

Martha Mendez

WLC 300

Personal Statement

Fall 2017

I was eight years old when my family came to the United States from Mexico to start a new life. Feeling small standing in the middle of my big empty bedroom, I could not help staring at the freeway from the window of our new American apartment wondering, in Spanish words, where all the people on those lanes were headed. My thoughts, my mannerism and my language were all representative of the country we had abandoned. It was not until school started that fall that made me realize how powerful words could be - words can build you or destroy you. The constant hurtful comments by bullies of my strange and funny sounding English accent relegated me into a world of loneliness, silence and low self-esteem. It was obvious my Mexican tongue was definitely not ready for this word power so improving my English by studying the sounds and the pronunciation of words became the main goal.

While it was a long and arduous task, I was determined to learn and pronounce English words so classmates - my future friends - and teachers could understand me. It fascinated me how learning the English language allowed for the exposure of its culture. My interest for language began in the sound of words of both idioms; the way they connected to create a story kept me captivated. Understanding and thinking in the two worlds only supported my bilingual tongue. But my concern became my boys for they were not bilingual and losing their culture propelled me into teaching and instilling in them the importance of maintaining a continued connection to their beautiful Mexican roots. I love being bicultural and bilingual and appreciate the value of both worlds for my life has improved in many valuable ways like communicating with my children.

I discovered enlightenment while instructing my kids about Spanish and its history and living in the two different worlds also developed my passion to improve someone else's life by teaching Spanish. To become a teacher is the reason why I chose Spanish Language and Hispanic Cultures as my major at California State University Monterey Bay (CSUMB). My experiences with teachers, other departments and students have been nothing but positive here and while attending Hartnell College in Salinas. I enjoy learning from the professors at this university and embrace their wisdom in Hispanic literature, history and culture because I want to implement their way of teaching when I become a teacher. The plan is to obtain a single-subject: Secondary Education teaching credential after graduating from CSUMB and work in a school district in my city or near it. Additionally, I am looking into the requirements of working as an interpreter either at a school district, for the court system or in the medical field.

Thanks to my amazing professors at CSUMB, my mind and vocabulary have expanded along with the importance of giving back to one's community. I truly enjoyed the Service Learning component and was honored to have been of service in the ESL/Citizenship Adult programs and appreciated the professors' enthusiasm in their lectures about linguistics, research resources and the analyzing of Spanish literature like poems, history – Chicano and female authors, history of civilizations and Latin America and the analyzing of the subtleties written between the lines - just like the lines that marked the lanes on that freeway I saw as a child from the window in that big empty bedroom.

I am tall enough, thankful and humbled to be able to hang frames on the walls with the beautiful experiences my two countries have gifted me. I do not feel small any longer and look forward to helping others improve their lives as mine was by the power of words and in the opportunity of a degree in Spanish.