
Mother Tongue: The Theme Of Discrimination Of Non-native Speakers

In Amy Tan's essay, "Mother Tongue" the Asian American novelist does a detailed job connecting with the reader in her writing. The way she uses rhetorical devices such as the pathos and logos appeal, but also the way she uses her tone and words of choice in her essay, help us better understand where she is coming from. She uses these devices to get her point(s) across in her work to the reader in an easy but efficient way. Tan grew up learning different types of English and the experiences she went through while growing up. She talks about how her English differs from her mother's way of speaking English. She, in a way, has become the middleman between these languages, being able to understand both sides. She also brings to light that someone who isn't completely fluent in their second language, can face some type of discrimination. I think she is successful with her attempt to induce her readers towards her claim.

Her essay has a lot of personal stories of her and her mom and with real life experiences, Tan is able to get her point across. This rhetorical device is most commonly called Logos. She is able to use this device to help her audience better understand that talking to certain people in a certain language is very important. In her essay Amy Tan talks about the way her mother speaks English. She describes it as "broken" or "limited" and hated using those words to describe it but couldn't think of any other way to describe it saying, "I wince when I say that" (Tan 364). She also dislikes using the term "limited English" explaining, "...[those words] seem just as bad, as if everything is limited, including people's perceptions of the limited English speaker" (Tan 364). She feels like using those words have a bad connotation because she feels like not only do people think her mother's English is limited but they perceive her mother as someone who they shouldn't take as serious. Her mother's English is obviously different than the one she uses when talking to other people. Amy Tan talks about the English that some may call "broken" but it's her mother's way of speaking the best English she can speak. She obviously hates using the words "limited" or "broken" because to her, her mother's way of speaking. It may not be familiar to others but to her it's what she grew up hearing.

Tan shares personal stories as well as showing her readers that the way you talk in English is essential to the way other people will treat you. She tries to lure her readers in emotionally to try to make them understand that treating others differently because they don't speak their perception of "perfect English" isn't right. This rhetorical device is called pathos. Tan shares a story of a time her mother went to the hospital to get the results of a CAT scan and she was anxious to know the diagnosis. She goes on with the story to say the hospital lost her CAT scans and "did not apologize" and goes on to say, "[the hospital] did not have any sympathy" (Tan 365). After that her mother insisted that they call her daughter, which was her of course, who spoke perfect English and explain to her what was going on. Once that happened she concludes, "the CAT scan would be found, promises that a conference call on Monday would be held, and apologies for any suffering my mother had gone through for most regrettable mistake" (Tan 365). This story she shared shows that because her mother's English is limited she doesn't get treated as well as some whose English, you could say, is perfect. Getting the reader's emotions involved to try to persuade them in feeling a certain way helps people understand your point of view.

Not only does Amy Tan use logos and pathos in her essay but she also uses tone to try to convey the readers into taking her very seriously. Not only do various tones make the reader take you seriously but they also keep them intrigued in what they are reading. She decided to use a very serious and defensive tone instead of a very casual tone in her writing. In her writing she states, " I was growing up, my mother's 'limited' English limited my perception of her. I was ashamed of her English" (Tan 364). She didn't try to make a joke out of this, instead she was being honest with her feelings of embarrassment. This makes her sound my relatable and makes herself an equal to her readers.

In the end Amy Tan successfully persuaded her readers into taking a deeper look into the discrimination and injustice non-native speakers go through. Her using logos in her essay she was able to show the logical sense of things and open our perception of the way we view immigrants. She also uses pathos to make the readers feel sympathetic towards people who don't speak perfect english. The tan uses a more of a shameful tone in her piece of writing to transmit how she feels and tries to make the readers grasp the topic. In conclusion by using these three rhetorical devices, Amy Tan persuade the reader to look farther than the way someone speaks in english because they, too, deserve to live a blissful lifestyle just like anybody else in the United States. Overall Amy Tan adequately and persuaded the audience to take another look at the injustices immigrants like her mother, have to deal with not speaking the native language of the new land, and be much more considerate and tolerant of ethnic differences.