

LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY IS A

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SUPERPOWER

AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE JOURNEY YIELDS SUCCESS

- **MADLINE MARTÍNEZ'S MIGRATION EXPERIENCE TO THE U.S.**
- **FORCED TO SPEAK ENGLISH AND THANKFUL FOR IT**
- **FINDING SUCCESS AS A COPYWRITER AND INTERPRETER**
- ***AND SO MUCH MORE!***

My name is Madeline Martínez and I am a native Spanish speaker who learned how to read and write English at school in my hometown in Puerto Rico. I was never forced to speak English until I moved to the United States twenty years ago, and I'm not going to lie, it was hard. It is not the same to speak a second language than to write or read it. I was always inclined to learn languages, but now I had to speak English because I had no choice. However, it was the best thing that could have happened to me!



My English-language learning experience started as a volunteer at my children's schools. This was the first step to break the ice. The language foundation I had from learning English in Puerto Rico was vital. But I must point out that I tried to stay up to date with my skills, seeking learning opportunities, whether through free English classes for adults in a classroom at a local institution or by meeting with diverse groups at the community library. The important thing was to expose myself to people with different accents and backgrounds and train my ear, since pronunciation is essential in English. Later, I started working as a teacher's aide, substitute teacher, and Spanish interpreter in different school districts and in different states. During my decades-long English language acquisition journey, I always met people who made me feel comfortable throughout the learning process. However, my children were always my best teachers. In the end, a second language has been a means to scale economically and navigate the best of two worlds in my professional life.

Right now, I'm working as a copywriter and content developer at URBANDER, a Woman and Minority-owned communications agency. I felt blessed and grateful when I got the job. I knew that I would not have been able to accept the role if I wouldn't have been forced to learn and speak English all those years

ago when I moved to the U.S. I contacted Language Testing International (LTI), the exclusive licensee of ACTFL and provider of ACTFL language proficiency assessments to certify my language skills in Spanish. My employer required it to do occasional translations and proofreading projects for our clients. After completing the test, I received an email with my LTI issued ACTFL Language Proficiency Certificates as follows: Advanced Writing, Advanced Listening, Advanced Reading, and Superior Speaking. Each certificate came with a digital badge through Credly, which I can display on LinkedIn and on my resume. My language credentials helped me land my current job. If you are bilingual, I highly recommend certifying your language skills. It can be a game changer for your career!

Being bilingual in my personal life means understanding life from another perspective. Lera Boroditsky explains how different languages have different structures, and how different languages also make you pay attention to different things. I feel that being bilingual has helped me become more flexible and more empathic, but at the same time prouder of my native tongue and its peculiarities.



The advantage of speaking a second language has given me the opportunity to help many people. For example, I have been able to clarify and address inquiries and concerns of Spanish-speaking parents during parent-teacher conferences and interpret questions for customers at the cash register in retail stores. In addition, I have been able to translate documents for teachers, and help non-English speaking travelers in airports. Most importantly, as a bilingual tutor I have been able to build the necessary trust among immigrant students to help fulfill their academic goals. There have been so many experiences where my language superpowers have made a difference and all of them have been extremely gratifying.