

Rhetorical analysis: "mother tongue" essay sample

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Rhetorical Analysis: “ Mother Tongue” Essay Sample

Amy Tan, the Author of “ Mother Tongue” very well makes the point across about cultural racism without showing any anger or specifically pointing out racism; Amy makes the reader realize how really not being American can affect how well you could handle everyday situations. The fact that this story was written by an immigrant, and provides real life stories about her mom and herself struggling in America, makes this novel a wonderful eye opener. The story focuses on the prejudices of Amy and her mother. All her life, Amy’s mother has been looked down because of the fact that she did not speak proper English. This story describes how she uses rhetorical strategies to make her argument, while also criticizing cultural standards. The story states that the Amy Tan writes of the different Englishes she uses in her life and illustrates the innumerable ways that people express themselves, depending on who they are with, and their needs.

The audience Tan is trying to reach are people that are ignorant of the fact that people like Amy’s mother who speak “ broken” English most of the time know they are taken advantage of, and struggle more with social interactions. This story could be intended to immigrant people that have to take care of their parents or simply other members of their family. This novel is also designed to people who like Amy have a “ language of intimacy” with their family. Amy sometimes had to help her mother out with dealing with important people by pretending to be her and speaking proper English. Her mother would be telling her what to say like “ why he don’t send me check, already two weeks late. So mad he lie to me, losing me money.” Amy states

that she would be very embarrassed when in this situations because she would be speaking proper English, unlike her mom.

She would say the same thing but in proper English like “ Yes, I am getting rather concerned. You had agreed to send the check two weeks ago, but it hasn’t arrived.” This is the only way that Amy knew she would get the respect her mother deserved, the respect that she did not get by speaking “ broken” or “ fractured” English. Sure enough, as she states in her novel, what she was complaining about in one of her phone calls got resolved the following week, and this rarely would have happened if her mom would have called. As a reader, I can relate to Amy’s story because I come from a Mexican background and we do go through rough times like she did, and sometimes people like us are not given the respect we should get like fluent English speakers get. Amy gives another example of the way her mother was treated because of the way she spoke the language, was when she was diagnosed with a benign brain tumor and the hospital told her that they had lost her CAT scan results.

The mother knew that she could not do more about it, because she knew that her English was limited so of course she would get limited responses. Her mother stated that she would not leave until the doctor called her daughter. Amy tells in her novel that she talked to the doctors and later the CAT scan results where found and there were many apologies from them. This example was based on the fact that Amy could speak perfect English, where here mother could not, and no service or apologies were offered to her. This is also an example of how Amy still switches roles with her mother by helping her out with the things she needs to take care of but cannot

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because of her inability to speak fluent English. The purpose of this story was to inform her readers her beliefs of that new language she had discovered, that maybe not only her, but other immigrant families might have. This language brings her closer to her roots and heritage by sharing it with not only her mother but husband as well.

This “broken” English brings her closer to her mother and gives her that well built and lovable connection with her. She also makes the point that people who do not speak proper or “broken” English like her mom, are often not treated right in society and seem like they are not smart enough. This novel is a good eye opener for all of those who sometimes have had an encounter with somebody that does not speak well English and judge them. This is a common mistake that even the ones that have immigrant parents make. We often make assumptions on people’s competency in society. Amy gives many examples of how she had to help out her mother in order for her to receive the right attention. This is something that many immigrant parents have to do in order to go on with the day, by asking their kids to help them out read letters that come in the mail, or even filling out applications for different things.

People who are well educated might think of this people as ignorant and not willing to learn, but this is not always their choice and like Amy’s mother they are always trying to do it themselves but at the end they have to turn to their families for help. Amy does a really good job at trying to explain her mother struggles as well as her. It is obvious to the readers what a connection she has with her mother and how her struggles made her be more rebellious and do more with the proper English she knew, and was

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often criticized by teachers. She never did that well on English achievement tests, so she was told she should do something not related with English. This novel hopefully will help out the people with misconceptions about immigrants who do not speak English, to not judge, but to help out so our society does not bring them down as it already does.