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HCOM 312

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English as a Second Language (ESL) – Group paper

Talking about English as a Second Language (ESL) in California can be a controversial topic like talking about immigration, religion or abortion. It can be as controversial as any event that involves the Latino community, more specifically the Mexican community, not only in California but in the entire country. The research for my presentation is to investigate the history of ESL and to educate others on how it came to be part of the educational system in the United States.

According to *Pittsburgh Public Schools*, English as a Second Language (ESL), is an instructional program for students whose dominant language is not English. This means that all students who have just immigrated to USA are introduced to English through this program. There are people who do not find meaning or purpose to this type of program, but according to *Sherman Independent School District (SISD)*, the purpose of the ESL programs is to increase the English proficiency of all eligible students so they can attain academic standards and achieve success in classroom as well as in a social environment. These students are also constantly evaluated to see their progress in a foreign language (English) other than their native language. Through these assessments, the level of English of the students is determined. As a result students can make the transition from ESL classes to classes that are taught entirely in English.

With the growth of the British Empire in the late 15th century and expansion of their routes, the English realized the need to communicate with the people with whom they were trading. For centuries to come, English became to what is known as *Lingua Franca,* which means common language in Italian, for those doing business with the British. As the Empire continued to grow, the British realized that they needed a better and more effective communication for their overseas businesses and colonies. Teachers were sent overseas to educate the upper-class colonists and the local government. In this way, the British were able not only to introduce their ideas and culture but also their language. Another reason to educate the new generation was because they knew that eventually these new generations would occupy the future government positions, and they would be able to pass on the British world to the lower classes. Usually, after many years of living a normal life, or what is believed as normal, one can only adapt or simulate a new cultural, religion or any customs. But nevertheless, one cannot strip away what one has lived and felt in a lifetime; that is what happened to the British. After all these years of teachers educating new colonists, the British understood that the locals would not give up their mother tongue, for which they decided to favor a bilingual education system.  This strategy would benefit both parties, the locals would keep their practices and beliefs and the British would gain trust and the support from the locals. As the English language started spreading through the world as a second language, words from foreign languages were added to the English language lexicon.

In the late 19th century and the early 20th century there were great opportunities the United States offered; millions of immigrants flocked to this country in pursuit of life, liberty and happiness. With them a great diversity of languages and cultures were brought over.  Many of these new settlers formed communities with people of the same ethnicity. For instance, French was spoken in Louisiana, and Spanish in Arizona and in New Mexico. During the 19th century the United States started grouping together for some sense of national identity and started to mold Americans into a cultural standard, proclaiming English as the national language (*ESL History*). Since the early 20th century there have been different laws, treaties and acts that have been against or in favor of these educational programs. We find that the 14th amendment protects and promotes equal rights for all, this includes education. We can also see that through the Naturalization Act of 1906 signed into law by Theodore Roosevelt, forced immigrants to learn English in order to become citizens. I personally agree because if we want to enjoy the good benefits of this country, we should give something back, what better way than making an effort to learn a new language which will benefit us more than anyone else. According to Westerville City School District, the 1920’s were devastating for many immigrants in the United States, as many states instituted only English in private and public schools. It was not until World War II, we begin to see the importance of foreign languages.

We live in a very open world in terms of freedom of speech, and that way we can be tolerant of issues concerning education for the people that came to the United States in search of the American Dream. But yet many of these foreign immigrants, contribute great amounts (directly or indirectly) to the country's economy, which should be no excuse, to provide education for them and their kids. Let’s take for example the British, they saw that long ways they were going to get more benefits from the new colonies than what they had to lose. From my own experience I did not take full advantage of ESL programs when I could have. Perhaps I took too much advantage of that instead of learning the new language, I decided to concentrate on keeping my native language, which eventually brought me problems in all aspects of the new language.I believe that ESL can really help in the acquisition of a new language, but it also depends in the interest of the person learning it.

Works Cited

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