

Dear Amy Tan,

I have recently read your essay “Mother Tongue”. It was really relatable to me since my family are also immigrants. The part that resonated with me the most was when you were talking about having to use simple English when talking with your mother compared to talking to others. My mom also has very broken English and I always end up having to use a mix of English and our native language which is Bengali. Although she doesn't really understand most things said to her, she tried her best to communicate. Even when she's home she likes to try her English with my siblings and I to show us her improvement. So, when I was reading your accounts of your mother not being able to express herself fully in English, I kind of went into memory lane remembering times when my mom would put me on the phone to make a doctor's appointment or interpret something for her. She always asks me to explain what is being said on the news and has gradually gotten better reading news headlines. I really enjoyed your work because it made me reminisce years back when my family first came to the USA. I also sometimes felt that mom wasn't being respected or given a just service because she wasn't able to fully communicate with English speakers. I also relate to the part where you talked about your mother not being given the proper information and service at the hospital. When my mom goes to the doctor by herself, she usually comes back saying that the staff didn't help her much and that they showed attitude and ignored what she was saying. But when she takes my siblings or I with her the staff act very different from what my mom has said. It's as if they think very little of people who haven't grasped English fully. As you stated in the story it's weird that other perceive how your mother talk as broken but you yourself don't notice it. I get the same feeling because I'm so used to talking to my mom with a mix of two languages that it sounds perfectly fine to me but when I see

others not understanding her, I remember that they don't have the connection that I have with my mom. It's interesting the more you start examining your surrounding the more you learn.

I agree with your message that not knowing English fully doesn't determine your level of intellect. I know many people who have come to the USA much later than I and are miles ahead in terms of their understanding of community, society, and are knowledgeable in many areas. It really frustrates me sometimes that a language is holding back someone from being great. I believe that it has gotten a lot better than the past because there are many people who come from abroad to work and although they lack in English speaking, they more than make up for it in term is their skills.