

# [After native tongue helps shape our personal](https://assignbuster.com/after-native-tongue-helps-shape-our-personal/)

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Afterthe reading of the article we get an idea of Robert King’s point of view andarguments concerning language.            It is correct that “ our nativetongue helps shape our personal identity, giving us not only words andliterature in common with people who speak the same language but perhaps evenhabits of mind.” (409) But in Robert D. King’s words “ just how much of acountry’s identity is tied to its language? (…) is language diversity reallythreat to national identity?” (409)            On august 1, 1996 a bill was sanctionedby the House of Representatives in the United States that would make theofficial language of the country English.

One of the states that passed the “ EnglishOnly” Law was Arizona in October, 1995.             King also reinforces the fact that theFounding Fathers didn’t feel the need to legislate that English had to be the officiallanguage of the Country and that “ it has always been taken for granted that Englishis the national language and that one must learn English in order to make it inAmerica.” (411)            Back in 1753, Benjamin Franklin showedhis concern about the immigrants, especially the German ones. He believed thatthey would out number them and they would not be able to preserve theirlanguage. Even Theodore Roosevelt said “ we have room for but one language here, and that is the English language (…) we must have but one flag. We must havealso but one language. That must be the language of the Declaration ofIndependence”. (411)             I think that one of the biggestquestions in King’s mind was “ is America threatened by the preservation oflanguages other than English?” (413) Through the Middle Ages you owed loyaltyto a ruler not to a nation as a language unit, but a lot of people think ofnation  as a “ totality of people whospeaks the same language” (414, Jacob Grimm, 1846) or that “ languagesoriginally distinguished nations from one another”.

(414, Rousseau) Therefor, almost by default, language became the defining characteristic of nationality.            Robert King gives us examples of howcountries deal with the language differences. For instance, Estonia has passeda law demanding knowledge of their language as a requirement for citizenshipeven though Ethnic Russians make up almost a third of Estonia’s population. At thesame time, other countries manage to stay unified in the middle of the multilingualism. For example, Switzerland and India, who recognizes 19 official languages. Both ofthe countries, in King’s opinion, have a “ strong national identity” and maintaintheir unity through their beliefs, religions, memories, customs, among otherthings.            Just like any other country, theseones have complications too when it comes to language, particularly when youhave so many. But like King says “ there is almost nothing the government (…)can do to change language usage and practice”.

You can’t make or stop someonein a free country to express themselves how they want and in any language theywish to. “ wise governments keep their hands off language to the extent that itis possible to do so.” (418)            I believe  that the most convincing piece of evidence iswhen he says that “ language is a convenient surrogate for other nationalproblems” (419), because people can deal with language differences. There areother ways to communicate and make yourself heard. People, especially in America, are just threatened by language and “ not many of today’s immigrants will seetheir first language survive into the second generation” (419) if we don’t acceptand respect each other and our differences.

People should take a look atthemselves and ask, is this really what we want? All of us to be the same? I don’tthink we do. How boring would that be?