Sample Essay #2

Does accent-reduction programs change a person's identity? Is it a reflection of widespread discrimination in America against those with an accent? Some people believe accents should be preserved for it is a mark of who you are. While others place more emphasis on the discrimination and bias it generates. In his essay, The Perfect Voice, Carl Elliot believes accent-reduction programs can change one's identity, particularly if done to excess, whereas Raymond Hernandez emphasizes the need for it, due to cultural pressure and discrimination, for those who really need it.

Elliot believes that our voice is closely linked to our cultural heritage. Throughout his essay, Elliot's focus is to understand why a person from the South, or anywhere really, should give up or modify his accent. The tension in the essay seems to be whether Southerners should adopt a "standardized" American accent or hold on to what is uniquely theirs. The writer has somewhat of a nostalgic view of his heritage. He feels that to give up an accent is to erase your identity. Lili Ambro, whose in charge of an "accent-reduction clinic" in North Carolina states that her clients are "worried not so much about sounding southern as about sounding like hicks"—as a way to reassure Elliot of the need to modify one's accent. The writer also emphasizes the stigma attached to a person with a southern accent seen on television. Images such as "big-bellied southern sheriffs, sweaty fundamentalist preachers, and shotgun carrying rednecks..." are prevalent outside of the south.

However, despite these stigma, Elliot believe that "enhancement technologies are usually marketed and sold by taking advantage of a person's perception that she is deficient in some way." "Accent-reduction" programs take advantage of a southerners negative or fearful perception of being labeled a hick. Our identity should not be compromised because of this
perception. Elliot is not saying one should not take up such programs as "accent-reduction," but that we should be careful not to allow it to change us.

On the other hand, Raymond Hernandez believes that cultural pressure and discrimination unfortunately force people to change their accent. Discrimination, the writer believes, is a prevalent part of our society. Immigrants, especially those who are new arrivals, face widespread discrimination, such as job and educational. This, in turn, makes people sacrifice their identity. This leaves an immigrant, or anyone with an accent, with no choice but to change it.

However, if someone is well-versed in English, but has a bit of an accent, they should never give it up; that the writer feels is a sign of damage to one's identity. Many experts, the writer feels, are questioning the need for accent-reduction courses. One such person is Professor Angelo Parrino. She "questions the need for accent-reduction course when the person can already be understood."

In light of these two essays, I believe a person should hold on for dear life to their heritage. However, for their to be cultural cohesiveness you should modify your accent if it is too strong, especially to be understood. If there is understanding, you should keep your accent.