



Writ 101 Writing Seminar I & Writ 011 Lab Sample Student Essay

Comparative Analysis

"Nah, We Straight": An Argument Against Code by Vershawn Ashanti Young & From Outside, In by Barbara Mellix are two pieces that are very distinct yet similar. The two texts take us readers on a journey of code-switching. Code-switching can be considered as switching multiple languages mid-speech, either being able to switch from one variety of language or the dialect to another, depending solely on the environment. Language plays a huge factor in our identities; it is a part of who we are and our culture. These two pieces put an emphasis on how code-switching is a racist concept many of us are forced into practice. This way of thinking created a concept enforcing the false notion that anyone who speaks other than standard English is inferior, causing identity issues. In Young's piece, she offers her opinion backed up with evidence it is written in a persuasive and expository matter. While Mellix speaks of her own experience with a narrative and subtle expository format. Young's & Mellix's pieces use different types of writing which include expository, and persuasive, and reading them together takes readers on two different journeys that prove how racism in code-switching affects people's identities.

Code-switching is not necessarily a negative thing. However, the way society wants and expects us to speak is. The negative stigma surrounding those who speak any language other than standard English in the United States is the issue. For example, needing to talk standard English in a bank to actually get a chance at an approved loan. While at home you speak African

American English (AAE) with your friends and family, not allowing you to be your authentic self which leads to identity issues. This is often a hectic practice. As a bilingual speaker myself, we face the world with two languages in our heads. Code-switching is a huge part of our lives. From “Mami dame comida” to responding to my zoom class and saying, “I think it’s obvious we are forced into our social class through systematic racism”. Code-switching makes me feel as if I am in a battlefield with myself. Constantly adapting, changing, and catering to other people’s needs and expectations. It is like picking and choosing the character I want to act out. Sometimes feeling like Dissociative identity disorder commonly known as split personality disorder because of how much I feel the need to switch my language depending on where I am or who I am talking to. The reality is I should be able to speak my own English without being judged for it.

Identity issues can come from constantly code switching. The term Double Consciousness is always feeling the need to look at oneself through the eyes of others explained by Young. For example, feeling the need to fit in by using standard English but also having this other side of you speaking AAE and that culture which is inferior making you never an “equal”. He expresses further that “Double consciousness ... has been adopted and translated into an instructional strategy that is used, like legal segregation, to govern blacks' social interactions in public, paradoxically in an era where allegedly, as linguist John McWhorter opines, ‘racism is quickly receding’ (266)” (Young 52). Mellix spoke AAE at home as a kid, she mentions she was mostly surrounded by black folks, which made it really the only language she knew. Her parents corrected her when they were outside of their home settings, teaching her Standard English along the way, and showing how it affects her identity. She describes feeling “...this same doubleness in uptown Greelyville where the whites lived...” As she states, “I was extremely conscious that this was an occasion for proper English. I had taken out my English and

put it on as I did my church clothes" (Mellix 259). She allows us to see how she felt wrong for not acting how she was taught to. She was unable to use the language she knew growing up. Mellix was lost in language. She showed the readers that she confused the two sometimes, she even took on writing in higher education to further practice standard English because she felt the need to further her writing in Standard English. Young informs us readers with some real word people and facts allowing you to understand the idea of code-switching and its impact. He is allowing us to see how Mellix's feelings were an instructional strategy to make her feel inferior to those whose language is standard English.

Code-switching is related to racism. How could code-switching possibly connect to racism? What about switching from language to language is connected to racism? Society creates norms and social constructs. For example, social class, and currency are man-made things that were created and made important by humans. Young explains to the readers that society was fooled into thinking languages were treated equally which helped gain the support of people in society.

It's reasoning that doesn't hold up when the two varieties meet in the public domain or in "formal settings." Since black English is restricted in school and the mainstream public, it is, in effect, rendered inferior, even if it is euphemistically described by Wheeler and Swords as "appropriate for other settings, times, situations..."(Young 52).

We see this at work when Mellix describes her personal experience throughout life with language and writing. Mellix, as previously stated, spoke AAE to a white male when she was a child. This made her feel extremely uneasy because she felt it was wrong of her to do so. She goes on and says "He was white and could speak as he wished. I had something to prove. Toby did not" (Mellix 260). Young informs us readers with some real word people and facts allowing

you to understand the idea of code-switching and its impact. He shows us readers AAE was pushed out of schools and mainstream public to create this idea of standard English being the superior language. Mellix did not feel she had “something to prove” for no reason, code-switching taught her that her language is not valuable enough to speak in certain settings or people. Young’s text allows us to see how Mellix’s feelings were caused by strategic legal racism created to make her feel inferior to those whose language is standard English. These pieces complement each other with their expository writing from Young, in which brings into depth code-switching meanwhile Mellix offers her a personal narrative illuminating each other to further understand racism in code-switching.

Young’s text is very different from Mellix’s simply because they are two different writing styles. Young’s text is a more expository writing piece. He writes the text with a lot of outside sources and analyzes it to support his claim. Generally speaking, his central claim is code-switching is racist and we should be able to use code meshing. Code meshing is being able to use two different languages. Young offers insight on how code-switching is racist and how Double consciousness plays a role in people when they practice code-switching. Meanwhile, Mellix has a different approach, personal narrative piece, perfectly complimenting each other. Her piece specifically focuses on language and writing parts of her personal life. Her central claim was how difficult it was to juggle the two languages around, causing her to have two identities. These two pieces are a great read together because they complement each other. Their different writing pieces emphasize how code-switching is racist practice put on people to make them inferior. Mellix helps us further understand the identity issues it causes with the help of her personal narrative because it allows the readers to be in her place and is a great example to prove Young’s point.

Work Cited

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