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# ¡Esto Es América!: Analysis of Language Policies for Incarcerated Spanish-Speaking Women in the State of Florida.

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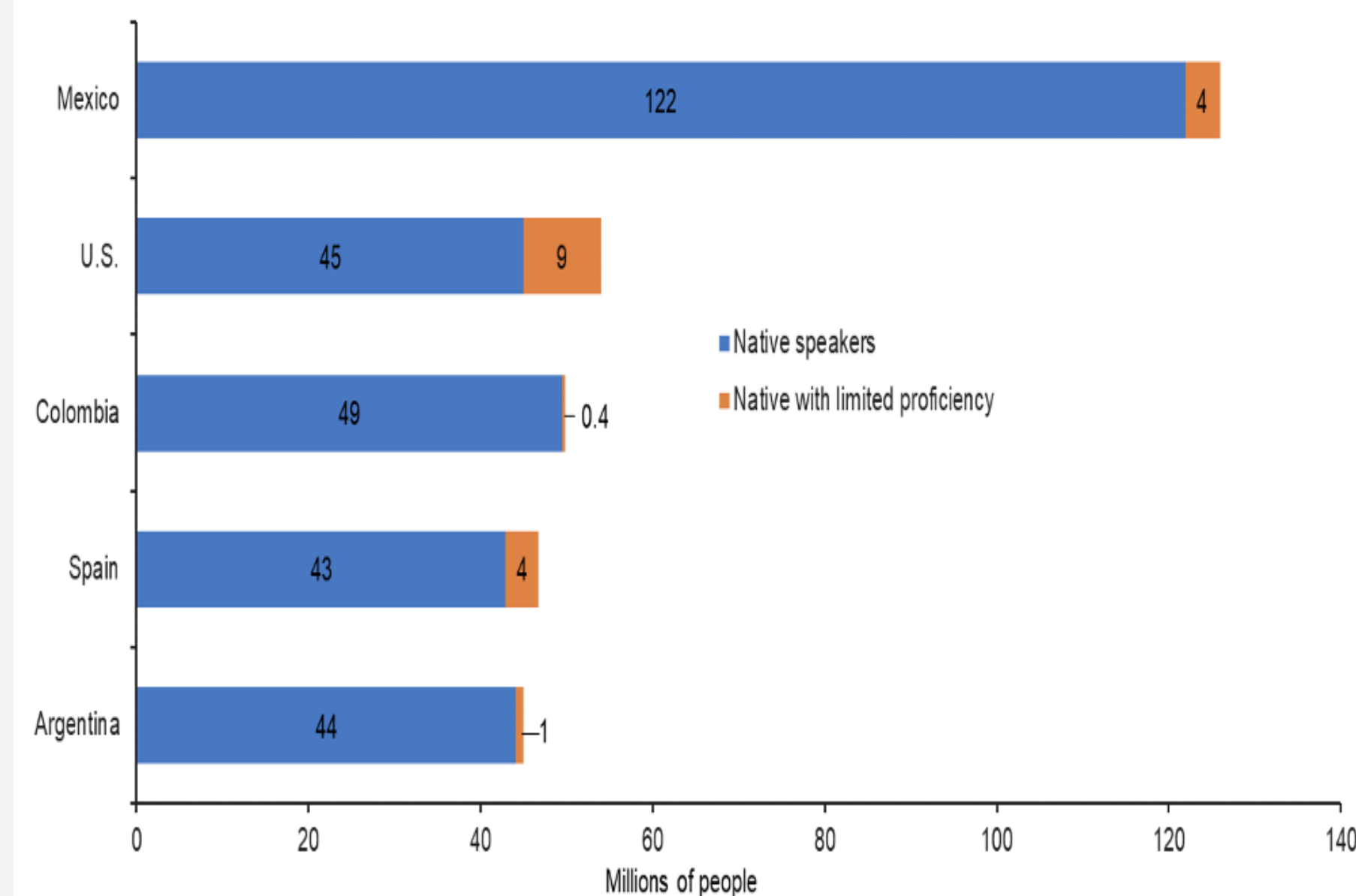
## INTRODUCTION

Florida has the third-highest Hispanic population in the U.S. (US Census Bureau, 2020). This study will analyze language policies concerning incarcerated Spanish-speaking women and employees of the Florida judicial system, i.e., exploring the performance of both non-English and non-Spanish speakers during legal proceedings. Language policies, and by extension, educational programs for inmates as well as communication training for prison employees and judicial staff, have evolved over time. Some of these initiatives have helped while others have revealed language barriers in the judicial system. The examination of current language policies through documentary reviews, such as the analysis of the Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Guidance document and ethnographic work will elucidate strengths and areas for improvement in the design, implementation, and evaluation of Florida's programs, thus contributing valuable and effective insights for the development of more context-specific educational and training projects.

## BACKGROUND

- **2020: Hispanic population:** California (15,579,652), Texas (11,441,717), **Florida (5,697,240)**, New York (3,948,032), Illinois (2,337,410), Arizona (2,192,253), New Jersey (2,002,575), Colorado (1,263,390), and New Mexico (1,010,811) (US Census Bureau, 2020).
- **According to the 2019 edition of the American Community Survey (ACS), there is a population of approximately 41.8 million Spanish speakers in the U.S. Florida accounts for 9.2% of the native Spanish-speaking population. Moreover, Spanish speakers reported a predominant use of Spanish and faced challenges with English proficiency** (Bucholz, 2019).

U.S. Has Second-Largest Native Spanish-Speaking Population



**Table 1.** Martínez-García, E., Martínez-García, M. T., Coulter, J., & Grossman, V. (2022). Se habla español: U.S. Yet to realize many benefits of a growing bilingual population. *Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas*. <https://www.dallasfed.org/research/economics/2021/0713>



Source: <https://lighthouseonline.com/blog-en/how-many-americans-speak-spanish/>

**Inmate Ethnicity:** In Florida, Latinos represent more than 20% of the inmate population; approximately 350,000 people. **During 2019, Latino women accounted for 12% of the incarcerated population.** (Rodríguez & Tublitz, 2023)

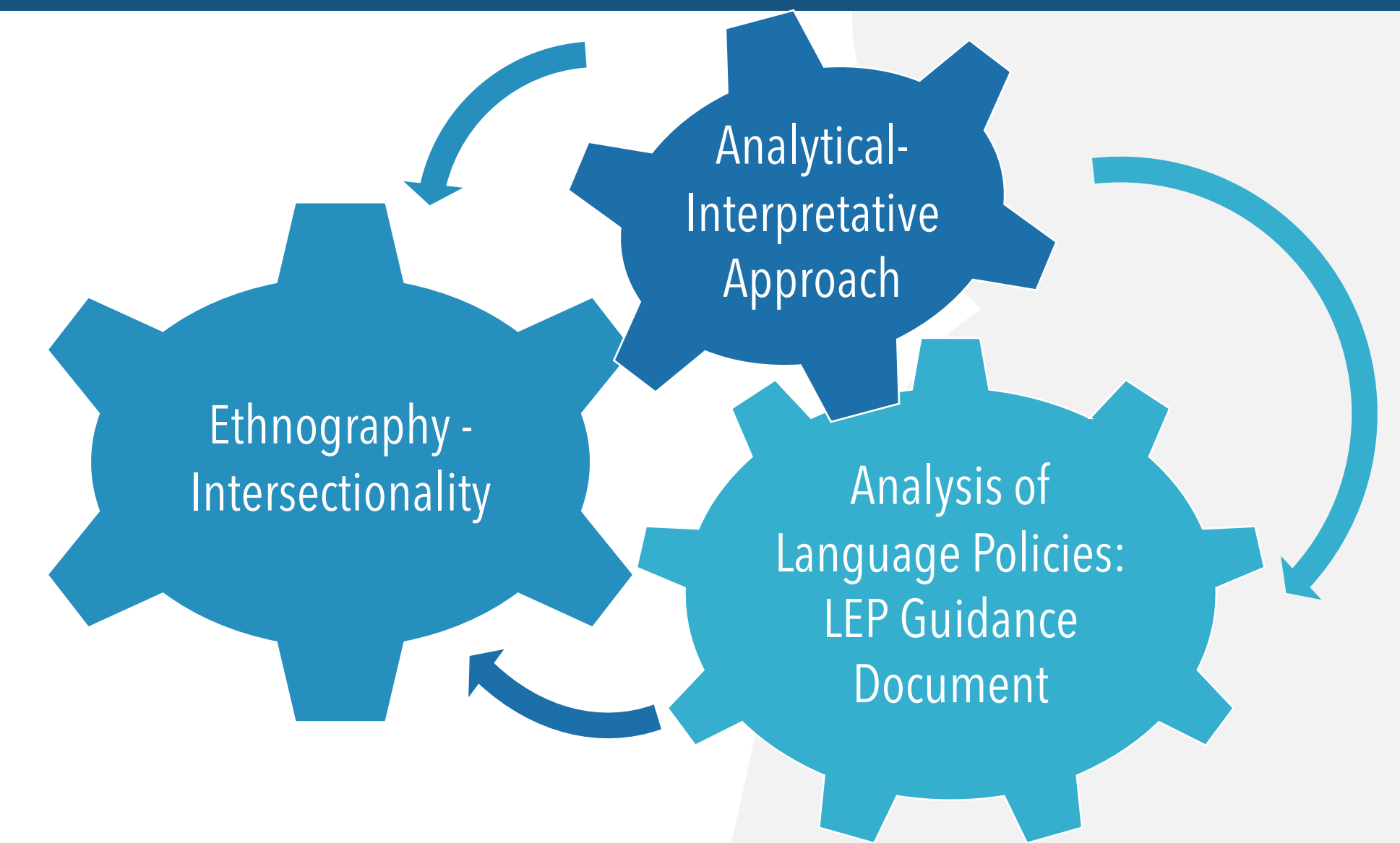
## REFERENCES



## RESEARCH PROBLEM

- **Barriers to English Proficiency:** During 2021, approximately 16 million Spanish-speakers stated they faced challenges in English proficiency. Various factors, including age, gender, place of birth, educational attainment, and duration of stay in the U.S., influence the progress of Hispanics in learning English (Krogstad et al., 2015).
- **Language-related challenges arise within judicial procedures.** When judicial outcomes are influenced by factors such as gender, race, or national origin, it is regarded as profiling, a discriminatory act (Hernández, 2019).
- **Interpreters are ensured to be present in criminal cases and civil cases brought by the Government in the federal justice system** (Abel 2013, cited in Hernández, 2019). Nonetheless, in Florida, the level of support offered in this regard is limited, and the policy is the same for both hearing-impaired individuals and non-English speakers.
- **Hernández (2019) highlights the connection between language issues and imprisonment.** In seven states, namely Arizona, Colorado, Hawaii, Louisiana, Michigan, Nevada, and Pennsylvania, ESL courses are offered to inmates or mandated as a prerequisite for parole.

## METHODOLOGY



## EXPECTED RESULTS

- **In Florida, educational programs for inmates and training for prison employees and judicial staff** have undergone changes. Certain initiatives have proven beneficial, while others have exposed **language obstacles within the judicial system**. By analyzing current **language policies** and conducting ethnographic work, strengths, and areas for improvement in **design, implementation, and evaluation** will be revealed, providing valuable insights to develop more context-specific educational and training programs.