

'We have room for but one language here': Language and national identity in the US at the turn of the 20th century

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to offer a tentative historiography of the emergence of one language ideology, that of English as the one and only language of American national identity. I will examine the appearance and growth of this ideology from the 18th to the 20th century, ending with the post-World War I period when three discourses, that of Americanization, that of Anglicization, and that of Anglo-Saxonization, came together suggesting to newly arriving European immigrants that in order to become loyal Americans they should absorb Anglo-Saxon cultural traditions and speak only English. I will also argue that while the linguistic assimilation of European immigrants eventually became a part of the American national identity narrative, the enforced nature of this assimilation was conveniently 'written out' of the story. As a result, children and grandchildren of European immigrants came to see language maintenance and loss as private issues, disconnected from larger sociopolitical contexts.

0. Introduction

In the aftermath of the September 11th terrorist attacks, American national identity is once again at the center of a fierce controversy. It is not surprising that a national crisis of such magnitude would call for the consolidation of a patriotic image of a 'real American' – history has taught us that all major national crises entail a similar renegotiation of who 'counts', who 'fits in', and whose voice gets heard. The anti-German hysteria engendered by World War I, merged with anti-immigrant xenophobia, challenged the legitimacy of hyphenated – and multilingual – Americans. World War II and the Pearl Harbor attack rekindled the fear of 'foreign elements' within and led to restrictions on civil liberties of Japanese-Americans, many of whom had lived in the country for generations. Now, in a hauntingly *déjà-vu*-like fashion, the general public ques-

tions the loyalty of Arab-Americans, the government places new restrictions on immigration and student visas, and the media reinforces an image of American citizens as patriotic middle-class American-born Christians, native-speakers of English, who are ready to defend their 'civilized nation' against the unspecified forces of Islam and other 'foreign ill-wishers.' This problematic image could be challenged from a variety of perspectives. The focus of the present study is on the historical construction of English monolingualism as a symbol of Americanness.

The image of America as a 'nation of immigrants' and the portrayal of turn of the century immigration as a 'melting pot' are by now an intrinsic part of the US national identity narrative. In a recent study, Bigler (1996) showed that during a community debate on the educational needs of Spanish-speaking students, Euro-American senior citizens in the small upstate New York town of Arnheim used these images to oppose the creation of bilingual programs. They stated that their grandparents became full-fledged Americans by willingly assimilating, learning English, and restricting the native languages to the privacy of their homes, and that any other course of action would threaten national unity and culture. These arguments are familiar to all following bilingual education debates and have been refuted a number of times, in particular by Kloss (1977) and Crawford (1992), who argued that historically the United States had a strong tradition of bilingual and native language instruction (see also Schmidt's paper in this issue). The aim of the present paper is not to repeat their arguments but to examine the period during which monolingualism in English came to symbolize Americanness, contextualizing it within a broader survey of American history and language attitudes. In doing so, I will challenge the narrative of the Arnheim elders suggesting that, even though some of their parents and grandparents may have been assimilating willingly, they also did not have much of a choice: once language came to the foreground as a constitutive part of American national identity, language shift was enforced upon immigrants and their children in return for a promise of acceptance and social mobility.

1. Language and national identity

Recent studies of the relationship between language and national identity demonstrate that not all nation-states accord similar importance to language in the construction of national identity, and, consequently, in the naturalization process (Piller 2001). While in some countries national identity is predicated on a common language, in others the common denominator may be ethnicity or religion. For example, Japan, and until recently Germany, privilege ethnicity and heritage: as a result, Japan-

born Koreans who speak Japanese natively and who had never resided outside of Japan are still not eligible for Japanese citizenship. Similarly, Germany has offered citizenship to ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe who did not speak any German, but often created insurmountable difficulties for Iranians, Turks, and Yugoslavs, some of whom were German-born and at times even monolingual in German (Piller 2001).

American national identity was historically founded on the assumption that whatever one's origin or native language, one could become an American by declaring a desire to do so and committing oneself to a set of liberal political principles, which include democracy, liberty, equality, and individual achievement (Citrin, Reingold, and Green 1990). This definition was severely limited by racial considerations – until 1870 naturalization was restricted to 'free white persons', which excluded African-Americans and Native Americans; Asian immigrants were excluded until the middle of the twentieth century. Language did not come to the forefront of the national identity project in the US until the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, when, in the wake of the Great Migration wave, language testing became a part of the naturalization process, and English fluency – and eventually monolingualism in English – a constitutive aspect of an American identity. The present study will ask four questions with regard to this period: (1) what language ideologies were espoused in the US prior to the beginning of the Great Migration in the 1880s; (2) why did language emerge in the period between 1880 and 1924 as a key aspect of national identity; (3) what were the implications of this change for language and educational policies and practices; (4) how were the changes received and responded to by immigrant communities?

2. Theoretical framework and methodology

In his groundbreaking volume on language ideologies, Blommaert (1999) emphasized the importance of the historiography of language ideologies, i. e., a study of ways in which certain discourses, beliefs, and attitudes toward languages come into being and become hegemonic, while others remain in the background or disappear without a trace. He argued that while we are gaining a better understanding of the synchronic functioning of ideologies of language, diachronic investigations of historical production and reproduction of ideologies are still rare and remain to be carried out. The present study aims to contribute to this new area of research by providing a tentative historiography of the emergence of one such ideology, that of English as the one and only language of American national identity. I will examine the appearance and growth of this ideology from the 18th to the 20th century, ending with the post-World War

I period when three discourses, that of Americanization, that of Anglicization, and that of Anglo-Saxonization, came together suggesting to newly arriving European immigrants that in order to become loyal Americans they should absorb Anglo-Saxon cultural traditions and speak only English.

In examining the process of naturalization and standardization of English as an emblem of national identity, I will apply the sociopolitical approach advocated by Blommaert (1999: 5) which adds to ‘the history of language and languages a dimension of human agency, political intervention, power and authority’. I will also draw on Anderson’s (1991) understanding of nation-states as imagined communities whereby the process of imagining draws on different sources at different times. Thus, my discussion of language ideologies will be at all times placed within a wider context of social and political issues, such as nation-building, immigrant and educational reforms and policies, and within more localized contexts of community activities, such as ethnic publications and parochial schools. I will also highlight opinions, alliances, and practices of ‘the real historical actors’ (Blommaert 1999: 7) – politicians, policy-makers, academics, educators, employers, and immigrant leaders – with particular attention to ambivalences, contradictions, and double standards underlying their views on language policies and practices.

To illuminate the change in language ideologies that took place in the period between 1880 and 1924, and, more specifically, post-World War I, I will draw on a range of primary and secondary sources on language, education, immigration, and workplace policies and practices. The primary sources used in the study include: (a) language and educational policies adopted between 1917 and 1924; (b) books and articles on foreign language and immigrant education published between 1900 and 1932; (c) immigrant memoirs published between 1900 and 1951 and detailing life stories of first generation immigrants and their children. The secondary sources include scholarly inquiries in the fields of language policy, language maintenance and shift, American history, and the history of education, in particular classical work by Fishman (1966), Handschin (1913), Hartmann (1948), Higham (1955), Kloss (1977), Leibowitz (1971, 1974), Luebke (1980), Schlossman (1983), and Zeydel (1964), and contemporary scholarship in the history of language policy and bilingual education by Crawford (1992, 1999) and Wiley (1998).

3. Language ideologies in the US in the 18th and 19th centuries

Current scholarship in history, sociology, bilingualism, and literary studies debunks the traditional image of America as a monolingual ‘melting pot’ where immigrants willingly renounced their native lan-

guages and learned English in order to belong (Crawford 1992; Kloss 1977; Leibowitz 1971, 1974; Schlossman 1983; Sollors 1998; Wiley 1998). In reality, these individuals, many of whom were already multilingual, were joining a society that was also visibly multilingual, and where bilingualism, biculturalism, and linguistic diversity were for a long time viable options, reflected in the policies and practices of the 18th and 19th centuries.

3.1 Language policies and practices

The fact that the American Constitution makes no reference to the choice of a national language can be interpreted in a number of ways. On the one hand, it may suggest that bi- or multilingualism were not necessarily desired goals for the country's founders; on the other, it may indicate a tolerant attitude toward linguistic diversity. Heath (1977) emphasizes that the founding fathers actively avoided giving English constitutional status, as the idea was considered by them to be hostile to the interests and independence of the respective States. At the time, the use of languages other than English was often considered indispensable for national unification and resulted in a number of multilingual governmental practices. During the years of the War of Independence, for instance, the Continental Congress published several documents, including the Articles of Confederation, in English and German, and at times even in French (Kloss 1977). The Californian constitution, adopted in 1849, required the publication of all laws in English and Spanish, while in Louisiana for most of the 19th century the state legislature and the courts operated bilingually in English and French (Crawford 1992, 1999). Voting requirements, prior to 1850, typically focused on age and residency, and oral English skills were not mentioned at all (although later some states added an English literacy requirement). It is also well-known that in the 1830s numerous German-speakers united to press – albeit unsuccessfully – for German as an official language in Pennsylvania and Ohio (Conzen 1980). It is worth noting, however, that, at least for some intellectual and political leaders of the colonial period and the 19th century, these multilingual practices constituted a temporary necessity, rather than a desired state of affairs. Moreover, not all languages were seen as equal in colonial times – while colonial and some of the immigrant languages, all of them European, were considered worthwhile by the founders of the country, indigenous languages were disregarded and indigenous populations were subjected to ‘civilizing’ efforts, which included the teaching of French, Spanish, and later on, English.

Furthermore, at times the nation's founders' attitudes also exhibited a double standard with regard to the value of foreign language instruction

versus language maintenance. While both Franklin and Jefferson were avid supporters of modern language study, they were often less than enthusiastic when it came to immigrant language maintenance and use. Benjamin Franklin, for instance, continuously praised the practical advantages of learning foreign languages and, in establishing the Public Academy and College in Philadelphia, introduced a provision that the trustees should engage persons capable of teaching French, Spanish, and German. His efforts also placed Philadelphia in the lead in publishing foreign language materials, and Franklin enjoys the distinction of having printed the first German-language Bible in the US, as well as numerous German hymnals, catechisms, and textbooks. In 1732 he even attempted, albeit unsuccessfully, to edit a German-language newspaper *Philadelphische Zeitung*. At the same time, he also expressed concerns about the Germans' lack of assimilation, proclaiming in 1751: 'Why should Pennsylvania, founded by the English, become a Colony of *Aliens*, who will shortly be so numerous as to Germanize us instead of our Anglifying them and will never adopt our Language or Customs, any more than they can acquire our Complexion' (cited in Crawford 1999: 11). In view of the subsequent Americanization of German immigrants and the necessity to forge political ties with the German community, later in life Franklin once again modified his views and in 1787 he actively supported the campaign to establish the country's first German-language institution of higher learning, now known as Franklin and Marshall College. Similar ambivalence can be found in the views of Thomas Jefferson, who worried whether the French speakers in the Louisiana territories could govern themselves and expressed concerns that non-English speaking immigrants may transmit to their children their own principles 'with their language' (Crawford 1992: 39). On the other hand, Jefferson played an important role in the establishment of modern language studies, and in particular German studies, in the country, and in 1818 had reported to the Virginia legislature: 'The German now stands in a line with that of the most learned nations in richness of condition and advance in the sciences. It is, too, of common descent with the language of our own country, a branch of the same original Gothic stock, and furnishes valuable illustrations for us' (cited in Zeydel 1964: 334).

Despite private concerns and periodic public outbursts against immigrant native language maintenance, in the 18th and 19th centuries immigrant communities enjoyed a vibrant cultural life. At one time or another between 1732 and 1800, 38 German-language newspapers were published in the US (Conzen 1980). The first Chinese newspaper in North America, *Kim Shan Jit San Luk* ('Golden Hill News') was published in San Francisco in 1854, and soon after Chinese newspapers and periodicals sprang up in all major Chinatowns throughout the country (Yin

1998). By the end of the 19th century, every major ethnic community had a number of dailies and weeklies. To increase circulation, most papers published literary work, often serialized novels, and with the increase in population due to immigration and annexation, the numbers of papers grew tenfold. Multilingual printing presses in Philadelphia, New York, and New Orleans also published fiction, poetry, and memoirs in numerous languages, including French, German, Spanish, Polish, Russian, Yiddish, Arabic, Norwegian, Swedish, and Welsh (Sollors 1998). Many of these were authored by local writers. Thus, 19th century German-American writing included the historical novels of Charles Sealsfield, the adventure stories of Friederich Strubberg, and the immigration novels of Otto Ruppis, while Louisiana gave birth to several French-speaking African-American authors, including Victor Séjour and Michel Séigny (Cagidemetro 1998). Another popular form of entertainment and language maintenance were musical and theater performances which appeared in a variety of languages from French and Spanish to Polish, Yiddish, Russian, Arabic, and Chinese. Due to the predominance of German immigrants for most of the 19th century, German theater was flourishing everywhere where there were German settlements, and in Minnesota alone there were almost over 1,600 performances of German-language plays between 1857 and 1890, one a week on average (Daniels 1990). German publications accounted for about 80 percent of the foreign-language press in the US in the 1880s, peaking to almost 800 in 1893–1894 (Wiley 1998).

Overall, in the 18th and 19th centuries, other issues, such as territorial expansion, preoccupied the country's leaders, and multilingualism with regard to colonial and immigrant languages was, if not promoted, then, at least, tolerated (albeit perhaps as a temporary state). Consequently, numerous immigrant enclaves maintained their native languages for generations, using them alongside English for diplomatic, institutional, religious, intellectual, and cultural purposes. Of particular importance to this maintenance was the status of immigrant languages in the country's schools.

3.2 Educational policies and practices

Educational policies and practices of the era were fairly supportive of linguistic diversity. The 18th century saw a rise in the importance of foreign language study. Initially, it was dominated by Greek and Latin, but modern languages were making headway and by the 1750s private schools in Philadelphia offered instruction not only in the classical languages, but also in German, French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, and Arabic (Crawford 1992). In 1779–80, at Jefferson's suggestion, William

and Mary College became the first American college to establish a professorship in modern languages. Since all secondary schools at the time were financed by private funds, immigrant communities were also relatively free to support instruction in their own languages. German-speaking Americans were operating mother-tongue schools in Philadelphia as early as 1694, and in the 1700s German instruction was offered throughout Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, and the Carolinas (Kloss 1977; Leibowitz 1971).

The 19th century witnessed a dramatic increase in migration from Germany. It is estimated that between 1830 and 1890 around 5 million Germans settled in the US, often in the Midwest, in areas where land was cheap and readily available (Daniels 1990). In some places immigrant settlers outnumbered the locals, and questions were raised with regard to which languages were to be used as a medium of instruction in schools. All educational arrangements at the time were the subject of local and state initiatives, and therefore different solutions were offered in different contexts. Starting in 1839 a number of states, including Pennsylvania and Ohio, passed laws enabling or requiring instruction in German in the public schools where a number of parents (often but not always 50 percent) requested it. Most often, such schools and programs appeared in places where German speakers were disproportionately represented rather than in places with the greatest numbers, and so they exerted most influence in Cincinnati, Milwaukee, and St. Louis but not in New York or Chicago. Several cities, including Baltimore, Buffalo, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Dayton, Denver, Indianapolis, Milwaukee, New York, San Francisco, St. Louis, St. Paul, and Toledo, offered German programs which ranged from dual-language instruction to an hour of German a day. Rural schools in Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Missouri, Minnesota, and the Dakotas, where Germans were heavily concentrated, offered instruction mainly or predominantly in German (Schlossman 1983). Some districts also offered translation services to German-speaking parents: as late as 1857 school reports in Pennsylvania and Indiana were published in German translation, and in New Jersey this practice persisted until 1888 (Zeydel 1964). In 1870, the US Commissioner of Education stated that 'the German language has actually become the second language of our Republic, and a knowledge of German is now considered essential to a finished education' (cited in Zeydel 1964: 345).

German was not, however, the only choice as a language of instruction and a foreign language. In the 18th century, French instruction was offered in Illinois, Kentucky, Michigan, New England, New York, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Wisconsin, and, of course, Louisiana (Handschin 1913), while in the 19th century it became a common part of the curricu-

lum in secondary and higher education institutions. In 1847, Louisiana authorized French instruction where parents requested it. French-language public schools also served the French-speaking communities in northern New England. Another language widely spread due to annexation policies was Spanish. Spanish-language schools served the Spanish-speaking communities in Florida, California, and New Mexico. New Mexico authorized bilingual education in 1850 and for most of the 19th century education in most public schools in New Mexico was conducted either entirely in Spanish or, later, in Spanish and English (Handschin 1913; Perlmann 1990). And even though in California bilingual schooling was officially discontinued in 1855, in Southern California it continued to flourish, together with Spanish-language newspapers, and Spanish-speaking officials and community leaders (Leibowitz 1971). Following the Spanish War of 1898 and the annexation of new territories, Spanish also found its way into public high school and college curricula (Handschin 1913). Other languages, such as Czech, Danish, Dutch, Italian, Lithuanian, Polish, Norwegian, and Swedish, were also part of the curriculum in areas with large numbers of immigrants from these linguistic communities (Crawford 1999; Kloss 1977). Mostly, however, these languages were available through private and parochial school instruction. Another language rising to prominence in the 19th century was sign language. In 1817 Reverend Thomas H. Gallaudet returned to America from Paris with the intention of establishing the first sign language school for the deaf in the country. He soon opened such a school in Hartford, Connecticut, and within forty years there were twenty residential schools welcoming deaf students who often had no other way of communicating but through pantomime and gesture (Baynton 1998). By 1860, deaf teachers numbered nearly half of all teachers in the profession, and by the turn of the century there were more than fifty sign language schools throughout the US, where thousands of students spent years living and studying together, successfully creating a new culture associated with American Sign Language (ASL).

The picture painted above may seem an overly positive one, and indeed not all linguistic minorities were treated the same in the 19th century US. While deaf and immigrant children were at times able to study in the language of their choice, a coercive approach was taken with regard to Native American children. From the very beginning of the colonization process, English colonists exhibited the desire to assimilate and 'civilize' Native Americans and, in order to do so, established bilingual mission schools. Starting in 1868, the government created off-reservation boarding schools in which American Indian children were forcibly anglicized, in an attempt to 'civilize' them and to replace their 'barbaric tongues' with English. The 1881 report of the Board of Indian Commis-

sioners to the President affords the English language an almost mystical power of transforming racial identities: 'so long as the American people now demand that Indians shall become white men within one generation ... (they) must be compelled to adopt the English language' (cited in Leibowitz 1974: 18). These policies and practices dealt an irreparable blow to the maintenance of Native American languages in the US.

It is also necessary to point out that while the educational establishment was at least concerned about the assimilation of European immigrants, Native Americans, and deaf children, a different policy was adopted with regard to the children of Chinese and Japanese immigrants, who were considered to be aliens ineligible for citizenship (eventually, the Chinese were prevented from entering the country by the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act). These immigrant children were often purposely kept outside of mainstream education and sent to segregated schools. The imposed segregation, combined with the often encountered sojourner mentality, created beneficial conditions for native language maintenance through private school instruction. The first Chinese after-schools were established in 1886 in San Francisco, and soon others followed in Boston, Chicago, Fresno, New York, Oakland, Phoenix, Portland, Sacramento, Seattle, and Stockton. Some were sponsored by the Manchu government, and others by local churches and communities. Since many of the Chinese in the US contemplated returning to their homeland, the schools offered a traditional Chinese curriculum, including Chinese classics (Wong 1988). A similar situation was encountered in the Japanese community, where many Japanese-language schools were sponsored by the Japanese government and local communities.

3.3 *The German school controversy*

Eventually, however, the use of languages other than English in the curriculum did not go unchallenged, in particular at the elementary school level. Numerous objections were raised to foreign language instruction (which in some places took the form of what we now know as bilingual education), and in particular in German. For instance, attacking the Indianapolis German program, the local newspaper *Indianapolis News* declared that 'the general thought now agrees in the uselessness of a foreign language in the public schools, where the American citizen is being made' (cited in Schlossman 1983: 169). Several state laws, most notably the 1889 Bennett Law in Wisconsin and the Edwards Law in Illinois, specified that all the common subjects in schools, including parochial schools, were to be taught in English (these laws were widely debated and then repealed in 1893).

Proponents of German instruction typically drew on four discourses, which emphasized different aspects of an ideology of linguistic tolerance.

The first, assimilationist, discourse underscored the homogenizing role of public schools in the Americanization of immigrants and the threat to such assimilation from private schools functioning in the native languages. In this view, the only way to draw large numbers of German children away from parochial and private schools and into public schools was through offering German, so that the children could, in the words of the assistant superintendent of schools in Wisconsin, 'be *anglicized* through their native tongue' (cited in Schlossman 1983: 145). The second, family-oriented, discourse pointed to the wisdom of fostering the intergenerational ties between immigrants and their offspring through the use of the minority language. Bilingualism, rather than monolingualism, was the expected outcome, as seen in the 1874 statement from the St. Louis schoolboard: 'It is ... to the interest of the entire community here that the German shall cultivate his own language while he adopts English as his general means of communication' (cited in Schlossman 1983: 151). In some places, in particular in Cincinnati and Indianapolis, educators also extolled the importance of bilingual skills in fostering business and trade at home and abroad, in particular in the light of Germany's growing stature in international commerce (Schlossman 1983). And in places like Cincinnati, St. Louis, Milwaukee, and Indianapolis, where German-English programs contained large numbers of children from non-German-speaking families, educators also saw significant links between foreign language instruction and the intellectual development of young children. The Cincinnati superintendent of schools, John Peaslee, stated in 1889: 'The fact is, that a child can study two languages at the same time and do as well in each, as he would if all his time were devoted to either language alone' (cited in Schlossman 1983: 156).

Despite the periodic controversies and the decline in German migration, at the turn of the century and up until the advent of World War I, German occupied a very favorable place in the curriculum. It was the most widely taught foreign language in the US, as well as the key language for dual-language instruction. In the year 1900, more than 600,000 American children (about 4 percent of the overall elementary school population) continued to receive instruction partially or exclusively in German (Kloss 1977). German-language programs in Cincinnati, Milwaukee, and Indianapolis continued to draw large numbers of students, and in view of the fact that many of the incoming Hungarians, Bohemians, and Eastern European Jews also spoke German, the outlook for the future of such language maintenance programs looked rather promising (Schlossman 1983). Cahan (1926) also noted that some new arrivals who did not know German were at times more interested in learning German than English in order to read the German socialist press and to

take part in socialist workers' meetings. And in 1913 the superintendent of schools in Cincinnati observed: 'As a matter of convenience in this day of travel and international communication it is convenient and important for a person to be able to communicate in two languages as widely used as English and German – but aside from even that, the value that comes from a bi-lingual education is of the greatest importance' (cited in Schlossman 1983: 176).

In sum, we can see that at least until 1880s language ideologies in the US and resulting policies and practices were marked by relative tolerance with regard to colonial and immigrant languages of European origin and to immigrant language maintenance. As Crawford (1992: 46) points out, immigrants were attacked 'for their Catholicism, intemperate lifestyles, or revolutionary politics, but seldom for their foreign speech'. As a result, despite concerns about immigrants' assimilation (or, rather, lack thereof), in many places language maintenance was, if not encouraged, then at least either assisted or not tampered with. Many politicians and educators also conveyed an admiration for German, the language of an important intellectual tradition which continued to influence all strata of American life. Most importantly, as seen in the German school controversy, at that time Americanization was not yet fully synonymous with Anglicization, and some immigrant children were 'transformed into citizens' through their native tongues.

4. Ideological shift in 1880–1924

In the forty four years between 1880 and 1924, often termed the Great Migration, approximately 24 million immigrants entered the United States (US Bureau of the Census 1975). This influx of immigrants raised numerous concerns about national unity and the capacity of American society to assimilate such a large body of newcomers. Eventually, concerns about the 'immigrant invasion', combined with the anti-German hysteria and xenophobia engendered by World War I, led to the convergence of Americanization, Anglicization, and Anglo-Saxonization and to the emergence of a hegemonic discourse which established English monolingualism as a constitutive part of American national identity.

4.1 The Great Migration

The Great Migration wave led to the rise of anti-immigrant movements, and eventually to the Americanization movement, for a number of reasons. To begin with, new immigrants were arriving in unprecedented numbers and settling in urban, rather than rural, areas where their native-language newspapers, organizations, schools, churches, and syna-

gogues, were extremely visible. Secondly, these new arrivals were seen as very different from the 'old.' Prior to the 1880s, immigrants came predominantly from Northern Europe (Germany, England, Scandinavia, and Ireland) and were considered to be relatively assimilable; as a result, their language maintenance efforts were for the most part tolerated or ignored. The vast majority of the new immigrants came from Southern and Eastern Europe (Russia, Poland, Hungary, Slovenia, Lithuania, and Italy) and were distinct from the mainstream Anglo population ethnically, as well as culturally and linguistically, with differences often described in terms of racial, intellectual, and moral inferiority. For instance, Ellwood Cubberley (1909: 15), an early historian of American education and a one-time superintendent of the school district of San Francisco, painted the new immigrants as 'illiterate, docile, lacking in self-reliance and initiative, and not possessing the Anglo-Teutonic conceptions of law, order, and government, their coming has served to dilute tremendously our national stock, and to corrupt our civic life'. The third reason for the rise of anti-immigrant movements was based on the new immigrants' religious affiliations: many were either Jewish or Catholic and put a lot of emphasis on mother-tongue parochial schools. Fourth, some German, Finnish, Eastern European, and Italian immigrants were involved in the socialist movement, and, since declared aliens were originally permitted to vote, they were perceived as a threat to the political balance in many states (Leibowitz 1974). Eventually, immigrants as a whole came to be perceived as a political threat, and later on, part of the Red Scare. Some employers were also concerned about the socialist and union ideas they may bring into the workplace. In turn, other business leaders welcomed the flood of cheap immigrant labor, while labor unions and American workers in general were concerned about losing jobs to immigrants. As a result of these, often conflicting, perceptions and biases, the newcomers – and their languages – came to be perceived as a threat to the social fabric of society. Notably, however, lurking behind concerns about language learning, religious beliefs, and socialist leanings was the growing and pervasive racism which positioned Southern and Eastern Europeans as members of the lower race (Daniels 1990; Wiley 2000; see also Schmidt's paper in this issue). The anti-immigrant spirit of the time is well-captured in a poem 'The Unguarded Gates' by poet and novelist Thomas Bailey Aldrich, published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1882 (cited in Daniels 1990: 275–276):

Wide open and unguarded stand our gates,
And through them passes a wild motley throng,
Men from the Volga and Tartar steppes,
Featureless figures from the Hoang-Ho,

Malayan, Scythian, Teuton, Kelt and Slav,
 Flying the Old World's poverty and scorn;
 These bringing with them unknown gods and rites,
 Those tiger passions here to stretch their claws,
 In street and alley what strange tongues are these,
 Accents of menace in our ear,
 Voices that once the Tower of Babel knew.

The poem also captures the fact that in the xenophobic atmosphere of the 1880s and the 1890s English emerged as a symbol of national unity and a new emblem of the American national identity, while other languages became 'accents of menace', the tangible embodiment of the threat of cultural pluralism and racial and ethnic diversity. This rise in importance of English is visible not only in anti-immigrant discourses and practices of the era but also in the debate about the use of American Sign Language by American-born deaf individuals. By the 1890s articles about deaf people strongly resembled articles on immigration, warning the readers that the deaf 'must be made people of our language' and insisting that if the deaf do not want to become 'a class unto themselves – foreigners among their own countrymen', they should be learning English (Baynton 1998: 370). A coalition of hearing parents and hearing educators of deaf children began a campaign to suppress ASL, or as they called it 'manualism', and replace it with 'oralism', or the exclusive use of lipreading and speech. Several important public figures, including Alexander Graham Bell, lent their support to the campaign. Bell asserted that sign language is essentially foreign and said that in an English-speaking country English and English alone should be used as a means of communication and instruction.

To speed up the assimilation process, in the 1880s and 1890s concerted efforts were made by various organizations and individual philanthropists to offer English instruction to new arrivals. These early attempts to assimilate the immigrants were typically undertaken by liberal reformers who, according to Weiss (1982: xiv), 'sought to help the immigrant adjust without stripping him of his European culture and values'. As time went by, it became clear that these efforts were insufficient and that many immigrants and naturalized citizens were unable to speak English. The separation between the mainstream society and the ethnic enclaves and availability of jobs for which English was unnecessary account for some of this lack of proficiency. For some immigrants, the reluctance to learn English was also compounded by their real or perceived sojourner status. Interested in earning some money but not in becoming Americans, these new arrivals did not consider it practical to devote time to English and citizenship classes (Wyman 1993). US Minister Townsend called the situ-

ation 'the crowning disgrace to our citizenship ... they having spent their time while in the United States, among the members of the foreign colony, where their native language is almost entirely spoken and they have not the smallest conception of the Constitution of the United States or the nature of the oath of allegiance' (cited in Wyman 1993: 64–65). To respond to the problem, in 1906 Congress approved a major change in the US naturalization policy, the Nationality Act, which required aliens seeking citizenship to speak English, and thus further reinforced the importance of language in the public mind. The president's report to Congress stated that undoubtedly 'some aliens who can not learn our language are good citizens. They are, however, exceptions, and the proposition is incontrovertible that no man is a desirable citizen of the United States who does not know the English language' (cited in Leibowitz 1974: 38).

Even this measure did not prove to be entirely effective and large numbers of aliens continued to live in the US without naturalizing their status or acquiring English proficiency. The census of 1910 revealed that 13 million, or 14.8 percent of the total population, were foreign-born persons and of these 23 percent of people ten years of age and over were unable to speak English (Macias 2000). Moreover, it was not only first generation immigrants but also their children who were considered to be a problem. By 1909, 58 percent of school age children in the nation's largest cities were of foreign-born parentage and in New York the number approached 72 percent (Weiss 1982); many of these children grew up speaking their native tongues and had little if any exposure to English. It was clear that one could no longer expect language learning to take place on its own, and immigrant education was deemed a national priority. Ellwood Cubberley (1909: 15–16) worded the mission of this education as follows:

Our task is to break up these groups or settlements, to assimilate and amalgamate these people as a part of our American race, and to implant in their children, as far as can be done, the Anglo-Saxon conception of righteousness, law and order, and popular government, and to awaken in them a reverence for our democratic institutions and for those things in our national life which we as a people hold to be of abiding worth.

The forceful images of split, broken, and amalgamated people and communities painted by Cubberley suggest that at the turn of the century immigrants were increasingly stripped of agency and decision-making powers when it came to language choice and that Americanization was turning into Anglo-Saxonization of the newcomers, rather than a melt-

ing pot for all races. The new rhetoric hailed English proficiency as a key aspect of American national identity, without which true citizenship was impossible. At the same time, up until World War I, English learning and first language maintenance were not seen as entirely incompatible, and politicians and educators, preoccupied with the learning of English, were not necessarily concerned about immigrants' native language use.

4.2 World War I and the Americanization campaign

World War I posed a challenge to the earlier complacency. Hartmann (1948) suggests that if it had not been for the war, assimilation efforts would have remained the domain of various agencies and philanthropists, rather than the government and the wider public. They might have also remained at a more liberal stage allowing for some bilingualism and biculturalism. The conflict in Europe heightened the sense of American nationalism and highlighted the persistence of Old World ties, language among them, among the European-born. In the context of the war, diversity often smacks of disloyalty (McClymer 1982), and many Americans felt 'that much of the opposition to the war had its origin among those groups of foreigners in our populations who were largely ignorant of our language and institutions' (Edwards 1923: 270). With patriotism on the rise, immigrants were noticed by the previously indifferent public, and the question of Americanization began to assume the proportions of a national crusade (Hartmann 1948). The intolerance of the time is well illustrated in a speech by one Nebraskan lawmaker: 'If these people are Americans, let them speak our language. If they don't know it, let them learn it. If they don't like it, let them move' (Luebke 1980: 12–13).

Now, however, it was no longer enough to learn English and assimilate: the political climate of the era required that immigrants discard all other allegiances but to America. The anti-German sentiment in particular had been growing steadily since the beginning of the war, and when the United States declared war upon Germany in April 1917, it erupted in a storm of rabid anti-German hysteria. The press attacked not only the German emperor and army, but also the nation, its language and culture, and members of the German-American community, many of whom, at least initially, were sympathetic to their former homeland (Duncan 1932; Luebke 1974, 1980; Wiley 1998). The national propaganda machine and the government-sponsored local defense committees fostered a climate of harassment, and speakers of German, in particular German teachers, faced sweeping accusations of being engaged in subversive activities (cf. Fitz-Gerald 1918). In many communities German-Americans were subjected to threats, intimidation, and beatings, while German books were removed from church, school, and university librar-

ies and destroyed or even publicly burned. Speaking German in public or over the phone was considered suspicious and unpatriotic, and in Jefferson County, Nebraska, the local council of defense ordered telephone operators to cut off parties who used German on the phone (Wiley 1998). Authorities in St. Louis and Milwaukee closed down local German theaters, while in other places there was a ban on German-composed music, and even wedding marches by Mendelsohn and Wagner were removed from marriage ceremonies. German-Americans in Nebraska were urged to cancel their subscriptions to German-language newspapers. German-language courses were being canceled in public and private schools. Numerous publications, including scholarly journals, printed vitriolic articles against German-language study, and the National Education Association declared 'the practice of giving instruction ... in a foreign tongue to be un-American and unpatriotic' (Fitz-Gerald 1918: 62), leading the state legislatures to reconsider the wisdom of offering such instruction.

Eventually, the debate led to two types of legislation adopted between the years of 1917 and 1922. More than 30 states passed Americanization laws which obliged aliens unable to speak or read English to attend public evening schools, and in some cases authorized funding for such schools and imposed fines on non-compliant aliens (Hartmann 1948). Thirty-four states also passed official English-language policies which declared English the only language of instruction. In addition, Louisiana, Indiana, and Ohio made the teaching of German illegal at the elementary level; Alabama, Colorado, Delaware, Iowa, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and South Dakota passed legislation that prohibited all foreign language instruction in grades I through VIII; while Wisconsin and Minnesota restricted foreign language instruction to one hour a day. Laws prohibiting German instruction were also adopted by a number of cities with large German-speaking populations, such as Baltimore, New York City, and Philadelphia. These laws effectively closed the pioneering dual-language programs in Cincinnati and Indianapolis, and many smaller programs that employed some form of dual-language instruction, or offered foreign language instruction in elementary school. Similar attacks were undertaken against Spanish-English bilingual programs in the Southwest (Grinberg and Saavedra 2000) and Japanese-language schools in Hawaii and California (Tamura 1993). In many, though not all, places in the Southwest, bilingual programs were termed 'un-American' and were replaced by English-only instruction (Grinberg and Saavedra 2000).

The arguments which justified the new laws and practices allow us to distinguish between two types of discourses which converged to promote the hegemony of English monolingualism. Among these two broadly delineated sets of discourses are those that invest different languages

with different moral and intellectual values and those that legitimize or devalue particular language practices. Among the most prominent in the first category is the discourse of the superiority of English, which allowed many politicians and educators to posit English as a language of high moral and intellectual value and to equate the lack of English proficiency with inferior intelligence and low moral standards. Eventually, this perspective inspired several psychological studies which 'proved' the 'feeble-mindedness' of the new immigrants and the insufficient cognitive development of bilingual children (for an in-depth discussion, see Hakuta 1986). Some new immigrants also drew on this discourse to praise the linguistic and cognitive transformation they experienced in the process of learning English:

I am in a special way happy to have learned the English language and through its medium to have become acquainted with the stalwart thought of the master minds of the Anglo-Saxon race. (Panunzio 1921/1926: 294)

Political leaders adopted this discourse to offer English a critical role in fostering the sense of national identity, loyalty, and patriotism. It was with this link in mind that the English First movement promoted the creation of evening schools offering English and civics education in every town where there was an immigrant community. More than thirty state governments and many cities joined in these Americanization efforts, launching English programs for foreign-born adults. These efforts had solidified the link between English and patriotism in the public consciousness so well that twenty years later Philadelphia's *Evening News* still argued that all aliens 'are to be taught the minimum of English necessary to guarantee a belief in democracy' (May 25, 1939). Interestingly and perhaps not surprisingly, Americanization and Anglicization efforts were also deemed crucial by employers, such as Henry Ford, US Steel, and the Pennsylvania Railroad. Many employers believed that it was low proficiency in English that made their workers easy prey to socialist propaganda, and that acquiring English would also make them internalize free-enterprise values (Crawford 1992). Hence, encouraged by the example of the Ford English School created in 1914, other employers institutionalized classes for their non-English speaking employees. By the spring of 1919, there were at least eight hundred industrial plants sponsoring their own classes or offering them in conjunction with the YMCA (Barrett 1992). Labor unions also competed for the workers' minds and organized classes for their members, as, in their view, the lack of linguistic proficiency impeded foreign-born workers from learning de-

tails of labor disputes and from seeing strikebreaking activities as unacceptable.

While English was proclaimed as the key language of value, a few other European languages – in particular Latin, French, and Spanish – also made the grade as valuable for the moral and intellectual development of American youth. German, on the other hand, lost its earlier cachet and became, at least for some, the language of the enemy, one that could demoralize and corrupt young minds. In a polemical essay in *Educational Review* on the advisability of German instruction in American schools, Gordy (1918: 262) declared that there is no place in American education for the language that upholds the Teutonic philosophy, which ‘prides itself in its inhumanity for it murders innocent children, rapes women, and mutilates the bodies of innocent men’. Gordy (1918) also argued that American students needed to be protected from other languages that could ‘contaminate’ them, notably Russian, Japanese, Chinese, and Italian. His views, however, were not necessarily representative of all members of the educational establishment. Barnes’ (1918) survey on the future of the German language in American schools showed that while some public figures, including the prominent businessman John Wanamaker, vehemently opposed the study of German, others, including several presidents and ex-presidents of Ivy League universities, spoke adamantly in defense of the German language.

The second set of hegemonic discourses of the era entail discourses which validated or delegitimized particular language practices, most notably bilingualism, foreign language education, and immigrant language maintenance. Here of particular interest are debates around the cognitive and linguistic development of bilingual children (Hakuta 1986). A comparison of these debates with those surrounding the German school controversy demonstrates that while previously bilingualism was seen as a relatively common phenomenon and an important linguistic and cognitive resource, following World War I many leading politicians, educators, and researchers, most notably Madorah Smith, suggested that bilingualism may interfere with the cognitive and linguistic development of immigrant children (Hakuta 1986), negatively affect their acquisition of English (Tamura 1993), and prevent their Americanization (Fitz-Gerald 1918). Bilingualism, in fact, became ‘unimaginable’ and many educators shared the opinion of Friedrich Bruns (1921: 142) who stated that ‘only a juncture of very unusual opportunities ever allows a man to become really bilingual’. It is not surprising then that educators ceased seeing foreign language instruction as a key to intergenerational communication. Now it was no longer children who had to learn the language of the parents, but parents who had to learn English in order to be able to communicate with their offspring, or in the words of Julia Richman, the

district superintendent of New York's Lower East Side schools, 'cross the bridge to join [their] child on the American side' (cited in Berrol 1982: 37).

Another set of debates erupted around the value of foreign language education, in particular for younger children. Some politicians and educators argued against foreign language instruction in elementary school linking it to undesirable immigrant language maintenance. Thus, in an address given at the War Time conference of Modern Language Teachers, Marian Whitney (1918: 11–12), a Vassar College professor, stated:

In so far as teaching foreign languages in our elementary schools has been a means of keeping a child of foreign birth in the language and ideals of his family and tradition, I think it a bad thing; but to teach young Americans French, German or Spanish at an age when their oral and verbal memory is keen and when languages come easily, is a good thing. ... until our population is more homogeneous, more one in speech and ideals, it is probably better to banish all foreign languages from the lower schools.

Eventually, anti-foreign-language legislation knocked modern languages out of the elementary school curriculum in many places across the country (for arguments in support see Fitz-Gerald 1918; Gordy 1918; Whitney 1918). Since at the time only 20 percent of the children continued their education past elementary school (Gordy 1918), this curricular change effectively limited foreign language instruction to the most privileged segment of the population, typically middle- and upper-middle class Anglo children. The ideological shift also affected foreign language teaching approaches: while prior to World War I, the Direct Method was slowly making its way in, raising the level of oral communication skills, in the aftermath of the war, reading skills were once again declared of greater importance and intellectual value (Cerf 1922; Heuser 1918; Kramsch and Kramsch 2000). One of the arguments in defense of the focus on reading skills was the fact that German classes with the stress on the spoken language had been largely patronized by German-American and Jewish students (Heuser 1918) and thus may have inadvertently contributed to immigrant language maintenance. Furthermore, to ensure the ideological purity of foreign language classes, it was argued that modern language instruction should be taken away from 'foreigners who seldom are able to acquire the point of view of their pupils' (Fitz-Gerald 1918: 58) and entrusted to American-born teachers (Whitney 1918). The arguments above once again underscored the pervasive double standard in the American ideology of bilingualism – while white middle-class children were encouraged to gain some degree of proficiency in French,

Spanish, and perhaps even German, their immigrant counterparts were discouraged from maintaining their native languages, and told to focus on English only.

Together, discourses which invested English with superior moral and intellectual values and discourses which linked bilingualism to inferior intelligence, low moral standards, and lack of patriotism, posited bilingualism as unpatriotic and undesirable, at least for the foreign-born and their children. The leaders of the nation, most notably Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, drew on these discourses to establish the hegemony of English, to argue that 'a hyphenated American is not an American at all' (Crawford 1992: 57), and to call for hyphenated Americans to discard the hyphen and with it, the legacy of other cultures and languages. While the role of these leaders in promoting the new ideology is well-established in the scholarly literature, it is rarely mentioned that Roosevelt reverted to German when necessary. The first German-American politician elected to Congress, Richard Bartholdt (1930: 56), recalls meeting Roosevelt in the State Congress in Albany in 1882. There, Roosevelt who had learned German in school in Dresden, Germany, approached Bartholdt for additional German lessons so that he could address his German constituents in their own tongue. Bartholdt agreed and the two frequently met to converse in German. According to Bartholdt, Roosevelt's proficiency in German significantly contributed to his success with a typically Democratic German-American constituency. Roosevelt's appeal to German suggests that his language attitudes, just like those of Franklin and Jefferson, exhibited a double standard and were shaped and reshaped by the political concerns of the moment. During and after World War I, these concerns led to a new national policy, one that expected full cultural and linguistic assimilation on the part of European immigrants. Thus, in 1915 president Wilson told new citizens in Philadelphia:

You cannot become thorough Americans if you think of yourselves in groups. America does not consist of groups. A man who thinks of himself as belonging to a particular national group in America has not yet become an American. (cited in Olneck 1989: 402)

And Roosevelt, in his famous 1919 address to the American Defense Society, later reprinted in multiple Board of Education bulletins and brochures, equated English monolingualism with loyalty to America:

We have room for but one language here, and that is the English language, for we intend to see that the crucible turns our people out as Americans, of American nationality, and not as dwellers in a polyglot

boardinghouse; and we have room for but one sole loyalty, and that is the loyalty to the American people. (cited in Brumberg 1986: 7)

Similarly, the president of the Pennsylvania Railroad, Samuel Rea, one of the key supporters of work-place Americanization, insisted that immigrants

must be induced to give up the languages, customs, and methods of life which they have brought with them across the ocean. (Hill 1919: 630)

Schools were among the first institutions to respond to this call and attempt to ensure that immigrant children – just like Native American children in the 19th century – were forbidden to speak their native languages. Superintendent Julia Richman, for instance, prohibited the use of Yiddish in Lower East Side schools, assigning teachers to patrol lunchrooms, restrooms, and schoolyards, and instructing them to give demerits to the users of Yiddish (Berrol 1982). Not surprisingly, the language particularly affected by the policies, practices, and hostile attitudes of the era was German. While in 1915 approximately 324,000 students were studying German, by 1922, high schools all over the country had fewer than 14,000 students of German, a mere 0.5 percent of the overall high school enrolment (as compared to 15.5 percent in French and 10 percent in Spanish) (Zeydel 1964). The combined effects of direct attacks on the German language and anti-foreign language legislation also contributed to the demise of the German-language press: while in 1910 there were 554 German-language publications, by 1920 there remained only 234 (Fishman, Hayden, and Warshauer 1966).

Eventually, the constitutionality of the new English-only statutes was challenged in court. The famous case, *Meyer vs. Nebraska* (1922–1923), was filed by Robert Meyer, a parochial teacher, who was convicted for conducting a religion class in German with elementary school children. The decision was upheld by the Nebraska State Court but Meyer appealed against the decision and eventually wound up before the US Supreme Court. The Supreme Court overturned the decision, proclaiming the Nebraska law unconstitutional. The majority opinion, written by Justice McReynolds, pointed out that ‘mere knowledge of the German language cannot reasonably be regarded as harmful’ and declared it unlawful to interfere with the teacher’s right ‘to teach and the right of parents to engage him so to instruct their children’ (Luebke 1980: 15). Progressive educators of the era supported the Supreme Court decision and called the law that prohibited foreign language instruction for all pupils who have not completed eighth grade ‘an arbitrary interference

with individual liberty and a mistaken educational policy' (Edwards 1923: 278). A similar victory was obtained in Hawaii where by 1920 there existed 163 private Japanese language schools, 12 Chinese and 10 Korean. Hawaii's Act of 1920 required that the instruction in these schools be limited to one hour a day, texts be subject to approval by the Department of Education, and teachers be able to speak, read, and write English, and be versed in American history and government; a similar act followed in California. The Japanese community rebelled against such imposition and eventually neither act was enforced, which allowed for significant growth in Japanese-language schools on the West coast (Leibowitz 1971). However, by the time the US Supreme Court's rulings repealed oppressive laws, the damage had already been done, not only to the German-American community, but more generally to language maintenance and foreign language instruction in the US, and it was not until World War II that greater emphasis was placed again on foreign language education. The concentrated Americanization efforts continued into the mid-1920s when the 1924 National Origins Act established quotas for each country outside of the Western hemisphere, with particular prejudice toward Southern and Eastern Europeans. This legislation reduced the influx of immigrants so much that it effectively stopped immigration for more than forty years.

To sum up, in the post-war atmosphere the hatred of the established German-American immigrants, who, at least for a while, were presented as 'the enemy' by the press, along with distrust and apprehension of the new Southern and Eastern European arrivals, led to a major ideological shift which, in Øverland's (1998: 52) words, 'made the very hyphen itself into a symbol of potential disloyalty'. This ideological shift resulted in four related trends in language and educational policies and practices: (a) conscious efforts to assimilate immigrant children and adults through English language and civics instruction, known as the Americanization movement; (b) policies that legislated English as the official language of a state, or at least the only language of instruction; (c) policies and practices that prohibited or restricted foreign language instruction, and in particular the study of German; and (d) practices that moved foreign language instruction out of elementary schools and into high schools, and restricted its focus to reading and translation skills. Together these trends suggest that the new political culture of 1914–1924 defined cultural and linguistic diversity as a national crisis rather than a resource (McClymer 1982) and posited immigrant bilingualism and language maintenance as 'un-American' in spirit. Learning English ceased to be sufficient – to become loyal Americans, immigrants also had to give up their native languages.

4.3 *Immigrants and the Americanization process*

While the events outlined above are well-known and have been discussed by a number of scholars (although perhaps not as a historiography of a language ideology *per se*), it is less known how individual immigrants and immigrant communities reacted to this ideological shift and accompanying changes in legislation and institutional practices. The purpose of the present section is to describe some of the reactions and to argue that, rather than being passive beneficiaries of educational opportunities, or helpless victims of unjust laws, immigrants have always assumed a very active role in shaping the America around them – transforming school districts and curricula, opening native language schools, editing native language newspapers, speaking to larger audiences, and recording their experiences in a substantial body of autobiographic writing. Thus, while the nativist and assimilationist movements of the time may have succeeded in decreasing the status and importance of languages other than English in the US, some immigrant and minority communities have continued, more or less successfully, to maintain their native languages (Fishman 1966). At the same time, the growing body of immigrant autobiographic literature, which appeared in response to the Americanization movement, allowed European immigrants to ‘write themselves into’ the canon of US literature and history, and eventually into the American national identity narrative (for an expanded version of this argument, see Pavlenko, in press). Three key trends can be singled out in immigrants’ reactions to the intolerant climate of the era: support of different types of assimilationist ideologies, opposition to assimilation and Americanization, and internalization of xenophobic attitudes by immigrant children.

The first trend entails an active and vocal support of Americanization efforts by individual immigrants and entire immigrant communities. Both immigrant memoirs of the era and historic inquiry point to the fact that many immigrants learned English voluntarily and enthusiastically and were often among the most effective Americanizers. Some, like Mary Antin (1912), Constantine Panunzio (1921, 1926), or Jacob Riis (1901), glorified the assimilation experience in their work and thus contributed to the creation of the ‘melting pot’ myth of the era. Others saw the native language as an equally important assimilationist resource. Among such reformers was Abraham Cahan, a Russian-born Yiddish-American writer, best known for founding in 1897 the *Jewish Daily Forward*, a Yiddish newspaper which he edited for the rest of his life. At the point of its peak circulation at 175,000 in 1918 it was the largest foreign language daily of its time, serving to popularize socialist ideas, interpret the United States to the immigrants, and offer a forum to Yiddish men of

letters. The paper, and in particular its famous letters-to-the-editor column *Bintel Brief* (a Bundle of Letters), was instrumental in helping the newcomers to get adjusted to the new society; it also urged them to learn English. It is important to note here that while many immigrant supporters of assimilation welcomed the attention and support offered to English language learners, they did not see Americanization as synonymous with Anglicization and argued for recognition of multilingualism as an important cultural and linguistic resource. In contrast, others, like Hjalmar Hjorth Boyesen, a Norwegian-born writer and professor at Cornell and Columbia, believed that bilingualism and biculturalism were incompatible with Americanness and urged their fellow citizens to leave their native languages and cultures behind (Daniels 1990). Some also played an important role in restricting language maintenance efforts. Graham and Koed (1993) point out that it was a German-American archbishop who attempted to curtail the use of German in Cincinnati, German socialists who supported the transition of German children from private to public schools, and Finnish-American women in Michigan that organized an Americanization club whose purpose was 'to eliminate the hyphen', making Finnish-Americans more American.

Notably, many immigrants who worked in support of the assimilationist movements, including Antin, Riis, Panunzio, and Cahan, arrived in the US and learned English in the pre-World War I era. The 100 percent Americanization campaign 'with its imperious demands that their culture and languages be given up at once, both in public and private' (Graham and Koed 1993: 35) offended and antagonized many of them, even those who previously supported the liberal Americanization agenda. Immigrant leaders used both American media and scholarly journals and ethnic press and fiction to protest the anti-German and anti-foreign language movements and to denounce the new approach to assimilation as 'cultural imperialism', pointing out that Americanization is now turning effectively into Anglo-Saxonization. Thus, a Polish-language publication in Chicago *Narod Polski* (Polish People) presented assimilation, predicated on 'only one language, unity of thought and opinion, one sympathy and antipathy', as 'foolish Americanization, similar to the Prussian system of denationalization' (McClymer 1982: 110). The Russian newspaper *Russkoe Slovo* (Russian Word) called in 1919 for a distinction between invited and coerced assimilation, and the Hungarian newspaper *Szabadzag* stated that 'Americanization does not mean the suppression of foreign languages' (Hartmann 1948: 257). Johannes Wist, editor of the Norwegian-language newspaper, *Decorah-Posten*, pointed out that while Norwegian-Americans happily claim to be American, real Yankees would not grant them this status, saying instead that these are foreign children or even 'dirty Norwegians'. Thus, he told his

readers that ‘while it was your duty to be an American, you did not really have permission to be one’ (cited in Øverland 1998: 51). Another Norwegian-American journalist, Waldemar Ager, polemicized against Americanization and its dominant metaphor, the ‘melting pot’, in his journal *Kvartalskrift* (Quarterly). In a series of essays, published from 1916 to 1920, he argued that the melting pot is in fact Anglo-conformity in disguise: Anglo-Saxons do not take part in this process, which forced new arrivals to discard the traits that made them different from the Anglo-Americans (Øverland 1998). Even Constantine Panunzio (1921, 1926), an Italian immigrant who publicly expressed his delight in learning English and getting acquainted with the intricacies of Anglo-Saxon thought, questioned the coercive spirit of the era:

... how unkind, how cruel are the methods sometimes used in connection with our so-called Americanization program. Think of our saying to these foreign peoples, some of whom have been in this country for perhaps a brief period: Forget your native land, forget your mother tongue, do away in a day with your inherited customs, put from you as a cloak all that inheritance and early environment made you and become in a day an American *par excellence*. This was precisely the talk I used to hear when I first came to this country. There was then as now, I regret to say, a spirit of compulsion in the air: ‘Either become an American citizen or get out,’ was in substance the attitude of certain people. (ibid.: 194)

And yet the most poignant and emotional defense of the right of American citizens to be bilingual came – not surprisingly – from the pen of a German-American, Richard Bartholdt (1930), a successful politician whose dreams to run for Senate were thwarted by the anti-German hysteria of World War I. In his memoirs published after the anti-German sentiments had subsided, he asks:

... what has mere speech, the twisting of the tongue in one way or the other, to do with the loyalty of a citizen? It is not lip service a country needs, but genuine patriotism, and the source of that is man’s conscience and not his tongue. If we have true loyalty in our heart of hearts, we can express it in any other language as beautifully as in English. Why, a man can be a good and true American without even knowing English, the same as a man who is physically unable to speak at all. It is right and proper that every American citizen, male and female, should master the language of the country. Even aside from public considerations, this is in their own interest. But from this it is a far cry to the assertion which nowadays is so often made, at least by

implication, that a man cannot become a real American, if his mother-tongue is a language other than English. (Bartholdt 1930: 30)

The rejection of the 100 percent Americanization efforts came not only from intellectuals and community leaders but also, and perhaps most visibly, from working class immigrants: only a minority enrolled in Americanization schools, even fewer completed a course of study. By the early 1920s it was becoming clear that Americanization efforts succeeded in raising public interest in immigrants but did not succeed in influencing naturalization rates (Hartmann 1948; McClymer 1982; Olneck 1989). Moreover, in some communities ethnic consciousness was emerging rather than subsiding, and they continued to support extensive parochial school systems which fostered native language maintenance. Also, while the number and circulation of the German-language newspapers drastically decreased post-World War I, the number and circulation of other non-English papers continued to grow, peaking in 1930. After that year, however, they went into decline as the new generation of American-born and raised children was either not interested in ethnic community affairs and ethnic language press, or preferred ethnic papers published in English. Progressive American educators, including Jane Addams, Edith Bremer, Horace Kallen, and Frances Kellor, also attempted to oppose and counteract the 100 percent Americanization movement, arguing for a pluralist society. Edith Bremer, for instance, did not see assimilation and cultural pluralism as mutually exclusive, and in 1910 created a series of International Institutes to maintain the cultural inheritance of the foreign-born and to provide the immigrants with the knowledge they needed to adjust to American life (Mohl 1982). Over the years, these institutes, established in all major American cities, sponsored a variety of programs and classes for local ethnic communities. Despite their noble mission, however, in some ways they also contributed to the transformation of American linguistic and cultural pluralism into 'festival pluralism' whereby food, dress, and music became the key markers of ethnicity. Most importantly, whether particular immigrant leaders and ethnic communities accepted or rejected intolerance toward their native language, they were powerless in the face of the fact that public schools transmitted unambiguously xenophobic and assimilationist messages to their children. In a series of essays entitled *Omkring foedrearven* (Concerning our heritage) published in 1922, the leading Norwegian-American writer Ole Rølvaag argued that as far as immigrant children are concerned, Americanization was in fact a process of elimination:

Again and again [second-generation Norwegians] have had impressed on them: all that has grown on American earth is good, but all that

can be called *foreign* is at best suspect. Many of our own people have jogged in the tracks of the jingoists. ‘Norwegian church service? Why should there be Norwegian church service in America? No, talk English ... No full blooded American can be expected to want to belong to a Norwegian church!’ ... The young are extremely sensitive in matters of honor, and much more so in their patriotic honor! It has been – and to some extent still is – a point of honor to be able to prove that nothing *foreign* hangs about one’s person. Under such conditions how could anyone expect that young people should show only enthusiasm for their forefathers’ tongue – that would be to expect the impossible. (cited in Daniels 1990: 176)

Some second-generation immigrants also recognized that social mobility required monolingualism in a particular kind of English – the refined language of the upper classes, and not the English of the Lower East Side, sprinkled with Russian, Yiddish, and Polish. Alfred Kazin (1951), an American-born child of Russian Jews, poignantly recalls the feelings of shame and inferiority cultivated by the school with regard to the language of immigrant children:

I was the first American child, their [his parents’] offering to the strange new God; I was to be the monument of their liberation from the shame of being – what they were. And that there was shame in this was a fact that everyone seemed to believe as a matter of course. ... It was in the sickening invocation of ‘Americanism’ – the word itself accusing us of everything we apparently were not. Our families and teachers seemed tacitly agreed that we were somehow to be a little ashamed of what we were. Yet it was always hard to say why this should be so. It was certainly not – in Brownsville! – because we were Jews, or simply because we spoke another language at home, or were absent on our holy days. It was rather that a ‘refined,’ ‘correct,’ ‘nice’ English was required of us at school that we did not naturally speak, and that our teachers could never be quite sure we would keep. This English was peculiarly the ladder of advancement. (Kazin 1951: 21–22)

Duncan’s (1932) collection of essays by second- and third-generation Americans, Brumberg’s (1986) interviews with immigrant children who went to school in the US at the turn of the century, and memoirs by other second-generation Americans suggest that school practices led many children to develop feelings of inferiority, low self-esteem, and embarrassment about their immigrant origins and native language. Thus, a second-generation Lithuanian recalls: ‘Often I burned with humiliation on occasions when my people were in the presence of a group of English-

speaking people' (Duncan 1932: 733). A Finnish-American remembers that when he was sent to pick up the Finnish paper for his parents, he would wrap it in an English paper or hide it under his coat (Duncan 1932), while a descendant of Russian Jews recalls that in the subway he would refuse to sit next to his mother when she was reading a Yiddish newspaper (Brumberg 1986). Individuals of German descent acknowledged that the hostile climate of the World War I years led them to deny their German origins, and to avoid using the language. Eventually, however, social pressure was written out of these immigrant narratives and language choices and decisions came to be seen as personal and family matters. Florio-Ruane (2001) tells that when her Italian-American father was growing up in the 1940s, he once refused to greet his Italian-speaking grandfather on the street, embarrassed to acknowledge the old man or his language in front of his classmates. She notes that what is particularly interesting about the father's story is the fact that as an adult he, like many of his peers, assumed full responsibility for his actions without recognizing the social forces that may have shaped his behavior toward the grandfather.

In short, we can see that when language came to be associated with national loyalty, Anglo-Saxon morality, and intelligence, linguistic transformation became central to making Americans out of immigrant adults and children. And while many immigrants and progressive Americans opposed the ideology of English monolingualism as Americanness, or, in Silverstein's (1996) words, 'the monoglot "Standard"', it entered the public discourse during the World War I era and remained there ever since co-existing with more inclusive versions of what it means to be an American. Eventually, the fact that abandonment of native languages was a socially enforced process was edited out of the national identity narrative, and immigrant families came to see their linguistic choices as individual and voluntary (Bigler 1996; Florio-Ruane 2001).

5. Conclusion

In sum, I have argued that, responding to concerns about national unity and security in the wake of the Great Migration and World War I, the nation's leaders 'reimagined' the United States as a monolingual country, positing a nation conceived not only in liberal ideals but also in language. Citizenship – achieved through linguistic transformation – was constructed as a primary identity category, incompatible with hyphenation and other national allegiances (Olneck 1989). As a result, starting in the 1880s and culminating with the World War I era, English gained prominence in the US as a crucial ingredient of American national identity. As such it became a tool through which European immigrants were

assimilated and a linguistic resource to which Asian immigrants had only a limited access.

As monolingualism in English came to symbolize loyalty to the United States, European immigrants were also encouraged – and at times forced – to discard their own languages and cultural traditions and to fit themselves into the Anglo-Saxon mold. And while the predominant metaphor of the time was the ‘melting pot’, not everyone was expected to do the ‘melting’: what in fact was expected from the European arrivals was Anglo-conformity. Rather than to encourage a creative blending of features in order to create a new nation, the ‘melting pot’ practices promoted a removal of features, most notably language, that differentiated new immigrants from their Anglo-Saxon hosts (Øverland 1998). Other racialized minorities who were not as ‘imaginable’ as desirable Americans had more freedom in terms of linguistic and cultural maintenance – this freedom, however, came at a price of a marginalized social and economic status in the majority society.

The shift in language ideologies, which encouraged first English, and then English monolingualism, as a defining aspect of American national identity, occurred – or rather, was enforced – in the course of one generation, resulting in the elimination of bilingual instruction, decline in foreign language study, and eventual language shift in numerous ethnic communities (notably, however, some immigrant communities have continued to invest in language maintenance). As time went by, what was in fact a coercive turn in American history, became romanticized and glorified. Bigler (1996) shows that the children and grandchildren of European immigrants in Arnheim, just as multiple proponents of the English Only movement, portray their parents’ and grandparents’ learning of English and refusal to use the native languages in public as entirely voluntary. It is well-documented that some immigrants were indeed enthusiastic about leaving behind linguistic and cultural baggage which linked them to oppressive regimes and denied them social opportunities in the new country. Most, however, would have preferred to retain the native language and to raise their children bilingually. In a society where bilingualism became unimaginable, this opportunity – or at least institutional support for bilingual development – was denied to them. Instead, the hegemonic ideology of English monolingualism as a keystone of Americanness came to dominate public discourses, eventually giving birth to the myth about European immigrants willingly giving up their native languages and cultures.

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