Tower of Babel: The Case for Linguistic Assimilation

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***Resolved: Culture ought to value assimilation over multiculturalism.”***

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Case Summary: The most important aspect of assimilation is language skills. No Affirmative is required to affirm that minorities must adopt every single aspect of the majority culture for good social cohesion. But in the area of language, we absolutely should value assimilation over multiculturalism. Multiculturalism de-emphasizes or even actively defeats efforts to unite a diverse nation around a single language. And that results in the exclusion of minorities from participation in democracy, since they cannot understand nor communicate effectively.

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Tower of Babel: Linguistic Assimilation

No sane person, not even an LD debater in this debate league, would argue that assimilation requires immigrants adopting every single characteristic of the majority culture without exception. And I certainly don’t have to prove that to prove that assimilation is a good thing. But there is one aspect of assimilation absolutely essential to the well-being of society and to the minority groups themselves. And for that, we must affirm that: Culture ought to value assimilation over multiculturalism.

OBSERVATION 1. DEFINITIONS

First, Assimilation. It’s most clear indicator is language acquisition.

Pew Research Center 2004 (non-profit research organization) nces compared to other factors such as education or country of birth? On both points an analysis of the survey results demonstrates that language plays a central role in the assimilation process.

In its current usage the concept of assimilation does not imply any superiority in the host society’s views or a particular value to the changes in attitudes and behavior among immigrants across generation. Rather, assimilation is now most useful as a means for describing a social dynamic that is characteristic of this era in U.S. history. Immigration has been the largest source of population growth in the Hispanic population since the 1970s. The 2002 National Survey of Latinos permits a comparison of the views and attitudes of immigrants and those of native-born Latinos and non-Latinos. This is one way to assess the pace of the assimilation process by which many newcomers adopt some values, beliefs, and behaviors more similar to U.S. culture than to the culture of the country from which they or their ancestors originate. This is neither a complete nor uniform process as some individuals change more than others and attitudes in some areas are more subject to change than others. Assimilation is similar to the concept of acculturation, which describes the changes in both the newcomers and the hosts when they come into contact with each other. Whereas assimilation describes this process on an individual level and focuses on members of one group adopting the cultural patterns of the majority or host culture, acculturation focuses on the impact that the two cultures have on each other. Literature has suggested that, while not perfect, language acquisition—in this case the acquisition of English—is a reasonable proxy to measure acculturation and assimilation.

Multiculturalism. Its advocates tell us it means rejecting language assimilation

In an article entitled “Embracing America also means embracing our multilingual diversity” in 2019, Prof. Madhavi Mallapragada, a big advocate of multiculturalism, candidly admits that it means moving away from assimilation around English as the unifying national language. She writes QUOTE:

*Prof. Madhavi Mallapragada 2019 (Ph.D., is associate professor in the Department of Radio-Television-Film at the University of Texas at Austin) 19 March 2019 THE HILL “*Embracing America also means embracing our multilingual diversity” <https://thehill.com/opinion/civil-rights/434624-embracing-america-also-means-embracing-our-multilingual-diversity>

In an increasingly [diverse](http://www.pewhispanic.org/2015/09/28/modern-immigration-wave-brings-59-million-to-u-s-driving-population-growth-and-change-through-2065/) America, culturally, racially and linguistically “different” immigrants are refashioning the American nation in new ways. That includes forging a diversity that is not just multicultural but also multilingual. A monolingual (English-only) multiculturalism is limited, not to mention paradoxical. One big step towards an inclusive vision of multiculturalism in the U.S. would be to fully embrace its multilingual diversity.

**END QUOTE.**

OBSERVATION 2. THE VALUE OF DEMOCRACY

Sub-point A. Why Democracy Matters

We need to uphold democracy because, as Winston Churchill famously said, it’s the worst form of government, except for all the others. But we should also uphold it because it is the best way to guarantee the best outcomes in public policy for the greatest number of people.

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy 2006. “Democracy” 27 July 2006 <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/democracy/>

Two kinds of in instrumental benefits are commonly attributed to democracy: relatively good laws and policies and improvements in the characters of the participants. John Stuart Mill argued that a democratic method of making legislation is better than non-democratic methods in three ways: strategically, epistemically and via the improvement of the characters of democratic citizens (Mill, 1861, Chapter 3). Strategically, democracy has an advantage because it forces decision-makers to take into account the interests, rights and opinions of most people in society. Since democracy gives some political power to each, more people are taken into account than under aristocracy or monarchy. The most forceful contemporary statement of this instrumental argument is provided by Amartya Sen, who argues, for example, that “no substantial famine has ever occurred in any independent country with a democratic form of government and a relatively free press” (Sen 1999, 152). The basis of this argument is that politicians in a multiparty democracy with free elections and a free press have incentives to respond to the expressions of needs of the poor.

Sub-point B. The Criterion for upholding it: Inclusive participation

We should affirm the resolution if it helps promote the inclusion of all citizens in democracy, because democratic institutions in themselves aren’t enough, we must have active citizen participation.

National Democratic Institute copyright 2019. <https://www.ndi.org/what-we-do/citizen-participation>

It is not enough to work only on setting up democratic institutions and processes. These institutions and processes must be put to work creating opportunities for citizens to lead healthy and productive lives. Ensuring that government actually works for the public good requires informed, organized, active and peaceful citizen participation.

OBSERVATION 3. The failure of multiculturalism

By de-emphasizing or even discouraging unification by national language, members of society become second class citizens, unable to participate in constitutional democracy

John Fonte 2015 (Director, Center for American Common Culture, Hudson Institute) 24 Sept 2015 Testimony for the Pennsylvania House of Representative State Government Committee Hearing on Official English <https://www.hudson.org/research/11702-official-english-fosters-the-patriotic-assimilation-of-immigrants>

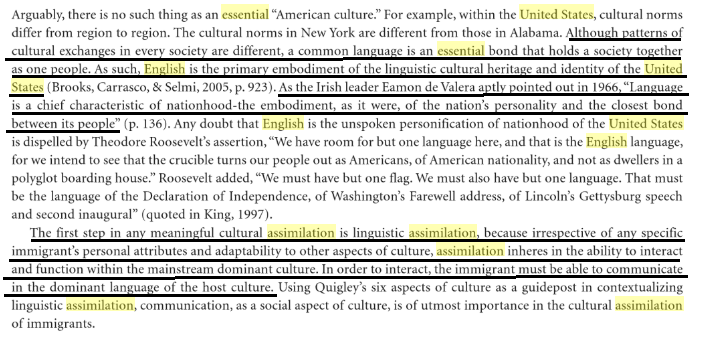
There is no doubt that mastery of English is essential for active citizenship in American constitutional democracy. During the next year and a half Americans will be involved in a presidential campaign that will be conducted 99% or so in the English language. An American not proficient in English would be at a tremendous disadvantage. He or she would have to depend on bits of translated material and information-opinion-propaganda from the foreign language media. They would not have the full range knowledge needed to make intelligent choices. Unfortunately for our democracy they would be more of a *client* than a *citizen*. If American liberal democracy is to thrive and prosper all our people should be fluent in English. That is to say, they should be *independent citizens* capable of making their own political choices, not *dependent clients* (and, thus, in an objective sense, really “second class” citizens) beholding to special interest groups because they do not have access to the full range of information available to proficient English speakers.

OBSERVATION 4. The success of linguistic assimilation promoting democracy

Sub-point A. Linguistic assimilation is the key to participation and inclusion in the nation

Morris I. Onyewuchi 2012 (Attorney) “Cultural Assimilation” chapter in the book DEBATES ON US IMMIGRATION edited by [Judith Gans](javascript:void(0);), [Elaine M. Replogle](javascript:void(0);) & [Daniel J. Tichenor](javascript:void(0);)

<https://books.google.com/books?id=m6alEQXmd3YC&pg=PA409&lpg=PA409&dq=assimilation+English+%22united+states%22+essential&source=bl&ots=nkfswFipua&sig=ACfU3U2IAIqpIH62aR2o6d2Y9W-yvFWXqg&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjL0Y2QuqzmAhVCTd8KHUS8DLYQ6AEwD3oECA0QAQ#v=onepage&q=assimilation%20English%20%22united%20states%22%20essential&f=false>



Sub-point B. Common language is essential for social cohesion and democracy to work

John Fonte 2015 (Director, Center for American Common Culture, Hudson Institute) 24 Sept 2015 Testimony for the Pennsylvania House of Representative State Government Committee Hearing on Official English <https://www.hudson.org/research/11702-official-english-fosters-the-patriotic-assimilation-of-immigrants>

The United States is the most successful immigration country in the history of the world for one basic reason⎯the triumph of patriotic assimilation⎯the assimilation of immigrants as loyal members of the American body politic. For more than 200 hundred years immigrants to America and their children have successfully assimilated into what has been called the “American way of life.” The patriotic assimilation of immigrants into the American constitutional regime did not just happen “naturally.” Patriotic assimilation was the end result of a sometimes explicit (and other times implicit) long-range vision that was formulated by America’s leaders. Since the days of George Washington continuing through the era of Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, and supported in the past decade by such public figures as Barbara Jordan⎯ this strategic vision has helped to define immigration-assimilation policy by welcoming immigrants and assimilating them into the mainstream of American civic life. A crucial and absolutely necessary part of patriotic assimilation for more than 200 years had been the bond of the English language, historically promoted by our schools, civil society organizations, state and local governments, and the federal government. If our democracy is going to work, Americans must be able to communicate with each other. A common language is essential.

Sub-point C. Acceptance of official language welcomes and upholds the rights of immigrants by making them full citizens

John Fonte 2015 (Director, Center for American Common Culture, Hudson Institute) 24 Sept 2015 Testimony for the Pennsylvania House of Representative State Government Committee Hearing on Official English <https://www.hudson.org/research/11702-official-english-fosters-the-patriotic-assimilation-of-immigrants>

De-emphasizing and placing obstacles in the path of English acquisition (by, for example, ridiculing the promotion of official English) may serve the goals of special interest groups seeking clients to manipulate, but does not serve the interests of the American people as a whole. Nothing could be more welcoming to immigrants than establishing official English. This says to the newcomers “We want you to be full citizens in our democracy,” not the dependent clients of some special interest group.

END QUOTE. In summary, assimilation should be prioritized over multiculturalism when we consider language skills, because it’s essential to responsible citizenship and participation in democracy.