

Considering Audience

Purpose: This activity will help you consider the significance of audience, purpose, authorial voice, grammar, and overall 'effective' communication.

Read the following passages and discuss with a partner. In your discussion, please address the questions at the end.

Passage 1

"I was born in 1946 in Paris. My mother was British and my father French but I did not become bilingual immediately as my parents spoke French to me at first. It was only when I was sent to an English boarding school in Switzerland at the age of 7 that I acquired English in a "sink or swim" manner. I don't recall it being difficult as the staff and my peers were all very friendly. I stayed in that school for 7 years and then, at the age of 14, was sent to a boarding school in England where I remained until my A-levels. This change was culturally very difficult and I never quite managed to become totally monocultural (i.e. British only) in the way others wanted me to be. But after 11 years of English schooling, I wasn't really French any longer and my return to France to enter the University of Paris at the age of 18 was quite a change. It took me a number of years to adapt linguistically, but especially culturally, to France and that explains many of my reflections in the book I was to write some years later."

Passage 2

"Bilingualism is the ability to use two languages with equal fluency, and to sound like a native in both. Young children are naturally designed to acquire whatever language(s) they are regularly exposed to. Although adults can study a second language to a high, even fluent, standard, they rarely manage to avoid a foreign accent. That's why true bilingualism has to start early in life - and why you don't need to be 'good at languages' to be bilingual.

The language you speak is closely bound up with your sense of identity, and how you view the world: being bilingual can make you feel at home in a wider set of social situations, and can give you two slightly different ways of looking at things.

Even where two languages are quite similar and you can function perfectly in either of them, things feel different in different languages. Robin puts it like this: "I feel a slightly different person speaking (or thinking) German than English - like everything's slightly more focussed." It's rare to come across people who are not glad to be bilingual. Letizia in West London says that her children "are very proud to be half English and half Mexican and to be able to speak two languages."

Passage 3

"Today, a baffled lady observed the shell where my soul dwells
And announced that I'm "articulate"
Which means that when it comes to enunciation and diction
I don't even think of it
'Cause I'm "articulate"

So when my professor asks a question
And my answer is tainted with a connotation of urbanized suggestion
There's no misdirected intention
Pay attention
'Cause I'm "articulate"
So when my father asks, "Wha' kinda ting is dis?"
My "articulate" answer never goes amiss
I say "father, this is the impending problem at hand"
And when I'm on the block I switch it up just because I can
So when my boy says, "What's good with you son?"
I just say, "I jus' fall out wit dem people but I done!"
And sometimes in class
I might pause the intellectual sounding flow to ask
"Yo! Why dese books neva be about my peoples"
Yes, I have decided to treat all three of my languages as equals
Because I'm "articulate"
But who controls articulation?
Because the English language is a multifaceted oration
Subject to indefinite transformation
Now you may think that it is ignorant to speak broken English
But I'm here to tell you that even "articulate" Americans sound foolish to the British
So when my Professor comes on the block and says, "Hello"
I stop him and say "Noooo ...
You're being inarticulate ... the proper way is to say 'what's good'"
Now you may think that's too hood, that's not cool
But I'm here to tell you that even our language has rules
So when Mommy mocks me and says "ya'll-be-madd-going-to-the-store"
I say "Mommy, no, that sentence is not following the law
Never does the word "madd" go before a present participle
That's simply the principle of this English"
If I had the vocal capacity I would sing this from every mountaintop,
From every suburbia, and every hood
'Cause the only God of language is the one recorded in the Genesis
Of this world saying "it is good"
So I may not always come before you with excellency of speech
But do not judge me by my language and assume
That I'm too ignorant to teach
'Cause I speak three tongues
One for each:
Home, school and friends
I'm a tri-lingual orator
Sometimes I'm consistent with my language now
Then switch it up so I don't bore later
Sometimes I fight back two tongues
While I use the other one in the classroom

And when I mistakenly mix them up
I feel crazy like ... I'm cooking in the bathroom
I know that I had to borrow your language because mines was stolen
But you can't expect me to speak your history wholly while mines is broken
These words are spoken
By someone who is simply fed up with the Eurocentric ideals of this season
And the reason I speak a composite version of your language
Is because mines was raped away along with my history
I speak broken English so the profusing gashes can remind us
That our current state is not a mystery
I'm so tired of the negative images that are driving my people mad
So unless you've seen it rob a bank stop calling my hair bad
I'm so sick of this nonsensical racial disparity
So don't call it good unless your hair is known for donating to charity
As much as has been raped away from our people
How can you expect me to treat their imprint on your language
As anything less than equal
Let there be no confusion
Let there be no hesitation
This is not a promotion of ignorance
This is a linguistic celebration
That's why I put "tri-lingual" on my last job application
I can help to diversify your consumer market is all I wanted them to know
And when they call me for the interview I'll be more than happy to show that
I can say:
"What's good"
"Whatagwan"
And of course ... "Hello"
Because I'm "articulate"
Thank you."

Consider these excerpts. With a partner, answer the following questions:

1. Who do you think the audience might be for each of the texts?
2. What kind of text do you think each is?
3. Where might you find each text? How do you know?
4. Where would you NOT find each text? How do you know?
5. Is there anything else that you can tell about each intended audience based on the text?

References

Passage 1

Navracsics, J. (2002, February). *Francois Grosjean: Interview on bilingualism*. Retrieved from http://www.francoisgrosjean.ch/interview_en.html

Passage 2

Law, P. (2014, September 23). *What does it mean to be bilingual?* Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/voices/yourvoice/multilingualism.shtml>

Passage 3

Lyiscott, J. (2014, February). *3 ways to speak English* [Video file]. Retrieved from http://www.ted.com/talks/jamila_lyiscott_3_ways_to_speak_english