



Midterm 2 - Unit 5-7 Reading

Reading Unit 5 (Raymond)

Reading 1

[1] How was a new sign language created in Nicaragua in the 1980s and what special role did children play in the development of the language? What important general lessons about language learning and theories of human language can be gained from this phenomenon?

- The new sign language developed in Nicaragua was created by **the community of deaf students**, who **unified the conventions** they used differently at home to a default convention to refer to an object or an action. At the same time, while they were interacting with each other, instead of adapting their signs to fit an existing language, they **developed something unique (new grammar)**.
- It **supports the Noam Chomsky Theory**, which it states that all humans are born with part of their brain dedicated to understanding and producing language.

Reading Unit 6 (Arya & Jacob)

Reading 1

(a) Is the global spread of English posing a major threat to linguistic diversity around the world? (the textbook and lecture also discuss this issue)

- There has been ongoing language loss **in Africa and the Pacific**, but here **the shift is not toward English but to regional lingua francas** (e.g. Lingala, Wolof, Swahili, Malay) or other urban vernaculars of mixed linguistic origin
- However, in many instances, it is observed that **even if English does not 'kill' other languages, it relegates them to a lesser role where English is used in all formal/high-status domains** (e.g. higher education, scientific communication,

transnational business) **and other languages serving informal domains as 'static markers of identity**

(b) Is the global spread of English causing socioeconomic equality?

- Literacy skills in standard English are becoming a necessary resource for access to higher education and better-paid employment.
- However, **English is a resource that is unequally distributed**. Elite groups have easier access and exposure to the English language (books, TV, travel) and English education
- Thus, **the use of English as a medium of education in many post-colonial countries privileges the relatively well-off urban elites and marginalizes the rural poor**. This turns English into a gatekeeper to social advancement.
- Socio-economic inequality usually has complex multifactorial causation in which **language probably plays a relatively minor role** alongside unequal economic and political relations

(c) Is the global spread of English posing a serious threat to cultural diversity around the world?

- Homogenization/cultural imperialism thesis- globalization is the globalization of capitalism, which in its cultural aspect encroaches on and undermines local identities through the imposition of a homogenizing, Americanized culture.
 - Strong visibility of American products across cultures- Starbucks, McDonald's, Hollywood films)
- However, the author states that **cultural influence is not necessarily unidirectional**.
- Globalization may be bringing into existence new hybrid cultural forms, new identities, and cosmopolitan cultures (popularity of Korean dramas, mixing of African-American and Caribbean musical cultures to produce styles of jazz and hip-hop, etc.)

Reading 2

(a) In the section 'Why English only?', the author lists a range of advantages that may be gained from multinational companies adopting English as their corporate

language. What are these potential advantages?

- **Competitive pressure**- Businesses need to communicate with a diverse range of customers, and business partners to grow their market. Speaking only a local language limits the scope of the business.
- **Globalization of tasks and resources**- Language differences can cause challenges when geographically dispersed employees have to work together to meet corporate goals
- **Merger and Acquisition integration across national boundaries**- Negotiations regarding a merger or acquisition are complicated enough when everybody speaks the same language. But when they don't, nuances are easily lost, even in simple e-mail exchanges

(b) In the section 'Obstacles to successful English-language policies', the author describes the challenges facing the use of English as a corporate language. What are these challenges/obstacles to success?

- **Change is shocking**- Change in language policy comes as a shock to employees and cannot be adopted fast
- **Compliance is Spotty**- Change happens more easily on paper than in reality, making international communication difficult
- **Lowering of self-confidence**- When nonnative speakers are forced to communicate in English, they can feel that their worth to the company has been diminished, regardless of their fluency level
- **Job Security falters**- Even though achieving sufficient fluency is possible for most, with the adoption of an English-only policy, employees' job requirements change—sometimes overnight
- **Performance Suffers**- Such sudden change in policy might cause employees to fail to participate in group settings, jeopardizing the company's performance

(c) In the section 'An adoption framework', the author suggests how companies can most successfully introduce an English language policy. What are the author's suggestions?

- **Enhancing employee buy-in** (the belief that a language policy shift will be beneficial) and **belief** (the belief that they can learn the language)

- **Offer opportunities to learn**- Offer employees to get exposure to and learn the language
- **Fostering positive attitudes**- People's faith in their own capabilities grows when they see others around them—peers, managers, friends—having positive experiences with the radical change
- **Verbal Persuasion**- Encouragement and positive reinforcement from managers and executives—simple statements like “You can do it” or “I believe in you”—make all the difference

Reading Unit 7 (Clara & Frank)

Unit 7 extra reading task

Find out about the legal case *Lau vs. Nichols*, 1974. What was the importance of this case, what triggered the lawsuit, and what were the consequences of the Supreme Court's ruling?

- **importance:** *Lau v. Nichols*, a case in which the U.S. Supreme Court on January 21, 1974, ruled that, under the Civil Rights Act of 1964, a California school district receiving federal funds **must provide non-English-speaking students with instruction in the English language** to ensure that they receive an equal education.
- **the trigger of the lawsuit:** The case centered on the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD), which had nearly 2,900 non-English-speaking students of Chinese ancestry. While approximately 1,000 of those students were provided supplemental classes in the English language, the others were not. In the early 1970s the students without access to such instruction, including Kinney Kimmon Lau, filed suit, claiming that the SFUSD violated their rights under the Fourteenth Amendment's equal protection clause and Section 601 of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or national origin in any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.
- **consequence:** **the lack of supplemental language instruction** in public schools for students with limited English proficiency **violated the Civil Rights Act of 1964**

Reading Unit 7

‘Spanish in the Southwest’ by Carmen Silva-Corvalán, in *Languages in the USA*, 2004, edited by Ed Finegan and John Rickford, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

When you read this chapter, pay attention to Silva-Corvalán’s description of the difference in proficiency in Spanish among first, second and third generation Hispanics (which she refers to as Group 1, 2 and 3). Also, find the answers to the following questions. Questions about this information may be included in the next mid-term exam.

1. What is meant by the term ‘an emblematic use of Spanish’?

The use of Spanish words or phrases to display that one is of Spanish background. It does not mean the speaker is fluent in Spanish, but merely has knowledge about it. The use of fixed Spanish expressions within English conversation.

2. How do groups/generations 1, 2 and 3 use Spanish in different ways/amounts when they interact with their parents, grandparents, and brothers and sisters?

- a. Native fluency, prefer to speak in Spanish over English when possible to relatives, peers, and children.
- b. Bilingual, talks to parents, grandparents, in Spanish, may talk to siblings in Spanish or English
- c. Mostly English, can understand Spanish but does not speak Spanish to parents, grandparents, brothers, etc.

3. According to Silva-Corvalán, what kinds of attitude do most Hispanics have towards Spanish and its maintenance? Does this attitude strongly affect the learning and use of Spanish?

Positive attitude, but this does not affect the maintenance and learning of Spanish. Uncommitted behavior to passing it on to their descendants.

4. What attitudes seem to be held towards English among the majority of Hispanics?

English is seen as necessary for upward social and economic mobility in American society.

5. Which of the following is suggested to be the most important factor for the maintenance of Spanish in the Southwest: (a) the availability of Spanish-language TV, radio and newspapers in major cities in the Southwest, (b) the availability of easy travel to Mexico and Central America, (c) regular in-migration of new native speakers of Spanish.

The regular in-migration of new native speakers of Spanish.