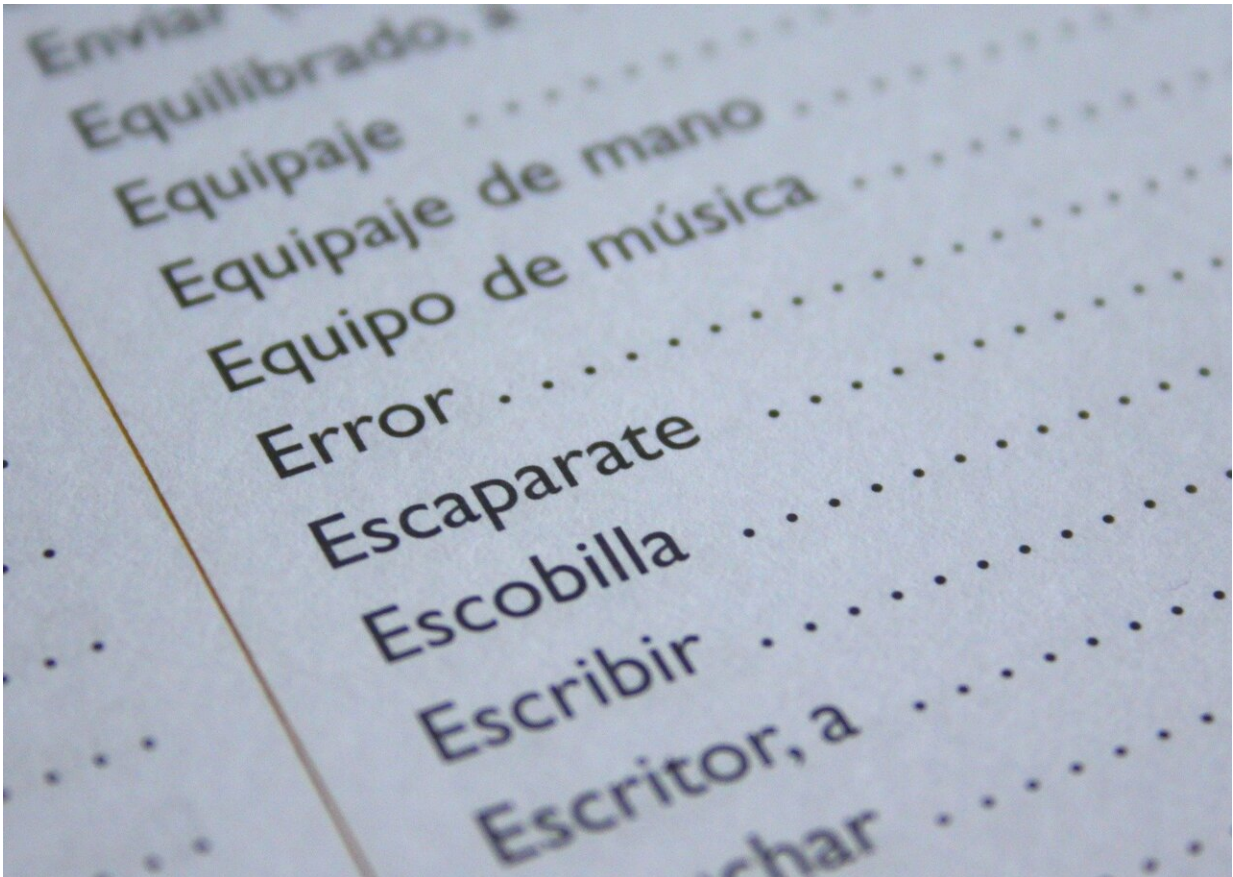


Spanish language increasingly more relevant to presidential elections

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Discourse in and about Spanish was present on both sides of the political spectrum, more so leading up to the 2016 presidential election than in

previous cycles, according to research conducted by faculty at Binghamton University, State University of New York.

As the 2020 [presidential election](#) approaches, Kirschen said that Spanish will continue to be a very present part of our national politics.

"This study helps shed light on the ways in which candidates speak of and to this very important part of the electorate," said Bryan Kirschen, assistant professor of Spanish linguistics at Binghamton University.

"Especially should they want to secure their votes—and interests—in the future."

According to Kirschen's research, the reaction to the candidates' uses of Spanish in 2016 depended on both their party affiliation and whether they were Latino or non-Latino. One example is the case of Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton's running mate, Tim Kaine.

"Tim Kaine added to this discussion, as he often gave speeches in Spanish, a language he developed proficiency in as early as the 1980's, while on a mission in Honduras," Kirschen said. "While Latino candidates were apparently considered as well, their Spanish was often assumed, but never praised."

Kirschen also said that Spanish played a prominent role in the Republican primary.

"Before [Donald] Trump became the GOP candidate to represent his party, numerous hopefuls were proficient in Spanish. Jeb Bush often used Spanish...but Trump dismissed his use of the language, like when he said in an interview 'I like Jeb. He's a nice man, but he should really set the example of speaking English while in the United States.'"

Kirschen concluded that in the Republican Party, Spanish has been

framed as a [language](#) in competition with and of threat to English, while in the Democratic Party, it is often embraced. He also poses another question that crosses [party lines](#).

"Why do we, as a society, encourage bilingualism—especially among Anglo Americans—when others are discouraged and forced to give up their own heritage languages?"

At the time of the research, there were more than 55 million Latinos in the United States, most of whom are speakers of Spanish.

More information: Bryan Kirschen, Spanish in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, *Spanish in Context* (2020). [DOI: 10.1075/sic.18006.kir](#)

Provided by Binghamton University

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