Index is allowed to vary through its full untransformed range (1 to 12). Bilingualism is the same dichotomy described previously with 1 representing fluent bilinguals. Other variables in the equation include age and sex, place and length of U.S. residence, parental education, and paternal occupation measured in Duncan SEI prestige scores. Because of its potential significance as a predictor, we also

TABLE 3

DETERMINANTS OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS AND ASPIRATIONS, SECOND-GENERATION YOUTHS IN SOUTH FLORIDA^a

Predictors	Math Scores			Reading Scores			Educational Aspirations			Occupational Aspirations		
	b	s.e.	p	b	s.e.	p	b	s.e.	p	b	s.e.	p
Age	-3.747	.672	.001	-2.000	.583	.001	-.062	.021	.005	-.848	.297	.005
Sex ^b	-.187	1.100	n.s.	-.659	.954	n.s.	.151	.035	.001	3.551	.486	.001
Length of U.S. Residence	.174	.701	n.s.	2.077	.608	.001	.021	.022	n.s.	-.317	.309	n.s.
City of Residence ^c	-9.809	1.939	.001	3.745	1.681	.03	.087	.061	n.s.	.295	.856	n.s.
Father's Education	1.023	.483	.04	1.308	.419	.002	.066	.015	.001	.334	.213	n.s.
Mother's Education	1.914	.478	.001	1.753	.414	.001	.068	.015	.001	.349	.211	n.s.
Father's Occupational Status	.128	.033	.001	.128	.029	.001	.001	.001	n.s.	.022	.015	n.s.
Hours of Homework	2.981	.422	.001	1.799	.366	.001	.129	.013	.001	.891	.186	.001
Knowledge of English	2.341	.468	.001	4.828	.406	.001	.084	.015	.001	.749	.206	.001
Bilingual	3.087	1.347	.03	1.577	1.168	n.s.	.151	.042	.001	1.297	.594	.03
Intercept	60.748	12.824		-23.466	11.124		2.764	.406		51.327	5.660	
R	.345			.414			.373			.252		
R ²	.119			.171			.139			.063		
N	2,349			2,349			2,349			2,349		

^aOrdinary least squares regressions.

^bFemale=1; male=0.

^cFort Lauderdale=1; Miami=0.

include hours of homework as a control. This is a five-point measure ranging from "less than 1 hour daily" to "five hours or more."

Most predictors have significant effects in the expected direction. In the interest of brevity, we focus exclusively on those of language knowledge. The effect of knowledge of English is very strong, exceeding four times its standard error. Each extra point in this index yields a 2.3 percentile gain in math scores. Yet even after controlling for English fluency, bilingualism retains a significant positive relationship with the dependent variable. According to these results, bilingual students who are comparable in all other characteristics to those who have lost fluency in the parental language have a small but significant advantage in math performance.

The same is not the case for reading ability. Since the test measures ability to read in English, it is not surprising that the Knowledge of English Index has the strongest effect, dwarfing those of other predictors. By itself, this result essentially signals the validity of the Index. It is worth noting, however, that the zero-order relationship between bilingualism and reading performance is positive and significant and that the net effect, although statistically weak, retains a positive sign.

The last two panels of Table 3 present regressions of educational and occupational aspirations. The first is based on responses to the question: "What is the highest level of education that you realistically expect to get?" Answers were coded along a five-point scale from "less than college" to "graduate degree." The second is based on the question, "What occupation do you plan to have as an adult?" Responses were transformed into continuous SEI occupational prestige scores. Results indicate that English knowledge and hours of school homework both have positive and sizable effects on aspirations. Net of them, however, bilingualism retains a significant and positive relationship with both dependent variables.

Past research in the sociology of education has found aspirations to be a reliable predictor of subsequent achievement (Haller and Portes, 1973; Sewell and Hauser, 1972; Kerckhoff and Campbell, 1977). To the extent that this continues to be the case, fluent bilingualism represents a net advantage for immigrant youth since it is associated with both higher present achievements and more ambitious plans for the future. These results lend support to the recent literature that views the ability to speak a foreign language as adding to, not subtracting from children's chances for educational success (Rumbaut and Ima, 1988; Figueroa and Garcia, 1994).

CONCLUSION

English is alive and well in south Florida. Miami is the American city most heavily affected on a proportional basis by recent immigration and, hence, the one where the demise of English predicted by nativist organizations

should be most evident. Our results indicate that such fears are exaggerated. Children of immigrants not only possess widespread competence in English, but also demonstrate an unambiguous preference for it in everyday communication.

Children raised in the core of the Spanish-speaking Miami community (those attending bilingual private schools) are actually the most enthusiastic in their preference for the language of the land. Moreover, the passage of time in the country strongly influences linguistic assimilation leading to a rapid shift toward English.

These results indicate that, contrary to nativist fears, what is at risk in this area is the preservation of some competence in the languages spoken by immigrant parents. Our results support those of prior research indicating that fluent bilingualism is an intellectual and cultural resource. In this sense, the rapid transition toward monolingualism represents a loss. Even highly educated immigrant parents do not stand much of a chance of transmitting their language to their children. Their illusions of communicating with their children and grandchildren in their native language will come to naught for the most part. Nativist fears that they will be able to do so to the detriment of English dominance are entirely unfounded. Results of the study indicate that only in places where immigrant groups concentrate and manage to sustain a diversified economic and cultural presence will their languages survive past the first generation. In the absence of policies promoting bilingualism, even these enclaves will be engulfed, in all probability, in the course of two or three generations.

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