

Com 150 expository- language in the united states essay

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Language in the United States Salima R. Smith COM/150 February 14, 2010

Instructor: Justi Glaros Diversity in America is not just limited to a person's ethnic background or religion, language also can separate a group of people.

Ever since the first European settlers inhabited America and intergraded with Native Americans there was a language barrier. Today, although English is the language spoken by the majority of people in America, those language barriers are still present. These barriers can be seen in the obvious matter, different types of languages spoken, and also in a less noticeable matter, different dialects within a language. Even with these barriers, man has overcome these differences and created a bridge for the gaps in language.

In the days of the first settlers, there was a critical language barrier that not only the Europeans had to endure, but the Native Americans had to also adjust. For the settlers, to utilize the help of the natives, they had to be able to communicate their needs. Once this was established, a relationship was able to be formed.

The natives had to learn this new language so the symbiotic circle could be completed. At this point the European settlers were able to receive the help of the natives with building their settlements and in return, the natives were able to utilize the technology that the settlers brought with them.

Unfortunately, this relationship proved to be not very prosperous for the natives. The European settlers used the natives and then committed genocide and consumed their resources.

Today in America, many different languages are spoken, from English, French, and Spanish, to Swedish, Japanese, and Mandarin. Almost all of the world's language can be heard in America, yet, some how we as humans can mostly overcome these barriers and communicate with each other. Not only do we overcome these differences, we embrace it and incorporate it into our own culture. Examples of this can be seen in our neighborhoods, stores, schools, even in pop culture. If we had a neighbor who speaks a different language, no matter if we wanted to communicate a positive message or especially a negative message, a dialect would be established.

The same example could be use for a store scenario, if a customer, who did not speak the same language, wanted to buy something, in most cases the language barrier would be overcome. In our schools, learning a second language is not only offered, it is a prerequisite to high school graduation. Even in pop culture, there are television shows that teach a different language as entertainment. Music in different languages has topped charts for popularity. Being diverse in languages had definitely helped mold America into what it is today. Taking a look into English spoken in America, there are different dialects with in different sub cultures. For example, if you took someone form the back woods of Alabama, a person from the sun and surf rich shores of California, a person from the mountains of Virginia and a person form the fast pace action of Manhattan and started a dialect with all four of them at the same time, there may be language barriers.

Although all of them would be speaking English, the barriers would come in the form of different accents (dialects) as well as the usage and meanings of

certain words (for example people in the Southern regions of America use the word “ yonder” to describe something as being “ over there”). This minor barrier would cause some delay and confusion in the discussion amongst these four people. If you look at different nations, you can see that there is some type of national language; French, France; Mexico, Spanish; Japan, Japanese. Now, within these countries many languages could be spoken, but there is one official national language. In America, there is no such thing. There is absolutely no official language.

This also adds to the great divide also commonly known as the language barrier. There has been an ongoing debate about whether or not English should be identified as the official language of America. To this day, that debate continues, and I believe that it always will.

The reason (in my opinion) that English will never be the official language of America is because the European settlers who landed in America did not found this country, they did not create this country and most of all, the language that they brought to this country was indeed foreign. There is also a type of language spoken in America that is widely discussed and often imitated throughout the world. It is American Slang. Depending on who you ask, some will say that slang is a result of English that was broken by slaves transported to America. Some will say that slang is a result of adolescents in America being rebellious towards their elders. Either way, there is a new form of slang added to each generation.

As time passes, that slang becomes common and an acceptable (grammatically) part of the English language. In the 1930's jazz musician Lester Young popularized the word "cool" and acknowledged it as a description for his music. During those times, any young person who used that word considered it to be slang. Nowadays parents use that word immensely in an effort to relate better to their children. A widely spoken version of English is Patois.

It is most commonly used by Jamaicans who have migrated to America and their descendents. Some words in Patois are results of broken English; some words are simply substitutes for other words. Most of the words that are used as substitutions are phrases that were created by slaves (during times of slavery) so that the oppressor would not understand what was being discussed. In Patois, the word Babylon means a corrupt government, or an officer of a corrupt establishment. The word Bakra (pronounced back raw) refers to the white slave master who used a whip to make the slave's backs raw. The word Card refers to fooling someone.

Whereas in common English, the word card refers to a deck of cards.

Language in this country has always united and divided people. It will always be a means of unification as well as division. Over time, people have learned to adjust to the language barriers in order to establish communication. It will continue to be a barrier and people will continue to adjust and work around it. Perhaps, one day, there will be one common spoken language and all peoples will be able to communicate without barriers and hesitation.

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