

CHAPITRE 8

La théorie du Melting Pot

MILESTONES

-« E Pluribus Unum » refers to the motto of the original Thirteen Colonies.

- 1880-1924 : 18 million of new immigrants

-1908 : *The melting pot*, popular play

-In the late 1880's : English-only instruction laws

-1906 : Naturalization Act gave English compulsory for immigrants

-1924 : Johnson-Reed Act introduced quotas of immigrants

-1967 : Bilingual Education Act

-1996 : English becomes the official language of the federal government

-2002 : No Child Left Behind measures

Melting pot refers to people from different countries with their own culture united together among a homogeneous society. It is the way how we consider the United States system. This notion was first used in a play *The Melting Pot* in 1908.

In this model people lose the specificities of their native country to become integrated into their host country which promotes its cultural standards so that they share a same language for instance.

In 1919, President Roosevelt had to face with important influx of populations : 18 million new immigrants came from Europe and Asia between 1880 and 1924. Thus he declared « We have room for but one language in this country, and that is the English language ».

Indeed, USA met difficulties to assimilate so many people, therefore Americans got worried. English-only instruction laws were passed in some states as Wisconsin and Illinois in the late 1880s. In 1906, with the Naturalisation Act, foreigners must learn English. Finally, the *Johnson-Reed Act* introduced quotas of immigrants privileging Europeans in 1924.

However this loss of roots led some communities to criticize this lack of multiculturalism. That is why some of them rejected the mainstream culture which gave a **salad bowl** model based on various cultures that make up a society. As a result the 1967 *Bilingual Education Act* led to English as a second language. But this act was considered as dangerous for the unity of the nation. It was then replaced in 2002 by the *No Child Left Behind* measures showing the difficulties to come up with a common language policy.

Added to this, the creation of the expression « **hyphenated America** », used by immigrants to claim for their origins, illustrated a risk of fragmentation of the USA. Roosevelt in 1915 fought to avoid his nation « to be a tangle of squabbling nationalities ». As well as President Woodrow Wilson thought that this way of thinking was an attack on the Republic. In 1956, the motto of the United States was *E pluribus Unum* which means « **Out of Many, One** » and tried to apply it. During legislative campaigns of the 1980s the will to give English an official status was debated. It led to ballot initiatives such as in California to restrict the social and educational services of illegal immigrants. Moreover in 1996 the Congress and the House of Representatives passed a bill designating English as the federal government's sole language.

Nowadays, immigrants originate from the developing world of Asia and Latin America.

