

**Ozzie Guillen was the manager of the Chicago White Sox who took them to win the World Series in his second year as manager.**

## **Ontiveros: Ozzie doesn't let less-than-perfect English shake his confidence**

*BY Sue Ontiveros September 27, 2011 9:26AM*

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So many times during the playoffs and the World Series I've just been filled with Latin pride as I watched Venezuelan-born Ozzie Guillen.

Oh sure, I am impressed with how in just his second year as a manager he's brought to Chicago what White Sox fans have wanted for so long: a World Series win.

Obviously, the man knows something about managing and dealing with baseball players.

And as a longtime Sox fan, I remember what a hardworking and fun-loving shortstop he was during his years playing for the team. Watching him, it was hard not to be impressed with Guillen's speed, hustle and sheer passion for the game.

But what gets me about Ozzie is every time I see him standing there ready to take the microphone. Ozzie never approaches that mike with any hesitation. There he stands before a sea of reporters ready to beam his every word across Chicago, the nation -- heck, the world -- and he is the picture of confidence. It never seems to bother him that his English is less than perfect.

And with that, I think he is sending out such a powerful message to Latinos and other non-English speakers. So what if he fractures the language here and there? The man is speaking the language of mainstream America and he is getting his point across.

He isn't sitting up there with an interpreter who would offer comments in perfect King's English. Nope, he is speaking English as he knows it. He is exuding the confidence that a man in his powerful position should have.

Many times adults for whom English isn't their first language are too timid about speaking it. They fear they won't be understood. Worse yet, they don't want others to laugh at them.

So they remain within their community speaking only Spanish or whatever their native language is. If they venture out of their confines into an arena where English must be spoken, they often are forced to rely on one of their children to act as interpreter. I wonder if that's demoralizing, always having to wait for a child or someone else to be their voice. How frightening it must be to try to navigate when you cannot speak to others.

There are opportunities outside their home language, and lacking the confidence to speak English keeps them from those chances and advancements. That to me is very sad.

Ozzie Guillen has to know that there are those who do poke fun at his English. Up and down the radio dial you'll find DJs doing Ozzie imitations. Yet he doesn't let it hold him back. Ask him a question, he'll give you an answer in his brand of English.

If Ozzie Guillen had stayed within the comfort zone of his native language, I think it's doubtful he'd be where he is today as the man who brought the Chicago White Sox to the World Series for the first time in 46 years. When he arrived in this country at the age of 19 to play ball, he knew little if any English. Yet he muddled along, picking up the language and more important, learning to feel confident speaking it.

He understood that if he was going to get ahead, he had to be comfortable speaking English.

Gaining that confidence to speak English doesn't mean Guillen has forgotten his roots or forsaken Spanish.

Oh, no. Instead, he's also showing our mainstream society what a person can achieve by being bilingual.

He has shown that with a roster of eight Spanish-speaking players, he can communicate with them in a way someone limited only to English cannot.

That's another powerful lesson.

We've learned a lot from Ozzie Guillen this playing season, and much of it is beyond baseball.

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