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Dialects or Standard Languages

The National Council of Teachers of English affirms “the students’ right to their own patterns and varieties of language – the dialects of their nurture or whatever dialects in which they find their own identity and style.” (586) This leads to a public’s fierce. Many people hold the opinion that the dialects have no validity while the others strongly disagree with it. Dialects contribute to the diversity of countries, present the culture and history of the regions and they are very useful in specific areas. Therefore I argue that the students should study dialects but also be fluent in the standard languages.

It’s necessary for the dialects to be existed and studied because they endow the societies with diversity. English can be categorized by areas and also by races. Ebonics is a typical English dialect spoken by African Americans. Most whites get used to speak Standard English. Chinese is one of the most diverse languages in the world. Most provinces in Mainland China have their own dialect (Mainland China has about 30 provinces) and dialects of cities in the same province can be distinctly different. It is not surprising that people coming form the same province don’t understand each other. Mandarin is considered the standard Chinese in Mainland China, Taiwan, Singapore and Malaysia. Most Chinese citizens are able to speak mandarin. Cantonese is a well-known Chinese dialect used in Guangdong Province, Guangxi Province, Hong Kong and Macau. Japanese is also a language with many dialects. The dialect speaking in Tokyo is very closed to the standard Japanese. Kansai Dialect is an influential dialect in Japan. Citizens who live in Osaka, Kyoto, Kobe and the nearby areas speak it. The Kansai Dialect does sound different from the standard Japanese; therefore, people living in Tokyo don’t always understand it. Lera Boroditsky states “The idea that language might shape thought was for a long time considered untestable at best and more often simply crazy and wrong. Now, a flurry of new cognitive science research is showing that in fact, language does profoundly influence how we see the world.” in her essay *Lost in Translation*. Therefore, having different groups of dialect speaking people is having citizens with vary ways of thinking.

A dialect is not only a kind of a language. It is the mirror reflecting the culture of the area and the ideology of the speakers. It may also be the heritage of history. The perspective that the differences between a foreign languages and dialects are only existed in pronunciations, tones and grammars is definitely incorrect. Ebonics is a very good example. It is the witness of the emancipation of slaves and demonstrates the thoughts and habits of African Americans. In Japanese history, Kansai dialect was considered the standard Japanese for a long time. It still keeps some ancient vocabularies and pronunciations. Consequently, considerable amount of citizens living in the Kansai area think of themselves as the inheritors of traditional Japanese and they are proud of their dialect. The Taiwanese mandarin and mandarin spoke in Mainland China have some slight differences. Due to Japan’s colonial rule, Taiwanese still use few Japanese words. It’s very often to hear them saying “Obasan” (“old lady” in Japanese) instead of “Lao-Nai-Nai” (“old lady” in standard Chinese). There is a famous area in Taipei called Hsimenting. It is also not a typical Chinese name. Chinese has seven major categories with many minor categories in each of them. Mandarin is the language of the North while most of the other categories are used in the South. In very ancient China the dialects from north and south were distinctly different. People living in the north travelled to the south and spread the northern dialect, so some Southern Chinese dialects are mixtures of the Northern dialects and ancient Southern Dialects. They witnessed the companionship of the South and the North. Cantonese was considered the standard Chinese in Tang Dynasty. It still keeps some ancient pronunciations and vocabulary words. Unlike mandarin that has only 4 tones (same pronunciation with different tones are different words in Chinese), Cantonese has 9 tones. Some words in Cantonese Chinese can’t be explained in Mandarin perfectly. A famous Chinese show called Sichuan Opera requires all the actors and actresses to speak Sichuanese. If the show is being translated in standard Chinese, it won’t be as amazing as the original show is. All dialects are representatives of the history or culture of regions. They are worth to be known and investigated.

The most significant value of dialects is their usefulness. When communicating with a group of people from specific region, speaking their dialect is a way to build an intimate relationship with them. If someone is living in an area with a major category of people who are not used to speak the standard language, the ability to speak the dialects become extremely important. Some words in standard Japanese and Kansai dialect with same or similar pronunciation have distinct different meanings. Dialects are even more important in China. Except for the Northern region, most Chinese people use their dialects but not mandarin in informal situations. Even mandarin is required to be taught in schools recent years, a great number of elders can only understand but not speak mandarin. They are struggling with the pronunciations. If non-native dialect speakers are going to the greengrocer’s, they may not understand what the shop owner is saying. Last year the Chinese Television Council was trying to ask all the television anchors to speak mandarin instead of dialects on TV. Many citizens disagree with it for there’s a large percentage of people prefer their dialects and some of the elders don’t understand mandarin especially in the Canton Region. Actually those different regions can also be considered as different discourse communities. Dialects are the required languages in those discourse communities. Patric Bizzell has mentioned in her essay *Hybrid Academic Discourses: What, Why, How* that “in a discourse community, shared conventions of language use affect social status, world view, and work. These elements are so powerful that the discourse could be said to take on a life of its own, independent of individual participants; it could be said, even, to ‘create’ the participants that suit its conventions by allowing individuals no other options if they wish to be counted as participants.”

The dialects do have significant meanings to the language, but the standard language is always the most important one. It’s necessary to require all the students to be influent in the standard languages for several reasons.

First, it will really be convenient if there is a language being in common use by the citizens of one country. No matter where an individual is in the country, he or she can communicate with local people with no obstructions. Since the relationships between different countries are getting more intimate these years, standard language is really important. Standard languages are showing their benefits when two countries are having some diplomatic activities or international games are holding. To make most people understand what is going on, multiple languages are required to be used. It has already taken a long time for the officials to go over all the standard languages. If the dialects are also used, the translation takes almost half of the time. When the major part of the activity starts, everyone is getting tired. Standard languages help saving much time.

Second, the standard languages are necessary to be existed in some formal situations. It is so ridiculous for the dialects to be used in the court, in a meeting or in a symposium. Sometimes, some accent or pronunciation in one dialect sounds funny to the ones who don’t speak that dialect. It is difficult for everyone to be serious in a formal situation if they are hearing a dialect. Also, because dialects are considered informal, they won’t be suitable for the atmosphere and would not be accepted by the experts and scholars.

Third, in majority countries in the world, second language or even third language are required to be studied at school. If most people are not fluent at the standard language, it will not be so attractive to the foreigners because they can only talk to few people after studying it. If the native standard language speakers will have problems communicating with the dialect speakers, it will be even harder for the foreigners.

Furthermore, contrary to some dialects that keep lots of ancient pronunciations, most standard languages are very new. They absorb fresh stuff as time goes by so they become very modern. It is the reflection of the development of the country.

Some people might say that it takes a long time to study both the dialect and the standard language. Like the old saying, “you can’t have your cake and eat it.” Actually this is not as difficult as they think. Teaching dialects at school doesn’t mean it has to be a required course for everyone. Also, studying the dialects doesn’t mean you have to be professional in it. In regions where people speak standard languages in everyday life, dialects can be elective courses. Because they don’t have the dialect surroundings, studying dialects can be very difficult. But it’s very different for students who live in the regions where people speak dialects. They grow up with the dialect-speaking environment so they can study it without spending lots of time on it. But it is really important for them to be fluent in standard languages since that’s much more useful. Students can spend most of the time on studying the standard languages and standard languages should be used in all the classes except for the dialect course. Then they can spend little time on studying the dialect and get to know the culture and history behind it.

Due to the diversity, culture, and the usefulness, we have to keep the dialects and regard them as important parts of languages. But because of their limitations, dialects should not be studied professionally except for the ones who are investigate the culture and history of the region. Standard languages should be strongly encouraged. Everyone has to be fluent in the standard languages in order to communicate with people coming from different areas in the same country. It saves individuals’ time and they get the benefits of both standard languages and dialects.

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| **Skill** | **Outstanding** | **Very Strong** | **Strong** | **Good** | **Inadequate** |
| Articulating a **complex claim,** emerging from and exploring a line of inquiry |  | \* |  |  |  |
| Using and **quoting from** course texts strategically |  |  |  |  | \* |
| Containing close and thoughtful **analysis** of the issues at play |  |  | \* |  |  |
| Utilizing a **clear organizational strategy** and effective transitions |  |  | \* |  |  |

Mengsu,

Works Cited?

As you can see above, I think this essay is very successful in many elements. Your claim is very clear, and you have a lucid writing style and cohesive organization. However, in revision we should talk about quoting. You use so many examples here that it can get confusing, and also you don’t provide very much analysis (your OWN thoughts, not the facts!). Let’s talk about this some more at conference, because I think this essay has the potential to be very successful!

Works Cited

Lera Boroditsky, *Lost in Translation.*

Allison Gross, Annie Dwyer, David Holmberg, and Anis Bawarshi edited. *Acts of Inquiry: Resolution on the Students’ Right to Their Own Language.* National Council of Teachers of English.Boston, New York: 2011. Print.

Patric Bizzell, *Hybrid Academic Discourses: What, Why, How.*