

# Language2



First Last Dr. TeacherFirst TeacherLast 6 July Learning English to get integrated in American society

It is essential to have sound knowledge of the English language to be able to live, work, and succeed in the American society. Even though the United States (U. S.) has traditionally been an immigrant society, most migrants have come from areas where the local language was either English, close to it, or the immigrant's home country had a multilingual culture where English was understood. Those immigrants, who have no grasp of the English language, often struggle to keep up with the social, cultural, educational, and professional requirements of American society. They also end up relegating themselves to only living and socializing in areas where their neighbors speak their native language. U. S. immigrants, who do not speak English, have to master the language to compete for equal choices in work and living.

Young students who do not speak English at home are at a disadvantage in American schools. They have to face the dual task of understanding the language, as well as following the curriculum. This adds an extra burden on them compared to their classmates who speak English as their first language. As a result, these students are not able to do well in their studies and lag behind their English speaking class fellows. While it is true that there are few international private schools that do teach in native languages, they are not always located at a convenient distance. Many parents are also unable to afford the tuition fee for private schools. The parents now realize that they have to teach English to their children otherwise they will be left out of the mainstream. This is why they are increasingly admitting them in special programs in schools which teach English as a new language.

For many non-native adults in academia, expressing themselves well in writing or in oral communication is a difficult step. These adult scholars in higher education receive less attention as their teacher has to make the extra effort to overlook their limited skills in English expression to appreciate the gist of their papers, research or presentation. They are not able to communicate well. Teachers then need to have more patience and neutrality when speaking with these students. However, not all teachers have that extra patience. In addition, non-English speakers in academia also face problems in presentations as they may not be able to find appropriate words to fully convey what they have in mind. This can result in the audience losing interest in their presentation and can potentially have an effect on their grades.

So, is there hope for non-English speakers or can they get along fine without learning English? Some non-English speakers do get along well professionally and socially. For example, successful software specialists, whose first language is not English, have come to the U. S. from several countries. But they are in a minority, and even more so, these technologists had already learnt English as a Second Language in their home countries. So what does the majority of non-English speakers do? Many of these non speakers of English tend to build communities which are isolated and comprises of immigrant from their own countries or languages. For example Hispanic communities have exploded in population levels in North Carolina, Iowa and Memphis (Cosgrove-Mather). And according to US census of 2000, in these communities, the percentage of people with below average communication skills in English has increased dramatically (Cosgrove-Mather). This puts them at a further disadvantage as, in their survival, they

move into areas where requirement of English is even lesser. This demographic situation reduces their opportunity to enter the mainstream American social structure and also reduces chances of employment. In fact, job opportunities for those with little or no skill in speaking English are very low.

The struggle for non-English speakers in U. S. is not just limited to education and social integration. Even when a non-English speaker visits a hospital, there is a clear disadvantage. The person finds it hard to communicate in order to explain his or her ailment. This situation can result in mistreatment. This shows that a difference in language can become a critical barrier between patients and the quality of health care they receive. One of the ways to overcome this problem is to ensure that interpreters are available at hospitals as denial of medical care is deemed as discrimination. But there is a shortage of interpreters and very few hospitals have them. The only practical choice that remains for these patients, other than suffering bad treatment, is that they need to make an effort to actively learn the language.

These are only a few of the difficulties that people face if they do not speak English well. However, the problem remains real and non-English speakers need to adapt by learning the English language. For young and older students alike, proficiency in English offers them the opportunity to achieve better education and, subsequently, better job opportunities. Knowledge of the language would help them and their families avoid miscommunication when seeking medical care. Finally, learning the language makes it easier for non-English speakers to avoid isolation and integrate in the social setup.

Works Cited

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Cosgrove-Mather, Bootie. "Language barriers cause problems". 6 August 2002. CBS News. 3 July, 2010. Web.