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The Power of Bilingualism

Yesterday, a strange man came to my front door. My mom answered the door and said to the man, "AGHA NO HOME!" She called me over to talk to him because she doesn't speak English. When I came to the door, the man said to me, "I need to talk to the person who handles the electric bills. I don't think you are that person." I answered, "Yes, I do handle the bills." The man said, "Really... I don't believe you. You are just a kid." The man was right. Even though I am just thirteen years old, I am the person who handles the bills in my house because my mom only speaks Urdu.

My mom relies on me to speak for her because my English is better than hers. When she is home alone, she cannot even answer the door because she doesn't know what to say to anyone. If it were not for me, my mom would never be able to open the door. I am my mom's English teacher and English translator. If I messed up when talking to someone for my mom, like the electric company guy, something really bad could happen to my house. We might have to pay too much money, or he could do something to the electricity in my house that we don't want him to do.

Most kids my age think about what to watch on TV or what to wear to school. I need to think about those things, too. But I also need to help my mom with things that most parents do without their kids' help. My mom does not speak English, but she understands a little bit of English. I always try to talk to my mom in English to help her learn more. When she is alone I get worried about how she is going to talk to someone

if anyone comes to my house. I always try to help her learn English. I know it looks weird teaching your mom, but she needs to learn English!

For example, last week we were at a party and my mom wanted to order food at the food counter. She asked me to come with her and tell them what she needed. I told the man at the food counter what my mom wanted. The man at the counter told me that he used to do the same thing for his parents when he was little. He said it is very hard, but it is rewarding for us when we get older. I agree with him.

Being bilingual will give me many opportunities. I would be able to teach people English, and help people by translating English for them. I always hope that all my hard work teaching and translating will help people in their lives later on. I think that my mom will get better in English maybe next year, or at the end of this year. When I get older I would try to volunteer to help those people who don't speak English that much because it's fun to help other people.