5. What kind of personality does Bryson project in this essay? In other words, based on his tone, word choice, his style, the examples he chooses, his comments, and so on, how would you describe him?
6. What examples of Bryson's sense of humor can you point to? How does his humor contribute to the essay? Is this a strategy you might employ in your writing?
7. How would you evaluate Bryson's own use of English? How might Bryson respond to the criticism that while defending nonstandard usage, his own writing strictly obeys the rules of traditional usage?

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

1. Do you think that dictionaries should be prescriptive instead of descriptive—that is, should they take a position on the traditional rules of proper grammar, usage, and spelling? Write a letter to Bill Bryson explaining how you feel about this and give three specific reasons.
2. Have you ever been bothered by someone's poor grammar or usage? If so, describe in a brief essay your experience and your feelings. Has this essay affected your attitude at all? Explain.
3. If you heard the president or some other official make grammatical and usage errors in an interview, would that affect your view of that person? Would it make him or her seem less deserving of your respect or seem more down-to-earth? Write out your thoughts in an essay, perhaps citing some examples of faulty presidential usage you've found on your own.

MAKING CONNECTIONS

1. As best you can, try to describe your own English usage. Do you think that you speak "good English"? How would the various authors from this section respond to your form of usage? Explain.
2. Now that you have read the different perspectives concerning "standard English," write an essay on where you stand on the issue. Do you think we need language guardians such as John Simon? Is English a changing and malleable medium to which we must adapt according to popular opinion? Do you think we have a right to use whatever form of English we choose?
3. Consider the English language education you received in school. Was it prescriptive, or did it allow for more flexibility? Did you learn the rules of grammar and sentence structure? Has this instruction helped you in your daily life? Was your academic language useful to you as a writer and thinker, or has it proven largely unnecessary? Explain.
4. What is the difference between "good English" and "real English"? In your opinion, should one be used in certain cases and not in others? Explain.
5. Do you think you have an accent? Can you hear yourself speak it? Do you know anyone who claims not to have an accent? What do they mean? Are they accurate in their assessment of their speech? Write an essay in which you explore the concept of the accent in your local area and the way people react to speech. Is one way of speaking considered more educated or intelligent than another?

SHOULD ENGLISH BE THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGE OF THE USA?

Bilingualism in America: English Should Be the Only Language

S. I. Hayakawa

The late S. I. Hayakawa was a leading advocate of the English-only movement. A former U.S. senator from California and a professor of linguistics who published several books on language, Hayakawa was born in Vancouver, British Columbia, to Japanese parents. Hayakawa served as honorary chairman of U.S. English, a public-interest organization based in Washington, D.C., that is working to establish English as the nation's only official language.

In this essay, Hayakawa explains why he feels that English must be the only recognized official language of the United States. This article originally appeared in *USA Today* magazine in July of 1989, by which time English had been made the official language in 17 states.

1 During the dark days of World War II, Chinese immigrants in California wore badges proclaiming their original nationality so they would not be mistaken for Japanese. In fact, these two immigrant groups long had been at odds with each other. However, as new English-speaking generations came along, the Chinese and Japanese began to communicate with one another. They found they had much in common and began to socialize. Today, they get together and form Asian-American societies.

2 Such are the amicable results of sharing the English language. English unites us as Americans—immigrants and native-born alike. Communicating with each other in a single, common tongue encourages trust, while reducing racial hostility and bigotry.

3 My appreciation of English has led me to devote my retirement years to championing it. Several years ago, I helped to establish U.S. English, a Washington, D.C.–based public interest group that seeks an amendment to the U.S. Constitution declaring English our official language, regardless of what other languages we may use unofficially.

4 As an immigrant to this nation, I am keenly aware of the things that bind us as Americans and unite us as a single people. Foremost among these unifying forces is the common language we share. While it is certainly true that our love of freedom and devotion to democratic principles help to unite and give as a mutual purpose, it is English, our common language, that enables us to discuss our views and allows us to maintain a well-informed electorate, the cornerstone of democratic government.

5 Because we are a nation of immigrants, we do not share the characteristics of race, religion, ethnicity, or native language which form the common bonds of

society in other countries. However, by agreeing to learn and use a single, universally spoken language, we have been able to forge a unified people from an incredibly diverse population.

6 Although our 200-year history should be enough to convince any skeptic of the powerful unifying effects of a common language, some still advocate the official recognition of other languages. They argue that a knowledge of English is not part of the formula for responsible citizenship in this country.

7 Some contemporary political leaders, like the former mayor of Miami, Maurice Ferre, maintain that "Language is not necessary to the system. Nowhere does our Constitution say that English is our language." He also told the *Tampa Tribune* that, "Within ten years there will not be a single word of English spoken [in Miami]—English is not Miami's official language—[and] one day residents will have to learn Spanish or leave."

8 The U.S. Department of Education also reported that countless speakers at a conference on bilingual education "expounded at length on the need for and eventually of, a multilingual, multicultural United States of America with a national language policy citing English and Spanish as the two 'legal languages.'"

9 As a former resident of California, I am completely familiar with a system that uses two official languages, and I would not advise any nation to move in such a direction unless forced to do so. While it is true that India functions with ten official languages, I haven't heard anyone suggest that it functions particularly well because of its multilingualism. In fact, most Indians will concede that the situation is a chaotic mess which has led to countless problems in the government's efforts to manage the nation's business. Out of necessity, English still is used extensively in India as a common language.

10 Belgium is another clear example of the diverse effects of two officially recognized languages in the same nation. Linguistic differences between Dutch- and French-speaking citizens have resulted in chronic political instability. Consequently, in the aftermath of the most recent government collapse, legislators are working on a plan to turn over most of its powers and responsibilities to the various regions, a clear recognition of the diverse effects of linguistic separateness.

11 There are other problems. Bilingualism is a costly and confusing bureaucratic nightmare. The Canadian government has estimated its bilingual costs to be nearly $400,000,000 per year. It is almost certain that these expenses will increase as a result of a massive expansion of bilingual services approved by the Canadian Parliament in 1988. In the United States, which has ten times the population of Canada, the cost of similar bilingual services easily would be in the billions.

12 We first should consider how politically infeasible it is that our nation ever could recognize Spanish as a second official language without opening the floodgates for official recognition of the more than 100 languages spoken in this country. How long would it take, under such an arrangement, before the United States started to make India look like a model of efficiency?

13 Even if we can agree that multilingualism would be a mistake, some would suggest that official recognition of English is not needed. After all, our nation has existed for over 200 years without this, and English as our common language has continued to flourish.

14 I could agree with this sentiment had government continued to adhere to its time-honored practice of operating in English and encouraging newcomers to learn the language. However, this is not the case. Over the last few decades, government has been edging slowly towards policies that place other languages on a par with English.

15 In reaction to the cultural consciousness movement of the 1960s and 1970s, government has been increasingly reluctant to press immigrants to learn the English language, lest it be accused of "cultural imperialism." Rather than insisting that it is the immigrant's duty to learn the language of this country, the government has acted instead as if it has a duty to accommodate an immigrant in his native language.

16 A prime example of this can be found in the continuing debate over Federal and state policies relating to bilingual education. At times, these have come dangerously close to making the main goal of this program the maintenance of the immigrant child's native language, rather than the early acquisition of English.

17 As a former U.S. senator from California, where we spend more on bilingual education programs than any other state, I am very familiar with both the rhetoric and reality that lie behind the current debate on bilingual education. My experience has convinced me that many of these programs are shortchanging immigrant children in their quest to learn English.

18 To set the record straight from the start, I do not oppose bilingual education *if it is truly bilingual.* Employing a child's native language to teach him (or her) English is entirely appropriate. What is not appropriate is continuing to use the children of Hispanic and other immigrant groups as guinea pigs in an unproven program that fails to teach English efficiently and perpetuates their dependency on their native language.

19 Under the dominant method of bilingual education used throughout this country, non-English-speaking students are taught all academic subjects such as math, science, and history exclusively in their native language. English is taught as a separate subject. The problem with this method is that there is no objective way to measure whether a child has learned enough English to be placed in classes where academic instruction is entirely in English. As a result, some children have been kept in native language classes for six years.

20 Some bilingual education advocates, who are more concerned with maintaining the child's use of their native language, may not see any problem with such a situation. However, those who feel that the most important goal of this program is to get children functioning quickly in English appropriately are alarmed.

21 In the Newhall School District in California, some Hispanic parents are raising their voices in criticism of its bilingual education program, which relies on native language instruction. Their children complain of systematically being segregated from their English-speaking peers. Now in high school, these students cite the failure of the program to teach them English first as the reason for being years behind their classmates.

22 Even more alarming is the Berkeley (Calif.) Unified School District, where educators have recognized that all-native-language instruction would be an inadequate response to the needs of their non-English-speaking pupils. Challenged by a student body that spoke more than four different languages and by budgetary

constraints, teachers and administrators responded with innovative language programs that utilized many methods of teaching English. That school district is now in court answering charges that the education they provided was inadequate because it did not provide transitional bilingual education for every non-English speaker. What was introduced 20 years ago as an experimental project has become—despite inconclusive research evidence—the only acceptable method of teaching for bilingual education advocates.

23 When one considers the nearly 50 percent dropout rate among Hispanic students (the largest group receiving this type of instruction), one wonders about their ability to function in the English-speaking mainstream of this country. The school system may have succeeded wonderfully in maintaining their native language, but if it failed to help them to master the English language fully, what is the benefit?

Alternatives

24 If this method of bilingual education is not the answer, are we forced to return to the old, discredited, sink-or-swim approach? No, we are not, since, as shown in Berkeley and other school districts, there are a number of alternative methods that have been proven effective, while avoiding the problems of all-native-language instruction.

25 Sheltered English and English as a Second Language (ESL) are just two programs that have helped to get children quickly proficient in English. Yet, political recognition of the viability of alternate methods has been slow in coming. In 1988, we witnessed the first crack in the monolithic hold that native language instruction has had on bilingual education funds at the Federal level. In its reauthorization of Federal bilingual education, Congress voted to increase the percentage of funds available for alternate methods from four to 25 percent of the total. This is a great breakthrough, but we should not be satisfied until 100 percent of the funds are available for any program that effectively and quickly can get children functioning in English, regardless of the amount of native language instruction it uses.

26 My goal as a student of language and a former educator is to see all students succeed academically, no matter what language is spoken in their homes. I want to see immigrant students finish their high school education and be able to compete for college scholarships. To help achieve this goal, instruction in English should start as early as possible. Students should be moved into English mainstream classes in one or, at the very most, two years. They should not continue to be segregated year after year from their English-speaking peers.

27 Another highly visible shift in Federal policy that I feel demonstrates quite clearly the eroding support of government for our common language is the requirement for bilingual voting ballots. Little evidence ever has been presented to show the need for ballots in other languages. Even prominent Hispanic organizations acknowledge that more than 90 percent of native-born Hispanics currently are fluent in English and more than half of that population is English monolingual.

28 Furthermore, if the proponents of bilingual ballots are correct when they claim that the absence of native language ballots prevents non-English-speaking citizens from exercising their right to vote, then current requirements are clearly unfair because they provide assistance to certain groups of voters while ignoring others. Under current Federal law, native language ballots are required only for certain groups: those speaking Spanish, Asian, or Native American languages. European or African immigrants are not provided ballots in their native language, even in jurisdictions covered by the Voting Rights Act.

29 As sensitive as Americans have been to racism, especially since the days of the Civil Rights Movement, no one seems to have noticed the profound racism expressed in the amendment that created the "bilingual ballot." Brown people, like Mexicans and Puerto Ricans; red people, like American Indians; and yellow people, like the Japanese and Chinese, are assumed not to be smart enough to learn English. No provision is made, however, for non-English-speaking French-Canadians in Maine or Vermont, or Yiddish-speaking Hassidic Jews in Brooklyn, who are white and thus presumed to be able to learn English without difficulty.

30 Voters in San Francisco encountered ballots in Spanish and Chinese for the first time in the elections of 1980, much to their surprise, since authorizing legislation had been passed by Congress with almost no debate, roll-call vote, or public discussion. Naturalized Americans, who had taken the trouble to learn English to become citizens, were especially angry and remain so. While native language ballots may be a convenience to some voters, the use of English ballots does not deprive citizens of their right to vote. Under current voting law, non-English-speaking voters are permitted to bring a friend or family member to the polls to assist them in casting their ballots. Absentee ballots could provide another method that would allow a voter to receive this help at home.

31 Congress should be looking for other methods to create greater access to the ballot box for the currently small number of citizens who cannot understand an English ballot, without resorting to the expense of requiring ballots in foreign languages. We cannot continue to overlook the message we are sending to immigrants about the connection between English language ability and citizenship when we print ballots in other languages. The ballot is the primary symbol of civic duty. When we tell immigrants that they should learn English—yet offer them full voting participation in their native language—I fear our actions will speak louder than our words.

32 If we are to prevent the expansion of policies such as these, moving us further along the multilingual path, we need to make a strong statement that our political leaders will understand. We must let them know that we do not choose to reside in a "Tower of Babel." Making English our nation's official language *by law* will send the proper signal to newcomers about the importance of learning English and provide the necessary guidance to legislators to preserve our traditional policy of a common language.

THINKING CRITICALLY

1. Why does Hayakawa feel it is particularly important for a nation of immigrants to communicate in a single, common tongue? Does the fact that he is an immigrant himself lend credence to his argument? Do you agree with this viewpoint? Why or why not?

2. What is Hayakawa's assessment of countries that recognize two or more official languages? From what you know of multilingual countries, do you tend to agree or disagree with his assessment?
3. How does Hayakawa define bilingual education? What does he feel is its biggest flaw? Drawing from your own experience, do you agree with him? Explain your answer.
4. What alternative to current bilingual education does Hayakawa suggest? Do his alternatives seem like reasonable and feasible solutions?

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

1. Have you ever been in a place where you did not speak the language? What if you were a child entering a school in which you did not speak the local language? With your classmates, discuss what this experience might be like. If you have been in a similar situation, discuss how your experience influences your opinion about bilingual education.
2. Research the bilingual policy in your state. (If your state does not have a bilingual policy, find out if any legislation is currently under review for either a bilingual policy or to adopt English as the official language of the state.) What is the demographic profile of your state's immigrant population? How does your state provide for non-native speakers in terms of education and social policy?

Why the U.S. Needs an Official Language

Mauro E. Mujica

The question of whether America should have an official language is highly controversial. The English-only movement is particularly troubling for many Spanish-speaking areas of the country, such as California, the Southwest, and Florida. Opponents to the movement fear that laws forbidding the use of Spanish could violate their civil liberties. English-only proponents insist that linguistic divisions prevent national unity, isolate ethnic groups, and reinforce the economic disparagement between the haves and the have-nots. It may surprise Americans that outside the United States, many people believe the United States should adopt an official language: English. In the next essay, Mauro Mujica explains that Americans seem to be the last people to recognize the need for an official language, and why that language should be English.

Mauro E. Mujica is chairman and CEO of U.S. English Inc., the nation's oldest and largest citizens' action group dedicated to preserving the unifying role of the English language. Mujica, who was born in Chile and immigrated to the United States in 1965, has appeared on many television and radio programs including *Today*, *Good Morning America*, and *60 Minutes*. This essay was printed online in 2003 by *The World & I*, a publication that seeks to present a broad range of thought-provoking readings in politics, science, culture, and humanity.

1 In June 2003, the Pew Research Center announced the results of an extensive survey on global trends such as the spread of democracy, globalization, and technology. Titled "Views of a Changing World," it was conducted from 2001 to 2003 and polled 66,000 people from 50 countries. The survey received some publicity in the United States, mainly because it showed that anti-American sentiments were on the upswing around the world. Less publicized was the fact that there is a now a global consensus on the need to learn English.

2 One question in the Pew survey asked respondents to agree or disagree with the statement "Children need to learn English to succeed in the world today." Many nations showed almost unanimous agreement on the importance of learning English. Examples include Vietnam, 98 percent; Indonesia, 96 percent; Germany and South Africa, 95 percent; India, 93 percent; China and the Philippines, 92 percent; Honduras, Japan, Nigeria, and Uganda, 91 percent; and France, Mexico, and Ukraine, 90 percent.

3 To an immigrant like myself (from Chile), these results come as no surprise. Parents around the world know that English is the global language and that their children need to learn it to succeed. English is the language of business, higher education, diplomacy, aviation, the Internet, science, popular music, entertainment, and international travel. All signs point to its continued acceptance across the planet.

4 Given the globalization of English, one might be tempted to ask why the United States would need to declare English its official language. Why codify something that is happening naturally and without government involvement?

The Retreat of English

5 In fact, even as it spreads across the globe, English is on the retreat in vast sections of the United States. Our government makes it easy for immigrants to function in their native languages through bilingual education, multilingual ballots and driver's license exams, and government-funded translators in schools and hospitals. Providing most essential services to immigrants in their native languages is expensive for American taxpayers and also keeps immigrants linguistically isolated.

6 Historically, the need to speak and understand English has served as an important incentive for immigrants to learn the language and assimilate into the mainstream of American society. For the last 30 years, this idea has been turned on its head. Expecting immigrants to learn English has been called "racist." Marta Jimenez, an attorney for the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, speaks of "the historical use of English in the United States as a tool of oppression."

7 Groups such as the National Association for Bilingual Education complain about the "restrictive goal" of having immigrant children learn in English. The former mayor of Miami, Maurice Ferre, dismissed the idea of even a bilingual future for his city. "We're talking about Spanish as a main form of communication, as an official language," he averred. "Not on the way to English."

8 Perhaps this change is best illustrated in the evolving views of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC). Started in 1929, the group was originally pro-English and pro-assimilation. One of the founding aims and purposes of LULAC was "to foster the acquisition and facile use of the Official Language of