

HUMA 1000: Cultures and Values: **Cover sheet for final essay**

Full name	
Student ID	
Writing workshop section number	
Writing workshop instructor	
Title of essay (please copy and paste from the document on Canvas)	2. The German philosopher Johann Herder (1744-1803) held that the essence, or the spirit of a nation is defined by the language that the nation speaks, the idea of which can be illustrated by the equation: one language = one folk = one nation. Originating from this belief is the question: To establish a strong nation, should all people in the nation speak the same language? What is your understanding on this, and why?

Declaration: The attached essay represents my own work. I have read and understood the University's policies on academic honesty and I confirm that the attached work conforms to these policies.

Please type your name:

Response to feedback: note here the comments from your instructor you have responded to (you can copy these from your feedback sheet).

- Counterargument and refutation faulty, now the counterargument is revised
- The overall essay is a bit short, now added one more reference from course material

HUMA1000A Final Essay (prompt 2)

Student ID:

Every country has its own language, some more than one. Bigger countries with many ethnic groups, like China, have more than 200 individual languages. However China has only one official language, which is Mandarin Chinese. Johann Herder, a famous philosopher, once suggested that the language of a nation determines the essence of the nation. To establish a strong nation, it has sometimes been suggested that all people in the nation speak the same language. This essay will argue that a nation is stronger when they share a common language. This will be asserted by demonstrating how a shared language can increase national identity and how linguistic unity is essential for communication purposes.

A key argument supporting a common language to build a strong nation is that it can increase the national identity of the people. This is because language is part of the nation's cultural heritage that is common for its people and essentially helps to bind a nation together. According to Pew Research Center, majorities among 14 countries polled revealed the importance of the ability to converse in the native language in order to be considered a true member of the nation (Stokes, 2017). The study also revealed that 70% of Americans emphasized the ability to speak English in their nation and see language as the most important requisite of national identity. The respondents all connect English and citizenship together. Though English is actually not the official language shared by American citizens, it is seen as part of their national identity because of its prevalence in daily use. For instance, an American will probably turn the television off if the news is not reported in English. In addition, immigrants in the United States are also eager to learn English as it will give them more job opportunities and easier communications. This study has sufficiently showcased the importance of language in a nation, a view recognized by majority of the citizens and immigrants. National identity is often referred to as the feeling one shares with a group of people in a nation, regardless of one's citizenship status (Jackson, 2014). A common language throughout the nation connects different people in different territories of the country or from different origins. In other words, it can build rapport across minorities in the country. Verbal and nonverbal symbols serves as a bond for many nationals (Jackson, 2014) and this shows that language does act as an unifying force in the nation. Through this linguistic unity, a strong nation with a high sense of national identity can be built.

Another argument to support a common language can build a strong nation is that it is essential for communication. Communication is a basic, fundamental part of any society. China is a great example of a country carrying many dialects. Many of its dialects differ from each other phonetically or morphologically that they are mutually unintelligible to different speakers. The National Language Movement in the early twentieth century was launched to officially establish and promote standard language in China (Simpson, 2007). This movement played an important part of transforming China into a nation-state. Before Putonghua has become a common language, dialectal diversity was causing serious problem in oral communication and hindered many political and economic activities. A common language has effectively reduced misunderstanding or inconveniences and help to push the nationalist movement in China forward. A common language helps to bind people together by allowing them to communicate. People are more united with linguistic unity. Moreover, a shared, standard form of language helps the government to communicate with its people effectively. This also helps to create mutual understanding between the government and its people, which helps to maintain stability in the country.

Critics might argue that establishing one common language in a nation would diminish other languages or dialects and even reduce the linguistic rights of the people. However, this is an over-pessimistic and naïve argument. Most particularly, this argument is over-pessimistic because having a shared language does not mean to abolish other dialects nor to forbid people to speak other languages. It can be true to some extent that people may use or rely on the official language more often than their local dialects, and that the dominance of the national common language may be a cause of dialect attrition. Nevertheless, dialects are allowed to co-exist with the common language or official language of the nation. In fact, languages or dialects can indeed co-exist for a long period of time if there is adequate support from the government (Simpson, 2007). Therefore, establishing a national common language can protect the ethnic minorities and there is only minor diminishing effect of other dialects. Furthermore, given people can still freely speak other dialects and maintain their 'language loyalty' to their local dialect, the policy of establishing one common language does not take away the freedom of the people. People can also choose when and which occasion to use different languages or dialects. The common language policy just helps to promote national identity and easier communication. Taken together, this argument demonstrates an over-pessimistic and naïve view of establishing one common language in a nation.

In conclusion, a nation is stronger when they share a common language because linguistic unity can increase national identity and allow easier communication. Linguistic unity is undoubtedly linked with national identity and crucially serves as a unifying force in the nation. A shared language allows easier communication which helps to create mutual understanding between people with different dialectal backgrounds. To build a strong nation, all people in a nation should be able to speak the same language, which defines the essence of the nation.

(938 words)

Reference:

1. Jackson, J. (2014). *Introducing Language and Intercultural Communication*, pp. 147-155. New York, NY: Routledge.
2. Simpson, A. (2007). Language and National Identity in Asia. Chapter on China by Ping Chen. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
3. Stokes, B. (2017). *What It Takes to Truly Be 'One of Us'*. Pew Research Center. Available at: <http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2017/04/14094140/Pew-Research-Center-National-Identity-Report-FINAL-February-1-2017.pdf> [Accessed 12 Apr. 2018].