1. What is at stake for each author in relation to language?

In Amy Tan's *Mother Tongue*, the central issue at stake is the perception of "broken" or limited English and how it restricts one's ability to gain respect, equal treatment, and access to services in an English-speaking society. Tan argues that variations in English—such as differences in accent, grammar, and pronunciation—should not be looked down upon or considered inferior. She highlights how linguistic bias can limit people socially and economically.

For Asao Inoue, language is a tool for survival and upward social mobility. He views literacy as a means of escaping oppressive systems and achieving stability. Inoue's stakes lie in the socioeconomic and cognitive functions of language, emphasizing how literacy enabled him to avoid crime and find academic success.

Ocean Vuong is concerned with how standardized language norms shape how we think and perceive the world. What's at stake for Vuong is the flexibility and creativity of language. He criticizes the normalized use of violent metaphors in everyday expressions—like "killing it" or "knock 'em dead"—and calls for a more thoughtful and imaginative use of language.

2. How does each author demonstrate what is at stake?

Tan illustrates what's at stake through personal anecdotes, particularly her mother's experience with language and how it affected her treatment in society. She also shares her own experience as an English major and writer. Her tone is playful and empathetic, as seen in phrases like "impeccable broken English" and "an adolescent voice that was not very convincing."

Inoue uses vivid storytelling and reflections on his youth to show the transformative power of literacy. He connects his experiences to broader social issues like redlining and racial discrimination, highlighting how literacy gave him a path out of poverty and danger.

Vuong demonstrates his concerns through critique and reimagining of language's potential. He challenges readers to question normalized, violent expressions and to treat language as a living, evolving practice rather than a static set of rules.

3. Do these authors make you care about what's at stake? Why or why not?

Yes, they do. Tan's narrative especially resonates with me, possibly because of my Chinese heritage. Her honest admission of feeling ashamed of her mother's English made me reflect on my own biases. Her stories about her mother receiving poor service—like the hospital losing her CAT scan or being cheated by a banker—reveal real injustices. These examples evoke empathy and underscore why everyone should care.

Inoue engages me through his use of personal storytelling. His explanation of how he misunderstood the phrase "make ends meet" was both emotional and thought-provoking. His story of how literacy shaped his life made the stakes clear and urgent.

Vuong makes me care by showing how language shapes our reality. His critique of violent metaphors pushed me to rethink the expressions I use and the values embedded in them.

4. What is the central point made in each reading? What evidence do the authors use to support it?

Tan's main point is that all forms of English, including non-standard or "broken" forms, are valid and meaningful. She supports this by showing how her mother can understand complex English texts and how others, including herself, understand her mother perfectly. She includes a transcription of her mother's speech to show that it is expressive, even if grammatically incorrect. Tan also discusses her own growth as a writer to show that her background shaped her voice.

Inoue's central point is that literacy can be life-changing and even life-saving. He supports this by recounting how it kept him out of trouble and helped him become a

professor. He also discusses systemic issues like redlining to show the broader context of language and inequality.

Vuong's key idea is that language is fluid and should be treated with imagination and care. He uses examples of commonly accepted phrases and their violent undertones to support his call for more conscious use of language.

5. Do you trust the authors? Why or why not?

Yes, I trust all three authors because they offer personal, first-hand experiences. Tan writes as a Chinese American who witnessed her mother being mistreated due to language barriers. Inoue shares his life story of growing up poor and using literacy to rise above difficult circumstances. Vuong, as a poet and immigrant, brings thoughtful insight into how language shapes identity and society. Their authenticity and vulnerability make them credible and trustworthy.

6. How do your experiences with language relate to the authors'?

My experiences with language mirror those of Tan, Inoue, and Vuong. Like Tan's mother, I once spoke "broken" English and was often viewed as foreign or less capable. Over time, I improved, but I've seen how accent and grammar can affect how people are treated. I believe no one should be denied rights or services based on how they speak, but I also understand that language barriers can affect comprehension. Honestly, I had trouble understanding Tan's transcription of her mother's English, and I'm Chinese myself.

This connects with the video we watched last week about code-switching. I've come to value the ability to switch between language forms, not to hide my identity but to show adaptability and cultural awareness. Being able to code-switch demonstrates linguistic competence while respecting one's heritage.

7. What is your family and community's relationship with language?

Most of my family members attended college but don't speak English. My neighborhood is very diverse, with people speaking various Chinese dialects.

Growing up, students often mocked the way others spoke—Mandarin speakers made fun of Cantonese accents and vice versa. I joined in, not realizing the harm or prejudice behind it. I see now that it was about fitting in.

Before I left China for the U.S., I overheard my mom crying and expressing her worries to my dad. My dad believed in the strength and independence that studying abroad would instill in me. While I still struggle with that, moving here made me realize how wrong my past ethnocentrism was. Now, I'm the one with an accent, and I see how damaging it is to mock someone for how they speak.