

Amy Tan's essay "Mother Tongue" explores the profound impact of language on identity, perception, and personal growth. Through her experiences with her mother's English, Tan realizes that language is more than just a tool for communication—it is a reflection of culture, personal history, and relationships. She comes to understand that the way her mother speaks is not a limitation but rather an expression of a unique and rich perspective.

Tan challenges the idea of "broken English" because it implies that some forms of speech are flawed and need to be corrected. I agree with Tan's argument that this term is unfair and restrictive. It suggests that people who speak in non-standard English are less intelligent or capable, which is not true. In Tan's case, people dismissed her mother as unintelligent simply because of the way she spoke, which affected how others treated her. Language shapes perception, and when people hear "broken English," they may judge others unfairly, just as Tan experienced when others dismissed her mother's thoughts and requests. This reinforces harmful stereotypes and places unnecessary barriers on individuals who are just as insightful and competent as those who speak standard English.

In her essay, Tan discusses the idea of "different Englishes," referring to the different ways she speaks English depending on the situation and audience. Like Tan, I also use different forms of English in my daily life. For example, when I speak with Americans, I use standard English with proper grammar and vocabulary. However, when I talk to my mother, I may use a more informal, familiar form of English that reflects our shared cultural background. This shift happens naturally, highlighting how language adapts to context and relationships. Our ability to switch between different Englishes shows the complexity of language and how it is deeply tied to identity and communication.

Tan points out that language ability tests fail to capture important aspects of communication, such as intent, passion, and the natural rhythm of speech. If someone were to judge me solely based on standardized language tests, they would not truly understand who I am as a person. These tests do not measure how deeply I think about small interactions, how much I observe the way people speak, or how I pick up on gestures and subtle expressions. Language is not just about correct grammar and vocabulary—it is about meaning, emotions, and the way people connect with one another. Tan's experience highlights how standardized assessments often overlook the depth of personal expression.

After reading "Mother Tongue," we can draw several important conclusions about language and its role in society. One key lesson is that language should not be used to judge intelligence or worth. Instead, it should be appreciated as a reflection of individual and cultural identity. From Tan's essay, we learn that language is deeply personal, and its variations do not make someone less capable or valuable. We also learn to be more aware of our own biases when it comes to language, as we may unconsciously judge others based on how they speak.

On a personal level, Tan's essay encourages us to reflect on our own use of language and how it shapes our interactions. I have learned that the way people speak does not determine their intelligence or character. Language is fluid, evolving, and shaped by personal and cultural experiences. By recognizing and valuing different Englishes, we can become more open-minded and respectful toward others. Tan's essay ultimately teaches us to embrace the richness of language and to appreciate the diverse ways people express themselves.