

Identity

Tiny Island in the southwest Pacific Ocean
Assemble different groups of people
Integrate multi-culture perfectly
Wonderful landscape and passionate people make it shine even more
A lovely place, a home I call
Neither is it a country nor a province, a question I wonder

Under another powerful force
Our flag cannot fly freely
Our hymn cannot sing proudly
We cannot be seen
So many times, I am wondering
Who am I?
Where I belong to?
Like an orphan who lost her identity
Helpless and indignant, but don't know what to do

Faithful mother tongue appears to rescue
Gives me a sense of identity
Reminds me who am I
Tells where I come from
A precious tongue never be forgotten
A valuable treasure should not be hidden but show
One day they will realise
It is a country need to be seen
It is a voice eager to be heard

By Chia En Liu

Critique:

In this assignment, I choose question 4 to answer which is related “My people” chapter in *Staying Alive*. I chose *My Faithful Mother Tongue* by Czeslaw Milosz as a reference to write my poem. This poem was written by a Poland poet who consider that mother tongue is the only way to help him to remember who he is. Also, he conveyed an idea about preserve the polish language. These ideas just hit my mind directly because it reminds me about my country.

My country is called Taiwan which is an island surrounded by seas. During the 17th century to 19th century, it was colonized by different countries such as Spanish, Dutch, Japanese and Chinese. Therefore, in the past 400 years, it was hard to define which country we belonged to because of the complicated political situation. Until 1945, there were a group of Chinese people came to Taiwan and established a new government system at here.

Due to our special location and colony culture, mother tongue is particularly important for Taiwanese people. Also, everyone may not have the same mother tongue because of the multi-culture combination. For example, our official language is Mandarin but my mother tongue is Taiwanese. Even though it is secondary language, it is still being spoken by majority of Taiwanese people. However, this language will become dangerous in the future because of some reasons. First, it doesn't pass on well on account of people still can communicate to each other by using Mandarin. Second, some people consider it is a tacky language so they don't want to use it. Third, there are more and more young people tend to learn foreign languages rather than learn Taiwanese. For me, I was considered that Taiwanese is a tacky language as well. Like in the Czeslaw's poem

*For you are a tongue the debased,
Of the unreasonable, hating themselves
Even more than they hate other nations,*

But now, since I am in the foreign land and have more connection with different people, I get to know my country more and I love my mother tongue more because it help me to represent myself truly.

Moreover, I found mother tongue is important to me because I can show difference between Taiwan and China to others. Due to some intricate political issue, we are forced by China's government that we can't show our national flag or sing national anthem on any public international occasion. It is a sensitive topic to discuss but it is truth and a hard diplomatic situation what we are facing now. I believe no matter where people from, they must can sing their national anthem and wave their flag proudly and freely. Except us, we lost our right and freedom to

do this. Therefore, in my poem, I try to speak out our voice that Taiwanese people do need an identity.

“*Without you, who am I*” said by Czeslaw. I am glad that I can keep my mother tongue and it does help me to raise the sense of identity to my country. In addition, I must try to save this because this is a valuable treasure which should not be hidden but show. Therefore I believe, only in the mother tongue can one speak their own truth.

I enjoyed your poem very much. You have certainly made an effort to engage with the course – it is not easy to study creative writing in a second language. I think you do an excellent job and I enjoyed reading your work.