

Yudenys Cepeda

English 1101

Word Count: 1190

I am Yudenys Cepeda, your regular 19 year old teenager. I am currently a Medical Assistant, soon to be Dialysis Technician and later on to be a Registered Nurse. My biggest motivation is being able to fulfill my dream and make my parents proud.

At the age of seven, it is very difficult to understand or be aware of changes. I had the perfect childhood, living in the Dominican Republic with my sisters and mother. However, my father wasn't part of that because he lived in the United States to provide us a better life both economically and socially. One morning I was told the news that we would be moving to the United States. I was ill at ease with the thought of leaving my friends and family behind. I was reassured that it was for the best, but being only seven years old that interpretation of reassurance only made me more perturbed. I would've never imagined how a new city, culture and language will shape me into the woman I am today.



My mother and I (Dominican Republic).

When I first arrived in the United States, everything seemed so strange. What I noticed most was the language being spoken here. It sounded so perplexing to my ears which made me feel insecure. I remember my mother trying to make me feel better, however at the time I didn't realize it was a new city for her as well. She tried accommodating my needs when I asked her to please put me in a school where Spanish was also spoken. To my disadvantage, we moved to an area where we quickly became the only Spanish speakers in the neighborhood. I was later on ready to start second grade instead of starting third grade like I was supposed to because of my language barrier. As unsettled as I felt, my exuberant personality exceeded my anxiety. The first day of school came and I remember it being the scariest moment of my life. I was asked to introduce myself but the only word I knew how to say was my name. I thought everyone was going to laugh at me but I made friends pretty quickly. They were Ester, Yang and Emily.



(I'm the one in the middle haha)

I quickly began to familiarize myself with the English language. I am proud to say that in as little as three months I was able to speak English with my friends. I figured that our literacy, intellectual, and dialogue is what makes us bond and understand one another.

I always set goals for myself and being able to fluently speak English was my first one. After much practice, I was able to master that skill to the level I knew people understood me. However, speaking English was very different from writing it. My next obstacle was passing the “State Test”. I knew I couldn't risk failing this exam because that would increase my chances of being left back. I was already taken down a grade when I first started second grade rather than third grade. I started reading books such as Diary of a Wimpy Kid, and Junie B. Jones.. These books made me love reading and motivated me to keep getting better. The day of the state test finally came and my anxiety was off the roof! When I opened that booklet, the literacy in that book was so much different than the one I was used to. It was in “Standard English” not the everyday English I was used to speaking. I remember what my teachers told me to do in order to get through the test if I ever get stuck. They told me to look for clues to understand the meaning of words. The short responses were easy to get through, but I wish I could say the same about the essay. I gave it my very best shot and hoped for the best. After a couple of weeks, I was given the news that I never expected. I scored second highest in the entire class! Everyone was so proud of how hard I had worked to achieve this.

Literacy and English became one of the biggest obstacles I had growing up. It makes me emotional to think about because trying to fit in, in a completely different environment is not always easy. Seeing my parents struggle with communication always made me feel down. I was the one that translated everything for them through the phone. I remember coming from school and having to sit down with my mother to call doctor offices and make appointments. Looking back at it, I'm sure it wasn't easy on my mother having to feel no control over little things that mattered so much because of our language barrier. I saw my mom struggle to communicate and I hated how some ignorant people would belittle her because she wasn't “fluent” in English.

Literacy is not only written words or a language, but the string that connects us all emotionally , spiritually and physically through the transparency of communication. My mother realized that she needed to understand English in order to be respected and heard. So she took it upon herself to attend an English school for two years. My mother as of now doesn't speak fluently but she's able to interpret and speak on an easy level. I am beyond proud of my mother's achievement.

The Literacy Narrative "Mother Tongue", by Amy Tan spoke to me in many ways. In this narrative she speaks about her mother growing up with "Broken English". She made the reader understand how hard it was on her end seeing her mother struggle. She wrote about the different "Englishes" in her life and I related to it. In reality, we are programmed to believe that proper English is standard English. However, I would argue that every English is proper English. Some of us have accents, and English is a second language. It's not as easy for others to learn standard English. In the literacy world, every English should be accepted because that's what makes us different and unify us at the same time.

Literacy not only motivated my mother but also me. I wanted many things in life and I still do but I am aware that everything is through the power of knowledge. I personally believe literacy is the first step into mastering that power. In high school in order to attend the Medical Assistant Program, I had to keep an average of 85%. For me it became hard work because of the timing in my life. I was also working during this time. But as hardworking as I am, I achieved that. I graduated High School with my Medical Assistant Certification. I knew I wanted more for myself, so that's exactly what I did. I initiated college and I'm working towards getting accepted into the nursing program.



Something I learned about writing and reading is that being able to understand literacy will always make you thrive because it is the one tool that works as a stepping stone in fulfilling anything in life. Literacy lifts us individuals out of our comfort zone and I am proof of it. As aforementioned, I continue learning and working towards my goals. I know that enhancing my skills in literacy will get me there.

Source:

Tan, Amy. "Mother Tongue." *The Threepenny Review*, vol. 43, Autumn, 1990, pp. 7–8.