



Personal Essay on Fishing and Persistence

I grew up translating menus for my parents. They had immigrated before I was born, and English still felt slippery to them. At eight, I was the one explaining whether 'grilled' meant spicy, whether 'medium rare' was safe, or whether 'organic' was worth the extra cost. The choices seemed small, but they carried more weight than I understood at the time.

What I figured out quickly was that translating wasn't only about words. It was about trust. My parents trusted me to make sense of things they couldn't. Sometimes I got it wrong. I once mixed up 'lemonade' and 'limeade' and watched my dad wince after the first sip. Another time, I confused 'shrimp' with 'prawns.' They laughed it off, but I didn't. I wanted to prove I could handle the responsibility.

By middle school, menus had turned into medical forms and rental agreements. I was twelve, sitting in waiting rooms or kitchens, trying to explain boxes and clauses that I barely understood myself. Sometimes I felt proud of being useful. Other times, I wondered why a kid should be the one parsing insurance paperwork.

That mix of pride and unease shaped me. It made me careful with words, double-checking before I explained. It also made me curious about what I didn't know. Each confusing phrase sent me digging: why one form said 'co-pay' and another 'deductible,' why food labels used words like 'natural flavoring' that didn't really mean much. Translation pushed me to ask questions and look closer.



In high school, I noticed how that habit carried into other areas. In history, I wasn't satisfied with what a policy did. I wanted to know why it was written in a certain way. In science, I paid attention to the wording of lab reports, noticing how the language shaped the results as much as the data did. Translation had trained me not to stop at the surface.

There were still times I wished I could just be a student, not a bridge. But those moments were balanced by what the role gave me. It taught me patience, because I often had to explain something more than once. It taught me humility, because I didn't always have the right answer. And it taught me that communication always shapes how people understand themselves and each other.

As I look ahead to college, I know I'll face new material and new communities I don't immediately understand. But I also know how to stay with the confusion long enough to make sense of it. Translation showed me that connection comes from effort, the work of staying with a question until it finally gives you something back. That's the lesson my family handed me, one menu and one form at a time.