

Language the
negligence and
suppression of
cultural heritage,



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Language plays an important role in forming human perception and attitude to life. It is also closely associated with the concept of culture, identity, and ethnicity and reflects the main peculiarities of a person. What is more, language can provide more cultural and historical information about a particular nation or identity and characterize its salient traits. Beside cultural and social affiliation, there are social and political factors that make those groups be assimilated to other cultural environment for the sake of being accepted in the community.

In this respect, *Hunger for Memory* written by Richard Rodriguez reflects on the vices of the U. S. educational system that made him lose his sense of identity. Similarly, Amy Tan's *Mother Tongue* also details the author's perception of the role of language in maintaining identities. In addition, both narrations are dedicated to the importance of family bond in understand of the self. Both literary works represent the shortcomings of the U. S. educational system that provides no perspectives for preserving mother tongue identities.

Both Rodriguez and Tan had to learn the standard American English to socialize, communicate with their peers and be normally accepted within the majority community. The intellectual development they underwent made them forget their identities and loss the sense of their cultural and national affiliation. They realized the actual impact of language on relations with their families and the surrounding people, mistakenly believing that speaking "common" language can provide them with more perspectives for self-development and growth as well as widen their opportunities for career promotion.

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Strong attachment to the educational system prevented them from conceiving the importance of cultural and identity. *Hunger for Memory* as well as *Mother Tongue* also discloses the connection between social and political influences and individual goals and incentives in life. Moreover, both authors realize that speaking “right” language detached them considerably from their veritable roots identifying their real values and origins. Later on Rodriguez realizes that accepting the institutional role alienates him from the Latin culture and, therefore, he decides to be more committed to his original positions (Rodriguez 13).

Like Rodriguez, Tan is also aware that language is the key aspect for assimilating to the American society and achieving success. She also realizes that American language and culture also requires the negligence and suppression of cultural heritage, particularly her native language and her mother’s language (Tan 46). In whole both works narrate the stories of cultural influences and the way culture can be shaped by external influences. Language is not only the source of identity shaping, but the one of the strong bonds in family relations. In fact, speaking alien languages, the authors unintentionally detach themselves from their relatives and family.

They believe that demonstrating and unveiling their actual roots will not provide them with social acceptance. Both works demonstrate affirmative policies of the United States that suppress any displays of minority ethnicity and impose assimilative tendencies in schools. In conclusion, both writers disclose their understanding of the role of language in shaping and maintaining cultural and ethnic identities. Specifically, they address aggressive policies in the U.

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S. schools where students can speak English language only, the language of the majority groups and, therefore, it considered to be key factor influencing author's understanding of success and social acceptance. However, both Rodriguez and Tan realize that loss of identity lead to loss of the self and perception of their cultural heritage.

Works Cited

Rodriguez, Richard. *Hunger for Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez*. Boston, MA: David K Godine, 1982. Print. Tan, Amy.

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