



# Home Run RESEARCH

Tatiana Cevallos

Editor: Stephen Krashen

*Homerun Research includes case histories. Often criticized as “unscientific,” in my view case histories can be very scientific and valuable. Quite often, when we see high levels of language and literacy development, reading is the only likely source. The writer of this case history, Tatiana Cevallos, credits self-selected reading with her improvement as a student in her native Ecuador, and also gives reading much of the credit for her competence in English. I have met Ms.*

*Cevallos, and can confirm that her spoken English is extraordinary, as is her written English, demonstrated in this article. It is hard to believe that she came to the United States as an adult.*

*It must be pointed out that Ms. Cevallos had an advantage many young people lack: Easy access to reading material. If all children had access to reading, this kind of case history would, I think, be the rule and not the exception. — Stephen Krashen, Column Editor*

**M**y journey as a reader evolved from a poor reader who did not like to read in elementary school into an avid trilingual reader in graduate school. Once I discovered the joy of reading, each language in which I read had its own purpose and emotional connection.

I grew up in Ecuador and I started first grade excited to learn to read. But I got discouraged because the class wouldn't move fast enough from learning syllables in letters that I had already mastered. In second grade I remember being uncomfortable during round robin reading because I had no fluency. By sixth grade I was embarrassed when I had to read aloud during *Novenas* because younger children would read better than I did. I had a lot of books available at home, but reading was hard and I was not interested in it.

In high school I discovered "magic realism," a literary genre in which ordinary events are filled with fantastic, magical elements and my life as a reader changed drastically. I immersed myself in literature. I enjoyed reading books by Gabriel Garcia Marquez and other Latin American writers who portrayed the culture and richness of my surroundings. The stories were interesting, colorful, and full of life. I read a lot and developed good spelling. I also developed a love for

my culture.

After high school I spent a year in Quebec as a student. I learned French and acquired the language fairly quickly by reading one or two books a month. My ability to speak French improved and became more stable through reading. I developed and expanded my vocabulary, syntax, and spelling in French. I enjoyed reading French Canadian and French literature and discovering the culture and people through books. This was the first time I frequented libraries and book stores.

Once in college, I read textbooks and started interacting with books by highlighting and taking notes in the margins. Never before had I dared to write in a book. This time, however, the books were for my personal use, and I reduced the amount of notes I took in class and relied more on my readings. For my thesis I read books and articles in English, which improved my academic English and gave me a foundation for what would later become my field of graduate studies. English became my professional language.

I came to Oregon for graduate school, and all the reading I did was in English and school-related. I started reading textbooks at a rate of ten minutes per page, and after two years I read at an average of five

minutes per page. Through reading I discovered the world of professional journals, research, and theory on language acquisition and bilingual education. Reading helped improve both my spoken and written English.

I am now an avid and passionate reader who enjoys reading books in their original language. Not too long ago I read a book by Laura Restrepo translated into English. What a disappointment! While the plot was interesting and included elements of magic realism, the English version did not carry the richness and melody that Spanish words have in my heart.

For the most part, English has remained the language in which I continue my professional reading. I read fiction to practice French now that I don't use it every day. Spanish remains my language for pleasure reading and for reading anything faster.

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