

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 STUDY ABROAD IN MEXICO AS AN EXTENSION OF SPANISH HERITAGE LANGUAGE LEARNING**

Heritage language learning is the study of the language of one's family heritage. A heritage language learner is a student who learns the language of his/her home or ethnic background. For example, third generation Chinese Americans who may only speak some Mandarin with their grandparents may study Mandarin as a heritage language in high school or college. Chicanos (Mexican-Americans) may have the opportunity to study Spanish, which they may speak at home with their parents, from elementary school to college. The previous illustrations give only two of the many types of heritage language learners (also referred to as background language learners or native language learners in this study) within the United States. Since language is associated with identity (Fishman, 1999; Giangreco, 2000; Liebkind, 1999; Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000), one might seek to learn the language of one's home/background to further define oneself. This is the case of many Chicano students who choose to formally study Spanish as their heritage language. The Chicana university students in this study go one "valiant" step further than the U.S. classroom, seizing the opportunity to study in Mexico and to immerse themselves in the culture and language of their heritage.

Although Mexico is the land of their background, it is important to note that Chicanos and Mexican nationals are different culturally and linguistically. Culturally, Valdés (1996) defines Chicanos as those whose ties to Mexico are weakened, who live exclusively in the U.S, who are aware of discrimination against Mexican-origin people, and who identify themselves as Americans because they know they are unlike Mexican nationals. Linguistically, Chicanos tend to speak a variety of Spanish that has characteristics of rural Mexican Spanish. With these differences in language and culture, studying in Mexico can be a linguistic and cultural shock for

a Chicano student. A student who studied abroad in Mexico summarized his experience: “in the U.S., I have to prove that I’m American; now in Mexico, I have to prove I’m Mexican.”

(Manuel Hernández, personal communication, September, 2000). This study explores experiences like Manuel's and analyzes perspectives on the Spanish learning of Chicana students in Mexico.

The study is composed of a set of case studies of Chicana Spanish heritage language learners who decided to study abroad in Mexico for one term of their undergraduate college career. The study took place over the course of 10 weeks at the Universidad de las Américas-Puebla in Mexico. The Chicanas’, Mexican peers’ and professors’ perspectives toward the Chicanas’ Spanish learning in Mexico are the focus of the study, along with a description of the students’ Spanish language features, and awareness of their Spanish skills and ethnic identity.

The specific research questions are as follows:

- a. What are the Chicana students’ attitudes toward their Spanish skills over 10 weeks of study abroad in Mexico?
- b. What are the Chicana students’ perspectives on their Spanish language features, awareness of their Spanish variety and ethnic identity?
- c. What are the Mexican professors’ perspectives on their Chicana students and their Spanish learning?
- d. What are the Mexican peers’ perspectives on the Chicana students and their Spanish learning?

This study is organized into four chapters. Chapter 1 includes a review of the literature on the history of the Spanish language in the U.S., heritage language learners, the Chicano Spanish variety, attitudes towards language, and the connection between language and ethnic identity. It also mentions methodological precedents from the literature. Chapter 2 reviews the methodology used in the study, including participants’ language background and their U.S.

university context and study abroad programs, and the Mexican university history and study abroad program. Chapter 2 also discusses the study instruments and procedures. Chapter 3 reports on the results from the instruments and procedures in chapter 2. Finally, chapter 4 discusses themes, conclusions, and implications gleaned from a cross-case analysis of the results in chapter 3.

## 1. 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Section 1.2.1 of the literature review looks at the history of the Spanish language and treatment of its speakers in the United States. Section 1.2.2 reviews characteristics of heritage language learners and their language classes, and section 1.2.3 looks specifically at Spanish heritage language learners and their sociolinguistic experience. Section 1.2.4 examines studies on language acquisition in the study abroad context. Section 1.2.5 discusses theoretical perspectives, and sections 1.2.6 establishes methodological precedents for the case studies.

### *1.2.1 THE HISTORY OF THE SPANISH LANGUAGE IN THE UNITED STATES*

Emigration to another land involves taking one's language to the new place. Valdés (1995) discusses immigrants as “language minorities.” The immigrants are labeled language minorities because their language is either the language spoken by few people, and/or is not the official language in the new land. This is the current situation in parts of North America, with French and Spanish as minority languages in Canada and the United States, respectively. Churchill (as cited in Valdés, 1995) divides minority language speakers into three categories: indigenous people (such as U.S. Native Americans), established minorities (such as Chicanos in the U. S.), or new minorities (such as recent Mexican immigrants to the U. S.). Majority language populations have often dealt with minority languages by ignoring them and expecting the newly immigrated or colonized indigenous people to assimilate culturally and linguistically

on their own. When this does not happen, governments may develop education systems with goals to assimilate the minority language populations. Historically, the United States has dealt with their Spanish-speaking minority in such a manner (Sánchez, 1997).

Spanish has been an established minority language for over half of the United States' independent history. When the U.S. gained Mexico's northern territory (today's states of California, New Mexico, and Texas) through the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, and Arizona in the Gadsen purchase in 1857, it also gained new Spanish-speaking citizens.

Sánchez (1997) recounts why the U.S. government was not concerned with the new minority (formerly the majority in Mexican territory) language population until the early 1900's. The Spanish speakers were isolated and had an agrarian economy, while the East Coast of the United States enjoyed integration and economic and industrial prosperity. Due to geographic separation and the infrequent economic interactions when the Southwest received materials from the East Coast, there was little contact between the two areas and therefore little need for the Spanish speakers to learn English, and vice versa.

The U.S. government was generally not concerned about the health, education, economy or politics of its Southwest Spanish speaking citizens until the early 1900s. Additionally, public schools were not widely available to anyone in the Southwest during this time. However, World War I, Roosevelt's New Deal, and World War II brought economic boosts to the Southwest and required military service of its young men. These circumstances created more contact and unity between Spanish speakers and the rest of the country. Although increased contact helped to linguistically integrate the already existing Spanish speakers into the country, there remained the constant flow of "new minority" Mexicans into the United States, which supported the continued use of Spanish in the Southwest. To summarize Sánchez (1997), the United States

showed little regard for their Spanish-speaking citizens until the country needed military forces. Only then did the U.S. concern itself with the Spanish-speaking minority of the Southwest.

In the 1940's, the move to involve Spanish minority language speakers in the majority political system and economy lead to top-down education planning with an emphasis on acculturation for Spanish speakers in the Southwest, not to mention all non-English speakers across the United States. Bilingual education using Spanish as a resource to teach English was the result. The idea of acculturation through the minority language demonstrates a language ideology that views the minority language as less because it is only a temporary aid towards speaking the more prestigious, majority language. The language ideology just described is "structural functionalism," according to Rippberger (1993).

The 1960's saw a shift in ideology from thinking solely about the interest of the majority population in educating language minorities to considering the needs of Spanish speaking minority students themselves. In 1968, the Bilingual Education Act obligated schools to meet the needs of their minority language students. Educational planning and policy still came from the dominant U.S. culture, however. Rippberger (1993) described this ideology as "conflict theory" which recognizes the minority language as useful, but still as a subordinate language.

Throughout the 1970's and 1980's, educators searched for better methods to teach minority language speakers. U.S. school boards asked for native Spanish speaker parents' and educators' input and involvement in the language education planning process, and more bottom-up policy was created as compared to earlier education planning. Higher education research commenced study on better ways to educate minority language speakers in their home and school languages as compared to decades before. As a result, heritage language learning programs (discussed in section 1.2.2) were developed. During this time and up to the present, minority language

speakers have been involved in the development of such programs. According to Rippberger (1993), this is called “interpretive theory,” an ideology that recognizes, puts value on, and incorporates the minority language and its speakers in the social environment.

Despite the shift in ideology in the United States, Chicanos continue to experience a language ideology that considers the language minority’s needs, but does not incorporate language minority perspectives, and/or an ideology that does not support or respect their language.

### 1.2.2 *HERITAGE LANGUAGE LEARNERS*

As discussed in section 1.2.1, the 1960’s was a time when educators realized they needed new methods to educate minority language speakers as the old methods were not developing language skills as hoped (National Education Association [NEA], 1966; Spolsky, 2000). And in the 1970’s and 1980’s, bottom-up policy planning included language minority speakers themselves in designing curriculum for language minority speakers, or heritage language learners.

Thus began the discovery of heritage language learner (HLL) characteristics and search for programs and pedagogy to teach HLL. The HLLs bring more language knowledge to the foreign language classroom as compared to their non-native speaking counterparts. Although language skill levels vary for HLL students (Draper & Hicks, 2000; Hidalgo, 1993; Scalera, 2000; Valdés, 1995), they usually speak an informal variety of their heritage language (Feliciano, 1981) and have low literacy skills in their native language. Students’ language variety is often stigmatized, which creates low self-esteem regarding their native language (Mercado, 2000). Due to this aural/oral knowledge and lack of reading/writing skill development, heritage

language learners have different needs, and therefore, require distinct language instruction (Feliciano, 1981; Hidalgo, 1993; Valdés, 2000).

Foreign language teachers often teach heritage language learners as they would any other language learner in a traditional, grammar-based curriculum. In Draper & Hicks' (2000) review of HLL research and instruction, and Scalera's (2000) recount of her first HLL classroom experience with secondary students in New York, they explained that foreign language teachers tend to become frustrated as their native speakers do not seem to perform well within a traditional curriculum. Gonzalez-Berry (1981) created a syllabus for university Spanish HLL students, keeping in mind that native speaking students are often bored and unchallenged when taught in such a grammar-based way. Scalera's (2000) students performed poorly on her grammar-based tests and homework. It was then she realized her students needed alternative instruction, and she needed to develop an alternative way of viewing teaching heritage language learners. Scalera's experience, representative of many others, demonstrates that teachers' beliefs and goals, curriculum design, and instruction and assessment require a change from traditional foreign language teaching to the unique teaching of heritage language learners.

Effective heritage language teachers have been described as coaches who are knowledgeable about the language variety of their HLL students (Draper & Hicks, 2000; Gonzalez-Berry, 1981; Scalera, 2000; Webb & Miller, 2000). At the same time Scalera (2000) sensed her HLL students were not responding well to what she thought they should know (i.e.: spelling), she began to understand the value of being a language coach in the classroom and she listened to students identify their needs and desires. She commented:

to be successful as a heritage language teacher, one must first help his or her students perceive their heritage language skill as assets, recognize what they already know, and provide a forum for each student to fill his or her own gaps in usage. (p. 81)

Teachers are encouraged to understand the linguistic, motivational, academic, cultural, emotional, and societal background of the students. An excellent framework of questions to learn about HLL students is given in Webb & Miller (2000, p. 48-54), a collection of educators' writings about their experiences and research with HLL. The framework, along with other research (Draper & Hicks, 2000; Gonzalez-Berry, 1981), suggests teachers understand the social ramifications of the variety the learners bring with them to the language classroom. Hidalgo (1993) reminds teachers that correcting the language that their family members use might be hard on heritage language learners. To summarize, the teacher of the heritage language is not the sole giver of language knowledge, as is often the case in a regular language classroom; rather, he/she is a coach and facilitator between what students already know and what they desire to learn.

Clear goals and curriculum design are pertinent to teach heritage language classes. However, there are no HLL teaching standards nor "clear educational policy than can guide the goals of language instruction for heritage-language-speaking students in the light of the current and future economic and social goals" (Valdés, 2000, p. 242). Notwithstanding, through research and praxis, some guidelines have been developed. Valdés (1995), in her discussions of Spanish heritage language learners in particular, suggests four areas of instruction which can be applied to heritage language learners in general: 1) language maintenance, 2) the acquisition of the prestige variety of language, 3) bilingual vocabulary expansion and 4) the transfer of literacy skills. In their discussion of language standards and assessment, Mercado (2000) and Giacone (2000) suggest that expectations should be high while sensitive in addressing the four goals.

Care should be taken to maintain the students' language variety while teaching the prestige variety, numbers 1 and 2 of Valdés' four areas. Language maintenance should include



sensitivity toward the students' language variety and no attempt to "replace" it (Draper & Hicks, 2000; Gonzalez-Berry, 1981; Hidalgo, 1993; Orrantia, 1981; Valdés 1995). The prestige variety should be considered an addition to the HLL's language repertoire. Another addition to language knowledge should be a sociolinguistic awareness that allows students to distinguish between prestige and non-prestige varieties as well as when to use each appropriately (Draper & Hicks, 2000).

Bilingual vocabulary expansion and the transfer of literacy skills (goals 3 and 4) include instruction not unlike an English language arts curriculum that offers literacy development through literature. Heritage language learning is unlike learning a foreign language because students already have highly developed communication skills; what they likely do not have is developed literacy or vocabulary in the heritage language. Thus, literacy should be developed in the HLL. However, Draper & Hicks (2000) and Hidalgo (1993) warn against lofty goals of bringing the heritage literacy level to meet the English literacy level. To fully develop literacy skills in both languages, they argue, heritage language instruction should commence in elementary school. Nonetheless, it is possible to make literacy advancements at a later point in education.

To make such advancements, the HLL curriculum should challenge students with rich literature and writing practice as would be proposed in a language arts curriculum for native speakers. The literature should be pertinent to and of interest to the students, at the same time heightening students' cultural awareness (Feliciciano, 1981; Giacone, 2000; Merino, Trueba, Samaniego, 1993; Scalera, 2000; Stovall, 1981). In Feliciano's (1981) HLL syllabus design for Puerto Rican university students and Stovall's (1981) HLL syllabus design for native Spanish speaker university students in San Antonio, Texas, they created syllabi that did not give explicit

grammar instruction a high priority in literacy transfer. Rather, as Scalera (2000) found, students will likely recognize and inquire about grammar points while involved with rich literacy instruction. Students should leave with a “deep and lasting understanding” and an increase in vocabulary from a language arts focused curriculum.

Heritage language teaching and assessment ideas will be reviewed from the research (Draper & Hicks, 2000; Feliciano, 1981; Gonzalez-Berry, 1981; McCallister, 2000; Mercado, 2000; Orrantia, 1981; Stovall, 1981). Teachers are challenged to instruct to the varying language abilities of heritage language learners. Suggestions include organizing a variety of class groupings and teacher-student interactions (Draper & Hicks, 2000; McCallister, 2000), allowing students to read self-selected literature (McCallister, 2000; Scalera, 2000), designing individual work packets (Feliciano, 1981), and creating specific goals for learning, as proposed in Orrantia’s (1981) syllabus design for mostly Puerto Rican college students. Heritage language classes can be given in a series, with each section or semester concentrating on a specific skill (Orrantia, 1981; Stanford University, 2000a).

Assessment ideas for HLL classes include pre, during, and post assessment. Pre-tests accompanied by an interview to assess student background and language abilities have been used to place students in appropriate classes (Feliciano, 1981; Mercado, 2000; Stovall, 1981). Throughout the semester, students’ attitudes, behavior, and performance should be constantly assessed so the teacher may hold students accountable to behavior and learning standards (Draper & Hicks, 2000; Mercado, 2000). Mercado (2000) suggested providing socioaffective support to help students control their emotions during their language experience. Post assessments include reviewing and grading assignments and tests students have gathered in a portfolio over the semester (Draper & Hicks, 2000; Mercado, 2000). Although the previous

methods may be used in any foreign language classroom, HLL classrooms should accommodate to a wide range of language skills and focus on HLL backgrounds and cultural interests.

As the research has shown, heritage language learner classrooms are special places where learners' language is further defined and refined by being exposed to the prestige variety, rich literature, and dynamic language instruction. Teachers have a responsibility to know their HLL students' sociolinguistic and affective needs. However, heritage language learners have the most important role: taking the initiative to maintain and expand his or her first language (Draper & Hicks, 2000). Hidalgo (1993) suggests that not all learners will have such motivation to add to their native language. After all, it is students' "effort, not aptitude, that determines success" (Giacone, 2000, p. 109).

### *1.2.3 SPANISH HERITAGE LANGUAGE LEARNERS*

#### *1.2.3.1 SPANISH HERITAGE LANGUAGE LEARNER PROGRAMS*

Spanish heritage language learner (SHLL) programs make up the majority of the background language programs in the United States. One can find Spanish heritage language programs at the elementary, junior high, high school and university levels. Merino, Trueba, & Samaniego (1993) discuss three main types of programs in the United States. First, there is transitional bilingual education where both English and Spanish are used in instruction, with Spanish eventually phased out by the third grade and at most by the sixth grade. Second, a two-way bilingual program uses both languages in instruction time to teach native and non-native speakers. Third, mother tongue instruction is provided to Spanish speakers only. The latter program is not common in either primary or secondary levels.

Most elementary programs are transitional bilingual. Fewer bilingual programs can be found at the middle school level. Students may be offered a Spanish language course, and at

most one content course in Spanish. A 1997 survey given by the Center for Applied Linguistics showed that only 7% of U.S. secondary schools offer heritage language courses (Draper & Hicks, 2000), most of them in Spanish. More often than not, native Spanish speaking students must enroll in Spanish language courses with non-native Spanish speakers, who are likely to have a low speaking ability, but good grammatical knowledge.

Students have limited opportunities to study their background language at the university level. In 1997, only 22.2% of all U.S. universities had developed language programs for SHLL (Brod & Huber, as cited in Valdés, 2000). Valdés (1995) further explains that teaching native Spanish speakers may provide a challenge for the university Spanish professor. SHHL often come to the university with a high level of fluency in spoken Spanish, but with low levels of proficiency in Spanish reading and writing (Hernández Pérez, 1997; Marrone, 1981; Teschner, 1981; Valdés 1995). In Hernández Pérez's (1997) study of university SHLL, participants reported feeling that Spanish writing was their weakest skill. Also, students' spoken Spanish variety might be stigmatized because it shares some of the same linguistic features as rural Mexican or Puerto Rican Spanish. To make matters more complicated, professors must teach to a variety of Spanish skill levels and varieties of Spanish in one classroom.

#### 1.2.3.2 *CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHICANO VARIETY OF SPANISH*

This section begins with a description of the Spanish of Chicano SHLL, what I will call Chicano Spanish, and the origins and experiences of its speakers. Chicano Spanish has linguistic characteristics similar to rural Mexican Spanish, but with a limited Spanish vocabulary repertoire and influence from English. Then, attitudes toward Chicano Spanish will be described in both the United States and Mexican contexts.

The United States' closest Spanish-speaking neighbor is Mexico, to which the highest percentage of non-European U.S. Americans trace their origin. Chicanos (Mexican-Americans) make up 65% of the 32 million Hispanics in the United States. Because Chicanos can trace their cultural and linguistic roots to Mexico, their Spanish is most similar to Mexican Spanish (Hidalgo, 1987; Sánchez, 1983). The speakers have been described as using a rural variety of Mexican Spanish (Hidalgo, 1987; Sánchez, 1981, 1983, 1993; Teschner, 1981; Valdés, 1988), which is characterized by distinctive vocabulary, archaic terms, irregular verb forms, aspiration of labiodental fricatives, and epenthesis and metathesis. An archaic term as well as an example of epenthesis (adding an extra sound in the middle of the word) is “*muncho*,” (standard is “*mucho*” (“much”)) which can be traced to Spanish literature from the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Sánchez, 1981). One may hear this word in both the Chicano home in the U.S. and the small, rural town in Mexico. Adding an extra *-s* to the standard second person singular verb, as in “*fuiste*” (“you went”) to make “*fuistes*” is an irregular verb form commonly found in both Chicano Spanish and rural Mexican Spanish (Hidalgo, 1987, 1993; Sánchez, 1981, 1993; Valdés, 1988).

While Chicano Spanish is most similar to rural Mexican Spanish, there are two characteristics that distinguish these Spanish varieties. The first difference is the limited Spanish vocabulary repertoire of many Chicano speakers (Valdés, 1988). Although Spanish skills vary greatly, first exposure to Spanish usually takes place in the home during the preschool years for Chicano children. Then they enroll in the U.S. school system where, though Spanish may be supported, English is the language of instruction and learning. The home remains one of the few places to develop their Spanish and, therefore, Chicano Spanish speakers tend to have a lexicon limited to the home and informal contexts (Hidalgo, 1993; Sánchez, 1993; Solé, 1981).

Two studies illustrate the tendency of Chicanos to have a limited Spanish lexicon. Galindo (1995) interviewed thirty teen-aged Chicanos from two communities in Austin, Texas who related that most of their Spanish was spoken in the home. They spoke English or a mix of Spanish and English in other domains such as school and with friends. In a second study Valdés & Geoffrion-Vinci (1998) compared the oral academic Spanish register of ten Chicano students at an elite U.S. university with that of seven Mexican students at the Universidad Autonoma de Ciudad Juárez. Both groups of students were first generation college-goers and about the same age. The researchers found that, although both groups of students had developing academic Spanish registers, the Chicanos lacked appropriate fillers and some Spanish terminology that the Mexicans employed. For example, the Mexican college students used more phrases like “*como mencionaba*” (“as was mentioned”) or “*particularmente*” (“particularly”) to cover pauses and connect statements. University Chicanos had a smaller Spanish repertoire by which to express their ideas in Spanish (Valdés and Geoffrion-Vinci, 1998). Hernández-Chavez (1993) labels the smaller repertoire a “lexical gap,” meaning there is a gap in the Chicano students’ Spanish academic vocabulary. Sánchez (1993) further explained that “unfortunately, the academic terms that we learn, whether to discuss government, politics, technology, literature, scientific topics or even cultural subjects, are generally in English” (p. 79).

Inserting English words in spoken discourse is a common strategy to express not only a word that is missing from their Spanish lexicon, but also to use adequate language to describe the surroundings (ie., Chicanos living in the U.S. culture (Smead, 1998)). This brings up the second difference between Chicano Spanish and rural Mexican Spanish: English. Valdés (1988) described three ways in which English has had an influence on Chicano Spanish and Smead (1998) added a fourth. First, there is the semantic extension, where the meaning of the Spanish

word is extended to the English word concept. Valdés gave the example of the Spanish equivalent. In Mexican Spanish it means a maid or housekeeper who takes care of the children. In Chicano Spanish, it has come to mean "babysitter," a U.S. concept that does not have an exact Spanish word to match it. Second, there are "borrowings," or what Smead describes as "loanwords," which are English words with Spanish morphemes and pronunciation. For example, the English word "sweater" is pronounced as "*suera*" in Chicano Spanish. A borrowing is a typical characteristic of a language in contact with another (Draper & Hicks, 2000).

Third, code-switching, or what Smead labels as lexical switches, is when one uses the English word and pronunciation instead of a Spanish word and/or pronunciation. English use in Chicano Spanish speech is common, and it is the individual speaker's decision, given the social circumstances, whether to code switch to English or use words influenced by English. Changing languages has been found to be a purposeful, social phenomena (Gardner-Chloros, 1997; Liebkind, 1999; Smead, 1998). Code-switching to English is not a sign of the lack of complete knowledge of Spanish or English as some believe; rather, it often represents the natural phenomena of languages in contact. However, a lexical gap in some Spanish HLL (i.e., formal Spanish) indeed necessitates a switch to English. Smead adds a fourth category, the phrasal calque, which is a direct translation of a phrase from English to Spanish. For example, the Chicano Spanish phrase "*venir para trás*" is a literal translation of "come (*venir*) back (*para trás*)" in English. Users of standard Spanish would say "*regresar*" (return, come back).

To summarize, Chicano Spanish has been found to be similar to rural Mexican Spanish, to have a Spanish lexicon limited to the home domain, and to be influenced by the English language. These combined characteristics have social consequences that result in attitudes

toward Chicano Spanish by Chicanos themselves and Mexican nationals in general, as will be discussed below.

### *1.2.3.3 PERSPECTIVES ON CHICANO SPANISH*

Perspectives toward Chicano Spanish will be discussed from the standpoint of the United States environment and of the Chicanos in the Southwest and of Mexico. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Spaniards brought their language to what is now the Southwestern United States, and today one still hears Spanish spoken throughout the region. The almost 500 years of Spanish maintenance is a result of various factors subsequent to Spanish colonization. Sánchez (1983) attributes Spanish maintenance (after the 1848 U.S. takeover of one-half of Mexico's land) to constant immigration from Mexico, ethnic segregation of neighborhoods and workforce, and racism. Valdés (1988, p. 113) explains Spanish maintenance resulting from the “density of the population; the number of short-term, cyclical, and long-term immigrants; the history of the community; the relationship between the Mexican-American community and Anglo populations; and the proximity of the community to the Mexican border.” Hidalgo (1993) adds that Spanish speakers have also maintained their language for interpersonal reasons.

Today, Spanish and English coexist in the Southwest and occupy different language registers. A register is the preferred variation of language used within a given context and language condition (Romaine, 1994). For Chicano Spanish speakers, Spanish is often used for interpersonal communication in the home context, a “low” register. Conversely, English is often used for discourse in academic contexts, which are classified in the “middle” and “high” registers. The fact that English tends towards the middle and high registers and Spanish tends towards the low register makes the Southwest a diglossic environment. Diglossia is where there is a high language and a low language, which possess high and low prestige respectively; it is a



common phenomena in societies throughout the world (Ferguson, 1959). For most minority language speakers in the U.S., the environment is diglossic because they cannot speak about all topics in their ethnic language (Fishman, 1999). In the case of the Southwest, English is a high, prestigious language and Spanish tends to be a low, non-prestigious language.

As a consequence of low prestige, Chicano Spanish is also stigmatized (Hidalgo, 1997; Sánchez, 1993). This stigmatization is the result of the sociopolitical environment especially in the Southwestern United States. Hernández-Chavez (1993) discusses the existence of xenophobia as represented in the development of English-only language policies since the late 1800's, and the anti-immigrant policies since the early twentieth century. In a discussion of language policy in the United States, Bourhis & Marshall (2000) explain that in the U.S. "the prevailing attitude was that patriotism demanded assimilation, and assimilation was signaled by the sole use of English" (p. 248). In this environment, minority languages, including Spanish, were seen as irrelevant in education (Fishman, 1999). Classrooms and schoolyards in Texas and other states prohibited their native Spanish speakers from speaking Spanish. During that time "many school children, experiencing embarrassment and shame in their desire to be accepted, reject the use of their native language and even deny their ethnicity" (Hernández-Chavez, 1993, p. 65). This sentiment mirrors the feelings that many Chicano students feel today within an environment that still gives little prestige to their heritage language.

At the university level, it is not uncommon for Chicano students to encounter expectations to produce academic Spanish. However, as Valdés & Geoffrin-Vinci (1998) discussed in their study on the academic register of Chicano Spanish speakers, students are often uneducated or unaware of academic Spanish. Spanish language professors have been found to lack respect for non-standard language varieties and to have negative attitudes toward the use of

Chicano Spanish in particular (Hidalgo, 1993; Marrone, 1981; Sánchez, 1981). This contributes to an environment of linguistic insecurity for the Chicano Spanish heritage language learner. Researchers report that Chicanos often feel their Spanish is inferior to that of the standard variety taught in the university classroom (Marrone, 1981; Sanchez, 1983; Teschner, 1981; Valdés, 1995). Valdés asserts that students are sometimes “confused and, on occasion, even ashamed about the lexical selections that they have acquired in their home or community” (1995, p. 118). Sánchez (1983) reported that a Chicana student from New Mexico admitted that she could no longer function within a Spanish-speaking context and was uncomfortable with her Spanish. Due to these types of experiences combined with the special linguistic needs to further develop their Spanish, there is a push to create Spanish heritage language courses for Chicanos seeking to improve their Spanish language skills (see section 1.2.2 for more on heritage language classes).

In the United States Chicano Spanish is perceived as low, irrelevant and a language with little prestige. The school system characteristically has not given value to Chicano Spanish from elementary to the university levels. As a result, Chicanos may understandably be self-conscious about their language. The following section presents studies about Chicano attitudes that are associated with a variety of factors, the greatest being with Chicano identity.

Chicano attitudes toward their Spanish correlate with gender, family decisions, view of correct Spanish, and the need for interpersonal communication. First, gender appears to influence attitudes toward Chicano Spanish in that women have been found to have a more affective and positive attitude toward their Spanish dialect. Galindo (1995) found that the female teen-agers in her study had more positive attitudes and stronger language loyalty to Spanish than their male counterparts. In a quantitative study including Chicano professionals and university students in the Rio Grande Basin in Texas, Mejías & Anderson (1988) found women to have

more sentimental attachment to Chicano Spanish than men, who had a more instrumental attachment than women.

Second, attitudes tend to be developed within one's family. Often, Chicano parents were punished for speaking Spanish in schools while growing up, so they did not want their children to experience the same and did not emphasize the learning of Spanish in the home (Galindo, 1995; NEA 1966). Children were told that speaking their home language was bad, which sometimes caused them to reject their own Spanish. This engrained negativity not only prevented the earlier generation from speaking Spanish, but also created a fear of discrimination against their Spanish-speaking children. Thus, Spanish was not passed down to following generations in some families.

Third, Chicano Spanish is pertinent to interpersonal communication. Mejías & Anderson (1988) looked at attitudes toward Chicano Spanish across gender, age and generation in almost 300 Mexican-American professionals and university students. Participants overwhelmingly felt their Spanish was highly useful in interpersonal communication. In Barker's (1975) study of language and social structure in the Mexican-American community in Tucson, Arizona, a city 60 miles from the U.S.-Mexico border, he found that the use of the variety of Spanish in interpersonal communication was necessary for solidarity within the socioeconomic groups in the community. Chicano Spanish was used in family and intimate relationships and other informal relations.

Fourth, Chicanos seem to be aware of standard Spanish, which may create a feeling of inferiority about their own Spanish dialect. Chicanos feel that correct Spanish is the standard variety that comes from Mexico (Barker, 1975; Galindo, 1996). In Barker's (1975) 6-month observation of Spanish use across Chicano social groups in Arizona, he observed that the

residents seem conscious of the dialectal differences between their Southern Arizona Spanish (also considered Chicano Spanish) and standard Spanish forms. “Conscious of ‘errors,’ they seek to substitute standard Spanish forms wherever possible” (Barker, 1975, p. 179) when communicating with Mexican nationals or those in the community who speak standard Spanish. They felt their Spanish variety forms to be less correct, hence the accommodation toward the standard Spanish. When asked what Spanish was the most correct and formal, the ten Chicana university women in Galindo’s (1996) study felt that it comes from Mexico City and Nuevo Laredo (the Mexican side of Laredo, Texas). They described their Chicano Spanish as a combination of English and Spanish, and acknowledged that it was not positively perceived. Some signaled self-confidence while others talked about their linguistic insecurity and expressed self-criticism regarding their Spanish variety.

Although Chicano Spanish, which includes Spanish-English code-switching, may be perceived as less prestigious by Chicanos themselves, it is strongly connected to their identity as Americans of Mexican heritage. Chicano Spanish is an identity marker vis-à-vis monolingual English speakers of the United States and monolingual Spanish speakers across the border in Mexico. Chicano Spanish fulfills the need for self-expression and a separate identity from the Anglo-American, and the English features separated them from Mexicans speakers (Galindo, 1995, 1996; Hidalgo, 1993, 1997).

The homogeneity that often exists in the physical attributes of both Chicanos and Mexicans motivates individuals to search for other discriminating means of establishing a unique identity and eventual segregation from the out-group. Language facilitates separation of one group from the other. (Galindo, 1995, p. 97)

Hernández-Chavez (1993, p. 66) writes language “encodes the customs and traditions of ethnicity.”

On the other side of the border, Mexicans also show attitudes toward Chicano Spanish, especially related to their perspectives and expectations of the Chicanos. There is a general belief that as masses of Mexicans emigrate north of the U.S.-Mexico border, the border-crossing process is degrading and “involves not only economic exploitation but also the loss of the national language and cultural values” (Hidalgo, 1986, p. 210). In general, Mexicans do not seem to be very sympathetic to their emigrant compatriots.

For example, one Mexican professor who participated in the pilot study expressed her sentiments about Chicano students who study at her Mexican university :

*Que finalmente no son Mexicanos . . . hay una idea especial para los Chicanos, sobre todo en el Norte. ‘Pues es este día que te fuiste, te volviste norteamericano, lo cual quiere decir que eres norteamericano . . . no?’ Ya son Chicanos . . . ellos también lo demuestran: “Soy Méxicano porque me gustan las tortillas, me interesa lo méxicano; pero mis impuestos están allá; pero critico todos los defectos de los Mexicanos.”* (Evelin Jacob, personal communication, November 28, 2000)

(That after all they are not Mexicans . . . there is a special idea about the Chicanos, especially in the North [of Mexico]. “Well, the day that you left, you turned American, which means you are American . . . right?” They are already Chicanos . . . they also show it: “I am Mexican because I like tortillas, I like what is mexican; *but*, my taxes are there; *but* I criticize all the defects of the Mexicans.”)

The professor’s perception of her Chicano students was that they are not Mexicans and when they travel south to study in Mexico, they are there to “*buscar algo*” (look for something), meaning their Mexican roots. Therefore, her perception of their search for their roots creates her expectation that the Chicano students will need extra psychological support, which she tries to give them.

In a study that took place in Guanajuato, Mexico, Riegelhaupt and Carrasco (in press) found that an upper middle class family had linguistic expectations of their Chicana teacher homestay guest that, when not fulfilled, resulted in negative attitudes on the part of the Mexican

nationals. They demonstrated harsh reactions toward the Chicano Spanish of their Chicana homestay guest. The family expressed negative attitudes and was shocked that a teacher, educated at a U.S. university, would speak what they considered to be a “rural, uneducated” variety of Spanish. Riegelhaupt and Carrasco developed an expectations paradigm that illustrates the Mexican hosts' concept of their Chicana guest:

If you are a “Mexican-American, Chicano, Latino, Hispano” university student or professional born or raised in the United States: 1) your Spanish language should reflect that of an educated person (i.e., standard-like Spanish is expected), and 2) social and cultural knowledge (etiquette, knowing how to behave appropriately in social settings, etc.) is also expected. (in press)

Mexican attitudes toward Chicano Spanish have their root in Mexicans' perceptions of Chicanos, which in turn create expectations of the Chicanos. This study will further explore this point.

#### *1.2.4 LANGUAGE LEARNING IN A STUDY ABROAD CONTEXT*

Much has been written about the language experience of heritage language learners in United States classrooms (Hernández-Chavez, 1993; Valdés, 1995; Valdés and Geoffrion-Vinci, 1998) and perceptions of Chicano Spanish within the United States. However, little is known about the Chicano language experience (language acquisition, language attitudes, identity) during study abroad programs. Study abroad is the term found in the literature to describe the experience of 1% of American university students that study for a semester or more in a different country each year when they study (Freed, 1998b). The study abroad setting provides a different target language encounter from that of the foreign language classroom or the heritage language classroom. Advocates of the study abroad experience, which usually entails language immersion complemented with in-class instruction, believe that one who studies abroad in the target language will dramatically improve one's language skills (Freed, 1995, 1998a; Pellegrino, 1998; Wilkinsin, 1998).

The study abroad research takes into account the plethora of variables influencing and resulting from the study abroad experience. In his review of methodology in study abroad research, Huebner (1998) recommends considering student age, aptitude, gender, motivation, previous language learning experience and learning strategies when discussing differences in language acquisition during study abroad. Further, in a longitudinal study of U.S. students of Russian studying in Russia, Brecht & Robinson (1995) discovered variables such as level of pre-departure language training (especially reading and grammar skills), age, and previous immersion in another country to be predictors of language success.

Along with the factors influencing linguistic progress as stated above, Pellegrino (1998) mentions, in her review of articles that portray student perspectives on study abroad, that students' perceptions have an influence on their individual experiences. Students bring their own theories about how languages should be learned which can help or hinder learning. Brecht and Robinson (1995) studied journal reflections on in-class and out-of-class experiences of students studying Russian. Their mixed opinions of each setting's usefulness showed that their perceptions influenced their attitudes and motivation toward in-class and out-of-class experiences. Pellegrino (1998) and Wilkinson (1998) agree that perceptions of interactions with native speakers of the target language bring up social, cultural, and conceptual issues that hinder or help interaction.

Wilkinson's (1998) case studies of two American college students' four-week study in France are examples of the great variation among individual study abroad encounters. Wilkinson sensed that Molise and Ashley, the two U.S. college student case studies, appeared to have a similar language level and openness to culture and language before their study in the same program. However, during their time abroad, Molise showed evidence of more openness than

Ashley, who turned to spending time with friends from the United States after having difficult relationships with the French. Due to Molise's comfort with her study abroad family, she learned and used French often. On the other hand, Ashley reported speaking "maybe three sentences a day in French with my family" (Wilkinson, 1998, p. 133). The differences in relationships and openness during their study abroad affected the students' language practice. This study shows that, even with similar backgrounds, two people can have dissimilar study abroad experiences with the language. Wilkinson proposes that it is nearly impossible to generalize from one study abroad experience to another.

Although the linguistic gains made during each study abroad experience varies, studies have discussed general themes of progress towards native-like speech. Native-like speech features include a high rate of speech and quantity of words, fluency and fewer mistakes (Freed, 1998a). Due to the nature of study abroad settings, where students are surrounded by speakers of the target language, many opportunities arise to use the target language, and it is no surprise that studying abroad generally provides more opportunities for fluency development (Freed, 1995). In Regan's (1998) review of sociolinguistic features in the study abroad research, she affirms despite movement toward native-like speech, study abroad does not seem to result in complete native speaker competence for the language learner.

The following studies are examples of native-like speech gains. In his study with Spanish language learners from varying language backgrounds (but no Spanish heritage language learners) in a 7-week summer language training program in Guadalajara, Mexico, Yager (1988) discovered that students developed a more native-like accent than they demonstrated before the program. This was measured by the native speaker raters. Their progress correlated with an integrative attitude toward Spanish. Yager also noted that general



improvements in language are made because of informal, or out-of-class interaction. In a study comparing Spanish native-like communicative strategy use in role-plays between beginning students in the study abroad context versus students in the foreign language classroom setting, Lafford (1995) found that the study abroad students possessed a larger repertoire of native-like communicative strategies than did their classroom counterparts.

There are other linguistic aspects that change in the study abroad language learner. Grammar improvement in advanced students is positively correlated with non-interactive, informal, out-of-class contact with books, radio, and television (Freed, 1995). Freed (1998a) reports that students develop a more varied target language vocabulary than before they studied abroad. Linguistic awareness also seems to increase. Pellegrino (1998) reports students being conscious of native speakers' reactions toward their language, and Brecht and Robinson (1995) and Freed (1998a) discuss students' awareness of their own language.

The study abroad research reviewed above suggests that there are many factors that influence language acquisition during study abroad programs, and the students tend to gain native-like target language features, along with other linguistic characteristics. Freed (1998a) gives a linguistic profile of students after they study abroad:

Those who have been abroad appear to speak with greater ease and confidence, expressed in part by a greater abundance of speech, spoken at a faster rate and characterized by fewer dysfluent- sounding pauses. As a group, they tend to reformulate their speech to express more complicated and abstract thoughts, display a wider range of communication strategies and a broader repertoire of styles. It is equally clear that their linguistic identities extend beyond the expected acquisition of oral skills to new self-realization in the social world of literacy (p. 50).

It is worth observing that the study abroad research discussed here was conducted with non-native speakers learning the target language in the study abroad context. To my knowledge no study has been completed that includes the continued language acquisition of a heritage

language within the context of a university study abroad program. Keeping the previous research in mind, the present study attempts to take a qualitative look at the language experiences of university heritage language learners of Spanish while studying abroad in Mexico.

### *1.2.5 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES*

Mercado (2000) mentioned that “language, identity, and motivation are inseparable within the context of heritage language instruction” (p. 213). Spanish heritage language learners are the focus of this study, so it is important to understand their attitudes (which are a base for their motivation) and identity. The following are theoretical perspectives on language attitudes and the connection between language and identity.

#### *1.2.5.1 LANGUAGE ATTITUDES*

McGroarty (1996) defines attitudes as representing a person's values and beliefs that promote or discourage choices made. Attitudes are abstract ideas that may seem difficult to measure, but researchers began to assess attitudes toward language beginning in the 1950's. Early on, psychometric approaches (psychological tests to measure attitudes toward language) were used. Gardner and Lambert (1972) used self-report data from questionnaires that conveyed feelings toward the target language, study abroad, and the language in general.

Gardner and Lambert (1972) studied attitudes and motivation toward language learning of high school students of French in Louisiana, Maine, Connecticut, and English in the Philippines. They discovered that language learning is not just dependent on intelligence and aptitude, rather, on attitudes toward the ethnolinguistic group and individual members. Motivation to learn the language is determined by these attitudes. Gardner and Lambert described two types of motivation. One motivation is “instrumental,” which views language

learning as practical, while the other type of motivation is “integrative,” which views language learning with interest and emotional attachment to the target language group.

French heritage language learners (FHLL) were included in the participant group of the Gardner and Lambert (1972) study. The researchers analyzed attitudes and motivation of these native FHLL apart from the rest of the participants and found a variety of attitudes. First, FHLL expressed strong pro-ethnic attitudes which did not necessarily correlate with strong French language competence. They found that the FHLL who felt positively about their ethnic group and had a high proficiency in English also possessed a comfort with both of their cultural and linguistic sides, achieving biculturalism and bilingualism. On the other hand, they found other FHLL to have what appeared to be a conflict in identity: while they had a strong ethnocentric and sympathetic attitude toward French-American culture, they still showed a preference for the American way of life as compared to the European French way.

Baker (1992) also discussed young people’s attitudes toward their ethnic language. In a study of the Welsh language, Baker found that between the ages of 13 and 14 integrative and instrumental attitudes were less favorable. Nonetheless, he discovered that the more Welsh a young person spoke, the more favorable the attitude and the more aware he/she was of the minority language and its instrumentality.

Language attitudes are evident when one responds to the speakers of the target language. For example, accommodation theory describes how an interlocutor changes some aspect of their speech because of the social reference of the other person (Giles, 1973). There are two types of accommodation. The first is “convergent” accommodation, when speech is changed because of desired solidarity with the other person. For example, Baker (1975) found that speakers changed their use of their southern Arizona Spanish dialect towards standard Mexican Spanish when

speaking with Mexicans or other speakers of standard Mexican Spanish. The second type of accommodation is “divergence”, when speech changes away from the co-participant to emphasize a different social identity. For example, Chicanos often use code-switching to distinguish themselves from Mexican nationals (Galindo, 1995, 1996; Hidalgo, 1997), which is a form of divergent accommodation. McGroarty (1996) adds that attitudes can be related to other variables such as confidence, personal and academic self-esteem, and the ethnological environment.

Fishman (1999) discusses language attitudes within social context. He states that if a language is viewed as functional, then there will likely be positive attitudes toward the language. On the other hand, negative attitudes may arise if the language is not seen as useful within a particular social context. For example, in the United States, English is viewed as a functional language but Spanish is not perceived to have such a functional value. Hence, attitudes tend to be more positive toward English than they are toward Spanish in the U. S. context. However, attitudes toward language use also depend on group beliefs. If a group, such as Spanish speakers, views their ethnic language as having a strong vitality with status, demographic strength, institutional support and control, then their attitudes will tend to be positive toward their ethnic language. The opposite occurs if the group views the language with weak vitality.

In summary, these studies demonstrate the variety of attitudes toward language and the beliefs about the ethnic language and its members. There are instrumental and integrative motivations spurred by beliefs that a language is functional and/or there is an emotional connection to the ethnic language and ethnic group. Divergent or convergent accommodation takes place according to the desire to create solidarity or separation with the target language group (Giles, 1973). Positive and negative attitudes also depend on the perspective of a language’s vitality within a social context. It was found that as young people use their heritage

language more, the more they were aware and believed in its instrumentality. Young people also have been shown to have a variety of attitudes toward their heritage language, which in turn has an effect on their identity. The following section will further discuss the correlation between language and identity.

#### *1.2.5.2 THE CONNECTION BETWEEN LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY*

This study draws on the sociocultural theory of language, in which language is seen as a dynamic tool in constructing identity within context. Lantolf (2000) explains that language is a tool that is used to mediate relationships. Human beings have the unique ability to communicate using language, and this is a primary means by which we interact with other humans and make sense of our social context. Language comes from the past and is passed down to us by our family. However, language must change to fit the communicative and psychological needs of present speakers (Lantolf, 2000). Thus, language is constantly in a state of change as its speakers adapt it to their needs and at the same time construct their own identity.

Liebkind (1999) mentioned that language is often a symbol of an ethnic group, even though not every member may speak the language. For example, in the United States, Spanish is not spoken by every Chicano, but it still symbolizes those of Mexican heritage, not to mention the broader Latin American community in the United States. According to Fishman (1999), identity changes according to time and social context. Liebkind adds that “language use influences the formation of group identity, and group identity influences patterns of language attitudes and usage” (p. 144).

Pavlenko & Lantolf (2000) and Giangreco (2000) discuss effects of second language learning on identity. In a review of literature authored by women transitioning into a new language and culture, the researchers found that they struggled and were dissatisfied with how

they expressed their identity using another language (Pavelenko & Lantolf, 2000). A dual role developed within the women: on one hand, the women constructed their new identity as they acquired another language; on the other hand, they were marginalized as second language learners.

In an account of his experience as a second language learner of Italian, Giangreco (2000) describes his Italian identity as connected to his language. The more comfortable he felt around those with whom he spoke, the more fluent his Italian seemed to be. As the author felt more comfortable with his own identity and language competence, his “need for native-like pronunciation diminished.” (p. 63). He stated that the Italian language and culture and interaction with the other influences in his life helped to create his emerging identity. Thus, Identity and language interrelate over time and in different contexts, and this study will attempt to describe how the case study participants’ identity and language interrelate in the Mexican context.

#### *1.2.6 SUMMARY OF METHODOLOGICAL PRECEDENTS*

The present study is designed to assess the Chicano students’ and their Mexican professors’ and peers’ perspectives toward Chicano Spanish during a 10-week study abroad semester in Mexico. The methodological precedents come from earlier studies and from a pilot study conducted by the researcher. The following section is a discussion of the literature that influenced the methodology design.

This study is designed to provide a qualitative, descriptive view on attitudes and the environment surrounding the case study participants. A case study format was selected to give such a holistic view of student experiences (Nunan, 1992; Van Lier, 2000). Five student journal reflections from each Chicana student were the backbone of this study, based on the following

literature. Riegelhaupt and Carrasco (in press) asked that their Chicana teacher case study keep daily journal entries about her language experience in Guanajuato, Mexico. The content of Brecht & Robinson's (1995) study of students studying abroad in Russia was extracted purely from student diaries and reflections on the value of formal classroom instruction. The authors recognized that their narrative data could not give a complete qualitative perspective on the topic; therefore they suggest that future studies triangulate data more completely by conducting interviews, carrying out self-reports, and participant and non-participant observations. Following these suggestions, the present study also includes non-participant observation carried out by the researcher in class observations, and self-report rating data in the questionnaires.

Additionally, interviews were an important data source for the study, and were based on the recommendation by Brecht & Robinson (1995) and the following studies. Galindo (1995) used tape-recorded interviews featuring open-ended questions as a primary data source, as well as others' casual conversations as additional data when conducting a study with adolescent Chicanos' attitudes toward Spanish and English dialects. The current study also includes some data from casual conversation. Hidalgo (1986) and Galindo (1995) interviewed the participants in their studies regarding attitudes toward Chicano Spanish. Wilkinson (1998) also used interviews while conducting two study abroad case studies in France.

The previous section reviewed methodological precedents for this study design. Chapter 2 will explain the methodology particular to this study.