

### **3.0 RESULTS**

This chapter presents the results of the study, which are reported by individual case and discussed in four sections per case. First, the Chicana student's perceptions of her own Spanish language features, others' attitudes toward her Spanish, and her own feelings toward her Spanish are described. Second, the student's professor gives his/her account and reactions toward the Chicana's Spanish and third, the suitemate and other peers relate their perception of the Chicana suitemate's Spanish. Fourth, a short summary of each case concludes the individual case study results. In the final section of the chapter a series of questions that emerged from the results are presented. These questions serve as guidelines by which the case studies are further compared in chapter 4.

#### **3.1 GRACIE**

##### ***3.1.1 GRACIE'S PERSPECTIVE***

Gracie described her Spanish language development over the 10 weeks. She had never taken a Spanish writing course, so she enrolled in a writing class because she desired to improve her writing skills. Gracie noticed her unfamiliarity with Spanish grammar rules right away. Nonetheless, she was satisfied with her accent and pronunciation. When she could not say something in Spanish, she tried "hard to change an English word into a Spanish word by just giving it a little twist." She reported that her translation tactic seemed to work for her and that she was "surviving."

In the following weeks Gracie mentioned the Spanish features with which she had most difficulty. She had trouble conjugating verbs, particularly the second person preterite verb form. Gracie observed that she always added an extra "s" (i.e.: "*trajites*" instead of "*trajiste*" (you brought)). She also noticed she directly translated Spanish from English:

I can't help but automatically say something in a direct translation. For example: *el me habló para atrás*, (pronounced *patrás* really quickly) when I am saying that "he called me back." Obviously, this is not correct in Spanish. I should say that: *el me regresó la llamada*.

Also, Gracie reported using new vocabulary, especially colloquial language, and to place emphasis on certain words when speaking. Although she was learning new vocabulary, she still had difficulty communicating what she wanted to say with her limited Spanish repertoire.

Toward the end of the data collection, Gracie recounted using many of the same Chicano Spanish features as she used in the beginning: "today my suitemate told me that I am still 'eating my s's' and she explained to me that I need to remember that past tense verbs only have one 's' . . . . I wonder where that comes from?" She also mentioned other features: "sometimes when I ask the girls if I look okay I will say, '*miro bien?*' or '*miro gordita?*' I forget the 'me' before and I was informed that the proper way is to use the words '*veo, me veo bien?*' '*me veo gordita?*'" Finally, Gracie mentioned having trouble with articles (*el, la, los, las*); she also commented on spelling:

When you look at a word, you recognize, hey, first of all that's the way it's spelled . . . . like '*jamás*,' I would have thought it's spelled with an 'h' but it's spelled with a 'j'?

Reflecting on her 10 weeks of study, Gracie described her improvements. She sensed the most improvement in writing because she wrote faster, especially when summarizing a reading. However, when Gracie was asked to write her opinion in Spanish, she could not find the words to express herself with the same level of formality she used in English. She sensed improvement in her accent. Gracie rated her Spanish skills at the same levels as she did in the beginning of the semester, but she also mentioned: she was "more critical" of her Spanish skills.

Gracie perceived others' reactions toward her Spanish. Three weeks into the semester, Gracie and her suitemates became good friends and she "enjoy[ed] the moment" with them, while they thought Gracie was "*mona*" ("cute") as she practiced the colloquial words they taught her. They seemed to "enjoy it when [she used] . . . slang words properly." Her roommates and others corrected her Spanish which Gracie appreciated; she felt it helped her improve. Gracie did not always feel support from her suitemates, however: "I remember my girlfriends laughing at me . . . because I always [said] things backwards." She also recounted the evening her suitemates imitated the way she spoke; she "wanted to cry" from embarrassment.

Gracie reported on people outside the suite and their reactions to her Spanish. She went to a McDonald's and, upon ordering a hamburger with an American English pronunciation, the attendant gave her a confused stare.

Sure, I still get plenty of looks, since my phenotypes are exactly like every other Mexican woman . . . often after I ask for something at a restaurant or in a store, attendants pause, stare and then question where I am from. This is because once I have opened my mouth and shared my accent, then people ponder about my origin . . . [and] ask where I am from and once I say "*Tejas*" . . . they understand.

Gracie's accent sometimes worked to her disadvantage. While she and her mother were negotiating with a vendor, Gracie felt that "once I opened my mouth" the vendors knew she was not Mexican and they charged her more than a Mexican national would be charged. Back on the UDLAP campus, however, Gracie sensed that her professors give her special treatment because she is Mexican-American. One of her professors had her present a class topic alone, as was the policy for the two Mexicans in the class but not for the other international students.

Gracie discussed her feelings toward her Spanish over the 10 weeks. When she first arrived with her Brown schoolmates, she was embarrassed that they, as Anglo Americans, received better scores on the Spanish assessment test than she, a Mexican American. This was

only momentary discouragement, as the beginning of her study abroad was “wonderful” and she became close with her suitemates. Then, the frustrations began. In her enthusiasm to speak, she would often become discouraged when trying to discuss important issues in Spanish and she realized she could not articulate herself in Spanish. Gracie began to express “guilt . . . that I should know Spanish, I should be able to communicate” and she had not learned more Spanish while growing up. By her second journal entry Gracie gained confidence to converse in Spanish with individuals, groups, and in the classroom. The next journal showed disappointment in her lack of improvement, particularly with Spanish verbs. She considered practicing her conjugations more and wondered why she repeatedly said the “incorrect” verb forms. By journal 5, Gracie reported being a confident tour guide to her friends and commented, “confidence, it's everything” for Spanish improvement.

### 3.1.2 PROFESSOR PERSPECTIVE

Gracie’s professors reflected on her Spanish at the end of the ten weeks. Gracie’s Writing Communication professor had previously worked with Chicano students and knew that their Spanish language abilities vary. He described her Spanish as a classic case where a bilingual student speaks and understands almost perfectly, but does not read and write as well as they do in the language in which they were educated. Her Spanish “*suena bastante bien . . . también presenta los rasgos típicos [de un bilingüe]: su pronunciación es perfecta . . . y te hace creer que su español es mucho mejor de lo tu crees que es.*” (sounds rather good . . . also, she has the typical Chicano Spanish features: her pronunciation is perfect . . . and then she makes you think that her Spanish is much better than it is). The writing professor rated her listening and speaking abilities as 5 (native level) and her reading and writing as 4.

The writing professor commented that Gracie was an extremely outgoing and open person. She enjoyed talking and asking questions about language situations not necessarily related to the class topic but, nonetheless, related to her language experience during her study abroad period. She was accustomed to expressing her opinions and ideas in English, and got frustrated when she could not do the same in Spanish. Gracie used English words to fill in the missing Spanish terms throughout her class. “*De repente se desespera . . . y no encuentra la palabra, y sabe que le voy a entender, entonces se siente más cómoda usando la palabra en inglés*” (All of a sudden she gets impatient and does not find the word she wants, and she knows that I will understand her, so she feels more comfortable using English words). Gracie’s professor perceived her to be comfortable with corrections. He suggested that she improve her use of subjunctive verb forms, academic vocabulary, and her academic writing style.

Gracie’s Art professor (also Brooke’s professor) adds that Gracie “*es pura pasión*” (is pure passion) and had an easy time speaking. However, “*Gracie tiene un español como . . . gente más rural. No lo sé, tal vez es mi impresión, por ejemplo ‘más pa trás’ . . . a mí me parece que su grupo, con que convive, debe de hablar así*” (Gracie has a Spanish like . . . people who are more rural. I don’t know, maybe it is my impression for example ‘más pa trás’ . . . to me it seems that the group with whom she spends time probably speaks like that).

### 3.1.3 PEER PERSPECTIVE

Gracie’s suitemate, Ana, also commented on Gracie’s Spanish. Gracie had a good relationship with all of her suitemates, particularly Ana, who had just spent a year learning English in Boston. Ana recounts the first time she met Gracie:

*Empezó hablar conmigo normal . . . . Como a los cinco minutos de estar hablando con ella fue cuando me dijo que era de Tejas . . . su español, no se oye mal, se oye bien, y no me di cuenta que era Tejana. Y más por mis*

*amigos que la conocen, a principio piensan que es mexicana y hasta [tiempo después de estar] hablando con ella, se dan cuenta.*

(She started speaking to me naturally . . . . After we were talking for five minutes she told me she was from Texas . . . her Spanish, it doesn't sound bad, it sounds good, and I didn't realize she was from Texas. And the more my friends know her, at first they think she is Mexican until after a while of talking with her, they realize [she's not].)

Gracie and Ana spoke Spanish together unless they were discussing important themes such as politics and social issues when Gracie “*quiere opinar . . . o cuando se molesta es cuando empieza a hablar en inglés*” (wants to give her opinion . . . or when she gets upset is when she starts to speak in English). Ana reported that, fortunately for Gracie, most of the suitemates understood her when she spoke English. Others, however, thought Gracie switched to English to show off or to be bothersome. Ana recalled that when they went into a restaurant and Gracie ordered with an English accent, from that point on the waitress gave them poor service. “*Porque habrá pensado, porque parece mexicana . . . porque me viene . . . a hablar . . . inglés? La gente pensó que era pesada . . . pero no sabían que ella era Americana*” ([The waitress] probably thought, because [Gracie] looks Mexican . . . why does she come . . . and speak . . . English? People thought she was annoying . . . but they didn't know she was American).

Ana admitted that sometimes she and the suitemates laughed at Gracie when she pronounced words incorrectly. Gracie's three closest friends in the suite took the initiative to correct her, although they were embarrassed to do so during the first 2 weeks of school. Ana reported that Gracie appeared comfortable with the corrections. The suitemates especially corrected features which Ana recognized as being from the north of Mexico.

*Estos errores que tiene, ni siquiera es la forma en que decimos nosotros, es más . . . del norte . . . la troca, la huerca . . . de dónde lo sacó? Por qué lo dice así si a nosotras no nos oye decir estas palabras? . . . . Lo está*

*traduciendo . . . tal como lo piensa en inglés lo dice en español. Me llamó pa' tras . . . en lugar de decir 'me regresó'.*

(These errors that she has, they aren't even the way we talk, it's more...from the north . . . *la troca, la huerca* . . . she is translating . . . just how she thinks in English she says it in Spanish. '*Me llamó pa' tras*' . . . instead of saying '*me regresó*.')

Ana commented that by the end of the 10 weeks, Gracie had improved her accent, especially when she used colloquial expressions like “*¿qué onda?*” (what's going on?) and “*¡qué padre!*” (how cool!) as compared to the beginning of the semester. Ana explained, “*está más fluído su español, pero los mismos errores los sigue teniendo*” (she is more fluent in Spanish, but she continues to have the same errors).

#### 3.1.4 SUMMARY

In summary, the comments from Gracie, her professors, and her suitemate described Gracie's Spanish language, others' attitudes toward it, and Gracie's feelings about it. Her peers and professors perceived Gracie's pronunciation to be close to perfect. At first, people assumed she was Mexican because of her looks, until they heard her speak for an extended period of time. Her Spanish was sprinkled with features that her peers and professor perceived as words from the country or from the north of Mexico. Gracie and her suitemate assumed she directly translated from English, and they both wondered where she had learned the forms. If the conversation (or writing assignment) got to a point where Gracie wanted to express herself, she switched to English due to a lexical gap in her Spanish.

Attitudes toward Gracie's use of Spanish were mostly supportive, except when she caused laughter by mispronouncing words, or when people were rude when they assumed she was a Mexican national showing off her English. Each participant commented on Gracie's openness and friendliness. Finally, Gracie felt disappointment in her perceived inability to avoid

stigmatized verb forms. However, as her course of study progressed, she gained confidence in speaking with people in a variety of circumstances. She continued to rely on English when expressing herself, which made her realize how much English was a part of her identity.

### 3.2 LEILA

#### 3.2.1 *LEILA'S PERSPECTIVE*

Leila described her language with a particular focus on spoken Spanish and vocabulary learning. Before classes started at the UDLAP, Leila stopped over in Mexico City to see her soccer teammates. It had been 6 months since she had trained with them, and she struggled to speak Spanish, especially with her pronunciation and tendency to translate from English to Spanish. After her arrival at the UDLAP, she reported being in an “observant state” and noticed the importance of inflection in Spanish speech. Four weeks into the study, she noted using more colloquial expressions, and found “I speak better when I turn my brain off and just speak.”

During the sixth and eighth weeks, Leila discussed her effort to speak more quickly and her strategies for vocabulary learning. She noticed that while trying to speed up her speech, she became “tongue-tied.” She showed efforts to slow her speech and noticed the “quality of my Spanish has improved.” Leila discussed her tendency toward visual learning and reported starting a Spanish vocabulary list from her classes and conversations. The list especially helped her while reading a 400-page novel in Spanish for her Comparative Literature class. Toward the end of the study, Leila mentioned her continued use of the vocabulary list and used it for writing, but not for speaking.

In general, Leila noted improvement in her reading and writing. On the self-rating scale, she rated herself a point higher than in the beginning of the semester in reading and writing, while she rated herself the same as the beginning ratings for listening and speaking. She



reported putting the most effort into speaking Spanish, but felt the greatest improvement in her listening skills. At the end of the 10 weeks she reported understanding native speakers better than she could at the beginning of her stay.

Leila recounted how she perceived others' reactions to her Spanish at the UDLAP, during her travels and soccer training. When Leila visited her soccer teammates in Mexico City before traveling to Puebla, they made fun of her Spanish. However, she credited her teammates with doing "a really good job at trying to help me." Her UDLAP suitemates did not correct her Spanish until Leila requested it. However, Leila reported that "my roommate will sometimes correct me and kind of laugh . . . she'll make little snooty remarks sometimes or make a joke with her boyfriend."

Four weeks into her study abroad period in Puebla, Leila felt skeptical regarding a compliment on her Spanish from an Anglo American friend who did not know any Spanish. However, Leila welcomed the compliments from her Mexican national friend with whom she regularly practiced Spanish. She felt free from intimidation in this friendship and considered him a support to her Spanish language learning.

Leila reported that the semester was beneficial for relationships on her soccer team. While she often spoke English on the UDLAP campus, she was forced to speak Spanish with her teammates in Mexico City. A sports psychiatrist was assigned to the Mexican national women's team to help foment unity, especially across Spanish-English language barriers. Therefore, this semester Leila was paired up to help a teammate with her English. Leila felt that being with the team this semester was important for her Spanish improvement and for her teammates' support of her Spanish language.

Leila expressed her feelings about her Spanish throughout the 10 weeks. In the first journal, Leila showed an intensity in her “quest for bilingualism.” Her determination for improved Spanish skills helped her combat the jokes and snickers from her teammates and roommate. She told herself to “not let the remarks get to you. Just learn from each mistake and move on.” She felt encouraged by little language successes:

The highlight of my week about two days ago [was] when my roommate’s boyfriend called and after one or two sentences he goes, “oh, [Leila], hi, I didn’t know that was you. Your Spanish has gotten good.” . . . It is the little triumphs like those that will feed me the confidence I need to keep on.

The second journal showed frustration in not improving her Spanish as she expected:

I would say that after one month of being in Mexico, my Spanish is definitely improving, just not as fast as I would like . . . . Over the last two weeks, I have been more frustrated than anything else. I am expecting too much of myself, I guess. I won’t be happy until I am accepted as a native.

Leila’s journal entries showed her frustration level decrease after her fourth week in Mexico. She realized that she must remain patient and take “one step at a time” in her language progress. Leila grew more relaxed, comfortable and at ease while using her Spanish. This carried over to her relationships with her suitemates: “my Spanish also I think has gotten better . . . that makes me more comfortable in talking to them and I’ve gotten to know them better as well.” Leila also felt positive about her Spanish when she was “forced” to use it:

Well, the past two weeks, I dealt with all the cabs, the hotel arrangements, changing plane tickets, getting to and out of the jungles of Xilitla. . . I did feel quite confident (I had to, otherwise we may have never made it out of the jungle) with my Spanish.

### 3.2.2 *PROFESSOR PERSPECTIVE*

Leila’s professor gave his impressions of her Spanish, although he admits not having interacted with her nor taken much notice of her Spanish skills. He teaches Business Communication in Spanish to Leila and twelve other international students for 2 1/2 hours a

week. The students completed presentations, weekly assignments, and exams in Spanish.

Leila's professor had had experience teaching Chicano students and while comparing Leila to them, he described Leila as "*muy Americana*" ("very American"). He saw her as dedicated to her work, but not making extra effort in her classwork. "*Yo la percibía totalmente Americana . . . e incluso a la hora de hablar español . . . construye como cualquier Americano . . . no como cualquier hispanohablante*" (I see her as totally American, including when she speaks Spanish . . . she constructs [Spanish] like any other American . . . not like any Spanish speaker). He mentioned that her Spanish had English logic and structure, similar to the dominant English speakers in the class. However, he noticed she expressed herself well in a class presentation and she had an "acceptable competence." Leila's professor rated her at a 3 on every Spanish skill, even though he had not extensively evaluated her abilities as the other professors had through language assessment and/or conversation.

### 3.2.3 PEER PERSPECTIVE

Leila's suitemate, Estela, evaluated Leila's Spanish skills as well. Estela was an 18-year-old freshman from the Mexican state of Morelos. She had a Chicana friend back home, with whom she got along well. Leila and Estela spent about four hours together a day in the suite, speaking in Spanish about their days, classes and exams. Estela rated Leila's Spanish abilities high: a 5 for speaking and writing, and a 5 for listening and reading.

Estela described Leila and her Spanish. Estela reported Leila as friendly and open, often inviting the suitemates to play soccer. Estela mentioned that at first, she and the other suitemates laughed at the way Leila said something. After Leila's request, they corrected her and felt as though they were doing it for Leila's good. She took the corrections well. Estela described Leila's Spanish as "*muy bueno porque . . . tiene mucho conocimiento del significado de cada*

*palabra. En ocasiones . . . tratamos de explicarle*” (very good . . . she has much knowledge of each word’s meaning. Sometimes we have to explain words to her). After reading Leila’s composition the week earlier, Estela also complimented Leila’s writing. Although Estela felt that Leila needed to improve her pronunciation, she noticed Leila’s hard work put into learning Spanish. “*Digo que empeño y esfuerzo porque, pues, se pone a leer y a escribir; palabras que no entiende nos pregunta o consulta en su diccionario, así constantemente*” (I mean determination and effort because, um, she makes the effort to read, write; she asks us or consults her dictionary for words she doesn’t understand).

### 3.2.4 SUMMARY

In summary, Leila approached the study abroad period determined to gain Spanish fluency especially to use with her soccer team. Over the 10 weeks she struggled to speak quickly and accurately and felt her soccer teammates and suitemates tease her but did not let their comments deter her language learning. However, Leila was encouraged by compliments from others and the language practice with her friend. Although her professor, with little on which to base his observations, saw her as typical “American” in her language characteristics, her suitemate complimented Leila on her efforts to learn Spanish. At the end of the 10 weeks, Leila reflected: “I may not leave Mexico as fluent as I would like, it is at least comforting to know that I can get around this country just fine on my own . . . and with patience and a little more work, the fluency will come.”

## 3.3 MIKAELA

### 3.3.1 MIKAELA’S PERSPECTIVE

Mikaela discussed features in her Spanish language over the ten weeks of her study abroad. She reflected in the first journal that “the Spanish I speak at home with family or friends

is usually very common language, words that were probably made up by my friends or grandmother, and Spanglish words.” She differentiated between her family Spanish and the “proper” Spanish she learned at the UDLAP. After four weeks, Mikaela mentioned using new vocabulary, improving the use of the Spanish articles “*el*” and “*la*,” indirect and direct objects “*la, le, lo*”, and knowing where to accent Spanish words.

In her remaining journal entries and interviews, Mikaela discussed her verb tenses and language style shifts. First she commented on her verb usage: “it’s not the verb that I can’t conjugate, it’s just that I feel like I don’t know the rules of Spanish, the rules of speaking or the rules of what tense.” She wrote about confusing the verbs “*acordarse*” (to remind oneself) and “*recordar*” (to remember). Eventually she recognized improvement in her verb tenses. Second, she reported on language style: “I also noticed that I speak differently with my friends and suitemates here, than with say, [my professors] or other [administrators].” She used colloquial language with her suitemates, but not with anyone else. “I’m able to change my style appropriately. I’ve learned to speak in a more formal or ‘respectful’ way also.” Her Spanish writing workshop professor seemed to help Mikaela recognize the differences in style because she was the one who suggested Mikaela use more formal Spanish than forms such as “*no más*” (colloquial for “*nada más*” (nothing more)) and “*en vez de*” (colloquial for “*en lugar de*” (in place of)).

Mikaela perceived that her Spanish language prompted negative attitudes, and she explained her perception of them. In the first journal entry, Mikaela wrote:

Sometimes I feel like the faces of the people that I’m talking to become distorted as I talk as if to say, ‘what are you doing with MY language?’ This is what I expected so I may also be imagining critical looks when they aren’t really there. I don’t think my Spanish is all that great so I was expecting a lot more of this and no compliments at all.

When she first arrived at the UDLAP, Mikaela felt that her Mexican national suitemates saw her as an Anglo-American international student and not Mexican, which is why they complimented her on her Spanish. She grew skeptical of their compliments, which was evident throughout her journal entries. Mikaela was pleased, however, when Mexican nationals she encountered in her travels thought she was a Mexican national. Also, while on vacation, Mikaela reported a conversation with Canadian nationals who were baffled by the fact that a young woman, so Mexican in appearance, spoke both Spanish and English. She informed them that, indeed, one can be Mexican and live in the United States at the same time. Overall, Mikaela perceived that people had positive attitudes toward her Spanish, although they were often confused about her identity. She added that the professors who she thought would be critical and judgmental of her Spanish were “very nice, very helpful.”

Mikaela discussed her feelings about her Spanish skills throughout the 10 week study abroad period. She arrived at the UDLAP with confidence in her spoken Spanish. After the first two weeks she reported that “I started talking to other [Mexican] students or the administrators . . . I started to realize there was a lot . . . I didn’t know . . . then my confidence was just shot.” However by the fourth week, Mikaela described increased confidence in her writing and feeling as though she had recuperated the Spanish language skills she thought she lost since high school. She sensed no improvement in her speaking. About half-way through her stay, she wrote: “I feel like my Spanish is getting worse lately . . . I’m not here for very much longer and I want to have improved my skills.”

Although Mikaela described a Spanish “slump” in the first half of her journal entries, she recounted encouragement while interacting with both native English and native Spanish speakers: “this weekend was a very fulfilling one for me, in terms of speaking, it was a very,

very nice feeling to be able to communicate with everyone and even be able to help out translating for others!” The last two journal entries showed positive feelings about her Spanish as Mikaela commented that “I can finally say that my Spanish has improved a little bit” after spending more time with her roommates. The last journal showed comfort with and acceptance of her Spanish: “I think that I feel very comfortable with my Spanish now . . . I’ve accepted the fact that there is always going to be some word that I don’t know.”

### 3.3.2 PROFESSOR PERSPECTIVE

One of the “helpful” professors Mikaela mentioned was the President of the ULDAP, who taught a course on the economy of Mexico and offered his perspective on Mikaela’s Spanish. Over the ten weeks, the President not only served as a professor but also as confidant and father figure when Mikaela struggled with homesickness and depression. He perceived Mikaela as comfortable with her speaking and felt that she spoke well. He described her Spanish as non-native but similar to Mexican Spanish. The president did not have a sense of Mikaela’s Spanish writing, but she told him that she had difficulties reading the economics articles in Spanish (approximately 75% of the total class readings). The President perceived Mikaela’s difficulties with economics terminology and attributed it to her lack of background in economics.

*Habla muy bien. Tengo dudas en que tanto entiende, pero por el otro lado, hay que entender que su campo de estudio no es la economía, y por eso tampoco puedo esperar que comprenda todo . . . ella me da la impresión que se ha preocupado por estudiar el español bien.*

(She speaks very well. I question how much she understands, but on the other hand, we need to consider that economy is not her field of study, and because of this I cannot expect her to understand everything . . . she gives me the impression that she has concerned herself with studying Spanish.)

The University President considered Mikaela as someone who possessed a stronger Spanish language base than other Chicanos he had in previous classes. He categorized Chicano students

as belonging to one of two types. He perceived that one type of Chicano student is someone who does not care to improve his/her Spanish, and the second type makes an effort to study Spanish. He felt that Mikaela was of the second type as she was someone who cared to learn her heritage language, Spanish.

### 3.3.3 PEER PERSPECTIVE

Mikaela's roommate, Dyana, gave her perception of her Chicana roommate's Spanish. At the same time Mikaela reported feeling criticized by her suitemates, Dyana recounted seeing little of her new roommate, but remembered being impressed with how well she spoke Spanish. Mikaela explained to Dyana that her great-grandparents were from Mexico. Perhaps Dyana, having had experience with international students staying in her family's home in Tlaxcala, considered Mikaela as another international student. Dyana described her interaction with Mikaela: . . .

*Es que con Mikaela casi nunca hablamos inglés . . . y de hecho, cuando hablamos inglés, es cuando ella no sabe una palabra, pero sólo me dice la palabra y yo le digo como se dice en español y ella sigue hablando español. Y siento que tiene mucho vocabulario, y . . . es fluída al hablar.*

(Mikaela and I never speak in English . . . and in fact, when we do, it is when she does not know a word, but she only says the word and then I tell her how to say it in Spanish and she continues to speak in Spanish. I feel as though she has much vocabulary, and . . . has fluent speech.)

Dyana discussed her perspective on Mikaela's language development over the semester. She felt Mikaela made a point to learn vocabulary words, including more complex and formal words, and informal words spoken with the suitemates. Their conversations deepened when discussing family, friends, relationships, home and school; thus, Mikaela needed complex Spanish words which she elicited from Dyana.



Dyana described features of Mikaela's Spanish that she perceived as errors. Mikaela pronounced "pues" as "pos" and she reports: "*no creo que mucha gente lo diga en la universidad. Ha de ser muy poca gente . . . no sé porque lo dice así por falla o por modismo*" (I don't think that many people say it at university. There are probably very few who do . . . I'm not sure if she says it because of error or because it's colloquial). Dyana corrected Mikaela's errors from the beginning of their interaction, which Mikaela did not seem to mind. The other six suitemates also corrected Mikaela, but refrained from correcting verb tenses if she used the correct semantic case of the verb. Dyana reported that Mikaela was careful to correct herself.

Dyana felt that Mikaela's Spanish started to improve from the first part of the study abroad and sensed that for Mikaela, it was important for her to learn Spanish.

*Siento que ha estado practicando, y ella ha aprendido . . . yo siento que al estar acá, se le ha obligado a conocer muchas palabras . . . usa un lenguaje muy propio, muy adecuado, y no tan informal como lo ocupamos nosotros al hablar.*

(I feel that she has been practicing, and she has learned . . . I feel that, being here, it has obligated her to know more words . . . you learn a very proper and appropriate language, not like the informal way of speaking that we use.)

### 3.3.4 SUMMARY

In summary, Mikaela's and other participants' comments on her Spanish language throughout the 10 weeks illustrated her development of formal and informal Spanish, and difficulties with certain verb forms. While the Stanford Chicana student perceived critical attitudes toward her Spanish and was herself critical toward others' compliments, she realized that her suitemates and her professors supported her in her Spanish language learning. Mikaela reported explaining her identity as a Mexican in the United States, which was instigated by people's confusion about her high language abilities in both English and Spanish. Mikaela went

from feeling that her confidence in her Spanish was “shot” to being comfortable with it and finding satisfaction with her Spanish language progress while studying abroad in Mexico.

### 3.4 BROOKE

#### 3.4.1 *BROOKE’S PERSPECTIVE*

Brooke described her Spanish over her study abroad time, with an emphasis on her speaking skills. During her first weeks, she noticed that she had learned new vocabulary, but reported “I don’t like using words or phrases that are super new to me. I’m more about picking stuff up over time.” As she read for her classes and came upon new words, she used her dictionary to decipher them and then wrote them down. She noticed that sometimes her spoken Spanish flowed, and other times she did not seem to speak fluently. About mid-way through the 10 weeks in Mexico, Brooke reported using her Spanish verbal skills in a unique way: speaking to strangers. “It was a sign of progress for me to willingly have a conversation with a stranger in Spanish, it’s something I was mortally afraid of before I came.” She also felt that interviewing another stranger, a Mexican artisan, for her Art class was a “milestone.”

By the end of her stay, Brooke enthusiastically related that her Spanish listening skills improved so much that she could completely understand native Spanish speakers, as well as sing along with Spanish songs because she could distinguish the lyrics, something she had never been able to do. Brooke admitted that she still felt her speech was “choppy” as she was still conscious of using the correct grammatical form, but had hopes of acquiring grammar rules to such a point that they would come to her automatically. With her writing, she sensed an improvement in grammar because she had fewer correction marks on her compositions. She had the most difficult time with using the subjunctive and conditional verb forms. Brooke rated herself a half-point higher in every area on the self-rating scale at the end of the study abroad as compared to

the beginning. She rated herself a full point higher in listening, the skill in which she sensed the most improvement. In general, Brooke perceived a Spanish skill improvement over time. Although she felt that her speaking skills might have sharpened had she made the effort to communicate more with Mexican students than she did, she reported having “stronger control of [her] Spanish skills.”

As Brooke’s Spanish skills changed over the semester, so did her perception of the attitudes around her. She expected more critical attitudes than she actually perceived. From the beginning she reported that she was weary of others’ opinions of her Spanish, especially after Mikaela relayed the Stanford professor’s warning. In journal 1 Brooke mentioned what she believed there to be criticism toward her Spanish-English code-switching: “I think that others might think I’m lazy with my Spanish.”

She was surprised to receive compliments on her Spanish proficiency. Her Mexican roommate, having lived 5 years in Texas, mentioned that she could relate to Brooke because she spoke both English and Spanish. Regarding her roommate Brooke commented, “its one thing for *me* to think I can speak Spanish, but when other people, Spanish-speakers, think I can, I’m shocked for some reason, or pleasantly surprised.” About half way through the study abroad period, Brooke spent a weekend with friends in Mexico City, who “seemed to be impressed that I was American and I still knew Spanish . . . I didn’t feel any judgment from them.” Nor did she perceive judgment from her professors or other Mexican students during the semester. “If anything, all the professors I have had here have been very understanding of . . . my Spanish abilities. And I haven’t really had any Mexican students make any comments to me about my Spanish.” Even though she received corrections, she was open to them and felt that they were necessary for her learning. Brooke also questioned the perception from which the compliments

were given. “I think all that depends on people’s perspective on whether I’m Mexican-American or I’m just an American.”

Over the 10 weeks of study, Brooke experienced wavering feelings toward her Spanish. At the beginning of the study abroad at the UDLAP, she realized she was not as confident about her spoken Spanish as she had been six months earlier at the CEPE. Brooke reported being

nervous and really worried because of the academic setting and the dorm living situation (not quite as nurturing as a motherly host-mom)! Anyway, I have found that here I don't feel like I'm speaking as comfortably as I was in Guadalajara (this could all be in my head of course).

Four weeks into the study abroad, Brooke still felt displeased and expressed feeling self-conscious around her Mexican suitemates. Brooke intentionally avoided them because she was intimidated about speaking with them. Finally, half-way through the study abroad period she reported being encouraged after her Guadalajara host family noticed her improvement in her Spanish speaking ability from the previous summer. She also related another out-of-town experience where she felt comfortable and, as a result, spoke Spanish fluidly as she was less concerned with her mistakes. As a result of these triumphs, Brooke felt less intimidated and self-conscious, but admitted her feelings were still up and down. Brooke commented that once she was comfortable, she would often be “humbled” in one way or another. By the end of her time, Brooke wrote:

Right now I feel comfortable with my Spanish. It’s still not as advanced as I’d like it to be and it still doesn’t come as easy as I’d like but I feel like it’s now on a very workable level, a level from which I can definitely reach my Spanish goals.

### 3.4.2 *PROFESSOR PERSPECTIVES*

Brooke practiced her Spanish skills outside of class and refined them inside of class. Two of her professors commented on Brooke’s Spanish skills and motivation. Brooke took the

History of Popular Art in Mexico with a professor who had been teaching at the UDLAP for thirteen years at the time of the study, which included 10 years of experience teaching Chicano students. The Art class was composed of one-third international students and two-thirds Mexican national students. Brooke completed two 10-page essays and two 10-page written exams in Spanish.

Brooke's Art professor commented about her class and Brooke specifically. She emphasized equal treatment of all her students, whether they were Mexican nationals, Chicanos, or other international students. "*Es mi alumno y ya*" (One is my student, and that's it.) The professor concentrated on the content and the meaning behind what the students said, not their language: "*me doy cuenta en la preparación . . . en ésto me fijo más que si como es su lenguaje*" (I focus on their preparation . . . I focus on this more than how their language is). With this ideology, the professor complimented Brooke on her writing and speaking organization and preparation. She added that Brooke's writing was not native, and that she had trouble with verb-subject agreement and subjunctive verb forms. Brooke did not speak much in class, like any other student who did not speak unless they had something personal to share. The Art professor suggested that Brooke practice her speaking to become more fluent. Regarding Brooke's Spanish skills, the professor ranked her speaking, listening, reading, and writing as 3, 4, 4, and 3, respectively; the same rankings Brooke assigned herself.

When discussing the class' reaction to Brooke's spoken Spanish, the Art professor said that people were generally unresponsive toward others' language, and were more likely to react strongly to the content of what someone said. However, in a class observation, the researcher noted four female Mexican national students snickering when Brooke started to read a passage

aloud. Brooke's professor recognized this, but noted that those particular female students will make fun of anyone who is different, not just Brooke.

Brooke and Mikaela took a writing workshop that consisted of one-on-one assistance time with their writing workshop professor to review essays and discuss style and writing tips from an academic point of view. The writing workshop coordinator had worked with Stanford Chicano students for the 4 years prior to this study and was sensitive to their language needs. She explains:

*Yo les aclaro mucho que las observaciones que hago no quiere decir que ellas estén mal que ellas no . . . puedan decirlo así . . . pero voy a hacer las observaciones en referencia a mi dialecto[ya] . . . que creo que es el estándar al menos en México.*

(I make it clear that my observations do not mean that they speak poorly or they cannot use a term in that way . . . but I will make observations with reference to the dialect . . . that I think is the standard, at least in Mexico.)

The writing coordinator first commented on both Mikaela and Brooke's language characteristics as Chicanas and then on Brooke's work. When describing the two Stanford Chicana students' Spanish, the writing workshop coordinator mentioned they used archaic Spanish terms, anglicisms, and non-academic Spanish discourse.

*Cuando yo las escuché o cuando leí su composición, mi reacción fue [que] tienen que aclarar conceptos del uso del vocabulario . . . que su sintaxis, su discurso, al nivel académico . . . no era muy fuerte, muy sólido . . . Expresiones como "na más."*

(When I hear them or when I read a composition, my reaction was that 'they need to clarify concepts and their vocabulary usage . . . that neither their syntax nor their academic discourse was very strong or solid . . . expressions like 'na más' (no more).)

While both Chicanas needed help with their vocabulary, syntax, and overall sophistication in writing, Brooke seemed aware and motivated to improve in these areas. From her workshop coordinator's point of view, she analyzed and adapted her writing to the corrections the coordinator made.

### 3.4.3 PEER PERSPECTIVE

Brooke's roommate, Fernanda, reported on Brooke's Spanish language features, efforts in learning, and the suite environment. Fernanda, born and raised in Mexico City until she and her family moved to Plano, Texas, five years before this study, had known and clashed with Chicanos in the United States. After being weary of having a Chicana roommate, she realized that she and Brooke had much in common, and was impressed that Brooke made such an effort to learn Spanish formally when many other Chicanos do not. Fernanda mentioned:

*Porque en verdad, Brooke ha aprendido el español por decisión propia. Porque en su casa . . . predomina el inglés . . . y también porque ya tiene muy establecida su identidad, y bueno dijo 'necesito aprender el español' . . . . Es muy valiente esto.*

(In reality, Brooke has learned Spanish by way of her own decision. English is the dominant language . . . in her household . . . and because she is very established with her own identity, she said 'okay, I need to learn Spanish' . . . . This is very admirable.)

When speaking about the rest of their suitemates, Fernanda commented: "*ellas simplemente la vean Mexicana, y asumen que ya sabe español*" (they simply see her as Mexican, and assume she can already speak Spanish).

Fernanda, who spoke English with Brooke because that was the language with which they felt the most comfortable in their interactions, described Brooke's Spanish and how it was perceived in their suite. Brooke's spoken Spanish was slow, and sometimes she had to think a while before saying a word. She did not seem bothered when she could not communicate something or people did not understand her. Brooke used English when she could not find the right words in Spanish. Fernanda regretted not speaking more Spanish so that Brooke could have practiced more than she did. She ranked Brooke's speaking abilities as a 3, her listening

and reading skills as 4 and 5 respectively, and did not rank her writing because she had not seen

it. Regarding Brooke's Spanish skills and expectations, Fernanda mentioned:

*Yo creo que ella traía una meta muy muy alta . . . ella creía que por venir y estar aquí tres meses su español ya tenía que ser excelente . . . yo no dudo que ha mejorado porque el ambiente que la rodea es en español . . . tal vez, no es tan, tan, tan fluído como ella desearía . . . y desea tener más vocabulario y . . . mejor gramática.*

(I think that she had set a very, very high goal . . . she thought that by coming and being here for three months that her Spanish would be excellent . . . I don't doubt that she has improved because she is surrounded by Spanish . . . perhaps she is not so, so fluid as she would like to be . . . and wants to have a larger vocabulary and better grammar.)

#### 3.4.4 SUMMARY

In summary, Brooke's journal entries, interviews, professors, and peers provided comments that illustrated Brooke's experience with her language during her 10-week study abroad in Mexico. Comments about her writing included that it had non-native characteristics but improved as she made the effort. Brooke mentioned that her previous writing courses at Stanford gave her a good base for her writing work at the UDLAP. Brooke, Fernanda and Brooke's Art professor all mentioned that Brooke should have practiced her Spanish speaking more than she did. The practice increased over the semester as Brooke made steps to talk to strangers and felt more comfortable around the people with whom she spoke, including her suitemates. She thought she would be criticized more than she was because of her Spanish, and instead found her professors to be helpful. Her roommate was especially sensitive to Brooke as a Chicana and expressed her admiration for Brooke's Spanish learning.

Brooke began the study-abroad as nervous and self-conscious about her Spanish, and ended it being satisfied with what she achieved. Overall Brooke felt proud of herself for taking another step in her Spanish language learning. "I'm really grateful to have had this experience



and I'm really proud that I made it happen . . . I really want to be fluent and I know I won't stop improving on my Spanish until I am."

### 3.5 QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

The study results were presented according to the researcher's study questions (see Chapter 1). The following questions surfaced during the analysis of each case:

1. What linguistic features appear in the Spanish of all the Chicana students?
2. What are the patterns of Chicana students' feelings toward their Spanish language over time?
3. How do professors' and peers' knowledge/lack of knowledge of Chicano Spanish and identity influence their attitude toward the Chicana students' Spanish?
4. What strategies and efforts do Chicana students demonstrate during their study abroad?
5. How does change in language affect change in identity?

These questions will guide the discussion of themes across cases in Chapter 4.