

- Why can't a same language be spoken strictly the same by its speakers?

In My Language Story, I noticed how important language was to me and how I didn't understand why the same language such as Spanish, can be so differently spoken by the various latin cultures. "My face turned bright red and I felt my blood rise to my head when they all had their eyes fixed on me and my ex said "Alicia, they just asked you a question..." I didn't know what to do, they repeated the question but I still couldn't understand them. This was when I realized how diverse and special language can be, even if we speak the same language, dialect is what makes it unique," this is an excerpt of an anecdote from an incident when meeting my ex-boyfriends family who are Ecuadorian. Living in New York I have never really given much thought as to why people have different accents because after all we do live in a city that is a melting pot of cultures. However, If I was ever asked if I had an accent speaking English, I would answer "no." Even when told I spoke well, I automatically thought is was because I didn't have an accent. During this course I realized how we all have a unique accent despite how fluent we are in a language. "It is a myth that some speakers have accents while others do not. We might feel that some speakers have very distinct or easily recognized types of accent while others may have more subtle or less noticeable accents, but every language-user speaks with an accent" (Yule, 240). In my trips to Mexico City (my native country), Costa Rica and Ecuador, I was able to experience the many different words that exist in Spanish to refer to the same object (dialects of Spanish), the different accents and

speech accommodation.

My first trip that I recall outside the U.S. was to my native country, Mexico City. Before leaving to my trip I was recommended or should I say forbidden to speak English. I was told it was too dangerous because of the popular idea that because one comes from the US, it automatically makes us wealthy and therefore, easy targets for delinquents. I thought it was not a problem, I would just stick to my Spanish tongue. However, the problem came once I arrived and after small talk with people in the stores gave away where I was coming from. Even though most words from English have been borrowed into Spanish in Mexico, the accent with which I pronounced them gave me away. The words that are commonly borrowed from English in Mexico are: “ok,” “bye,” “small,” “medium” and “large.” My greatest difficulty came when I had to accommodate my speech to the “Mexican ghetto” style. I was going with my aunt to “La Merced,” an area in Mexico D.F. where you can find many things much cheaper than in the department stores. The area has plenty of places where one can buy different candies, shirts with logos, decorations and many more things. The problem with this area is that its streets are also filled with delinquents and everyone who goes there needs to be street smart, therefore, I wouldn’t survive without being robbed if I spoke my usual Spanish. I then had to accommodate my Spanish to the Spanish ghetto spoken in that area. At first and even until this day, it is quite hard for me to do it because I feel weird doing so and less articulate.

In my other trips to Costa Rica and Ecuador, I experienced a similar situation. Except that in Costa Rica I didn’t worry about not speaking English or accommodating my

speech to the speech of the town since the area where I stayed was filled with tourists but I did learn new words and phrases that Costa Ricans use instead of some words that are common in Spanish. For example, when they greet another person, instead of saying “hola,” “buenos dias/ buenas tardes,” they say “pura vida” which means “pure life.” In Ecuador, since I was already familiar with the dialect commonly used among Ecuadorians because of the contact I’ve had with friends, ex-boyfriends and acquaintances, I was able to pull the “I’m Ecuadorian” story while in Galapagos. As a non-Ecuadorian citizen in Galapagos, foreigners pay double the price at all times even after you pay the fee of \$100 at the airport when arriving, compared with the \$7 fee for Ecuadorian citizens. I stuck to my Ecuadorian accent at all times and avoided paying double fees for all activities we did while on vacation. ←---LOL i want to hear that :]

- What are the benefits and disadvantages of being bilingual?

As I read my classmates blog posts I realized that many of us like myself came from other countries and had to learn English as their second language and how they felt in some ways the same way I did. We all agreed that English is important to succeed in this country, “Unfortunately, speaking Spanish alone was not going to be enough for me to be able to truly take advantage of what the United States has to offer” (Marianda). However, at the same time we have lost a part of our native language. As Amalia wrote on her blog, “I was the girl who didn’t know much of her own heritage, all I knew was that when I went home my parents would speak to me in something foreign from what I heard at school, I remember it being a constant struggle.” Being that I was brought here at 3 years of age, I was fortunate to learn English much easier and faster than my parents. I don’t really remember how I learned it, how I communicated before I spoke it and how I felt as I learned the language. All I remember was watching cartoons

before I entered Kindergarten and telling my mother I knew how to speak English while imitating the noises I heard the cartoons utter.