

Introduction

Sociolinguistics affirms that language does not exist in some theoretical vacuum; it carries social evaluations and entails real outcomes for real speakers of a particular language variety. Through this perspective we will deconstruct the linguistic régime of the United States to understand how such a multicultural nation ultimately gave rise to the worldwide English monolith. Thru the paradigm of political linguistics, we will look at how these social evaluations and their juridical manifestations have played out over the history of the United States, and the effects (or lack thereof) of laws on American language communities.

Specifically, I want to cover the current state-level status of English as an official language, grouping the laws by their general provisions, and search for reliable data that can help us gauge the potency of particular state laws (before and after enactment).

Political Linguistics

Political linguistics studies the ways and extent to which “official” governance structures can influence the use, status, or form of language among its constituents. Calvet 1996 This is the framework in which we undertake this study. I hope to contribute knowledge in two ways:

1. Examining the form and effects of the various state language laws in the United States
2. Understanding how the United States became a monolingual political entity in the context of a multi-cultural population, without the presence of a federal language policy

US Demography

Language Law in the United States

Baron 1992 gives a thorough overview of language laws throughout the history of the United States.

State-by-State Case Studies

Comparative Analysis and Conclusions

References

Baron, Dennis (1992). *The English-only question: official language for Americans?*. Yale University Press.
Calvet, Louis-Jean (1996). *Les politiques linguistiques*. Presses universitaires de France.