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## **English should be made the Official Language of the USA**

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The United States of America is home to people of diverse cultures, professions, religions, social beliefs, etc. And true to its name, it has been the global embodiment of ‘unity in diversity’. A major factor which has bound together the people of this nation is the English language. More than 95% of the citizens speak the language fluently and use it for all practical purposes, even if it is not their native tongue. The government too functions with English as the medium of communication. From the Constitution, to legal papers filed today, all official forms are documented in English. It is mandatory for any foreigner who wishes to enter the country, to have a good knowledge of the language. This being the scenario, it is indeed surprising to learn that English is not the official language of the USA. An official language not only simplifies many aspects of governance and administration, but also helps in creating a better sense of belonging for the citizens. Keeping this in mind, this paper aims to justify why English should be declared the official language of the nation.

The question of whether or not English should be given the ‘official language’ status has been debated upon since 1780. Right after independence, John Adams made a proposal to the Continental Congress in favor of the motion. In the subsequent years, many other leaders openly voiced similar opinions. In 1907, the President of the USA then, Theodore Roosevelt also showed the green signal for giving English the special legal status. Today, an amendment to the Constitution is proposed in almost every meeting of Congress, asking for English to be made the official language of

the country. In spite of support from powerful people in the past and present, the motion is yet to pass. The problems hindering the success of the motion are as follows:

- English is seen as a threat to other languages spoken in the country – many people believe that people would be forced to abandon their native languages if English was declared the official language.

- Many leaders and human rights activists have openly disapproved the idea – according to them, it is undemocratic, and violates the First Amendment.

- The support from the people for the motion has been low – most of them are not even aware of the existence of such an issue, and they believe English to be the official language of the nation. Those who are informed on the issue are either indifferent, or have opinions related to the first problem.

The first problem is a consequence of the fact that non-native Americans feel anxious about preserving their cultures, traditions, and native languages.

This insecurity has led many of them to appeal to the Human Rights councils against the motion. The root cause for their claims being powerful is that people who live in foreign lands feel a greater sense of bonding and belonging towards one another, and are willing to go to great extents to preserve their identities. In other words, they come together at the time of need to support any cause that will ensure this. And though the USA has encouraged the development of all languages, they fear that declaring English as the official language will gradually lead to a decline in the usage of their native languages (“ The United States”, 2013).

The second problem addressed deals with a more serious issue concerning politics and ethics – native Americans have come together to form Human

Rights councils with the strong belief that declaring English as the official language is against the Constitution and the ideologies of the nation.

Councils such as the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has stated that it would be undemocratic and a violation of the First amendment, to declare English as the official language. These groups have both political and people backing. They have a strong belief system which has resisted the motion stubbornly, and will continue to do so ("Should English", 2013).

The third problem is a sad state of affairs as far as the people are concerned. It is shocking to know that a good majority of the Americans are unaware of this issue - in fact many of them believe that English is already the official language of their country, as shown by many survey results. However, an even more pressing problem is the attitude of the people who are aware of the issue. It is seen that a majority are indifferent towards the outcome. This can be attributed to two reasons: 1) they do not know the political and administrative convenience the motion, if successful, would lead to. 2) they feel that helping the government with solutions is not their job. The first reason can be taken care of with more awareness campaigns, but the convincing the people who fall in the latter category does not look very hopeful. ("Resolved, that", 2013)

The three main problems analyzed above are all interlinked. It is obvious that lack of awareness is a major in each of the cases, which can be overcome with focused effort over time. Awareness must start from political issues that are concerned with the motion, and must go on to show people that there is nothing to be afraid of, if English is made the official language of the nation. In order to do this, the basic fact that an official language does not hinder

everyday life, must be understood. It is merely for the convenience of the government, and does not have any hidden motives of eliminating other languages. Also, organizations like the ACLU must take it upon themselves to take the motion forward, rather than prove to be an obstacle to it. After all, their claims of it being undemocratic do not hold water beyond a point. There are no laws against using other languages inside the country, only that English will be given a special legal status. Once this is understood by the people, and Human Rights councils are willing to lend their support for the motion, the case is almost complete. What remains is persuading the people who are the cause of the third problem. Well, strictly speaking, even if they refuse to participate, the motion could be successful, but as a democracy and a nation which moves forward with its people, it is important to convince them as well. And to do that, one can only implore its citizens to be more responsible, and take pride in being a part of the nation that the rest of the world looks up to.

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