Learning English is learning to Assimilate into American Culture

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**Introduction**

According to political scientists, social boundaries that define core national values are helpful in recognizing each other’s identity. These social boundaries are based on race, language, and ethnicity. It may also be based on political beliefs like individualism and liberalism and civic attributes. These attributes are necessary for mutual recognition. There are various social processes that help to get mutual national identification or assimilation (Lash, 2018).

Assimilation is a process where foreigners become the part of a national and they intermingle with the local ethnic group. Some of the early classical theories consider it the phenomenon of cultural subtraction. The classical theories of assimilation consider ethnic and majority groups converging into the norms and values. This theory suggests that people who have been a part of a new culture for a longer period of time show more similarities. Gordon, in 1964, described different stages, which show the process of acquisition of language and culture The race was particularly the main factor that led the immigrants to be part of American culture. It became easier for some racial groups to assimilate with the American culture within no time and some were not able to adopt American Culture. It was easy for the people to belong to the white race to be the part of American culture but it was not easy for Asian and African to assimilate easily with the Native Culture. This intermingling of the white race gave birth to the core values of American Culture (Lash, 2018).

American culture is shaped both by the immigrants and the native people. Assimilation became a reason of changes experienced by the immigrants as well as by the host country. The schools, churches and other major educational institutes have tried to bring up a mutual culture to make the cultural minorities the part of American society and its culture. The intermingling of an immigrant with the American society gave a new concept of American society that became the base of “true American” or a nation with diverse culture. Assimilation truly proved as a process of change for American society (Lash, 2018). Due to the rise in the number of immigrants in America, the American institutes are trying to minimize the Ethnic distance and they are considering the English language as a cohesive force between the native people and the immigrants.

Assimilation, which can be defined as the process of cultural and ethnic change in which the foreigners become like locals. Many examples of assimilation have been witnessed in America after the increase in immigrants. All the immigrants coming from different races, ethnicities and cultural backgrounds learn to assimilate into American culture. Learning the English language is one part of assimilation. Immigrants who come to America also learn about their technologies and inventions made by Americans. Most of these immigrants enjoy Christmas and Easter holidays, they celebrate Thanksgiving, Halloween and other events of American culture. All the American popular games are also played by immigrants baseball, gridiron. All types of races and immigrants learn to assimilate in American culture.

Other examples of assimilation are the adoption of the lifestyle, customs, eating and dining habits, etc. In some cases, cultural assimilation also results in the adoption of beliefs and values of the other cultures. The immigrants in America learn and comprehend American culture, which makes it more rich and diverse.

Language is essential for social adjustments. In teaching modern language like English, the cultural and social aspect of the native speakers are always focused. It is the best example of acceptance of the cultural and social existence of society through learning its language. Language become the tools for a child to have friendship, to love and to make memories (Covello, 1939)

English language is the core part of American Culture and learning this language will help to assimilate completely with American culture. Being able to understand English will help to have more insides of American Culture and it is an essential tool for assimilation into the new culture. That is why learning the English language, plays a vital role in cultural assimilation. The main focus of this discussion is based on the question that, how learning the English language is a vehicle for assimilation in American Culture?

## The Connection between learning English and Assimilating into American Culture

English is a lingua franca in this globalized world and it is the part of the core values of American Culture. The anthropological studies have shown that language and culture are interdependent and language is always attached to the cultural and social context. Cultural acquisitions also happen with the help of language. Language has been a powerful medium for socializing because the cultural material pass to each other through language and the cultural discourse are also displayed in a specific culture. For immigrant learning, the English language is a source to get closer psychologically and physically with the host culture. Proficiency in the English Language is a mean of integration into American society. It brings with itself the commitment to the great American Value (Hoffman, 1989).

Only 14 percent of us population were foreign-born in 2015 and 12 percent was the second generations of the immigrant staying in the country for long. But now the percentage of immigrant has increased tremendously and the majority of the native believes that it is not necessary to born inside the country to be American (Hoffman, 1989).

**The informative function of the English language:**

The most important medium of communication in America is English and it is a mean by which people get to know each other. It is understood as an instrument for action. It is understood as a medium of cognitive development. The social dimension of culture can be better expressed through language. The English language will make the people bridge the cultural gap and to assimilate in American culture. They will be able to communicate and understand the core values of the dominant culture if they get to know their language.

All the historical books, stories and policy designs of the country are in the English language and if an individual has learned English he/she will easily explore the cultural existence of the society. Idioms and slang words are also essential to understand the cultural makeup of society. Without learning English it is not possible to understand the cultural existence of the society. The factual statements related to the background of American culture are also saved in the English language and to get an in-depth understanding of those learning English is a must.

In the perspective of English language learning, the classroom environment is set in a way that it targets the specific American cultural and the overcoming of stereotypes in the culture is being generally toughed. That gives a better understanding of the culture. Immigrants learn the language as a requirement of their educational institutes but it is also delivering them information regarding the cultural makeup of America. They are basically doing cultural learning because the textbooks reveal the music, food, religion, and beliefs of Americans.

English is not just playing a role of communication but it is the main tool to intermingle with the American culture. It helps to identify the norms and values of the society that are being saved in the textbooks or expressed through media. It breaks the barrier among people and helps to develop a more cohesive environment. (“English as a Global Language and the Effects on Culture and Identity,” 2017).

**Expressive Function of English language:**

Language is the major means of interaction and communication in a diverse environment like that of the United States. Learning the English language is the same as opening the channel to enter in the American culture. Communication is not just speaking but it refers to the manners that come develops with interactions. Learning the English language will help to learn about the code of conducts in American culture. Culture is transferred in a way of text expressed through language. Language is a model of culture (Graddol, Thompson, & Byram, 1993). To understand the feelings and emotions of the native people learning their language is important. It will help to express ideas, emotions and will help to explore their way of life by communication with them.

The English language makes use of phrases, idioms and words to express feelings and emotions in a better way. The English language comprises of words that are an expression of a feeling such as angry, apprehensive, bewildered, ecstatic, furious, overwhelmed etc. These words are most commonly used to express emotions in the English language. With the development of language, natives keep on inventing different phrases that are used to express feelings and emotions. This also includes some slang words, which become popular among the American community. For instance, some of these slangs are, No Worries, I am in! Dude etc.

**The directive function of the English language:**

To get orders, request or to have a command over anything, the English language is most normally used inside America. Being a highly developed country, technology has been the part of their culture and the English language is a requirement for undressing the direction of those technological developments. Research and development is an integral part of American society. Being able to understand the lifestyle of American the knowledge and skills regarding modern technologies are must and learning the English language will make it easy to understand the operation of a technology. It thus helps a foreigner to adopt the American lifestyle.

Like any other language, the English language also serves to perform some directive functions associated with it. English is the most common language of all the immigrants and ethnic groups that come to America. This language is also commonly used in business and professional meetings, conversations, documents. The documents having commands, orders and directions are written in the English language. Example of simple commands in English is "Close the windows", "Do not smoke in this area", and "Do not disturb”, “Don't you want to help me?”, “It’s late!”. English is most commonly used in all the actions that need command or direction.

### Immigrants Learn the English Language to be American

Immigration has been seen as an issue in America because the country is receiving an influx of hostility from the immigrants. Immigrants are trying to be the part of the economic, social and cultural makeover of the country. For them learning English is not just a step of development for the immigrants. Being the part of a classroom where a teacher is helping to understand the vocabulary and accent of the English language is the first step to adopt the American culture. It is the same as introducing them with the American culture through their language.

The Americans do the favor to have a proficiency in English for legal immigration. Usually, the immigrants have to pass the English language test before coming to America. Because the English language will help them understand and adopt a new life in America. In fact, it will help them to adopt American culture and lifestyle (Guido, 2008). American consider English as one of the founding principles of America and the language as an important role for upbringing responsible American citizen. This concept of the American increased the immigrant patience of learning the English language. An immigrant from Norway, Russia, Southern European and Finns have shown great interest in English language and English names. They preferred to be the part of American identity by learning its language and by following its naming patterns. Both the naming and learning English will help them to be part of the economic and social sector of society (Guido, 2008).

The American culture in most of the AMERICAN INSTITUTE teaches immigrant English through music, American history, movies, Dramas, books, stories, news, and novels.

The course that teaches English through music, develops speaking and listening skills by examining American music. The language of the poet and the idioms of the song is interpreted. The also explain the current American culture in perspective of the lyric used in the song. The course that teaches English through stories focuses on the improvement of native speech and fluency through stories of American storytellers. The activities of the students including presenting and listening to those stories. They also have to take the inte4rview from native speakers. English through American History focuses on the building of student’s writing, reading, and grammar by studying the historical and cultural materials of the United States of America. The class focuses on the significant events that happened in the history of the United States that shaped the political and cultural trends of the society (Skinner & Hagood, 2008).

### Conclusion

Assimilation is no doubt a process of ethnic change and the foreigners become part of the nation by adopting its cultural values. Foreigner becomes part of American society by having proficiency in the English language. Because language is the median they use to communicate with the native people. The educational institution that teaches the English language to immigrants teaches it by exploring the dramas, movie, poetry, history books, stories, and music. By exploring that aspect the immigrant develops an interest in American music, history, poetry, movies and in short in American culture. So learning English is a tool that accelerates the assimilation of immigrant into American culture.

The English language is used to strengthen the grips in a developing country like American and people want to be the part of that developed society so the prefer learning English as a second language. The functions of the English language are considered and used by the immigrants to express feelings, emotions and to direct and command as well. English is the language of Science and technology. The American lifestyle is driven by both technology and scientific innovation so learning the English Language is equal to adopting an American lifestyle.

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