

Personal Statement

I was in first grade when I learned my first Spanish words. “*Hola. ¿Cómo te llamas?*” I could hardly believe that there was another language, aside from the one that I spoke, that could be used to express ideas, ask questions, and communicate with others. “*Me llamo Suzita.*” My English name, Heather, didn’t translate into Spanish, so *la maestra* gave me my first Spanish name, *Suzita*, “Little Suzy”. Spanish was my first true love. I fell hard for the cadence of the syllables; the warmth of the words; the R’s rolling off my tongue.

When I was six, I went with my parents to look at a car for sale in East Salinas. Having been born and raised in Carmel, California, I had never been anywhere so exotic and colorful and lively! A little boy, about my age, played near us on the sidewalk, and I quickly realized that this was my chance to try out my new language.

“*¿Hola. Cómo te llamas?*” I squeaked out tentatively.
“*Juan!*” he shouted over his shoulder as he ran to join his *compañeros*.

I was amazed that he had understood me! I had communicated with someone who spoke this beautiful foreign tongue. It was like I had found the key to a magic door, and, to my amazement, it had opened to reveal a stunning world of *flores* and *vacas* and *estrellas*. But it wasn’t enough. I ran and caught up with my new friend, Juan. We stood, staring blankly at one another, and it saddened me to realize that I didn’t have anything else I could say. He looked at me expectantly and sputtered something in Spanish that I couldn’t understand. I turned and walked slowly back to my parents, determined that someday I would be able to understand this new language that I didn’t know but already loved.

It wasn’t until my sophomore year in high school that I finally got the opportunity to study Spanish formally. I took Spanish I and II, skipped Spanish III and took AP Spanish my senior year. After graduating high school, I was accepted into UC Berkeley, but all I wanted to do was study Spanish. I begged my parents to let me defer my acceptance and study Spanish in Mexico and Costa Rica. They agreed. At the end of that semester, I met my future husband.

I didn’t end up going back to school as I had planned. Instead, my husband and I settled down, started a business, and raised four kids. Suddenly, twenty years had gone by. I am pleased to share that after the twenty year hiatus, I am back to studying Spanish. I will be graduating from CSUMB in the spring of 2018 with my B.A. in Spanish Language and Hispanic Culture. I hope someday to teach Spanish and share

my love of the language with kids from all backgrounds. I want to give them each their own magic key to the enchanted world of *flores* and *vacas* and *estrellas*.