

Yisel Morales

Dr. Rona Kaufman

Writing 101

September 27 2018

A Biliterate

“I feel uncomfortable when you speak ‘your’ people’s language.” A statement I’ve translated multiple times since the day I developed a conscious mind. When my non-speaking friends comprehended nothing my other Spanish speaking friends were telling me. Perhaps, I hadn’t seen it before but, they were just upset that they didn’t have the key access code. Flourishing in a itty bity town in the state of Washington wasn’t a problem. Sumner was the idealistic dream town that no one knew whenever I mentioned it. Specifically, there was one area where all the townspeople would rise up and smell the white rose bushes in a fraud outlined by their white picket fence. Gazing down these streets, I wondered to what extent my soft tongue would ever dearly allow me to be a part of this fictional world. An all-inclusive dialect that *is* the socially acceptable norm. My warm box of a home was the only place, I felt, was acceptable to speak in my almost disgraced language. Little had I known I have been living two separate interconnected lives through the power of language. The one I presented in public and the other I used at home and with close friends. After copious interactions with others. I finally understood that language is my own literacy. Most importantly, it is the locked gate that separates foreigners from natives.

In theory, my tongue was crafted genetically to provide an acute access code as well as a setback. In grade school, there was a language program for children who spoke like me. This in

which was designed to hone our ‘English Language’. We were all given a test the first week in to see who was qualified enough for their aid. Faded objects in rectangular boxes squinted before me. Filled with meaningless squiggles and a straight line right underneath with the instructions: *“please name what the object in the image is called..”*. Only I and a couple others ever did make it out that first and last week. What had been meaningless to me, had absolutely proven a challenge for the rest of them which were consistently pulled away from wetting paintbrushes and colorful pallets. Only children who showed proficiency in English, were allowed to have fun. We had the access code innate. They had to work for it. In a way, I was jealous that they were having what looked like, fun, in that small conference room. Stripped away from the only children whom spoke something that felt like home. This warm glowing breeze I couldn’t read of others when I spoke to them only in English. Their voices were stone cold and as stiff as a brick with no breeze. Yet, why was it that all the warmth spewed from their throat ended up spiked together? After all, they all started kindergarten with me. Why was it that I and the other two were any better at re-labeling inanimate objects? It finally dawned me that we all had a common extension. Someone whom we grew alongside and went through the process of reading and writing in the modern world before us. Our siblings. For me, it was my aunt Lucy who prematurely carved my newly engineered foreign tongue. She exposed my newborn pink colored brush into an ancient black polished ink bottle and with it wrote words which ultimately permanently bled through my vibrant canvas. These words are what exempted me from these literate meetings. The other two didn’t seem to care much, perhaps this gave them a permanent sense of privilege. The same privilege I felt at first when I succeed. However, that feeling died as soon as I realized I couldn’t read and share our warmth together. I was forced to find comfort in

my newly certified language. Now, I would have to translate what the rest of the non-speaking Spanish children were attempting to paint for me.

Time winded too fast and surely enough middle school came along. For two years it was the same oval shaped table of 8 with the same faces at the commons. The “Mexicans” as they’d call it. However, they would never understand that it wasn’t about how we all came from the same ethnic backgrounds. But rather, we all understood each other bilingually. It wasn’t that we were racially biased. But rather, the fact was that no one else chose to sit with us because whenever one did. They felt intimidated that there were so many of us at one table. Communicating phrases that our parents taught us from a very young age. “Aye! que tal tu finde semana?” Jasmine dijo. “Bien chido” le respondio Stefanie. “Mi abuelita iso some mole and it was bomb a’f” dude.” “Dammn, I wish we had that last night. Mi ama made some caldo, you know, pa que se nos quite la gripa.” As me and my friend were sitting unable to communicate in that same familiarization. “So, uhh, yeahh” Savannah said anxiously. “Don’t worry, we’re all friends here.” I reassured her with a slight chuckle. Yet, I could sense her uneasiness. The freshly painted maroon and gold building was a promising new beginning for all of us even if it meant incompleteness. Laughter, gossip, and mischief fulfilled the cafeteria. And all of it was in English. Except for our table. We were the foreigners in their pink branded lunch bags. When they attempted to enter our purple clouded world they were color blinded. Savanah turned to me and asked “do you want to sit with me and my friends this time?” That was when my life changed. I decided I got bored of sitting with these same people and chose to sit at her grey colored table of four. Man could I just feel the heat that was just radiating from out their eyes and mouth. They took it as a sign of almost betrayal like truancy. With one of them yelling out “don’t come back here trader”. I was leaving the only piece of my *other* life behind. Could I not have

the best of both worlds? As I sat down, in that cold chair, there was a different feeling. “Hey Savannah.” “Hey Devante”. “Yisel is sitting with us today”. “That’s fine” “wasn’t it hilarious when it was Sam’s turn to show off his mad skills? Dude passed with a straight F” “OMG I KNOWW. I felt bad. Is it his fault he started band so late?” “I guess not.. what about that walking dead episode last night? Wasn’t that epic??” “Yisel, do you watch the Walking Dead?” “I’ve never heard of it.” “You NEED to watch it, it’s so flipping good.” Who knew that a month later I would soon be branding a matching ‘if daryl dies we riot’ shirt with them. It soon dawned upon me that our worlds were disconnected in the sense that I analyzed our conversations. Rereading them in my mind. My Spanish speaking friends talked about family in a language that sounded like home. Whereas my only English speaking friends spoke in a pop culture influenced way. We were different. We talked about our families whereas they never spoke about them other than their brothers and sisters whom they only ever saw during Christmas or special holidays. Was this what this ancient world was all about?

I and my mother’s cousins are about the same age. As children, we used to play Marco polo in the dark all the time and the most fun id ever have in my life. Were the times we spent playing together. Then, we semi-grew up and that was once again, when I was dubbed the outsider. “you ever heard of solynda?” “mhmm, I heard of her and her pathetic wannabe squad. In fact, I snatched that weave so hard, her little ass head popped off” I laughed, attempting to relate to what they were saying. “what are you laughing at? You don’t even know what a weave is. All you is is a washed uptown girl from nowhere. You don’t know our gangsta attitudes. You aint even got the body either. Just a frail whack trying to hard nothing” I will never forget this moment when my own cousins told me I shouldn’t be there because I didn’t speak their “Tacoma” lingo. Why was it that I had to be the outsider? It was then when I realized I didn’t

have the right key to be allowed to speak to them. They belonged in this violent gang packed world. Because I couldn't speak in the way they did with their everyday slang, I didn't belong with them anymore. I sounded too "perfect" in my English. Could they really blame me? This was Sumner's doing I thought. In fact, right after this incident I wanted to move to castle peaked Lincoln. Begged my mother. It never did happen. I only wanted to be included and accepted by them. I wanted to learn their language by reading what their conversations sounded like on a daily basis.

Interestingly, it seems as though both the lunch table incident and my cousins elite slang squad were matched in a pattern. I simply wasn't allowed to be at the borderline between English and Spanish. I had to only pick one. Leaving that table meant disowning the connections we had formed through our mother tongues. Whereas, with my mother's cousins. I was a product of disgust in the way that I couldn't communicate to them attractively. Perhaps, this is what it felt for my non-Spanish speaking friends. A feeling of discreet out casting all because of our different dialects.

High school gave me the privilege to finally accept that it was okay to speak my home language. Spanish had never before felt as acceptable as the now. I finally understand now that it is important to preserve it for the future generations to come. Speaking a second language allowed me to soak into a differently beautiful world. Something that I had been inclined to be nurtured from. There is no doubt that it feels the same for everybody else. Being able to read these conversation between each other and really analyze what we as a society is talking about. Perhaps it no longer will be a choice for my little cousins. Everyday their Spanish begins to diminish as their mother speaks only in English to them. As a family we feel a sadness dawning upon us. Language is our literacy. Analyzing different conversations was our translation of

reading. The most important elements that define who we are. As a result, it is the only unique key I have to the gates of a prohibited world.