

Vanessa Crowe

Professor Helmreich

Freshman Composition ENGL

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Dear Professor,

This writing was a great way for me to step out of my comfort zone and write in a perspective that does not match my own. I am actually not used to doing this since it is always easier for us to write in a perspective that is like our own. It allowed me to think more of the opposing side even when I am reading something as simple as an opinion-based tweet or something as lengthy as an article or a book. It is quite interesting what writing in the opposing perspective can do to how you read and analyze literature.

I focused the most on the argument aspect of this writing because I really wanted the audience to be convinced. However, I did not want the audience to feel pressured almost like I was shouting at them since Tan did not do that. I wanted the reader not to notice they were being swayed to my point of view until the end of the essay just like Tan did. As I said in the previous paragraph, this way of thinking really helped me read and analyze better. The audience was a small part of what I considered when I wrote this essay. I wrote toward an audience who agreed with Tan's point of view and also people who would agree with the essay. I focused more on people who might have been unsure of their feelings toward Standard English but leaned toward Tan's perspective. I liked the idea of that audience because I did not make this essay aggressively argumentative because I wanted the reader to feel not like I convinced them, but they simply changed their perspective after they learned more through my essay. This does not

mean that I used hedging a lot. I wanted to be in line with Tan's writing which she did not use that strategy. Like Tan, I made sure to be straight to the point so the audience can be sure of how I felt about the topic.

There are three course outcomes that helped me with this assignment. Like the last assignment, the 3rd learning outcome, "Develop strategies for reading, drafting, collaborating, revising, and editing," was also a large part of this essay. My drafts were way better this time because I put more effort into writing them and revising other essays gave me ideas for my own. I realized that anything can be revised even if you think it is perfect, so it is much better to write drafts as if you're writing the final piece. The 5th outcome, "Engage in the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes," was easily achieved through the topic of this essay. I was able to learn more about society and how they interact concerning English. I did not think I would find much evidence supporting this claim, but I now realize how much the world depend on Standard English.

The 4th outcome, "Recognize and practice key rhetorical terms and strategies when engaged in writing situations," was the largest part of this essay. I really had to pick out specifics of how Tan used rhetorical devices so I can use them in a similar way. As Tan used logos to explain why she says she saw her mother's English as "limited", I made sure to use the device by showing some statistics of how people value Standard English. When Tan used ethos to show her expertise in the topic, I used it by showing my personal history of the device. Tan used pathos when giving specific descriptions through stories with her mother and I used it when talking about specific values and beliefs. It was kind of difficult to try to use these devices but once I noticed that I would use them anyway since it was an argumentative essay, I stopped

trying. After I wrote the essay, that is when I tried to find places where I used the devices, and they were there. I believe that once you know how to write an argumentative essay, it is way less stressful to use these appeals since without them there would be no argument.

As someone who migrated from a country that does not speak Standard American English and was pushed into learning it, I realized it is much more beneficial to our wellbeing to

learn it. In the personal essay by Amy Tan, she explains the struggles her mother and herself faced getting through a world where Standard English is the superior. They had several issues with communication especially since Tan's mother did not sound like a Standard English speaker. She explains how this idea of a superior dialect can be harmful to people's health and business. She tries to convince the reader that her mother should not have to learn Standard English if her English is already understandable. However, Tan's mother should just conform and learn Standard English to make her daughter's and her own life easier. For me, it definitely got rid of the stress of being insecure every time I would open my mouth to speak. I am sure that learning Standard English would change the way her mother interacts with others and the difficulties her daughter faced in her childhood.

Going through life, changing the way I speak is not something uncommon to those who did not grow up speaking Standard English which is most people. As we know, the majority of Americans speak English, more specifically 78.4%; of course, that does not mean that they all speak the Standardized version. Whether it is an Alabamian, a Californian or a New Yorker, they all have different dialects but when push comes to shove, Standard English is what they turn to. This can be commonly referred to as a "Customer Service" voice where people simply switch the way they speak when they are at their jobs which is similar to how Tan noticed she was speaking differently in her academic presentations compared to how she spoke to her mother, she saw that it was strange but that does not mean she stopped doing it. Just like how Tan and several others can switch between the different "Englishes" she uses in a work environment compared to her mother, her mother can do the same by learning Standard English.

I believe uniformity should be valued in the US even if it may put a few people at a disadvantage for a short period of time. Several people have already experienced this where they had to learn Standard English and even though they may have had a hard time in the process, like me, they eventually got over it. The individualized ideology that is widespread in the US that encourages people like Tan's mother that being adamant on using your own dialect and refusing to learn another is a great aspect of a distinct personality can be harmful; for example, the case of Tan's mother where she struggles to communicate with people every day because of her lack of Standard English. We have to admit to ourselves that Standard English is seen as superior as it is used by the majority of the country. Of course, it is not superior but, it is much better to conform to an already established society with that idea than to trouble yourself with fighting back against something you cannot control.

It is not just the fact that majority of Americans speak English, but many depend on people speaking Standard English to get through everyday life especially if they are in a white-collared environment. This is not something that is a myth that is widely believed but a great amount of employers admit that they make hiring decisions based on how people speak. You best believe that one's ability to speak Standard English affects the likelihood of them being hired. I mean, let us also reflect on ourselves: are we more likely to trust those who speak Standard English than those who don't? It is a high possibility that when asking for something as simple as directions, we are less likely to believe someone who has a heavy non-American accent so how can we blame employers. Even when people learn English, most people learn through tv shows and movies which are filled with Standard English especially among the

protagonists. This means that people who learn languages through television are more likely to learn Standard English anyway so what is the problem if Tan's mother does the same?.

Learning Standard English is definitely the way to go for Tan's mother. English is the global language of business. It is not always because people are just "unaccepting" or hateful of other dialects but, sometimes it is just easier. It is easier to communicate universally with one dialect and language like Samsung, Microsoft in Beijing, Nokia, and many more. These companies communicate in English despite being in countries where most of the population does not speak English. Some may oppose this idea of a common mode of speech since we cannot expect everyone to sound the same. However, that is completely different. People can have their own dialects and language, but a common mode of speech makes life much easier.

Careers like pilots are extremely important to speak the same language, for example, Aviation English. Pilots need to speak their type of English no matter where in the world they are because it is way safer. I mean, imagine pilots who fly all over the world speaking a different language depending on the country they were born in, that would be incredibly chaotic. I am not comparing this to Tan mother's experience with Standard English because pilots would obviously be in complete danger if they did not speak English so it would do much more harm.

Tan's mother is obviously a businesswoman as she is involved in stock brokering. It will make her life much easier and influence the way people treat her for the better, especially her doctors and her stockbroker who lives all the way on the other side of the country. Her life would not just be easier but also fulfilling as she would have more experiences without asking her daughter for help or feeling inferior to others. Events like her mother's CAT scan could have been avoided if her mother knew Standard English. Although it was wrong for the doctor to be

unaccepting of her mother's dialect, learning Standard English could have saved her life and protected her health if the CAT scan results were needed to be known immediately. Those who do not speak Standard English like Tan's mother and several others in the US should definitely learn if they want to go through their daily life comfortably.

Rhetorical Appeals of Tan and Myself

Tan's use of Logos:

- Explaining how seeing her to mother's English as "limited" made her see her own mother's thoughts and ideas as imperfect; Asian Americans do not have that much representation in Literature which could be because of the insecurity they have in their English

Tan's use of Ethos:

- She is a writer and gave several presentations on different types of English

Tan's use of Pathos:

- Stories with vivid descriptions especially of how her mother struggled to get medical help b/c she could not speak Standard English

My Use of Logos:

- Statistics on how many people use English in America and how many employers value the dialect; Standard English is used most in workplaces and it is easier to communicate

- Just like how Tan can switch different dialects, so can her mother
- Easier and more comfortable life

My Use of Ethos:

- Personal history with Standard English
- Recognized opposing claims

My Use of Pathos:

- Values and beliefs: Uniformity in way of speaking

References

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