

English Should be the Official Language of the United States

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English is a common language that can be seen everywhere in life, in all parts of the world. The United States, for example, primarily uses English, but has never designated it as an actual official language. Obviously, that's not the only language though, and many other languages such as Spanish and Chinese have it beat in terms of total number of people who speak it (Lane, 2016) In the United States, English is currently the top language, with over 230 million people speaking it, followed by 37 million people speaking Spanish. (Wikipedia: Languages of the United States, 2016) The entire population of the United States only totals about 312 million people, (WorldOMeters, 2016) making English the primary language of 74% of people in the United States. English should be designated as the official language of the United States. With so many people speaking it, and it being the majority, no other language makes sense to be official. Also, there's quite a few benefits to English being official, such as a baseline uniformity across all 50 states. This topic is highly controversial, with many opinions both ways. With everything considered though, it makes sense to have English as the official language. It's something that's long overdue, and will help to better our country. English is a fairly common language globally, but it is rarely considered an official language. Declaring English as the official language would bring unity and numerous other benefits to the United States.

English isn't actually the official language, which will surprise many people. It's commonly thought that since so many people speak it, and it's already used everywhere, that it must be the official language. In reality, it's just the dominant language, not the official. The United States has never had any official language, not even way back when it was only 13 colonies. Many people feel that not including English as an official language was simply an

oversight of the Founding Fathers (Marshall, 1986), while others fear huge public backlash and hostility. John Marshall thought that it would be better for an identity of language to be created by the people through social and individual choice, rather than by public laws. (Marshall, 1986) The Founding Fathers seemed to want language to be an individual choice as well. There have been attempts at pushing for English, such as recently when House of Representatives member Steve King tried to introduce a bill to make English the official language of the United States (Rothman, 2012) King notably told Fox News anchor Jon Scott “I have seen, and many in this country have seen, citizenship oaths taken in foreign languages. I’ve given speeches at naturalization ceremonies – I like to go there, I like to welcome new Americans. But I can notice if I tell a joke who laughs and who doesn’t. Those that don’t understand English don’t laugh at those jokes don’t understand English, but they’re being sworn in as American citizens.” This really shows that people coming into the country don’t always know how to speak English, and are going to then be left to themselves to figure out how to integrate into an English-speaking society. Even though English isn’t technically *required* to be known, it certainly is very useful to know. Our country currently stands at a mix of opinions, with many people supporting, many opposing, and many people feeling that it should just be left alone and dealt with later.

There are many reasons and examples why English should be official. One such example is the writings of our Founding Fathers. The official documents governing our entire country, such as the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and Bill of Rights all are written in English, and English only. There is no translation to any other language anywhere to be found, except in modern times so other people can read it. If the Founding Fathers didn’t believe in an official language, then they would have gotten someone to translate so others can read it. A single language would lay the groundwork for communication. Anyone would be able to talk to

anyone else, without any sort of a language barrier. The “United States” is meant to be united, and how can that happen without some sort of consistent language for communication.

Multilingual services such as translation are a huge waste of money for businesses. They have to spend extra money to translate a product into other languages, just to appeal to a wider audience, when that audience could just be speaking the same language and save all that trouble. That’s just in one case too. There would be no need to worry about translating anything if you were an American company, as everyone would already be on the same page.

Many people argue that English is *already* the dominant language, so what’s stopping it from becoming the official language? There’s no other language that’s even close to overtake it, and people who speak other languages are often bilingual, meaning they speak both another language, and English. Not having to waste ink and paper on printing the exact same thing in other languages, such as Spanish, would save countless amounts of money in the short, and long term. Even if it’s only half a penny cheaper per item, any decent product will sell hundreds or more units, which then translates into significant costs cut. For example, if it’s a nickel cheaper per \$5 phone case sold to have English text only, and they sell a thousand units, that’s \$50 saved, which probably doesn’t seem like much, but that can make a world of difference to a company selling a product at such a low price point where every cent counts. Regardless of cost, there’s less material needed to print on, which translates into less environmental waste caused by the packaging material just being thrown away.

Some people feel that not having printings in other languages is discriminatory, such as “In October 1982, Edward R. Neaher, a judge in Brooklyn, New York, rejected a lawsuit pleading that Social Security forms are discriminatory because they are not also printed in Spanish.” (Marshall, 1986) Generally speaking, most federal documents and procedures, such as

the naturalization test to become a citizen, require that you can read, write, and comprehend the English language. This is just another example, and keeping a consistent baseline of “skills” helps to maintain consistency and make sure everyone has a common knowledge set. It’s commonly thought that a change like this would bring major pushback, opposition, and disagreements. Such is true with any major decision though. People who don’t speak English already are obviously the most likely candidate for pushback. People who can’t speak fluent English are more common than you may think, 1 in 10. These people though face multiple issues, such as employment. It’s been proven that regardless of educational status, immigrants who are proficient in English earn significantly more than those who are not, and those who are highly skilled but don’t speak English are twice as likely to work in unskilled jobs. The report shows that “individuals without English proficiency earn an average of 25 to 40 percent less than their more acclimated counterparts.” (Seman, 2014) This is no insignificant amount of money either, and is easily enough to be the difference between poverty and middle class. While this may seem like an individual issue, it even affects the overall economy. If someone is making less money, they’ll spend less money, which causes reduced tax income and consumer spending, leading to reduced business and government income. They are also much more likely to be unemployed or in poverty without English fluency. Even their children can be affected though, as studies have shown that those with higher English proficiency have children that are more academically and economically successful, and contribute more to society. (Seman, 2014)

In order to function in our society, it’s fairly essential to know how to read, write, and speak English. Simple tasks like fueling a car, getting a job, ordering food at a restaurant, and going shopping all require the use of English. The likelihood of finding an employee to speak your language for you is highly unlikely, and a major inconvenience to both parties. It’s an

unwritten law almost to know how to speak English to be integrated into society. Despite this though, some people believe that it'd be unfair to force people who don't speak it to go learn it. In reality, it'd only serve to make their lives easier.

The bright side of knowing English, for the immigrants at least, is that it would make moving into the country significantly easier. They would have no trouble understanding any of the signage we have all over the place, and no trouble communicating with anyone around them. Related to this though is that it's not required that they know it, which means many people won't bother to learn it, as English isn't a particularly easy language to learn. If English was official and required, then more immigrants would be encouraged to learn it, which would drive the total number of people not speaking English down further, and increase the number of English speakers, furthering unity.

There are quite a few places that have already made English official, some have it exclusive, and others just recognize it as official. Many states such as Arizona have already made English the official language, and have had great success. It's been proven to be fine, and work out well for them. Outside the U.S., other places are doing it too. One such place is Canada. The Official Languages Act of 1969 is an act that stated that English and French were of equal and official status in Canada. (Wikipedia: Official Languages Act (Canada), 2016) In this case, English is official, but not necessarily officially primary. They have a unique way of handling languages in that they just made two official and equal. Here in the United States, English should be made official, instead of including others such as Spanish. A problem in Canada with this ruling is that French is hugely popular in Quebec, but not nearly as popular as English is everywhere else. This leads to a separation problem, as people do not want to learn both languages, creating a language barrier. Going back to a point earlier, unity and consistency is

what the United States should strive for. While Canada's system works, it does pose a challenge for those who do not speak both languages. They could benefit from switching to exclusively English as the official language, but that's a topic for a different paper.

Using Canada as an example, there is a few things to learn. One of the outcomes of this type of system is that due to Canada's unique situation where there is 1 job available for every 3 people, (Herry-Saint-Onge, 2012) finding a job can be quite difficult. Something that can set people apart is whether or not they are bilingual, meaning they speak both English and French. This can land them positions that other people would not have available to them, giving them an edge over the rest. This could be seen as a benefit or drawback, depending on who you are. It also creates a lot of jobs, as there are many people who speak one language or the other, but not both, requiring the use of multilingual services, translations, and translators. This can be a good thing for some people, but it's a two-sided coin. Those who are not bilingual are then stuck with lesser paying jobs, or have a harder time finding jobs. The time investment to learn a language is substantial, and not an easy undertaking, leaving many people in a tough situation. Since there is both languages seen interchangeably and somewhat commonly, not knowing both can sometimes be an inconvenience, an inconvenience that could be easily solved if everyone was on the same page.

English happens to be somewhat unique in that there's many different versions of it. For example, there is American English, British English, and many others that are all English, but have slight differences. The question then becomes: Which English is the proper one? Which English becomes official? What about the other ones? Is a certain style picked or is it just 'English'? This is something that would have to be debated, and certainly considered much

further and more extensively, but it seems most logical to accept any form of English, as long as it's actually English.

English as the official language simply makes sense in today's United States. It's time for a change that is long overdue to finally be made a reality. It will help to bring unity to the United States, and simplify the lives of many people. It will save businesses money, and help to keep the economy strong. The more people we have that speak the same language, the further integrated our nation becomes. With nearly 75% of people in the United States speaking exclusively English, it's time that a change is made, and for that number to rise, in the *United States of America*.

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