

## ■ AN ANNOTATED STUDENT RESEARCH PAPER

Jake Jamieson's assignment was to write an argument, and he was free to choose his own topic. After considering a number of possible topics and doing some preliminary research on several of them, he turned to the material he was studying in another of his courses, which focused on the study of the English language. In that course, he had become intrigued with the English-only movement. As he said, "I chose this topic to do my paper on because it is an aspect of speech that I had previously explored, and my interest was piqued. The topic absolutely intrigued me, from the prospect of banning languages other than English right down to the question of funding for bilingualism."

Jamieson began by brainstorming about his topic. He made lists of ideas, facts, issues, arguments, and opposing arguments. Once he was confident that he had amassed enough information to begin writing, he made a rough outline of an organizational pattern he felt he could follow. Keeping this pattern in mind, he wrote a first draft of his essay. Then he went back and examined it carefully, assessing how it could be improved.

After he reread his first draft, he realized that his organizational pattern could be clearer and that his examples needed to be sharper and more to the point. He also struck upon the idea of asking a series of rhetorical questions in the eighth paragraph, and he took particular delight in being able to use them in this paper: "I have always enjoyed these kinds of rhetorical questions, and I was excited when I got a chance to sneak them into this paper, lampooning the air of superiority and unwillingness to accept difference that characterize the English-only viewpoint." Most importantly, Jamieson scoured his sources for the most appropriate and memorable quotations to include in his paper, all the while being careful to keep accurate notes on where he found them.

The final draft of Jamieson's research paper illustrates that he has learned how the parts of a well-researched and well-written paper fit together and how to make the revisions that emulate some of the qualities of the model essays he has read and studied. The following is the final draft of the paper, and it demonstrates MLA format for research papers.

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English Composition

16 May 2006

### The English-Only Movement: Can America Proscribe Language with a Clear Conscience?

*Announces melting pot debate*

A common conception among many people in this country is that the United States is a giant cultural "melting pot." For these people, the melting pot is a place where people from other places come together and bathe in the warm waters of assimilation. For many others, however, the melting pot analogy doesn't work. They see the melting pot as a giant cauldron into which immigrants are placed; here their cultures, values, and backgrounds are boiled away in the scalding waters of discrimination. One major point of contention in this debate is language: Should immigrants be pushed toward learning English or encouraged to retain their native tongues?

*Asks question to be answered in paper*

Those who argue that the melting pot analogy is valid believe that people who come to America do so willingly and should be expected to become a part of its culture instead of hanging on to their past. For them, the expectation that people who come to this country will celebrate this country's holidays, dress as we do, embrace our values, and most importantly speak our language is not unreasonable. They believe that assimilation offers the only way for everyone in this country to live together in harmony and the only way to dissipate the tensions that inevitably arise when cultures clash. A major problem with this argument, however, is that no one seems to be able to agree on what exactly constitutes "our way" of doing things.

Not everyone in America is of the same religious persuasion or has the same set of values, and different people affect vastly different styles of dress. There are so many sets of variables that it would be hard to defend the argument that there

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*Defines English as the official language*

is only one culture in the United States. What seems to be the most widespread constant in our country is that much of the population speaks English, and a major movement is being staged in favor of making English the official language. Making English America's official language would, according to William F.

*Uses MLA citation format, including introductory signal phrase and parenthetical page number*

Buckley, involve making it the only language in which government business can be conducted on any level, from federal dealings right down to the local level (71). Many reasons are given to support the notion that making English the official language is a good idea and that it is exactly what this country needs, especially in the face of growing multilingualism. Indeed, one Los Angeles school recently documented sixty different languages spoken in the homes of its students (National Education Association, par. 4).

*Introduces English-only position*

Supporters of English-only contend that all government communication must be in English. Because communication is absolutely necessary for a democracy to survive, they believe that the only way to ensure the existence of our nation is to make sure a common language exists. Making English official would ensure that all government business, from ballots to official forms to judicial hearings, would have to be conducted in English. According to former senator and presidential candidate Bob Dole, "Promoting English as our national language is not an act of hostility but a welcoming act of inclusion." He goes on to state that while immigrants are encouraged to continue speaking their native languages, "thousands of children [are] failing to learn the language, English, that is the ticket to the 'American Dream'" (qtd. in Donegan 51). Greg Lewis echoes Dole's sentiments when he boldly states, "to succeed in America . . . it's important to speak, read, and understand English as most Americans speak it" (197).

For those who do not subscribe to this way of thinking, however, this type of legislation is anything but the "welcoming

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*Introduces anti-English-only position*

act of inclusion" that it is described to be. Many of them, like Myriam Marquez, readily acknowledge the importance of English but fear that "talking in Spanish—or any other language, for that matter—is some sort of litmus test used to gauge American patriotism" ("Why and When" 473). Others suggest that anyone attempting to regulate language is treading dangerously close to the First Amendment and must have a hidden agenda of some type. Why, it is asked, make a language official when it is already firmly entrenched and widely used in this country and, according to U.S. General Accounting Office statistics, 99.96 percent of all federal documents are already in English without legislation to mandate it (Underwood, "English-Only" par. 2)? According to author James Crawford, the answer is quite plain: discrimination. He states that "it is certainly more respectable to discriminate by language than by race." He points out that "most people are not sensitive to language discrimination in this nation, so it is easy to argue that you're doing someone a favor by making them speak English" (qtd. in Donegan 51). English-only legislation has been described as bigoted, anti-immigrant, mean-spirited, and steeped in nativism by those who oppose it, and some go so far as to say that this type of legislation will not foster better communication, as is the claim, but will instead encourage a "fear of being subsumed by a growing 'foreignness' in our midst" (Underwood, "At Issue" 65).

*Uses an example to question English-only position that speaking Spanish in the home is abusive*

For example, when a judge in Texas ruled that a mother was abusing her five-year-old girl by speaking to her only in Spanish, an uproar ensued. This ruling was accompanied by the statement that by talking to her in a language other than English, the mother was "abusing that child and . . . relegating her to the position of house maid." This statement was condemned by the National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE) for "labeling the Spanish language as abuse." The judge, Samuel C. Kiser, subsequently apologized to the housekeepers of the country,

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adding that he held them "in the highest esteem," but stood firm on his ruling (qtd. in Donegan 51). One might notice that he went out of his way to apologize to the housekeepers he might have offended but saw no need to apologize to the hundreds of thousands of Spanish speakers whose language had just been belittled in a nationally publicized case.

*Argues against the English-only idea of multilingualism as irrational*

This tendency of official-English proponents to put down other languages is one that shows up again and again, even though it is maintained that they have nothing against other languages or the people who speak them. If there is no malice toward other languages, why is the use of any language other than English tantamount to lunacy according to an almost constant barrage of literature and editorial opinions? In a recent publication of the "New Year's Resolutions" of various conservative organizations, a group called U.S. English, Inc., stated that the U.S. government was not doing its job of convincing immigrants that they "must learn English to succeed in this country." Instead, according to this publication, "in a bewildering display of irrationality, the U.S. government makes it possible to vote, file a tax return, get married, obtain a driver's license, and become a U.S. citizen in many languages" (Moore et al. 46).

*Asks rhetorical questions*

Now, according to this mindset, not only is speaking any language other than English abusive, but it is also irrational and bewildering. What is this world coming to when people want to speak and make transactions in their native language? Why do they refuse to change and become more like us? Why can't immigrants see that speaking English is right and anything else is wrong? These and many other questions are implied by official-English proponents as they discuss the issue.

Conservative attorney David Price argues that official-English legislation is a good idea because many English-speaking Americans prefer "out of pride and convenience to speak their native language on the job" (A13). Not only does this statement

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*Points to growing popularity of English-only position*

imply that the pride and convenience of non-English-speaking Americans is unimportant, but that their native tongues are not as important as English. The scariest prospect of all is that this opinion is quickly gaining popularity all around the country.

*Presents status report of English-only legislation*

To date a number of official-English bills and one amendment to the Constitution have been proposed in the House and Senate. There are twenty-two states, including Alabama, California, and Arizona, that have made English their official language, and more are debating it every day (Donegan 52). An especially disturbing fact about this debate is that official-English laws always seem to be linked to other anti-immigrant legislation, such as proposals to "limit immigration and restrict government benefits to immigrants" ("English-Only Law Faces Test" 1).

*Concludes that English-only legislation is not in our best interest*

Although official-English proponents maintain that their bid for language legislation is in the best interest of immigrants, the facts tend to show otherwise. A decision has to be made in this country about what kind of message we will send to the rest of the world. Do we plan to allow everyone in this country the freedom of speech that we profess to cherish, or will we decide to reserve it only for those who speak the same language as we do? Will we hold firm to our belief that everyone is deserving of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness in this country? Or will we show the world that we believe in these things only when they pertain to ourselves and people like us? "The irony," as Hispanic columnist Myriam Marquez observes, "is that English-only laws directed at government have done little to change the inevitable multicultural flavor of America" ("English-Only Laws" A10).

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## Glossary of Useful Terms

**Abstract** *See Concrete/Abstract.*

**Allusion** An allusion is a passing reference to a familiar person, place, or thing, often drawn from history, the Bible, mythology, or literature. An allusion is an economical way for a writer to capture the essence of an idea, atmosphere, emotion, or historical era, as in "The scandal was his Watergate" or "He saw himself as a modern Job" or "The campaign ended not with a bang but a whimper." An allusion should be familiar to the reader; if it is not, it will add nothing to the meaning.

**Analogy** Analogy is a special form of comparison in which the writer explains something unfamiliar by comparing it to something familiar: "A transmission line is simply a pipeline for electricity. In the case of a water pipeline, more water will flow through the pipe as water pressure increases. The same is true of electricity in a transmission line."

**Anecdote** An anecdote is a short narrative about an amusing or interesting event. Writers often use anecdotes to begin essays as well as to illustrate certain points.

**Argumentation** To argue is to attempt to persuade the reader to agree with a point of view, to make a given decision, or to pursue a particular course of action. There are two basic types of argumentation: logical and persuasive. See the introduction to Chapter 20 (pp. 484-91) for a detailed discussion of argumentation.

**Attitude** A writer's attitude reflects his or her opinion of a subject. The writer can think very positively or very negatively about a subject or have an attitude that falls somewhere in between. See also *Tone*.

**Audience** An audience is the intended readership for a piece of writing. For example, the readers of a national weekly newsmagazine