

Linguistic Life Expectancies: Immigrant Language Retention in Southern California

RUBÉN G. RUMBAUT

DOUGLAS S. MASSEY

FRANK D. BEAN

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH generally supports the view that Latin Americans in the United States assimilate linguistically. Studies using data from the US Census and other official statistics (Alba and Nee 2003; see also Alba et al. 2002; Bean and Stevens 2003), as well as investigations based on longitudinal surveys conducted among the children of immigrants (Portes and Rumbaut 2001, 2006), reveal a quick shift to English fluency, if not outright dominance, between the first and second generations. Nevertheless, research on immigrant language retention has been hampered by a lack of data on language use or ability broken down by generation. Surveys that focus on the children of immigrants, by definition, permit only a contrast between first and second generations. Moreover, because the US Census Bureau eliminated the question on parents' place of birth after 1970, it is no longer possible to distinguish generations using census data, forcing researchers into crude native-born/foreign-born comparisons.

In his controversial book *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity*, Samuel P. Huntington (2004) argued that the arrival of Latin American immigrants in large numbers during the last three decades of the twentieth century threatens the core of American identity and culture in the twenty-first century. According to Huntington, Latin American immigrants are much less likely to speak English than earlier generations of European immigrants because they all speak a common language; they are regionally concentrated and residentially segregated within Spanish-speaking enclaves; they are less interested in linguistic and cultural assimilation; and they are encouraged in this lack of interest by activists who foment identity politics. He is particularly pessimistic about the prospects of Mexi-

can American linguistic assimilation: "If the second generation does not reject Spanish out of hand, the third generation is also likely to be bilingual, and the maintenance of fluency in both languages is likely to become institutionalized in the Mexican-American community" (2004: 232). According to Huntington, "There is no *Americano* dream. There is only the American dream created by an Anglo-Protestant society. Mexican-Americans will share in that dream and in that society only if they dream in English" (ibid.: 256).

Although Huntington's thesis was widely dismissed by scholars, including the authors of this study (see Massey 2004; Bean, Brown, and Rumbaut 2006), it nonetheless achieved widespread public diffusion and has been tacitly accepted in many circles. In this article we make use of two new surveys to test Huntington's assertion of linguistic retention among persons of Latin American as well as Asian origin, by far the two largest sources of immigration to the United States over the past 40 years. Data on the degree to which immigrants and their descendants in different generational cohorts are able to speak their mother tongue and actually do so are used to derive linguistic "survival curves" across the generations. These survival curves yield "mortality rates" to which we can apply life table methods to develop "linguistic life expectancies"—the average number of generations a mother tongue can be expected to survive in the United States after the arrival of an immigrant. In doing so, we hope to provide the public with an intuitively appealing way of understanding that Spanish in no way constitutes a threat to the continued predominance of English within the United States.

This exercise is not carried out as a technical analysis of a survival process in the usual demographic sense. Rather, it adapts a well-known demographic technique to make a heuristic point: that those who worry about linguistic balkanization because of heavy immigration from Spanish-speaking countries have nothing to fear, because use of Spanish dies out rapidly across the generations, even in the area of highest Hispanic immigrant concentration in the United States.

The surveys we use were conducted in Southern California, a region adjacent to the Mexican border that was not only the country's largest net receiver of immigrants during the period 1970–2005, but one that also contained more Spanish-speakers and persons of Mexican origin than any other megalopolitan area and displayed a rising level of Hispanic residential segregation (Massey and Denton 1987; Iceland, Weinberg, and Steinmetz 2002). By the year 2000 one of every five immigrants in the United States resided in the region's six contiguous counties (San Diego, Orange, Los Angeles, Ventura, Riverside, and San Bernardino), including the largest communities of Mexicans, Salvadorans, Guatemalans, Filipinos, Vietnamese, Taiwanese, Koreans, Iranians, and Cambodians outside of their countries of origin. In the Los Angeles metropolitan area alone, according to Current Population Survey estimates, by the year 2000 the Mexican-origin population exceeded 5 mil-

lion persons, including some 2.2 million born in Mexico, 2 million born in the United States of Mexican-born parents, and another million who were third generation or higher. In the huge television market of Greater Los Angeles in the summer of 2005, nine of the ten most-watched prime-time programs were broadcast in Spanish by KMEX, the Univisión channel (see López 2005). For these reasons our analysis offers a “hard test” of Huntington’s hypothesis. If speaking Spanish does not persist across immigrant generations in the urban corridor stretching from San Diego on the Mexican border to Los Angeles, then it probably will not persist in other communities throughout the United States.

Data and measures

We draw our data from two sources: the Immigration and Intergenerational Mobility in Metropolitan Los Angeles (IIMMLA) survey, and the third wave of the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS) in San Diego. For purposes of this analysis the two data sets were merged ($N=5,703$), since they are based on representative samples of respondents evenly divided by sex, of the same approximate age (28.6 years for IIMMLA respondents and 24.2 years for CILS) and national origin (Mexicans, Salvadorans, Guatemalans, Filipinos, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Koreans make up 78 percent of the merged sample, and other Latin American and Asian nationalities 10 percent), who were surveyed at about the same time (IIMMLA in 2004, CILS in 2001–03) in the same metropolitan region (the six contiguous Southern California counties). The merged data sets reflect the diversity of contemporary immigration (immigrants and refugees, laborers and professionals, documented and undocumented) and include significant subsamples of the least-educated and poorest immigrants from Latin America (particularly from Mexico, El Salvador, and Guatemala) and Southeast Asia (especially from Laos and Cambodia).

The focus in both surveys was on patterns of adaptation, including language assimilation, of adult children of contemporary immigrants—both those who were born abroad and arrived in the United States as children (the 1.5 generation) and those who were born in the United States of immigrant parents (the second generation). The two surveys used identical measures of English and non-English language proficiency and preference, and of other relevant variables. By merging the two data sets we thus gain larger sample sizes for significant subgroups and greater precision and reliability for our estimates of linguistic life expectancies by group and generation.

The IIMMLA survey

The IIMMLA was a telephone survey conducted in 2004 among targeted random samples of 1.5, 2nd, and selected 3rd and higher generation adults

in the five-county Los Angeles metropolitan area, which encompasses Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura counties (Rumbaut et al. 2005). For purposes of sample design, eligible adult immigrants were defined as “1.5 generation” if they came to the United States to live before the age of 15; as “2nd generation” if they were born in the United States and had at least one parent who was foreign-born; and as “3rd+ generation” if both they and their parents were US-born but had one or more foreign-born grandparents.

Before the start of interviewing, targeted quotas for ten ethnic strata were established for eligible respondents aged 20 to 40 years in the five-county area, placing special emphasis on the largest and most significant group—the Mexican-origin population. The IIMMLA also sampled a strategic handful of other large immigrant and refugee origin-groups that were expected to differ in their modes of incorporation into US society, including Chinese, Filipinos, Koreans, and Vietnamese, along with Salvadorans and Guatemalans taken together. All groups were assigned a separate sampling stratum for 1.5 and 2nd generation respondents and targeted quotas of 3rd+ generation respondents were also established for Mexicans, non-Hispanic whites (hereafter simply whites), and non-Hispanic blacks (not used in this analysis, since they consist overwhelmingly of fourth or higher generation African Americans who speak English only). The final design called for completing approximately 4,700 closed-ended telephone interviews with random samples of eligible respondents: about 3,500 with 1.5 and 2nd generation respondents and around 1,200 with 3rd+ generation respondents.

Multi-frame sampling procedures were used to improve the chances of finding and interviewing members of targeted populations. The first stage used random digit dialing (RDD) to sample and screen households in the five-county area, and using this approach the IIMMLA was able to complete sample quotas for Mexicans, whites, and blacks of all generations. For other groups, samples were compiled using RDD until the incidence rates of eligible respondents became prohibitively low. At this point, more specific geographic and race-ethnic sampling frames were used, targeting RDD to households in high-density Asian residential areas and those on lists of Chinese, Filipino, Korean, and Vietnamese surnames.

The surveys were administered in English or Spanish using a computer-assisted telephone interviewing system. In total 4,655 interviews were completed between the start of full-scale interviewing in April 2004 and its conclusion in October 2004. Of these, 2,822 (61 percent) were derived from interviews using solely first-stage RDD sampling, while 1,833 (39 percent) resulted from interviews using the augmented samples. To achieve this, 263,783 different telephone numbers were dialed at least once, including 122,984 listings from the first-stage RDD sampling frame and 140,799 from the augmented samples. These calls resulted in the identification of 10,893

adults meeting the eligibility requirements of one of the ten targeted sample subgroups. Efforts were made to complete interviews with 8,815 of these adults (in 2,078 cases the quota for the subgroup had already been filled). The number of questions asked varied by generational status, yielding an average interview length of 27 minutes for 3rd+ generation respondents, 32 minutes for those in the 2nd generation, and 34 minutes for those in 1.5 generation.

The CILS survey

For more than a decade the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study followed the progress of a large panel of youths representing several dozen nationalities in two main areas of immigrant settlement in the United States: Southern California (San Diego) and South Florida (the Miami and Fort Lauderdale metropolitan area). The baseline survey, conducted in spring 1992, interviewed eligible students enrolled in the eighth and ninth grades of all schools in the San Diego Unified School District (N=2,420). (A parallel sample was drawn from the Dade and Broward County Unified School Districts, but we ignore the South Florida sample.) The sample was drawn in the junior high school grades, where dropping out of school is rare, to avoid the potential bias of differential dropout rates between ethnic groups that are found at the senior high school level. Students were eligible to enter the sample if they were US-born but had at least one immigrant (foreign-born) parent, or if they themselves were foreign-born and had come to the United States before age 13. The resulting sample was evenly balanced between males and females and between foreign-born and US-born children of immigrants. Reflecting the geographical clustering of recent immigration, the principal nationalities represented in the San Diego sample (as is largely the case in the IIMMLA sample) are Mexican, Filipino, Vietnamese, Laotian, Cambodian, Chinese, and smaller groups of other children of immigrants from Asia (mostly Korean, Japanese, and Indian) and Latin America (most of the Spanish-speaking countries of Central and South America and the Caribbean).

Three years later, a second survey of the same panel of children of immigrants was conducted. By this time the youths, who were originally interviewed when most were 14 or 15 years old, were now 17 to 18 years old and had reached the final year of high school (or had dropped out of school). The follow-up survey in San Diego succeeded in reinterviewing 2,063 or 85.2 percent of the baseline sample, with almost identical proportions of males and females, of native-born and foreign-born youth, of US citizens and noncitizens, and of main nationalities. There was a slight tendency for children from intact families (both parents present) to be over-represented in the follow-up survey; all other differences were statistically insignificant (Portes and Rumbaut 2001: 25–31).

During 2001–03, a decade after the original survey, a final follow-up was conducted. The respondents now ranged from 23 to 27 years of age, and most had to be contacted individually in their places of work or residence. Tracking the sample after an interim period of six to seven years was made possible by two factors: first, the availability in our data files of information on Social Security numbers, birth dates, and last known addresses of respondents and their parents; second, the rise of Internet services able to conduct confidential searches on the basis of this type of information, supplemented by other retrieval methods. Mailed questionnaires (which included detailed questions on language use, proficiency, and preference) were the principal source of completed data in this third survey. Respondents were also interviewed by phone when possible; trained interviewers visited respondents for whom no telephone numbers were known, but whose last known address or that of their parents was available. Over a period of more than 24 months of fieldwork, CILS-III in San Diego retrieved complete or partial information on 70 percent of the original sample and 82 percent of the first follow-up sample.

We focus on the 1,502 cases from the San Diego sample for which we have complete survey data over the span of a decade. Unlike the first follow-up, where effects of sample attrition were negligible, the time elapsed between the last two surveys and the significant sample attrition indicate the need for adjusting results for sample selection bias. Family composition and early academic performance were the chief predictors of presence/absence in the CILS-III sample in San Diego. Preliminary runs indicate, however, that adjusted averages do not differ significantly from those unadjusted for this source of error, specifically with respect to language outcomes that are the focus of this analysis. (For details on CILS-III, see Portes and Rumbaut 2005.)

To analyze linguistic variation across the generations, we defined generational categories following the approach of Rumbaut (2004). Those born outside the United States comprise the *first generation*, divided into two cohorts based on their age at arrival: the 1.0 generation of immigrants who arrived as adults (whom we ignore in this analysis), and the 1.5 generation of those who arrived as children (here restricted to those who arrived in the United States before age 15). The US-born *second generation* is also divided into two cohorts: members of the 2.0 generation were born in the United States of two foreign-born parents, whereas members of the 2.5 generation were born in the United States of one foreign-born parent and one US-born parent. The *third generation* consists of US-born persons with two US-born parents, among whom we distinguish the 3.0 cohort (those with three or four foreign-born grandparents) from the 3.5 cohort (with only one or two foreign-born grandparents). Finally, those in the *fourth generation* are respondents whose parents and grandparents were all born in the United States.

We do not claim that belonging to generation 1.0 versus 1.5, or 2.0 versus 2.5 is identical to moving from some exact age to another in a standard life table. Rather, for heuristic purposes, we adopt the notion that generational intervals as used here constitute meaningful representations of time in the life of a foreign language. We then apply life table methods to assess how long use of foreign languages could be expected to last in the United States if these intervals were equal in the same sense as exact years of age or precise birth intervals. We knowingly adopt a useful fiction to make a point: that the United States retains its historical reputation as a “graveyard for languages.”

Table 1 shows the number of IIMMLA and CILS respondents (N=5,703) broken down by generation for the main groups used in this analysis (all except non-Hispanic blacks). For all groups except Mexicans and European whites, immigration is so recent that sampling is infeasible beyond the 2.5 generation. Indeed, for those seven groups without exception, more than 70 percent of their total population in the United States is foreign-born, and of the remainder nearly all belong to the US-born second generation. For those groups and their descendants in Southern California, members of the fourth generation have not yet been born, and members of the third generation are small in number and still in infancy or childhood. Thus, Mexicans offer the strongest test of Huntington’s hypothesis; and clearly, by his frequent mention of their situation and population size in the United States, they were the group most salient in his mind. In total, the merged IIMMLA and CILS data set used in this analysis contains 1,642 respondents of Mexican origin above the 1.0 generation. All of the cell sizes for Mexicans are large enough to provide robust estimates of linguistic life expectancies.

TABLE 1 Numerical distribution of the IIMMLA–CILS merged sample by population group and generation

Group	Generational cohort						Total
	1.5	2.0	2.5	3.0	3.5	4.0	
White European	81	83	117	18	108	291	698
Mexican	423	578	240	48	164	189	1,642
Salvadoran–Guatemalan	181	182	17				380
Other Latin American	91	93	56				240
Filipino	411	446	126				983
Vietnamese	434	148	8				590
Chinese	235	170	28				433
Korean	257	133	18				408
Other Asian	232	70	27				329
Total	2,345	1,903	637	66	272	480	5,703

NOTE: For definitions of generational cohorts see text.

Linguistic survival curves

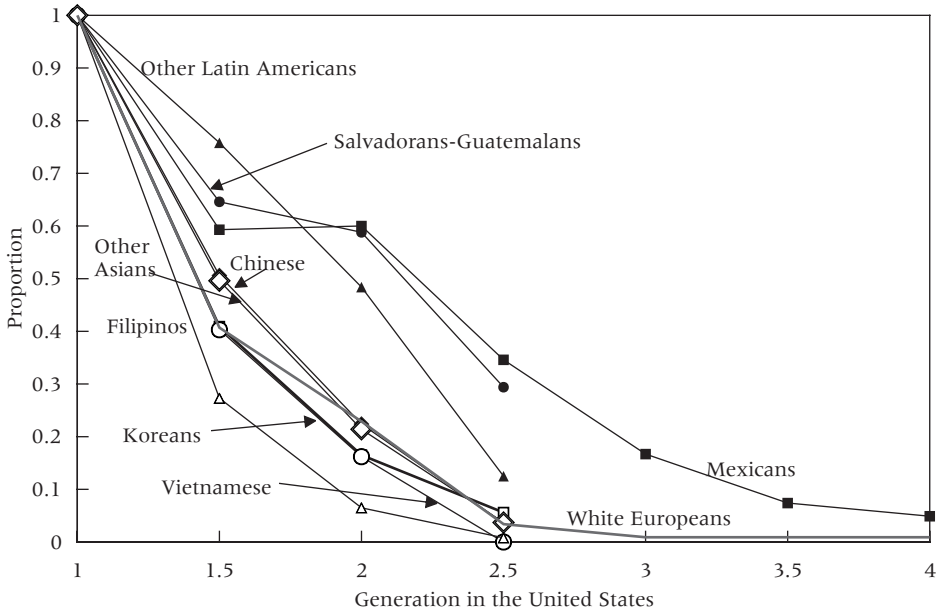
We measure the “survival” of immigrants’ mother tongues using answers to two survey questions. The first asked how well a respondent spoke the language of his or her ancestors, and those who did not answer “very well” were assigned the equivalent of a linguistic death certificate. We consider the mother tongue “dead” in the sense that the respondent has lost the ability to speak it fluently. The second question asked which language the respondent preferred to speak in the household. If the respondent answered “English,” then the mother tongue was also considered to have “died” because it was no longer used within the intimate confines of family life.

Those two criteria are reasonable predictors of language death. Other data from the IIMMLA and CILS surveys show that the children of immigrants are much more likely to lose their ability to read or write a non-English language than their ability to speak it, and that, once literacy in a language dies, the remaining level of fluency is much more likely to diminish over time and bilingualism becomes increasingly rare. Moreover, it is in the home where a non-English mother tongue is most likely to be used, especially with immigrant parents who arrived as adults; among the 1.5 and higher generations in Southern California, communication with coworkers, close friends, and even spouses and children is far more likely to take place in English.

Figure 1 shows linguistic survival curves defined according to the first criterion. The x-axis specifies generations spent in the United States in increments of 0.5, and the y-axis indicates the proportion of group members still speaking the mother tongue very well—that is, the proportion among whom language fluency has “survived.” Given the sheer number and density of Spanish-language speakers in Southern California, and the long history of Mexican settlement, we would expect the generational survival curves for Spanish-speaking groups to be above those of Asians and white Europeans, and this is indeed the case. At each generational point from 1.5 to 2.5 the proportion speaking Spanish is higher than the proportion speaking any of the other mother tongues. In generation 2.5, 35 percent of Mexicans, 29 percent of Salvadorans and Guatemalans, and 13 percent of other Latin Americans still speak Spanish very well. In contrast, the proportion speaking the mother tongue very well in generation 2.5 does not exceed 6 percent for any other group.

In the third generation and beyond, we can only compare Mexicans and European whites. Despite the strong retention of the mother tongue among Mexicans through generation 2.5 (35 percent compared with just 3 percent of white Europeans), thereafter the survival curves begin to converge. At generation 3.0 only 17 percent of Mexicans still speak fluent Spanish and at 3.5 the figure drops to 7 percent. By the time we arrive at the fourth generation, the proportion of Mexicans who speak Spanish very well

FIGURE 1 Proportion of immigrant group members who speak mother tongue very well by generation

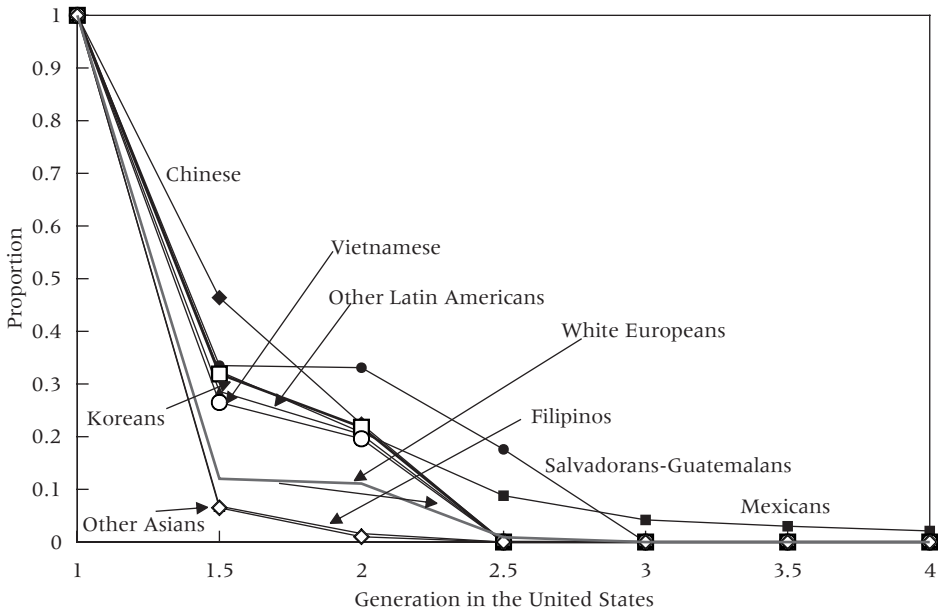


is just 5 percent, compared to around 1 percent of white Europeans who speak their mother tongue very well. In other words, given the linguistic death rates prevailing in Southern California, Mexican immigrants arriving today can expect only 5 of every 100 of their great grandchildren to speak fluent Spanish.

Linguistic ability is not linguistic use, however, and although some descendants of Mexican immigrants retain the basic ability to speak Spanish, they may prefer to use English in most settings. If they prefer to speak English at home, for example, they are not likely to prefer Spanish in other settings and probably will only use it when the social situation appears to require a linguistic shift. Figure 2 presents survival curves where the “death” of the mother tongue occurs when a respondent in a particular generation states that he or she prefers to speak English at home. Although, even according to this definition, Mexicans and Central Americans continue to display elevated survival curves compared with other groups, they no longer stand out as visually distinct in the graph, and other Latin Americans display a curve that is indistinguishable from that of Vietnamese or Koreans. Even among Mexicans, by the third generation 96 percent prefer to speak English at home.

Thereafter the graph levels off, with just 3 percent continuing to express a preference for Spanish. Put another way, the probability is 97 percent that the great grandchildren of Mexican immigrants will not speak Spanish. If the vast majority of Mexicans in Southern California cannot retain

FIGURE 2 Proportion of immigrant group members who speak mother tongue at home by generation



fluency in Spanish or a preference for its household use beyond the third generation, then its survival prospects elsewhere in the United States are probably at least as dim. Contrary to Huntington’s assertions, even in the nation’s largest Spanish-speaking enclave, within a border region that historically belonged to Mexico, Spanish appears to be well on the way to a natural death by the third generation of US residence.

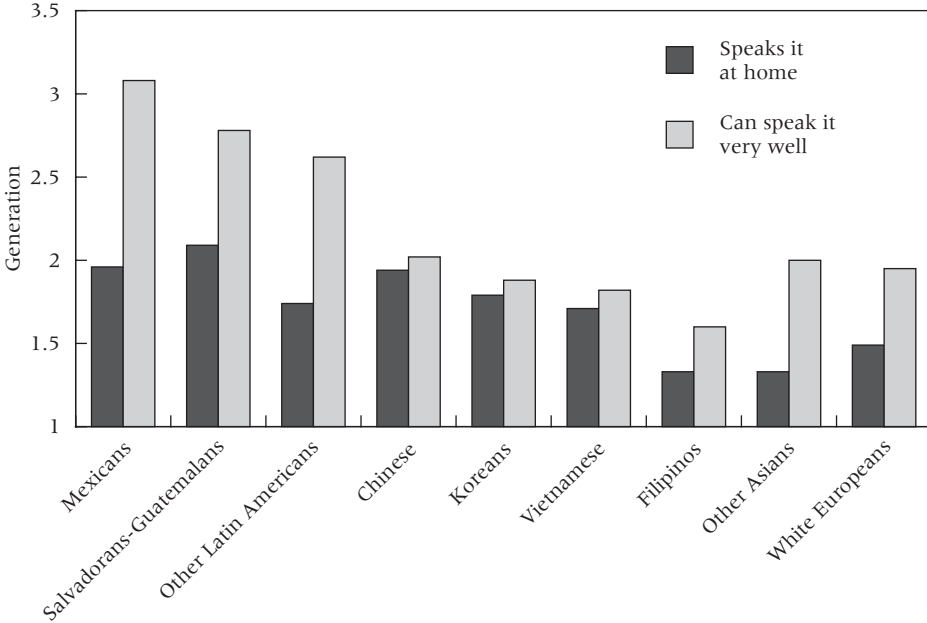
Generational life expectancies

In order to compare the survival prospects for different mother tongues among groups using a simple and easily interpretable metric, we employed life table methods to compute linguistic life expectancies based on the survival curves shown in Figures 1 and 2. In doing so, we follow a hypothetical cohort of ethnic group members as they “age” across the generations and experience the linguistic mortality rates prevailing in Southern California according to the IIMMLA and CILS data. Rather than a person aging year to year, duration here is measured in terms of half-generation increments. A language is “born” in the United States with the arrival of first-generation immigrants, and it then survives over time to the extent that people in subsequent generations continue to retain the ability to speak it and use it within their households.

We can extend the analogy between human life and death and linguistic life and death by applying the classic formulas of the life table (see Preston, Heuveline, and Guillot 2000) to compute “generational life expectancies” for the mother tongues spoken by different immigrant groups in Southern California. The only complete generational survival curves, of course, are for Mexicans and white Europeans. To permit computations of life expectancies among other immigrant origins, we linearly extrapolate the most recent half generation; and once the curve falls below a survival threshold of 0.05, we close out the life table in the next half-generational segment. The resulting life expectancies give the average number of generations a foreign language can be expected to survive within the cultural and linguistic milieu of contemporary Southern California.

The bar chart in Figure 3 shows the life expectancies for the mother tongues of the various origin groups studied to this point. For each group, the left-hand bar shows the life expectancy computed when death is defined to occur when the respondent no longer prefers to speak the language at home, and the right-hand bar shows the life expectancy computed when the respondent reports he or she cannot speak it very well. As can be seen, irrespective of which definition is considered, no mother tongue can be expected to survive beyond the third generation given the linguistic survival probabilities now prevailing in Southern California.

FIGURE 3 Linguistic life expectancies for selected immigrant groups by generation



The most liberal definition of linguistic life—retaining the ability to speak a language as opposed to a preference for its daily use—yields a life expectancy of 3.1 generations for Mexican Spanish, 2.8 generations for the Spanish spoken by Guatemalans and Salvadorans, and 2.6 for that spoken by other Latin Americans. Under current conditions, therefore, the ability to speak Spanish very well can be expected to disappear sometime between the second and third generation for all Latin American groups in Southern California. Life expectancies are even lower when life is defined by a preference for its use at home. In terms of daily use, Spanish can be expected to die out after 2.0 generations among Mexicans, 2.1 generations among Guatemalans and Salvadorans, and 1.7 generations for other Latin Americans.

Among Asian groups, the two definitions of linguistic life and death generally do not yield very different life expectancies, and in some circumstances “speaks the mother tongue at home” yields a slightly higher expectation of life than the ability to “speak it very well.” Nonetheless, no matter which group or definition is considered, the average Asian language can be expected to die out at or near the second generation. The lowest life expectancies are observed among immigrants from the Philippines, a former US colony where English is widely spoken. The average life expectancy for the mother tongue of Filipinos (usually Tagalog) is only around 1.3 generations for the preference-based definition and 1.6 generations for the ability-based definition. In general, however, life expectancies for Asian languages (including Chinese, Vietnamese, and Korean) among immigrants in Southern California vary in the narrow range between 1.3 and 2.0 generations of US residence, which is comparable to the range of linguistic life expectancies observed among white Europeans (1.5 to 2.0, depending on which definition is considered).

A graveyard for languages

In this analysis we have tested Huntington’s assertion that Spanish is unlikely to go the way of other immigrant languages in the United States by succumbing to English-language dominance across the generations. Southern California offers an ideal test of his hypothesis because it is the largest Spanish-speaking enclave in the United States and houses some of the oldest and largest Mexican neighborhoods in the country, as well as the country’s largest concentration of immigrants. We defined linguistic survival in two ways: a preference for speaking a mother tongue within the household and the ability to speak that language very well.

Our findings directly contradict Huntington’s assertions. The United States has aptly been described as a “graveyard” for languages because of its historical ability to absorb immigrants by the millions and extinguish their mother tongues within a few generations (Portes and Rumbaut 2006), and

Spanish appears to offer no threat to this reputation. Owing to the number and density of Spanish speakers in metropolitan Southern California, Mexicans and other Latin American immigrants retain a greater ability to speak their mother tongue very well compared with other groups, but, by the third generation at the latest, ability drops sharply and converges toward the pattern observed for white Europeans. However, when survival is defined as a preference for speaking Spanish at home, the survival curves for Mexicans and other Latin American groups look much more like those of Asians and white Europeans. Although the life expectancy of Spanish may be appreciably greater among Mexicans in Southern California, its ultimate demise nonetheless seems assured by the third generation. Like taxes and biological death, linguistic death seems to be a sure thing in the United States, even for Mexicans living in Los Angeles, a city with one of the largest Spanish-speaking urban populations in the world.

This analysis carries the same caveat as any other study based on a period life table estimated from cross-sectional data: it assumes that the linguistic behavior of today's second, third, and fourth generation immigrants accurately forecasts the behavior of future generations. It is possible that Spanish will be retained more readily in the future because its use is no longer stigmatized in schools; because continuous immigration will create more opportunities to speak Spanish with one's compatriots in the future; or because Spanish-language media will become increasingly prevalent. At this point, however, after at least 50 years of continuous Mexican migration into Southern California, Spanish appears to draw its last breath in the third generation.

The death of immigrant languages in the United States is not only an empirical fact, but can also be considered as part of a larger and widespread global process of "language death" (Crystal 2000). Whether or not this is desirable, of course, is another question altogether. To the extent that language fluency is an asset and that knowledge of a foreign tongue represents a valuable resource in a global economy, immigrants' efforts to maintain this part of their cultural heritage and pass it on to their children should not be discouraged. Without strong social structural supports, however, the chances of sustaining fluent bilingualism in American communities seem slim. Our conclusions thus reverse the concerns and alarms often found in the popular literature, which call attention to the proliferation of foreign languages and to the threat they pose to English dominance. Historical and contemporary evidence indicates that English has never been seriously threatened as the dominant language of the United States and that—with well over 200 million monolingual English speakers—it is certainly not threatened today, not even in Southern California. What is endangered instead is the survival of the non-English languages that immigrants bring with them to the United States.

Note

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(IIMMLA) survey, and the third wave of the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS-III) in San Diego. The surveys were carried out in Southern California during 2001–04.

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