



Intergenerational Language Shift of Hispanic Americans

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Research Question

What factors causes language loss among Hispanic Americans, and what factors support language maintenance?

Among immigrant Hispanics, two-thirds (65%) say they use Spanish when they think, 15% say they use English, and 18% say they use both English and Spanish. By the second generation, use of English rises to 63% and use of Spanish falls to 18%. By the third generation, eight-in-ten (80%) Latinos say they think in English, 13% say they think in Spanish, and 7% say they think in both languages equally” (Pew Research Center)

Found 3 main factors through linguistic research and case studies that contribute to language loss

01

English School
System

02

Societal
Influence

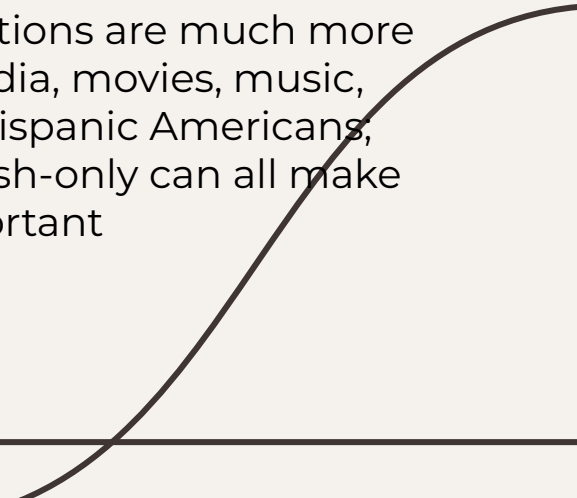
03

Economic
Pressures

English School System

- Emphasis on English only instruction, often without bilingual support (which has been proven to slow the rate of Spanish language decline)
- English-only standardized testing is critical for success.
- Second language instruction is often not introduced until high school, but instead of a program of instruction that recognizes the language abilities they do possess and builds upon that, the language instruction will most likely be geared toward a one-size-fits-all approach with students progressing through the same material in a manner that neither engages nor meets linguistic needs of students who already speak another language.

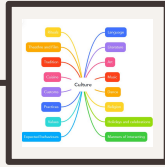
Societal Influence

- Hispanic Americans often feel ashamed if they don't speak English "well enough"; Americans can be very hostile towards languages that aren't English.
 - Many Hispanic immigrant parents who experienced discrimination and humiliation for their limited English skills then choose to raise their children to speak English in and outside the home.
 - Media consumption, peer pressure, and day-to-day interactions influence language maintenance. Younger generations are much more immersed in the English digital world of social media, movies, music, and online content than previous generations of Hispanic Americans, consuming all of these different mediums in English-only can all make their heritage language seem irrelevant or unimportant
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Economic Pressures

- The use of Spanish can subject a person to significant disadvantages, including "the loss of a job, instant scapegoating and identification as an outsider" (Valdes 253)
- The labor market, while presenting bilingualism as an ideal, also serves to reinforce the notion among parents that the mastery of English is the most important in terms of the labor market success of Latino children."
- Consequently, many parents prioritize English language acquisition, viewing it as essential for their children's professional success and upward mobility in an English-dominant job market. This often leads families to make the difficult choice to emphasize English, viewing heritage language maintenance as a luxury they cannot afford in their pursuit of financial stability.

Language Maintenance



Creating spaces where
Hispanic culture feels safe and
celebrated



Reforming education to include
immersion programs and
bilingual support



Family dynamics and support

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Questions?
