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English 122

Professor Browne

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Blended English

1. This was my second time analyzing “Mother Tongue” by Amy Tan. During my first read of this essay, I received a 5/9 on the practice AP Language Test , which was quite the disappointment for me. But after reading Tan’s essay once again, in a much more comfortable environment, I can see why I scored such a low point.

2. Tan introduces the audience to the two different lives she lives by starting her essay with a talk she participated in. It was about her book “The Joy Luck Club” and she realizes this talk was different than all the other similar talks she had done, solely by the fact that her mother was in the audience. “…Of the different Englishes [she] do use” (Tan), it was Tan’s mother’s first time to hear a more illustrative English format coming from Tan. The speech consisted of a lot more “carefully wrought grammatical phrases…with nominalized forms, past perfect tenses, conditional phrases”(Tan) which built up what we may call ‘coherent sentence’: which were never used at home around her mother. Tan talks about how clear her mother’s broken/limited English sounded to Tan, although everyone else could never grasp what Tan’s mother was trying to say. She then describes the importance of having correct and fluent grammar and “believed that her [mother’s] English reflected the quality of what she had to say. That is, because she expressed them imperfectly her thoughts were imperfect [as well]” (Tan). From this point I began to wonder about my own past and how I was perceived by my own parents, specifically my mother.

3. It was overly important that my writing skills, be it creative or academic, were at par with those who were enrolled in UC Berkeley as an English major, back when I was in middle school. To the eyes of my mother, who graduated Berkeley back in 1997, properly organizing your thoughts in order to clearly communicate your intensions through months of revisions were of the upmost importance on her “perfect student” requirements. She would always explain that the quality of writing displays your class and intellect, which I still believe till this day; this is the reason why “Mother Tongue” was so interesting and was indeed a defining piece of writing for me.

4. Communication, whether it be in English or in different languages, tells a lot about one self. Varying levels of vocabulary correlate to equally varying levels of intellect, and depending on how you communicate your opinions, be it through metaphors, similes, anecdotes, personifications, etc., we all tend to assume the author’s intelligence. But in Tan’s essay, we see the misperception of communication, a prejudice behind the uses of “English.” We begin to see the importance of understanding one another, away from judging each other by the way we look, dress, and even the way we talk.

5. Tan implies that many of us have very shallow thoughts, as she describes the way her mother was perceived by others, blind to the fact that she “reads the Forbes report, listens to Wall Street Week, converses daily with her stockbroker and reads all of Shirley MacLaine books with ease- all kind of things I can’t being to understand” (Tan). Tan describes a complex idea in which she expanded through multiple uses of anecdotes, successfully persuading the readers that English doesn’t have to be written/spoken in one way; because each one of us will be different, each with our own backgrounds, opinions, inspirations, and all of them effect our writings so our readers can proudly say: “so easy to read” (Tan).