

After native tongue helps shape our personal

[Countries](#), [United States](#)



After the reading of the article we get an idea of Robert King's point of view and arguments concerning language. It is correct that "our native tongue helps shape our personal identity, giving us not only words and literature in common with people who speak the same language but perhaps even habits of mind." (409) But in Robert D. King's words "just how much of a country's identity is tied to its language? (...) is language diversity really a threat to national identity?" (409) On August 1, 1996 a bill was sanctioned by the House of Representatives in the United States that would make the official language of the country English.

One of the states that passed the "English Only" Law was Arizona in October, 1995. King also reinforces the fact that the Founding Fathers didn't feel the need to legislate that English had to be the official language of the Country and that "it has always been taken for granted that English is the national language and that one must learn English in order to make it in America." (411) Back in 1753, Benjamin Franklin showed his concern about the immigrants, especially the German ones. He believed that they would outnumber them and they would not be able to preserve their language. 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 have also but one language. That must be the language of the Declaration of Independence". (411) I think that one of the biggest questions in King's mind was "is America threatened by the preservation of languages other than English?" (413) Through the Middle Ages you owed loyalty to a ruler not to a nation as a language unit, but a lot of people think of a nation as a "totality of people who speak 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 passed a law demanding knowledge of their language as a requirement for citizenship even though Ethnic Russians make up almost a third of Estonia’s population. At the same time, other countries manage to stay unified in the middle of the multilingualism. For example, Switzerland and India, who recognizes 19 official languages. Both of the countries, in King’s opinion, have a “ strong national identity” and maintain their unity through their beliefs, religions, memories, customs, among other things. Just like any other country, these ones have complications too when it comes to language, particularly when you have 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 someone in a free country to express themselves how they want and in any language they wish to. “ wise governments keep their hands off language to the extent that it is possible to do so.” (418) I believe that the most convincing piece of evidence is when he says that “ language is a convenient surrogate for other national problems” (419), because people can deal with language differences. There are other ways to communicate and make yourself heard. People, especially in America, are just threatened by language and “ not many of today’s immigrants will

see their first language survive into the second generation" (419) if we don't accept and respect each other and our differences.

People should take a look at themselves and ask, is this really what we want?

All of us to be the same? I don't think we do. How boring would that be?