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Language arises out of a need for communication, thus indicating its natural connection to social relationships; however as we develop language, the social constructions frequently end up excluding others rather than including them. Looking more closely at the problem behind language construction, we find that anywhere from small to large differences make a huge impact of social realities. Essentially, the group in power becomes the oppressor to the smaller group forcing their language and rules upon them, making language truly represent a power control. We have seen this issue arise throughout history during many acts of discrimination. While typically this language battle serves to isolate one group as inferior, occasionally, a group grasps on to these same concepts to isolate themselves and thus take control.

Because language aims to connect us, we see a high level of development when languages cross. However, historically this development has provided us with both positive and negative results. Although we now consider English to be a highly confusing and inconsistent language, during the 12th the influx of French words created a language bond between the two ensuring a positive connection. Without the growth during that time, our language would be dramatically changed; however we must ask ourselves: how was so much change able to occur at this time? By looking at the power influences at that time, English was under the control of the French and so, while the influx of language is now beneficial, during that time the French’s influence forced their language upon the British. Comparatively, we now have a huge influx of Spanish speakers in the US, but our response is dramatically different.

Rather than happily allowing Spanish to influence English, America has begun to abolish the use of Spanish in interfering areas. This phenomenon seems to occur mainly because in this case English is the power in control. Specifically, Dennis Baron discusses in his article, *English Spoken Here? How to Combat the Influx of Spanish*, some states have begun enacting laws making English the language of the state. Even though this law cannot spread as across the country as the national language, when states make it their language of choice they announce their decision to reject any form of Spanish and thus prevent language change. Interestingly, America targets only large phenomena out of the fear that a national change may occur. Baron dissects the issue of Spanish and Yiddish in Iowa by comparing their percentages and growth in speakers to that of New York. Essentially, in his discussion he shows how even though the growth of Yiddish speakers has grown dramatically by comparison, in Iowa, the citizens still are making changes only to the growing Spanish population.

By looking at how the group in power, America, has responded to a growing culture, we can begin to develop an understanding of how the social implications of language comingle with power controls. Like America’s reluctance to appreciate Spanish, in the past we have seen similar issues with African American Vernacular, Eastern-European accents during major immigration, and discrimination between the upper-class and lower-class speaking mannerisms. Each of these examples represents a way in which English has acted as the oppressing language by forcing the others to adhere to its standards. Up until Oakland battled to list Ebonics as a real language, those of African-American descent truly had no voice. This limitation manifests its self not only in their inability to achieve success in school, but also in the work force and community through repeated acts of discrimination.

Having discussed this controversial topic in class, we have developed the sense where we want to eliminated this social injustice but have also stigmatized the discussion so heavily that any comment can create tension. James Baldwin suggests in his article, *If Black English Isn’t a Language, Then Tell Me, What Is?* that “white Americans would not sound they way they do if there had been no blacks” by describing how white Americans took many words, especially from what we now call the Jazz Age, and translated them into something appropriate and catchy but also white. He writes that “language is also a political instrument, means, and proof of power,” showing us how it forces control upon those that it wants to. Looking at Baldwin’s assertions, we further see how language in this case has consistently acted as a means of control. Rather than letting traditional black terms like “jazz me, baby” and “let it all hang out” mean the same thing in white culture as they do in black, white Americans took those terms, modified the meanings, and in many cases still attributed them to white people or disregard the extreme oppression linked behind them. However, even in typical white culture, these same kinds of discriminations and oppressions occur.

If we look at differences in socioeconomic class, almost always we see differences in language, and with those differences come huge types of discrimination. From the accents in the south to the differences in British accents even white Americans or English constantly judge based off of ways of speaking. Specifically, Alan Ross describes the severe discrepancies in England in 1956, in his article, *A U and the non-U Exchange*, by specifically describing the huge changes between both their word choice and pronunciation. His article made the country aware of these issues, which inspires social change, but true change needs to teach us to avoid judgment. However, judgment is never limited to accent but also to word choice and sentence construction as well, which adheres to our similar notion of education in America. Being a country raised on the wealth of powerful white figures and standardized English, American now only willingly accepts that same standard in education, but yet with a growing and changing population the standard is near impossible to meet. Additionally, the only students who can easily meet the standards are those who adhere to its expectations. In class we discussed the issue with “the noun game” where students strived to place the correct noun in the right category, but one student could not always get it right. His problem lied with his natural understanding of the nouns. Coming from a different culture, his concept of nouns and English did not make him dumb or wrong, but just different and so this limiting game prevented him from receiving true success. Issues like this come up repeatedly in education and other aspects of society because America only prescribes “its” English to the many varied types of individuals living here.

Even though society has used language to ostracize those who speak differently, it also uses it to ostracize those whose use varies makes mistakes even when the right meaning is conveyed. For instance, we frequently make mistakes while talking and even sometimes in writing. Most of the times we know the rules, but language simply happens so fast that sometimes it just comes out. However, because it is such a strong method of power, those with better usage or even just a better ability to think before they speak often judge those perceived as below them. This situation happens all the time in conversations when we mush words together or say the word thing. Cady, in the film *Mean Girls,* perfectly represents this mistake when being nervous while talking to a boy, says “grool,” instead of great or cool. Instantly, we sense her fault and watch her quickly try to recover from the mistake. Lucky for her, it is a teen movie where she is hot and the boy likes her, so it ends up fine. Interestingly enough as we have grown to become a society depended on English and the use of it, our desire to judge had grown, but with that judgment we make more mistakes by being less conscious of what we do. Although websites like damnyouautocorrect.com also aim to make us laugh, a simply glance at this site shows that even though most of the time in mistakes, the meaning is understood, since the use is flawed we still feel compelled to make judgments.

In my language in the news presentation, I highlighted the use of cuss words in our society and how those words either exclude or include students by making them the outsider through ridicule or inclusion. Frequently students, though not limited to students, ridicule other through potent words of offense the negatively label a student. Typically, the word either develops its negative connotation over the ages or increases in disrespect. By looking at how one student created a cuss free week, I dissected the idea that cussing promotes a general attitude of negativity, and with this one boy’s resolution, he strove to change the atmosphere of a whole school. Expanding this idea shows us more specifically the social and power control that language holds by exposing that our society not only values English as a control but also values it power to offend. However, tied into that description is the ability to understand the offense. One of my friends, a girl studying from China, did not understand the context of the word “ho” when she heard it while studying here in America. Although the insult was not directed at her, since the word’s meaning did not translate for her, neither did its offense. Comparing that situation to our repeated discussion of the use of “gay” as a derogative term raises a few issues. One, although the word is frequently used in place of something that you would describe as unlikely, like “that outfit looks gay,” controversy has arisen around its use as a whole because of its connection to being homosexual. Knowing the history of homosexuality and its oppression in history combined with how this word is used negatively forces us to understand the connection as negative. While I am quick to not want to use gay to prevent offense, if we really look at it, the word is simply a short compilation of phonemes with multiple meanings. Only when we make the connection, is it offensive.

Even though we frequently discussed in class how a word only has meaning when it is valued, and we can easily understand that without value we could eliminate the social issues related to words, language relies on its ability to convey meaning. As social beings, we connect through our language as it provides the medium for describing our feelings, needs, and desires. However, both sadly and strangely, like I mentioned previously, language has provided us with the power to oppress those who convey their meaning differently. While our levels of oppression differ by being dramatic attempts to eliminate alternative uses, like the prevention of Spanish in society, to our silly desire to correct the autocorrect on our iPhone, through language’s power, we see that it undoubtedly has a huge hold on our social identity.