

English 96

Discussion for Rodriguez' "Aria"

Public and Private Languages

Instructions: All of us use different “languages” throughout our lives. We usually have “public languages” such as the way we speak at school or to our employers and “private languages” such as the way we speak to family and close friends. We might even have other languages that are not so obviously public or private.

Using one of your reading journals (one of your bluebooks), make a list of the different “languages” you speak. You can refer to them in whatever way you want, so long as you (and possibly me) can understand what you mean. After you have finished your list, go through it and mark each “language” as either “public” or “private” (or both if you really believe that it is on the border).

When everyone in your group has finished, share your lists with each other. What agreements or disagreements do you notice? Do these agreements or disagreements seem to be related to gender, age, ethnicity, or some other factor? If so, please note it and be prepared to discuss it.

Language and “Dominant” Culture

In your group, discuss the following:

1. Do you believe that your future success will depend partially or completely on your ability to speak and/or write well in English?
2. Do you agree with Richard Rodriguez that speakers of other languages need to master English as quickly as possible regardless of the consequences?
3. Did you, like Rodriguez, have to learn to communicate in English (after already being able to communicate in another language)? If so, were your experiences similar to or different from his?

Bilingual Education?

Bilingual education refers to teaching students using their native language. For example, a bilingual Math class for Spanish speakers would be conducted in both Spanish and English. The idea is that Spanish speakers will learn the Math concepts (and therefore not fall behind) while also learning English.

1. What is Rodriguez' opinion of bilingual education?
2. How does he support (i.e. argue for) his opinion? (In other words, what evidence does he provide?)
3. What is your opinion of bilingual education? How would you support your opinion?