

AP Language and Composition: Argument Prompt

The following essay is written by Amy Tan, author of *The Joy Luck Club*. Tan and her essay present a commentary of the nature of spoken English and its value and complications. Read the essay carefully. Then write an essay that defends, challenges, or qualifies the affect language has on others' perceptions of the speaker.

How to Write the Paper

I. Introduction –

Thesis: explicitly state where you stand on the issue

Lead in/Hook and Background: these help you frame your argument in a philosophical way

Thesis: **The claim that language affects peoples' perceptions of the speaker is a clear and undeniable reality.** (This is your statement of defense, challenge, or qualification)

Now you need to further specify your argument. Remember, the thesis is a road map. Where are you going to stop on your journey? Without this further step, you are saying, "I'm driving." That doesn't help the reader follow you. Where are you going to end this journey? What's the conclusion you will draw at the end.

Thesis, cont.: **The description of Tan's mother's English as "broken", the questioning of the stock broker, and the conflict at the hospital all reveal that variance from the English norm causes the speaker to be viewed as unintelligent and incompetent by those outside the intimate family.** (Provide your evidence in brief, as well as the conclusion you will draw from the evidence)

Hook and Background info: Here is where you set up the philosophical assumptions you will be basing your argument on. So if you are defending, you want to set up why you are on that side in an overarching way.

An accent affects the way that one pronounces words and reveals where an individual is from – this statement of location or origin often changes the way the individual is viewed by the listener. A twang may make the listener think of the American South, a South known only from television, full of trailer parks and swamps and raised trucks; a limited and biased view that has little connection to reality. In Amy Tan's "Mother Tongue", this relationship between spoken English and perception is examined; however, her discussion adds another level of depth to the nature of spoken English: the impact of being a non-native speaker.

I've used the first two sections of the intro to develop my philosophical basis for the argument. I'm developing a general, broader view of the topic, then narrowing it down to the specific as I work through the intro. Remember, we are looking at an arrowhead here, the first line is the broad bottom, and then we work to the point.

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