

English
11/20

Rudy and Yolanda communicated in completely different languages. By language, I mean the written, and spoken kind. More so I mean the traditions, and values that go hand in hand with learning a language. When they learned their own languages, they inherited their own set of ideals, that were changed by what, where, and how they were taught.

Yolanda's language was Spanish. She learned to speak Spanish in the Dominican Republic. Her lifestyle was one of a strict Catholic girl. Yo had a very traditional father. He allowed nothing but what was the social norm. His social norms became hers. When she moved to the U.S., she was completely naïve when it came to the American culture. Yolanda was raised in the way that the use of drugs and alcohol were totally unheard of. Pre-marital sex was something that was taboo, and strictly reinforced. She had grown up with very traditional values that were adopted from her mother and her father. She was never exposed to any outside stimuli. Whether or not it was voluntary, she was forced to conform to the rigid Hispanic values. This conformity kept her at bay. She couldn't experience the things necessary to become a whole person.

Rudolf B. Elmhurst was a young man from a liberal family in the United States. His parents were easy-going people, with thoughts of letting Rudy develop on his own. He learned English much the same way Yolanda learned Spanish. He was taught by his parents. He also absorbed the culture around him and he learned the American way of doing things. Rudy had quite a bit of freedom. He could have come and gone as he pleased. He had no restrictions, and was allowed to grow freely. With that opportunity Rudolf Brodermann Elmenhurst was able to laugh along with everyone else at the mention of his difficult to pronounce name. He had been allowed to grow unrestricted, but not unchecked. While his parent were liberal, they still gave him the attention necessary, and the room to evolve. This independence helped him to be who he was, invincible to insult, injury, and always in control.

When Yolanda and Rudy first met they were in English class. He had showed up late and totally unprepared for class, the exact opposite of her. She marveled at how he could walk in late, take what she thought of as an embarrassing scene, and laugh about it. She always went to class early, had all of her books and was well prepared for class. She also got extremely embarrassed when he laughed about the pencil, which he considered no big deal, but a chance to show off. Rudy and Yolanda had been raised differently, and this affected how they interacted socially. This is one of the most pronounced differences between them that is brought about by language, and the ideals that accompany their different backgrounds.

Rudy and Yo were working on their poems for class. Yolanda used the style she had been taught. She followed the instructions to the letter. Rudy had wrote about what he wanted, and tried to be the class clown. This was another difference in their language. She had been taught to do as told, and do everything correctly. Rudy was doing what he wanted, as he was taught to. He used the assignment as a chance to get attention, to be noticed. Yo shied away from anything of the sort. She was quiet, and shy, he was loud, and liked attention. This was another side effect of language. In learning the strict Hispanic values, Yolanda had learned that children were supposed to be quiet, proper, etc. Rudy just did what came natural. He wasn't taught to fear anything, so he never had that problem. The different languages taught different mentalities, and were based on the values of the teachers.

Somehow they decided to work together on their homework. She helped write his poem using the phrases and double meanings that he thought would be appropriate. It was pornographic by her standards, but she didn't know what any of it meant. She wrote her poem using the format that she was taught to. When it came time for the two to read their poems Yolanda read hers first. No one knew what she was talking about

because they had a different frame of mind. Then Rudy read his poem the whole class erupted with laughter. The rest of the class had understood all of the inside jokes, and puns. He later explained to her all of the little details that she couldn't understand. Yolanda couldn't comprehend what was going on because of her language, and the way she was raised. She was never allowed to experience anything of the sort, so it all seemed alien to her, just as her poem had to him, and the rest of the class.

After a short time dating, Rudy began to try and introduce sex into their relationship. He had up to that point corrupted her to drinking, smoking, and doing a variety of drugs. She still hung onto the fear instilled in her as a child. Rudy had never had to have that fear, he was totally uninhibited. She wanted to experience sex, but she told herself no. She still had the old fears in her head. The threats of her father, the priests, and the other fears she had invented, stemming from the roots of her language, and the Hispanic upbringing. The language Rudy used, and the ways he described sex had also driven her away. When he referred to sex as "getting laid" it completely turned her off. She thought it was supposed to be very romantic, and everything would be set just right.

Eventually she overcame the barriers, and made love to men. Rudy was not one of them his American overconfidence, and frustration turned her off. The way they communicated about sex, and love was a major difference in languages. Yolanda had acquired the idea that sex was an act of love, and should be treated as such, and introduced as such. Rudy was interested in the short term gratification of "getting laid."

Rudy and Yolanda grew up learning different languages, and at the same time learning the cultural norms of the area in which they originated. They brought their values with them when they went to college. Rudy had the same style of free upbringing that most Americans at that time had.. Yolanda was raised by a stern father, who left no room for argument. The barrier between Yolanda's world, viewed through her Hispanic background, and the new world she moved into was very hard for her to overcome.

Eventually she changed, and adapted more to the American culture, as she began to learn the English language first hand. The languages that these two young adults had learned molded who they were. They each learned a different language, so they had different, conflicting ideals.

Gradually one language gets assimilated by another. Yolanda began to lose her language, and her Hispanic values. The more popular American style took over. She was captured by the new culture, and almost completely lost her old one. Rudy soon faded from her life. People are affected by how, where, and when they are raised.

Alvarez shows that language is a tremendous difference in everyone's' lives. Everything that is the norm for one person is completely alien to someone else, and visa versa. The language, spoken, written, and cultural play a huge part in who we are. Rudy and Yo, are just two small examples of language in an ever changing world.

