Sample Essay #1

Carl Elliot in his article "The Perfect Voice" and Raymond Hernandez in "When Accent Becomes an Issue" write about the effect of accent on perception of class and social status.

Carl Elliot writes about people who want to change or reduce their accent. He writes about the southerners with a noticeable southern drawl who want "to diminish, change or erase their southern accents." Carl Elliot says that "enhancement technologies were a form to help people change themselves or help them discover who they really are." He says that many of southerners when they visited up North they try to speak like Yankee; or when they around outsiders or at their work. They learn that "a southern accent needs to be moderated, if not effaced, or else you will not be taken seriously." Carl Elliot gives an example that on TV news reporters must speak non-southern even though they are southern. Carl Elliot says that "what worried me most was the sense that by trying to change your accent, you are rejecting something of who you are." That is why many clients of accent-reduction clinic "worried not so much about sounding southern as about sounding like hicks." Even Lilli Ambro, who runs such a clinic speaks with a southern accent. But is society, in general, ther is an idea that a southern accent is something, that people shoul get rid of; that people with a southern accent feel like they are lower class. "Nobody explicitly teaches us this, but we somehow absorb the lesson that north of the Mason-Dixon line a southern accent generally codes for stupidity or simple-mindedness." That is why many people "were willing to pay $45/hour to undergo a successful "dialect change." Under pressure of social expectations people change or reduce their accent. "The people most inclined to change their accents are those whose success at work depends on the successful
Raymond Hernandez writes about how an accent can affect a person’s social status, about a discrimination by an accent. He writes that "in a few isolated cases, people who have felt discriminated against because of their accents have turned to the courts, making formal complaints like those filed for years by victims of racial and ethnic discrimination." Raymond Hernandez in his article, like Carl Elliot, gives examples of people who wanted to change their accent in case to be taken seriously, or to be promoted. Unlike Carl Elliot, who writes about southerners, Hernandez writes about immigrants. Both of them write about relationship between an accent and person's identity. That people worry that when changing their accent they might loose their identity. "When you have an accent it gives you a certain originality, something that is singular, something that is yours." Both authors say that an accent has nothing to do with personality. Hernandez says that "It has nothing to do with your logic, fund of information or ability to problem-solve." Elliot gives an example of a client of a clinic, who took a lesson or two and then dropped the course, never paying his bill. It showes that personality of a person would never change, unlike his or her accent. Both authors give examples of people who was forced to change their accent in case to get a job on broadcasting. Hernandez tells about Mari Santana whose "accent would be a liability." That she "will never get a job." Elliot writes about an aspiring actress whose acting coaches had advised her that to have a successful career she would need to be able to switch southern accent on and off." Hernandez writes about a 22-year-old Colombian who was trying to fit into society and could not because of his accent. "The problem is that he feels his accent sets him apart from other, even though he has lived in this country for nine years."
All these examples show that an accent means a lot when it is about a person's social status.