

Essay summary of mother tongue

[Family](#), [Mother](#)



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Essays #1: Rough Draft Language & Power in “ Mother Tongue” A higher level of sophistication and articulation in one’s speech portrays one as a very well educated person. Such a person’s “ language” makes them an admirable individual that can lead people and hold power with ease. In the article “ Mother Tongue”, Amy Tan emphasizes the idea that we all speak different languages unconsciously and that we are categorized by the way we speak.

Language is power; people develop that power through their own sense of cultural and historical language and usage because language comes from culture. In “ Mother Tongue,” Amy Tan discusses the different experiences she had that made her realize the different types of “ English’s” she uses. The first time she realized this was when she was giving a talk about her book, *The Joy Luck Club*. When realizing that she had been using proper English to speak to her audience, after seeing her mother in the crowd. A language she had never used with her mother but her mother understood it.

Tan felt embarrassed because the only way her mother would communicate with her was through “ broken” English and contradicts how much she actually understands. This reminds us that even though her mother’s English seemed “ broken” Amy Tan still understood her mother tongue. In situations of being her mother translator made her realize the different types of “ English’s” she uses. When Tan was young she used to speak to her mother’s stockbroker on the phone and act as if she was her mother in order to get

people's attention. She had the idea that her mother's English was limited and so her opportunities throughout her life would be limited too.

In a different occasion when her mother went to the doctor to get the results of a CAT scan, the doctors ignored her when she complained about them losing her results. It was not until Tan talked to the doctor that they apologized and cared to solve the problem. She believes that people would not take a person seriously because of their speech. Tan comes to the idea that the language spoken in the family plays a large role in shaping the language of a child. This made her acknowledge that perhaps her family's language had an effect on her own opportunities in life.

In her experience, she notices that Asian students actually do better in math tests than in language tests, and she questions whether or not other Asian students are discouraged from writing or directed in the direction of math and science. Tan changed her major from pre-med to English and she decided to become a freelance writer even though her boss told her she could not write. She did not follow expectations that people had of her because of her struggle with writing and language. With her mother as an influence Tan decided to write her stories for people like her, people with "broken" or "limited" English and gave her fuel to write.

Language is powerful, having the right correct words in your speech sends out a powerful statement. If you were trying to make a statement but it lacked structure that would affect the importance of what you are trying to convey. Tan starts to figure out what is correct language but who's to say what correct language is. For language to be correct it has to adapt to their situations of use, by doing this it starts to gain meaning. We communicate

with people every day, but sometimes we do not adjust our communication style to the audience or situation at hand which can lead to confusion.

In the context of your communication makes a difference both in the way you engage with others and in the way they interpret your communication. In order to adapt your communication effectively, you need to know your “audience”. That way a word can fit in to the situation to figure out its proper use but prescriptivism follow the tradition of the classical grammars of Sanskrit, Greek, and Latin, “ which aimed to preserve earlier forms of those languages so that readers in subsequent generations could understand sacred texts and historical documents,” this would help describe the important use of the word in a right way.

Without correct language you would not know on where you stand or would not have power in the way you speak, just like Amy Tan mother nobody gave her respect because of her broken English that’s why she translate for her mom so she wouldn’t be taken advantage of. They must apply the principle that “ deep thought” equals “ good speech” to make language powerful. Correct language is the key to success. If people don’t have language, they don’t exist.

Language come from culture which connects, it gives a responsible use of language as a source of power. Furthermore, to have a great grasp on correct language you need to be knowledgeable on the subject of what you are discussing. So is knowledge power? Yes, depends on the knowledge at hand, everyone grasp information differently so their knowledge from one individual to another is vastly different.

Now the next question is, what do you consider as knowledge? Is it knowing how to solve a quantitative physics problem or knowing how to make a souffle without it flattening. If you have knowledge the next step is knowing how to use it. The idea here is that the acquisition of knowledge results in social power. The one “ in the know” holds a certain power over those who do not.