Barrio Logan

Barrio Logan is the Mexican enclave of San Diego where Mexican heritage and identity are tightly interwoven into the community’s history and culture. Due to its dense immigrant presence, geographic location, and unique cultural environment, it may be assumed that it provides a setting conducive for preserving the Spanish language.

Research Questions

- Is Barrio Logan challenging traditional patterns of language loss by fostering Spanish language maintenance to be socio-economic, and demographic factors?
- Is the Vitality of Spanish strong enough to sustain its linguistic survival beyond the 2nd and 3rd generations?

Theoretical Framework

The Vitality of Spanish in Barrio Logan

Chicano Park

Chicano Park is a space for recreation, a safe haven where residents feel the power of community, and where language usage reflects its vibrant bilingualism. The park has a profound historical significance to the local community due to the struggles endured to achieve it. It is also with 15-foot tall murals painted on pillars that hold up Interstate 5 and the Coronado Bridge which convey a message about the community’s history and struggles painted by Chicano artists and groups. The park illustrates the historical and deep ties Mexican culture and heritage have to the community. The language on many murals is in Spanish, reflecting the significance of the ethnic tongue in facilitating community unity and mobilization.

Illustrative Data and Analysis

Socioeconomic Characteristics of Barrio Logan & California

Table I: Educational Attainment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Barrio Logan</th>
<th>California</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High School Graduate or Higher</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>78.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree or Higher</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than High School</td>
<td>33.7%</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table II: Ethnic Classification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Barrio Logan</th>
<th>California</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>74.7%</td>
<td>32.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>90.7%</td>
<td>77.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Identified or Not Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
<td>67.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Table III: Foreign Born Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Barrio Logan</th>
<th>California</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>47,416</td>
<td>33,071,646</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Born</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>26.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Born from Latin America</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
<td>55.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Ethnolinguistic Vitality of Spanish in Barrio Logan

- It is probable to posit a Mexican identity and heritage without incorporating the Spanish Language
- Younger generations are redefining what it means to be Mexican-American and which elements of the ethnic culture need to be embraced and reproduced to claim a Mexican identity
- Observations indicate the overall vitality of Spanish in the community in Low Medium as Spanish seems to be taking on a more symbolic value for the 2nd and 3rd generations of Mexican-Americans rather than remaining an active and necessary component of the Mexican part of their identity

Conclusions

Factors Favoring Spanish Maintenance

- Low Socioeconomic Status creates social conditions that foster Spanish Language
- Social networks, low cost of living, and employment opportunities attract low monolingual immigrants
- Community culture creates an environment where Mexican identity and heritage is continually promoted and reified
- Demographic Support for Spanish preservation
  - 74% of the population in the Barrio Logan area is Mexican-origin
  - 72% of the population speaks a foreign language at home

Spanish as a tool for Civic Mobilization

- Efforts of gentrification have triggered civic engagement among 1st and 2nd generation women
- Bilingual use of Spanish to connect with monolingual in an effort to raise awareness, educate, & empower
- Spanish serves as a symbol of solidarity and facilitates the creation of a sense of belonging

- Spanish is a supplemental resource compensating for the lack of traditional resources such as financial or material capital

Factors Disfavoring Spanish Maintenance

- 1st Generation Compounding
  - Almost 2/3 of the 1st generation members are long-term residents
  - Approximately 1/3 of the 1st generation are recent arrivals between 1980-March of 2000
  - 14% of population are newcomers who usually re-identified the communities customs and language
- Racialization of ethnicity
  - San Diego’s redevelopment program has created new commercial and office spaces, a ballpark, and housing developments that triggered the revitalization of key areas, excluding Logan Heights

- Impact on Barrio increased rents, unaffordable housing units, pushing out of small locally owned and operated businesses by high-end grocery retail, and zoning facilities

- Residents are being pushed out of Barrio Logan due to job losses, increased housing costs, and financial hardships resulting from the revitalization program

- Gentrification is causing the displacement of Spanish-speaking residents as they are forced to relocate

- Foreign Language Spoken at Home in Barrio Logan
  - Population 5 years and older: 42.4%

Mexican Identity in Barrio Logan

- Majority of Spanish speakers at home are adults over the age of 50
- Minority of Spanish speakers at home are children between ages 5-17
- Language preferences of children are key factors in the survival potential of the ethnic tongue

- Approximately 1/3 of the youth speaks Spanish at home implying the Spanish of Spanish is in the hands of 3 out of 25 children

Language and California

- Spanish ranks 1st among foreign languages spoken in California
- 25% of foreign language speakers speak Spanish
- 92.7% of the Spanish-speaking population are minors ages 5-17
- 1 out of 10 adult Californians can understand or speak Spanish

- Approximately 3 out of 10 minors speak Spanish

- Understanding the linguistic behavior of the Mexican American generation in Barrio Logan may provide insight into the linguistic assimilation process the Spanish speaking population of California may potentially follow and the future of Spanish in the state