

IDENTITY NEGOTIATION AND CONSTRUCTION: A CASE STUDY OF TWO COSTA RICAN WOMEN LEARNING ENGLISH

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This capstone focuses on two Costa Rican women learning English in their own country and asks the question: How do Costa Rican women negotiate and construct their identities while learning English and what implications are there in their personal lives? The study was modeled after Norton's study (2000) of five immigrant women learning English in Canada. That study found that the women were constantly negotiating and constructing their identities and that their home lives were affected. The researcher of this study utilized initial and final questionnaires, a pair of interviews and a diary study over the course of sixteen weeks to investigate and follow the changes in the identities of the participants. She found that both participants negotiated and constructed their identities while learning English but that only one woman experienced any negative implications due to her newly acquired language skills. The other participant did not experience any problems in her personal life, rather was supported and encouraged to learn by her family.

IDENTITY NEGOTIATION AND CONSTRUCTION: A CASE STUDY OF TWO
COSTA RICAN WOMEN LEARNING ENGLISH

by

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

When I was first traveling in Costa Rica, I met many Costa Rican women, or *Ticas*, who were anxious to learn English. As I developed relationships with a few women, it appeared that most of them viewed speaking English as an essential ability. The ability to speak English creates possibilities for promotions, access to better educational opportunities, or work in Costa Rica's booming tourism industry. While the women were all motivated and successful by most standards, they seemed aware that they were walking a delicate line between what was expected of them as women in Costa Rican society and culture and their own professional and educational goals. Women traditionally have worked at home raising families, but the women I encountered were interested in pursuing further education, starting their own business or working within the growing tourist industry.

As I observed and became friends with these cultural tightrope walkers, I began to wonder how the acquisition of English was affecting their identity. I became interested in identity studies and second language acquisition after reading a Bonny Norton article (1997) about social identity and language learning for a class at Hamline University. I was aware that immigrant women in North America often face pressures at home as they are learning English because studying English leads to a power shift between genders in the family. I was curious about how this might play out in another country where the

woman is not an immigrant, but lives in a male-dominated culture. In Latin American culture, Costa Rica not excluded, the primary goal of a woman is to receive and give love to a man and her children (Castro-Paniagua & Goncalves, 1997; Jiménez-Guerra, 1997). Traditionally, women have been of little value outside of the home and they are to find stability and dependence in a relationship with a man, whether in marriage or simply living together (Castro-Paniagua & Goncalves, 1997; González, Jovel and Stoner, 2004; Jiménez-Guerra, 1997; Pinto-Alicea, 2001).

The most ideal romantic relationships in Costa Rica are thought to be when women embody the stereotypical Latina: fragile, self-denying, obedient, passive and resigned (Castro-Paniagua & Goncalves, 1997). Often the most important objective for a woman is to find a suitable male partner and in doing so, she loses her own independent identity (Castro-Paniagua & Goncalves, 1997). Due to overwhelming societal, cultural, and often familial pressure, it is difficult for some women to achieve their own identity through their own “capacity and initiative, to become an actor and a leader instead of remaining an object” (Jiménez-Guerra, 1997, p. 192).

The women I met initially seemed to have a more liberal view of themselves and believed they should complete high school, attend university and obtain well-paying jobs. They did not limit their options to what their families were expecting of them, which is in contrast to the ideal Costa Rican woman. While it is deemed acceptable for Latinas to leave home to study and work, it is expected that they return home to marry, have children, and take care of their families (Pinto-Alicea, 2001). The women I met valued both roles: the traditional homemaker and wife as well as the business-savvy, working

woman. As I reflected on their decisions and beliefs about their futures, I wondered how a *Tica* negotiates her traditional identity while pursuing business opportunities and education through the acquisition of English. How does she negotiate and construct her identity during her time learning English, and how does that affect her personal life?

It is established in the field of sociolinguistics that identity shifts occur during the acquisition of another language and that the identity shifts are closely linked to social identity (Gardner, Masgoret, Tennant, and Mihic, 2004; Hansen and Liu, 1997; Norton, 1997; Norton Peirce, 1995). While there are many views of social identity in the field, for this study I have adopted Norton's view of identity: how people view themselves in relation to the social world, how their view is constructed over time, and from that view, how they perceive their future possibilities (Norton, 1997, p. 410).

There seems to be an inherent connection between language and cultural identity (Hansen and Liu, 1997; Kramsch, 1998). People are often identified by the language they speak, the accent they have and the phrases they use. People may choose to identify with a particular cultural group simply by language choice. It seems logical then that the most successful second language learners are psychologically willing to adapt to various behaviors or cultural norms of speakers of the second language (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). That is, they adopt the behaviors of a language group, and by adopting the behavior, they increase their use of the target language. Furthermore, as one learns a second language, one negotiates between the two languages and cultures, thereby becoming a member of both linguistic and cultural groups (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Norton, 1997; Skilton-Sylvester, 2002). Most identity studies have taken place in

countries where English is the dominant, majority language, specifically in the United States and Canada. It can be reasonably assumed that the female study participants were also assimilating and adjusting into North American culture where women are generally encouraged to pursue education and work.

There is an apparent gap in the literature regarding women learning English in their home countries (Marx, 2002) and because little research has occurred outside of an English-speaking country, it is of interest to me to see how the absence of cultural assimilation impacts identity while learning English. Clearly, a student learning English in the United States is also learning the culture. That is, due to the culture, women from more traditional cultures may be more inclined to speak out, look for work outside of the home, and support themselves because it is accepted for women to do so in North America. As immigrant women look for work, take English classes, and learn to survive in a new culture, they will see empowered women in prestigious positions. The women learning English may begin to emulate their new friends and coworkers and look for ways to become more self-reliant, a valued North American cultural norm, which leads to identity negotiation and construction. To clarify, as immigrant women learn English in the United States, they also absorb North American culture.

Norton's study (2000) investigates identity negotiation of five immigrant women living in Canada. Norton explored how the women negotiated and constructed their identities while learning English and the impact it had on their personal lives. The purpose of my study is to explore the similarities and differences between her participants and Costa Rica women learning English. Norton's group consisted of immigrants to

Canada, all learning English and struggling to survive in a new culture, language and family dynamic. They were working towards a better life for themselves and their families and Norton argues that their identities were constantly changing due to the exposure to language and culture. Few, if any, studies on identity negotiation have taken place in a country where English is not the dominant language, that is, where the students are learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The participants in my study are Costa Rican women learning English in their home country; a country where English is not the dominant language and the culture is male-dominated. These women are learning English to improve their financial opportunities to benefit their families and their own futures. Do they continuously negotiate and construct their identities as do the immigrant women in Canada? Are their personal lives impacted similarly? I am hoping to discover if Costa Rican women go through identity negotiation and construction similar to their immigrant counterparts in North America and if so, how that affects their personal lives.

Initially, I was teaching in a city close to the San Jose and was interested in studying university women taking English classes. I moved to a rural coastal town in January 2005 and now very few of my female students are pursuing higher education. As I reflected on the differences between the women, I realized that the rural women have even a greater need to learn English because this is where the droves of tourists visit and stay. Job opportunities exist that do not require higher education, but that do require one to speak English. My students work in restaurants and hotels, banks and retail stores, and all are learning English to keep their jobs or to start their own businesses. Historically, the local men have been farmers or fisherman and the women have stayed at home. Now

however, thanks to a growing focus on tourism, the women have more access to jobs outside the home and more time to spend taking English classes. They know that ability to speak English is the key to working successfully with the vacationing foreigners. The participants in this study are also grandmothers, mothers, daughters and sisters and some may be torn between their family roles and their professional goals (González et al., 2004). As attitudes and Costa Rican society change and become more North Americanized, they are leading the change and going against traditional expectations for women. These women will be better qualified for higher paying jobs, will be able to compete more effectively for jobs in tourism, and may encourage other women to do the same.

This capstone will focus on Costa Rican women learning English. How do they negotiate and construct identities while learning English and how does that affect their personal lives? In Chapter Two, the literature review, past studies will be examined, identity negotiation and construction will be described and the relationship between language and identity will be explained. In Chapter Three, the methods used in the study will be discussed, including participant information, the methods used to collect data and how the data was analyzed. Chapter Four explains the results of the data analysis and Chapter Five will conclude the capstone with a discussion of the study, its limitations and my recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This capstone focuses on identity negotiation and construction of Costa Rican women while learning English as a foreign language and the implications for their personal lives. More specifically, do women learning English in their own country continuously negotiate and construct their identities and if so, how are their personal lives affected by their shifting identities? This chapter will focus on the literature that I found helpful to understanding this question: 1) What is the relationship between language and identity; 2) What is identity negotiation and construction; 3) Who are Costa Rican women and what are their traditions; and 4) What are the implications for female English language learners?

Language and Identity Studies

The first studies concerning women and language appeared in the early 1970s. The feminist political movement was underway in the United States and more attention was given to inequitable power relations between men and women. The 1973 publication of Robin Lakoff's *Language and Women's Place* generated interest in gender studies in the field of applied linguistics (Davis & Skilton-Sylvester, 2004). Other research focused on differences in men and women's speech (Freed, 1995) and various theories concerning gender and language use developed. These developing views, as well as studies in the fields of education, sociology, anthropology, linguistics and women's studies influenced

early views of gender in second language acquisition (SLA) research (Davis & Skilton-Sylvester, 2004).

Research soon focused on the influence of social relations on language learning (Davis & Skilton-Sylvester, 2004). Researchers began to investigate the role of identity in regard to language learning, perhaps none as well known as Bonny Norton. Her research, commentaries and books have influenced the many theories of social identity and language learning that have developed. She is not alone in her interest (Davis & Skilton-Sylvester, 2004; Norton, 1997). Many researchers are interested in the role of identity in language learning and call for additional studies in the field (Davis & Skilton-Sylvester, 2004; Hansen & Liu, 1997). While many are studying the impact identity has on language learning in North America, few, if any studies have taken place in other countries where English is not the dominant language.

Psychologists have studied identity development extensively for the past fifty years but these studies have little bearing on SLA. Some SLA researchers have adopted a version of Norton's definition of identity which defines identity as how people view themselves in relation to the social world, how their view is constructed over time, and from that view, how they perceive their future possibilities (Norton, 1997, p. 410).

Group Membership and Language

Language learners are constantly interacting with different social groups and this interaction influences how they perceive their identity as it relates to the social world. Most people are members of several groups based on ethnic, gender, social and economic statuses and Hansen and Liu argue that one's identity is derived from group membership

(1997). Group membership is also dependent on language use (Hansen & Liu, 1997; Gardner, Masgoret, Tennant, & Mihic, 2004; Norton, 2000; Ullman, 1997). This is easily understood in a language-learning context. Language can bar membership from social groups, meaning a Spanish-speaking woman would not consider joining a group of English-speaking women for drinks if she cannot converse in English. Language then can exclude one from group membership, but it is argued that people usually try to gain “in-group” status (McNamara, 1997; Hansen & Liu, 1997). To gain in-group status, language learners need to practice their English, but the ability to speak English is often a requirement to join the social group (Norton, 2000, p. 47). This leaves the language learner in a difficult position: they need to practice speaking English but are often excluded from the group because they do not speak the common language fluently.

While learning another language, the learners’ social identities will change (Gardner, et al., 2004; Norton, 1997) as social identity is established and maintained by language ability (Hansen & Liu, 1997; McNamara, 1997). The ability to speak English opens new opportunities for the learner in the workplace, in education or in social groups. In other words, the ability to speak English can enhance socioeconomic standing (MacPherson, 2005). It is argued however, that learning English may alienate the learner from his or her own ethnic group (Hansen & Liu, 1997; McNamara, 1997) and even from his or her own family (Norton Peirce, 1995; Skilton-Sylvester, 2002). With group membership threatened, learners at some point may decide to learn the target language to a “certain extent”—meaning they can be fluent or even proficient without losing their old identity or their group memberships. They may learn the new language to a certain

extent believing it necessary to maintain old group memberships while simultaneously becoming members of a different social group (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000). Language learners usually do not want to eliminate group memberships but prefer to move freely between the various groups of which they are members. To maintain various group memberships, language learners must have multiple and changing social identities.

Multiple and Changing Identities

Social identity is not fixed (Skilton-Sylvester, 2002; McNamara, 1997; Morita, 2004; Norton, 1997; Schmenk, 2004; Ullman, 1997) and is continually changing depending on the social context or setting (Marx, 2002; McNamara, 1997; Morita, 2004; Norton, 1997). The learner adjusts or negotiates his or her identity depending on varying social situations (Skilton-Sylvester, 2002). The term “negotiate” is used to describe how a language learner relates to various social groups and how this relationship changes over time. To clarify negotiated identities, consider that at home, a woman may identify herself as mother or wife; at school, as a student; or at work, as a member of a team or a supervisor. Social identity is then a site of struggle (Norton Peirce, 1995, p. 20; Norton, 2000, p. 127). The struggle occurs because social identity is complex, multiple, dynamic and even contradictory (Hansen & Liu, 1997; Marx, 2002; Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 1997; Ullman, 1997). Learners are moving between various social groups and social contexts and are constantly negotiating and constructing their identities to either be or not be a member of a group. They must have multiple and changing identities to move from one context to another which means that learners are negotiating and constructing their identities in every social context. Language learners are unique in this sense. In a

traditional social world, people do not move into new roles or negotiate their identities based solely on their language use.

Identity Negotiation and Construction

In the previous section, it was established that social identities are constantly changing due to movement between social groups which means the learner must continuously negotiate his or her identity whether it be consciously or unconsciously (Marx, 2002). In the language-learning context, language becomes the medium through which a learner negotiates her social identity (Hansen & Liu, 1997; Norton, 1997; Norton, 2000) because it is through language that a person is either given or denied access to social groups (Norton, 2000, p. 5). A non-native English speaker may not feel comfortable or confident enough to speak up during casual lunchtime banter at work with native English-speaking coworkers. This lack of participation may exclude them from this social group and may influence how native English speakers interact with them.

When language learners speak, they organize and reorganize their identity and how they relate to the social world (McNamara, 1997; Morita, 2004; Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 1997, p. 410). This negotiation of their identities occurs in every social context because the language learners generally try to gain access to social groups. If language learners cannot gain access to the social group because they cannot communicate well, they construct an identity. That is, their inability to speak the target language establishes their identity: a non-speaker of the target language. On the other hand, perhaps they can communicate very well, and they construct their identity based on a successful encounter in the target language. In other words, it can be said that identity

is constructed by language (Norton, 1997) and that people establish their identity by how they choose to use language (Freed, 1995). Social identities are negotiated and constructed throughout the language learning process which may occur over a short or long period of time.

Costa Rican Women and Tradition

This study focuses specifically on Costa Rica women and their identity negotiation and construction while learning English. Costa Rica is a small country about the size of West Virginia with a population of a little over 4 million people, located in Central America between Nicaragua and Panama. It has enjoyed political and economic stability for more than 100 years (Saint-Germain & Morgan, 1991) and is proud of its peaceful history. Education is free and mandatory and is fully funded by the government. The National Army was disbanded in 1948 and schools have benefited from the extra funding (von Herold Duarte, 2005). Its literacy rate is by far the highest in the region at 96% (The World Factbook, 2005). Due to the stable political, economic and education conditions, many Costa Ricans, or *Ticos*, “see themselves as culturally superior to the rest of Central America, as more enlightened” (Saint-Germain & Morgan, 1991, ¶ 118). Being “culturally superior” includes greater personal freedoms and opportunities for women than in other Central American countries.

Opportunity to Work

Women have frequently held positions in the government and participate more in teaching and politics than women in their neighboring countries (Saint-Germain & Morgan, 1991). Women were granted to right to vote in 1949 and in 1988, the Costa

Rican National Legislature passed “The Law of Real Equality for Women.” The law provided for equal opportunity in work, education, healthcare and politics. Naturally, the passage of the law was controversial in the traditionally male-dominated country and was seen as a power shift between the sexes, that “married men with families to support” would be “displaced by financially secure women” (Saint-Germain & Morgan, 1991, ¶ 62). The fear was that women would take jobs that were historically held by men, and the men would be unable to support their families. However, most women who work do so out of economic necessity while men generally have more prestigious jobs, such as managers or supervisors (Jiménez Guerra, 1997). Due to this fact, statistics show that women earn less than men even though they head 51% of Costa Rican households (Jiménez Guerra, 1997). Women are, however, making progress. In the last year, more women joined the labor force at an increase of eleven percent, from 560,000 women to 623,000 women (Leal C., 2005). Further progress was made in supervisory positions. The percentage of female supervisors or managers grew from twenty-six to twenty-seven percent (Leal C., 2005). In other Central American countries, three-quarters of women live in poverty, while in Costa Rica, only one-third of women are considered poor. This is likely due to high employment rates among women meaning Costa Rica women contribute monetarily to the household rather than depending on a spouse or other family members (Saint-Germain & Morgan, 1991).

Opportunity to Learn

As stated earlier, elementary and secondary education is free and mandatory. The government provides uniforms and books to those students unable to afford them (Saint-

Germain & Morgan, 1991). Every town has a local elementary school, Catholic church and a soccer field—representing the three most valued institutions in the country.

When students graduate from high school, they may pursue higher education provided they pass the entrance exams to university. Costa Rica has four national universities with various branches throughout the country and forty-nine private universities (Láscaris-Comneno, Aguilar, Silva, Coto, Calderón & Brenes, 2001). The national universities are extremely competitive and accepted only 55% of applicants for the 2006 school year (Villegas S., 2006). Many of my female students have gone to university and are enrolled in classes or are studying for the entrance exams. They make it clear that without a university education their ability, as women, to support themselves and their families is much more limited (S. Valencia, personal communication, July 15, 2005). Uneducated Costa Rican men often work manual labor jobs and can earn a good salary while uneducated Costa Rican women do not have that opportunity, outside of working with tourists. While many women work, their jobs tend to be in lower paying positions such as retail sales or housekeeping (Leal C., 2005). This reality motivates their pursuit of English acquisition and education as does the desire to lead a better life than their mothers and aunts.

The combination of a university education and the ability to speak English opens the door to job opportunities. Many international companies such as Intel, Hewlett Packard, IBM, Proctor & Gamble, Ford and Conair have offices and call centers in Costa Rica and pay above average salaries (Umaña D., 2006). These businesses are present at bilingual job fairs but to be hired the applicants must be fully bilingual in English and

Spanish (Madrigal, 2005). In my teaching experience, more women than men seek out additional English classes to perfect their language skills in preparation for a career.

Other women work in the tourism industry where a university degree is not required; the only necessary credential is the ability to speak English. In the rural coastal towns, English is seen as the ticket out of living on day-to-day wages or a way to effectively compete with university educated women.

Tradition, Love and Women in Costa Rica

Traditionally, the woman is a homemaker, caring for the husband or partner, kids and home in the ideal male-female love relationship (Castro-Paniagua & Goncalves, 1997; González, Jovel & Stoner, 2004; Pinto-Alicea, 2001). In this type of relationship, the woman “realizes herself through loving and serving a man” (Castro-Paniagua & Goncalves, 1997, p. 266) and rarely achieves her own, distinct identity separate from her family (Castro-Paniagua & Goncalves 1997; Jiménez Guerra, 1997; González et al., 2004). Her identity is found in her role as homemaker, wife or mother. Only by “her own capacity and initiative” can she become “an actor and leader instead of remaining an object” (Jiménez Guerra, 1997, p. 192). Some *Ticas* may be encouraged to go to school but are then expected to return home to the traditional role of mother, wife and homemaker (Pinto-Alicea, 2001). Other *Ticas* do not choose education to broaden their opportunities, rather they choose to fulfill the ideal female image still popular in Costa Rica: beautiful, fragile, self-denying and passive (Castro-Paniagua & Goncalves, 1997).

The women in my study have chosen to pursue education and English studies in the face of tradition and are negotiating and constructing their identities constantly at university, at their jobs and at home.

Implications for Female English Language Learners

As language learners negotiate and construct their identities to become members of various social groups, often immigrant women in North America learning English encounter a power struggle at home due to their shifting identities and have to work through understanding how this affects their possibilities for the future (Frye, 1999; Gordon, 2004; Norton, 2000). MacPherson (2005) suggests that by learning English, women living in traditional, male-led societies have the opportunity to overcome the “negative self-images” and “limited roles.” (p. 587). The men in the home may be uncomfortable with the empowerment of their wives or daughters who complete their education or achieve English language speaking ability. As I previously mentioned, learning English can alienate the learner from his or her ethnic group or even his or her family (Hansen & Liu, 1997; Norton Peirce, 1995; Skilton-Sylvester, 2002). The changed balance of power sometimes leads to violence (Frye, 1999, p. 502).

In Gordon’s 2004 study, “I’m tired. You clean and cook: Shifting gender identities and second language socialization,” families struggle when the woman begins to learn English even though it provides better economic opportunities for her. The study, focused on immigrants from Laos, found that the female immigrants had more opportunities to learn English than men through community programs or from simply interacting with people while shopping or enrolling children at school. Some Lao women

gained economic independence and decision-making power based on their ability to communicate outside of the Lao community. This created a power shift in the family; in Laos, the males generally had the power. The Lao women's growing proficiency in English and American culture eroded the men's authority (p. 444).

Women from more conservative cultures may take classes in order to improve their lives and the lives of their families, but at a cost; the male may feel threatened (Davis & Skilton-Sylvester, 2004). In Gordon's study, some Lao men resorted to violence to prevent the change in authority. Other researchers have found that this shift of power may create violence "in those who feel themselves threatened or silenced by the power of her (the English learner's) voice" (McMahon, 1986, cited in Rockhill, 1990, p. 90). For women in these situations, learning English can become a much more serious endeavor.

In the Latino community, women are taught to be quiet but with more education, they become independent and self-confident, which may lead to a power struggle in the family (Pinto-Alicea, 2001). Language learners go through identity negotiation as part of the learning process and unfortunately, some will encounter unforeseen problems in the home. Identity negotiation and construction can also be seen as a social skill to develop as it allows the language learner to move fluidly from one group to another.

In her book on identity and language learning, *Identity and language learning: Gender, ethnicity and educational change* (2000), Norton documents the identity struggles of five immigrant women learning English in Canada. The women in her study not only have to deal with learning a new language, but also a new culture. They lost the

status they once had in their home country when they arrived in Canada because they could not fully communicate with the people they came into contact with on a daily basis. One woman in the study was a teacher with a Master of Arts degree in her home country but in Canada, worked in a restaurant kitchen. Another woman was a surveyor before immigrating to Canada where she worked as a cook in a fast food restaurant. Their jobs and educational background were of no value in their new country because they could not speak English. They had not only lost social status; they had also lost their professional identity and were in the process of negotiating a new identity.

Norton argues that through the acquisition of English, learners negotiate and construct an identity. As they learn English, their identities change, but Norton attributes some of the identity negotiation to living in new country within a new social setting with new social rules. All the women in her study were working to help their families, not just themselves, become successful in their new lives.

To summarize, as female English language learners progress in their ability to speak English, they are continually negotiating and constructing their identities based on interactions with various social groups. It has been found that the shifting identities create problems in their homes and impact their personal lives in a negative way in the studies conducted in North America (Gordon, 2004; Norton, 2000). Similar studies that focus on women learning English in their home countries are relatively rare at this time.

As Marx (2002) acknowledges, there is a gap in literature when it comes to studying women learning English in their own country. Her own study was a first-hand account as she left Canada and studied German in Germany for three years and

documented her identity shifts. This gap sparked my interest in identity negotiation of women learning English as a foreign language in their own country, specifically in Costa Rica, without the struggles of being an immigrant. Will their identities be negotiated and constructed like the immigrant women in the United States and Canada? What are the personal consequences for them?

In the following chapter, the methods used in the study will be discussed, participant information given, and how the data was collected and analyzed. Chapter Four will include the results of the data analysis, and Chapter Five will conclude with a discussion of the study, implications and recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between identity and language, to ask, more specifically, is a Costa Rican woman's identity negotiated while learning English and if so, does the negotiated identity create problems in her personal life? In Chapter Two, the relationship between language and identity was explored, identity negotiation and construction were explained, a brief history of Costa Rican women and tradition was given and the implications for female English language learners were explored. In this chapter, the research methods are detailed and the procedure used for data collection and analysis is explained.

Research Design

The research question is qualitative in nature. Through the use of case study, the tenets of qualitative study can be satisfied: describing, understanding, and explaining (Tellis, 1997). Rich case study provides details about the research question and its context, discusses how conclusions were drawn, and how the conclusions relate to theoretical assumptions. It must also have internal validity, meaning the researcher should incorporate triangulation, long term observations, checking and rechecking assertions and making the assumptions known at the beginning of the study into the entire collection process (Faltis, 1997). Case studies are sometimes criticized because

generalizations cannot be made from a single case, but over time, if results are replicated in various studies, more confidence can be placed in the theory.

As previously stated, the goal of this study is to increase understanding of the relationship between identity and language learning and for that reason, I modeled my study after Norton's 2000 case study of five immigrant women learning English in Canada. If the conclusions of the study were to parallel Norton's, the argument is strengthened: identity is negotiated and constructed throughout the English language learning period and that changed identity creates stress in the home. Similar to her study, I used multiple sources of data collected from the participants: initial and final questionnaires, two interviews and a collection of diary entries. This triangulation of research is necessary to ensure accurate and valid findings.

Research Site

The language school has two campuses: city and rural. It is a private institution consisting of two coexisting schools: a Spanish-language program for foreigners and an English language program for local residents. The city campus is located in a large city in the Central Valley of Costa Rica. Approximately 900 students are currently enrolled in the city campus' English program. Many students are attending one of the many universities in the Central Valley or are professionals, while others are simply interested in learning English as a social activity.

The rural campus, where the study was conducted, is located on the Pacific coast, thirty kilometers from a national university. The town has a population of approximately 3,000 people and survives mainly on income from fishing and tourism. The English

program is much smaller at this campus. The student population typically ranges from 35-40 adult students and 30-35 children and is taught by two English professors. Most students at this campus do not have a university education and are taking classes to work more effectively in tourism.

Students at the rural campus are long-term residents of the community and most live paycheck-to-paycheck working manual labor or service jobs. Very few professional opportunities exist in the community as it is still relatively undeveloped. In recent years however, there has been a large influx of tourists and foreigners who have purchased land and homes. Jobs have been created to support and cater to the new foreign population, most of whom speak English. Due to the newly created job market, the demand and need for English classes has skyrocketed in the last two years.

Research Participants

Case study is a form of qualitative research and to maximize what the researcher can learn within the time parameters of the study, he or she must purposefully select cases (Tellis, 1997). I chose three female participants from the school's rural campus to take part in the study; one, however, was unable to complete the study due to obligations at her university. To meet the research criteria, the participants were over the age of 18, worked outside of the home, lived with family members, were native Spanish-speakers, and were enrolled in English classes.

The participants were aware of the questions I was asking and the purpose of the study. When communication paths are open between the participants and the researcher, the participants are not objects, but rather research partners who have questions that are

also important to the study. In Cameron, Frazer, Harvey, Rampton & Richardson's 1992 book, (as cited in Norton, 2000) the relationships the researcher can have with the research participants are discussed. They describe three research-participant relationships as ethical, advocacy and empowerment research.

In ethical research, the researcher is concerned that the participants not be harmed or inconvenienced, while advocacy research is distinguished by the researcher's desire to do research *for* the participant, perhaps even advocating for the participant.

Empowerment research is set apart from both ethical and advocacy research as it is characterized by research *with* the participants. That is, the interaction between the researcher and participant is a vital part of the study. To implement empowerment research in my study, I followed two guidelines suggested by Cameron *et al.* (as cited in Norton, 2000, p. 23).

1. People are not objects and therefore, should not be treated as such. Interaction enhances research.
2. Participants have their own agendas. Their questions may generate further ideas for the researcher.

The participants in the study were both students I had taught for over one year so I had already built a certain level of trust and confidence with them. As such, I wanted to continue the relationships, treating them as students and friends, as well as colleagues. Empowerment research allowed me to view their questions and thoughts about the research question as potential leads to additional interesting areas to explore. I was able to implement empowerment research in the interview component of the data collection,

which is more fully described in the following section. Through the use of an open relationship between the researcher and participants, I hoped to develop a descriptive picture of Costa Rican women's negotiated identity while learning English.

The research participants were not aware of who was part of the study and I have changed their names in order to ensure their anonymity.

Rosa

Rosa is a forty-nine year old woman and mother of five. She is not married, but in a 30 year-long *unión libre*, similar to a common law marriage. Jokingly, she explained that she never wanted to get married because she said that then her relationship would be even worse yet. In addition to her five children, she also supports a handicapped sister and raises a teenage granddaughter. Since completing elementary school at the age of 13, she has worked as a cleaning woman throughout the town. She currently works as head cleaning woman at a local school and earns minimum wage, about \$1.40 an hour.

She began taking beginning English classes a year ago in the hopes of getting a better job and to be a better role model for her granddaughter. She is quite liberal and candid saying she wants her granddaughter to get a good education and speak English so that she can compete with the foreigners in the future.

I chose Rosa to be a part of the study because her attitude is a reflection of many middle-aged *Ticas* I know in the community. She jokes around about her socio-economic status, about men and laughs often. She sometimes laments her lack of formal education but strives to make a better life for herself and her family.

Mariela

Mariela is a college-educated, twenty-nine year old single woman. Like Rosa, she was also born and raised in the community. Her father left when she was twelve years old and she and her older sister were left to help her mother raise her three younger brothers and sisters, one of whom was maimed in a car accident. Her mother valued education and Mariela and her younger sister were encouraged and supported to attend university. Her older sister did not study after high school. She married young and now has three children.

Mariela studied tourism at a national university and currently works at the language school as the main receptionist and tour coordinator. She began studying English in high school and throughout university, but never actually spoke much English until she began working at the language school. She enrolled in classes about two years ago and now converses easily in English. She would like to live in the United States someday to more adequately support her family.

I chose Mariela because her job is the main source of income for her family and she would not have gotten the job had she not spoken some English. She supports her mother, her sister who is still studying out of town, and her two younger brothers. She excels at her job and Spanish language students constantly talk about her helpfulness and steady smile.

Data Collection Techniques

To develop a picture of Costa Rican women's identity while learning English and also to have internal validity, I implemented three forms of data collection. The data was

collected over sixteen weeks since observations of identity negotiation do not occur in a specific moment, but rather as a process. To follow and document the process, I began by using an initial questionnaire. The initial questionnaire focused on the frequency and location of English use, motivation for learning English, family dynamics, educational background, self-identification and group memberships. I gave the participants the questionnaire to complete in their homes. They returned the initial questionnaires within the week. One participant, Rosa, contacted me during the week to seek clarification on how to rank her identities (See Appendix A, #17). The information collected was necessary to better understand the participants and their perspective and experience of learning English.

I used questionnaires because they are efficient, easy to score and analyze. They only provide a snapshot of the participant or issue however, rather than demonstrating a more in-depth view (Patten, 2001). Due to this shortcoming, I also conducted two interviews with the participants. In order to create interview questions that would provide valuable insight into the research question, I developed questions drawn from responses from the initial questionnaire. Some responses on the questionnaire were unclear or were not answered directly so I asked clarifying questions. Other interview questions were developed from questions that the participants had asked me about the project and their comments regarding their English language learning. I was thankful for the interaction between us and believe it is an example of empowerment research. I, as the researcher, had other areas of interest brought to my attention by the participants. Once I had formulated some preliminary questions, I then conducted an interview with

each woman. Throughout both interviews, I asked unplanned questions as the participants shared their thoughts and experiences, which led to other areas of discussion.

Interviews are valuable to the researcher as they build a relationship between the participants and the researcher. Through increased rapport and trust, the researcher has the opportunity to explore feelings and reactions of the participants as well as providing the possibility to follow-up with interesting responses (Patten, 2001).

The participants also were asked to keep a diary. Norton (2000) states that writing can be daunting for some students, but with the use of guiding questions, can be an effective measure of identity negotiation. I developed some guiding questions based on similar questions used by Norton (2000). The other questions were developed to uncover their personal opinions and understanding of the interaction between language and culture. This information was important to my study as the immigrant women in Norton's 2000 study were heavily influenced by culture. The participants' perceptions of American and Canadian culture I felt were valuable to interpreting their negotiation and construction of their identities.

Each Tuesday during the course of the study, I collected the diaries, made notes or wrote additional questions for the participants to answer. After reviewing the previous weeks' responses, I added a new guiding question. The participants had the option to write either in Spanish or English so that they were not preoccupied with writing in English rather than simply writing their experiences and reactions. Both women chose to write in Spanish almost every week. The purpose of a diary was to give the women an

opportunity to express themselves in ways that they may not have been able to in the interviews or by the questionnaire.

The women completed an initial questionnaire and a follow-up interview. They completed the diary portion of the study and then completed a final questionnaire and interview. This order seemed most likely to provide time and opportunity for them to express and clarify themselves.

Data Analysis

The task of gathering the questionnaires, interviews and diaries is rather overwhelming. As Norton (2000) suggests, I ordered all data by participant, meaning each participant had her own file. I analyzed each file separately, made conclusions and notes. In my analysis, I referred to a framework of three guiding questions I developed while keeping Norton's definition of identity in mind: how people view themselves in relation to the social world, how their view is constructed over time, and from that view, how they perceive their future possibilities (Norton, 1997, p. 410).

Each file included the questionnaires, interview notes and the diary entries. The questionnaires served as an overview of the participant while the interviews and diary entries provided a more in-depth view. Diary entries were analyzed in the language in which they were written. After the individual analyses, I placed each participant's response and my comments side by side on a spreadsheet divided by topic, to compare their experiences. In this way, I was able to make direct comparisons and draw conclusions.

In the following chapter, the results of the data collection are analyzed and discussed. In the fifth and final chapter, the study and its implications are discussed and recommendations for further study are given.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to explore the negotiation and construction of identity of Costa Rican women as they are learning English and observe any implications in their personal lives. As they negotiate and construct their identities while acquiring English, I wanted to see if they experience a power shift or related problems in their home. In this chapter, I examine and summarize the findings of the data collection including the participants' questionnaires, interviews and diary entries. The results are organized and presented within the previously described framework. The guiding questions used were:

- 1) How do the women view themselves in relation to their social world and how has that view been constructed over time?
- 2) How do they perceive their possibilities for the future, including possible implications for their family relationships?
- 3) Do they negotiate and construct their identities similar to immigrant women living in the United States and Canada?

Rosa and Mariela: How do they relate to the social world?

The women in the study could be categorized as old and new generation *Ticas*: both are studying at the language school, live in the same community, support their families financially, but that is where the similarities end. Their educational background,

ages and relationships inside and outside of the classroom vary greatly and this has influenced the negotiation and construction of their identities.

Rosa

Rosa is a 49-year old woman who grew up in town and attended its elementary school. At the time, the nearest high school was thirty-seven kilometers away, with unpaved, mountainous roads and seven rivers to ford. If a family wanted their children to attend high school, a move to the inland city was required. For Rosa's family, this meant that her father would lose his fishing job and he was unprepared for life in a city. Needless to say, Rosa was not able to attend high school; rather she began working in her home, helping her mother raise her brothers and sisters.

Before Rosa was twenty, she had the first of her five children. She settled down with her *conviviente*, or common law spouse, and they remain in a *unión libre*, similar to common law marriage. According to Costa Rican law, if a couple has a *unión libre*, after three years the woman has the same rights as a legally married woman (Saint-Germain & Morgan, 1991). It is very common in the more rural areas of Costa Rica for couples to have a *unión libre* rather than be legally married. As tradition dictates, Rosa stayed home and raised the children initially, but once her last child was born, she began working as a cleaning woman. Her husband worked and continues to work manual labor jobs around town. In the first interview, she stated that they do not share finances nor do they still have a romantic relationship; they just share a home. As she good-naturedly joked on the first questionnaire, she never wanted to get legally married because a *unión libre* is bad enough.

After her youngest child was born in 1985, she expressed a desire to enroll in sewing classes offered in town by the municipality for minimal charge. Her husband did not allow her to go. She told me in the second interview that after a year or so had passed, another class was offered; this time it was a cooking class. Again, he refused, believing that her place was in the home and she was too old to learn. When she said this, I quickly did the math and realized she was no more than twenty-eight years old at the time. Again, she followed his wishes. Months later, artisan classes were offered in which students were taught how to use natural materials to make souvenirs for tourists. When she told her husband that she had enrolled, he balked at the idea so she did not go. A few years later, she was interested in taking the national exams for a sixth grade diploma. When she told her husband, he mocked her, saying that *viejas*, or old women should not take the exams. She explained that after so many years of discouraging comments and disparaging remarks, she gave up on pursuing education to improve her life. Rosa knew it would only create problems for her, her relationship with her husband, and also for her children who were still quite young.

In January 2006, Rosa heard of an opening at the language school in town and immediately went to apply, hearing rumors that part of the job's benefits included free English classes. She was quickly hired and she began cleaning and doing minor maintenance at the school six days a week. Rosa said that the job has been a major source of contention with her husband who is clearly opposed to the idea that she is learning English. Their relationship is as strained as ever; they mostly argue but now she

refuses to let him dictate what she can and cannot do. When she explained the situation to me, she was visibly angry but proud that she had finally stood up for herself.

As a cleaning lady at the school, Rosa makes minimum wage, a little over a dollar an hour, and receives free English classes and monthly contributions to her pension. Most teachers and students in the school commented to me that she always makes fresh coffee and offers it with a smile during break times. Throughout the school, she is known as a hard worker and she identified herself as such numerous times throughout the data collection period. She takes great pride in her work and told me she saves any English materials that she encounters while working. She often comes with scraps of paper with notes jotted down to ask me the meaning, use or pronunciation of words she has come across.

Aside from a decidedly unromantic and stressful relationship, her home life is fairly typical of a middle-aged *Tica*. She raised five children and is currently raising a thirteen-year old granddaughter whose parents live in the mountains. She is quite strict with her granddaughter and sends her to a local after-school program two days a week to practice English. She expects her granddaughter to go to the local high school and constantly refers to a better future for her, usually explicitly linking English to a better future. At this point, Rosa feels that her identity as a grandmother is her most important identity because she is able to provide a safe home, stability and the promise of a better future for her granddaughter. This seems even more important than being a mother to her own grown children.

Rosa stressed throughout the diary entries and later in the interview that she wants to be a role model for her children and grandchildren. During an interview, she shared that just three of her children attended school beyond sixth grade and is hoping that by taking classes now, they will see that learning has no age limit, that one can always improve one's education and possibilities.

Four of her five grown children still live in her house or on her property. Each child has a spouse and three of the couples have small children. While each couple contributes to the monthly bills, she is primarily responsible for the cleaning and cooking in the house. Her situation is quite common in *Tico* families: all the children are grown, but the mother still is the homemaker and provider of food and support. It is expected that even if she works ten hour days, six days a week, that she still will keep the house together without help from the others.

Throughout the data collection process and as long as I have known Rosa, she has repeated the same refrain: there is no age limit to learning. She has tremendous pride and tenacity and no longer will allow her husband to dictate her educational and work future. She is constantly working, either at the school cleaning or in classes or in her home. Her belief is that through hard work and by learning English, her future opportunities are greater.

Mariela

Mariela is a twenty-nine year old local woman who has lived in the town her entire life. She is the second oldest of five siblings and was raised by her mother. Her father left when she was about twelve years old and now he has a different family on the

other side of the country. She does not have a relationship with her father and shared that he has visited her and her siblings fewer than five times in the last twenty years. Since he left, she has assisted her mother in raising her younger siblings and now she helps support the family financially.

She went to elementary school in town and then began commuting thirty-seven kilometers to go to junior high and high school in the larger city. The roads were paved in the mid-1980s and bridges had been built so it was now possible for local students to go to high school. She rode to the city on a public bus and the trip lasted almost two hours each way. To arrive at school at time, she left the house at 5:30 in the morning and returned at 5:30 in the evening. At the time, very few local girls were commuting to the city for classes because the trip was very long and tiring, but her mother insisted that she and her sisters get as much education as possible.

During the six-year period Mariela was commuting to school, the beachside town saw much growth and development due to an influx of foreign tourists who were now able to arrive more easily via the paved roads and newer bridges. The town was quickly becoming a popular destination for tourists looking for an “authentic” Costa Rican town. As high school graduation was drawing near, Mariela applied and was accepted to the eco-tourism program at a national university located in the province’s capital. She moved from home and studied eco-tourism at the university and began taking English classes. The university offered English classes that focused primarily on reading and writing and rarely did Mariela have the opportunity to speak English.

When she graduated from the university, she was offered many jobs in the tourism industry, but she chose to return home to work in a hotel as a receptionist. She felt it was most important to live at home and help her mother support her family, especially her younger sister who was about to begin university. Her younger brother was in a car accident during the same time period and had severe injuries, causing him to lose his job and go on public assistance.

After close to two years at the hotel, she was recruited by the language school to work as a receptionist and tour coordinator. She has worked at the school for over three years and is well liked and respected by students and colleagues alike for her friendly demeanor and unlimited knowledge of local information, tours, and school details. Essentially, she is the glue that keeps the school together on a day-to-day basis. She works six days a week and takes English classes two days a week.

While Mariela speaks conversational English and reads and writes well, she considers herself at an intermediate level and does not feel very confident when she speaks. At work, she speaks English multiple times throughout the day, usually with students or with tourists seeking information about the school. If the English speaker is North American, she feels more confident, but with European and British English speakers, she struggles to understand their accents. She is very detailed oriented and sometimes this affects her confidence while speaking since she is preoccupied that she is saying everything perfectly (See Appendix A, #13), but it is because she speaks English well that she has the job.

Through her work, she has met people from around the world and has maintained relationships with some former students. Some of these students have invited her to Canada or the United States to visit, live or work temporarily. The ability to speak English has enlarged her perception and understanding of other cultures through the relationships she has developed and she wishes to pursue those relationships. The North American governments make her desire difficult; both the United States and Canada require that Costa Ricans have visas prior to visiting the countries.

Mariela currently is not in a romantic relationship. She recently ended a long-term relationship because her boyfriend had to take a job in another city and she refused to leave her job. She is interested in marriage and the possibility of a family, but feels that supporting her family and continuing her employment at the school are more important at the present time.

How do they perceive their future possibilities at work and at home?

Rosa

Rosa began taking English classes in the last year and rated herself as “confident” when speaking (See Appendix A, #13). While reading and writing are somewhat difficult for her, she is a successful language learner—she has a good memory, is not scared to try speaking, and is very friendly. Since she works at a language school, she has daily encounters with English speakers and she is very outgoing, engaging as many people as possible in conversation, even if it is a simple “Good morning. How are you?” She feels encouraged and supported in her language interactions at the school, but says that she has little, if any opportunity to speak English outside of the school.

In a diary entry, (Appendix C, #7) Rosa explains that women have many more opportunities to *superarse*, or get ahead in life if they can speak English. She is confident that her possibilities for better-paying employment will increase significantly once she speaks more English. She believes that without this skill, she will remain a manual laborer. In addition, she explains that most foreigners living in the town are English-speaking business owners and she believes that through a friendly relationship with an English-speaking foreigner, a better job opportunity may arise. This may be a simplistic thought process, but it is accurate. Most large businesses in town are owned by foreigners and cater to foreign tourists, many of whom speak English.

At home, Rosa says that only one of her daughter-in-laws supports her pursuit of more education, namely English classes. Her other children are at best, uninterested. In the final interview, she told me that her husband mocks her for taking classes. He tells her she is too old to learn and that she is wasting her time. She sees her investment quite differently. She explained that for years she allowed him to control her future and believed that maybe she *was* too old. She simply changed her mind and decided it was her husband who was too old, or rather, old-fashioned. At this point she told me for the first time that he cannot read or write and I wondered if he was made uneasy by the idea that a woman will have more knowledge, and consequently, more power than him. She now is of the opinion that men have absolutely no right to tell women what to do in regards to preparing themselves for the future. She stated fiercely that they are selfish and want to hold their women back so that the *machista* tradition continues.

She has no intention of leaving her husband as she has nowhere to go, but says that she will no longer allow him to make decisions for her. She feels empowered by learning English and by meeting people from all over the world through the language school. Rosa was much more timid and shy when she first started taking classes (Appendix C, #1) but now feels free and confident.

Mariela

Even after years of English classes and daily experience with English-speaking clients, Mariela does not feel extremely confident when speaking English (See Appendix A, #13 and Appendix B, #6). She recognizes that she would not have her current job or benefits without it though. She expressed in a diary entry (See Appendix C, #1) that up to a couple of years ago, she had never valued the English classes she had taken and that she really did not like the language itself. She was observant enough however, to understand that it was a necessary skill to survive and make a better life for herself and her family. She considers English a tool to survival, just as necessary as perseverance and a strong work ethic.

While Mariela uses English on a daily basis, she mentioned various times that she does not like the language and that she would prefer not to speak it. Just as many times, she said that English is indispensable for Costa Rican women and that it keeps the job opportunities equal between men and women. In her opinion, English-speaking *Ticas* are seen as more competitive and industrious. They are able to balance the traditional role of mother and caretaker with the role of a well-employed career woman (See Appendix C,

#3). With that perspective, she continues learning English and strives for fluency so that in the future she is well prepared for a better paying job.

Mariela feels responsible to help her family and identifies her most important identity as that of daughter. Her understanding of being a good daughter is that she continues working, learning English to prepare herself for additional opportunities in the future and providing financially for her family (See Appendix A, #19 and #25). As I previously mentioned, Mariela has developed relationships with various former students of the school. She maintains these relationships and believes that work opportunities may arise in the United States or Canada that would allow her to provide a better life for her family from there as she would likely earn more money. She also mentioned that she would like a romantic relationship with someone who only spoke English, stating that most North American men are much less likely to be *machista* than *Ticos* and are more open to having an educated, working and independent wife.

Rosa, Mariela and their immigrant counterparts

As language learners negotiate and construct their identities, immigrant women in North America learning English often encounter a power struggle at home due to their shifting identities and they have to work through understanding how this affects their possibilities for the future (Frye, 1999; Gordon, 2004; Norton, 2000). Rosa and Mariela are learning English in their home country and are not required to become members of English-speaking social groups to survive socially or economically. The ability to speak English enhances their economic opportunities for the future, and similar to their immigrant counterparts, there are implications for their family relationships.

One noteworthy difference between immigrant women learning English and the participants in this study is that because the language learning occurs in Costa Rica, the participants are not assimilating to a new culture and country. The women in both Gordon's study (2004) and Norton's study (2000) immigrated to either Canada or the United States from various countries meaning that in addition to learning a new language, they were learning a new culture. Norton argues that the language learners' identities are continuously changing in different social situations and also believes that the identities constructed are often influenced by the culture (2000). That is, the language learners are negotiating and constructing their identities based not only on their experiences in the target language, but also because they are living in a new country with new social expectations and rules (Norton, 2000). As Marx (2002) notes, there have not been many identity studies of language learning conducted outside of North America. It is for this reason that I originally began the study so that I could discover if the language learning experience and identity changes of Costa Rican women and the North American immigrant women are similar.

Rosa

Like the immigrant women studies in Gordon's 2004 study, "I'm tired. You clean and cook: Shifting gender identities and second language socialization," Rosa encountered a power struggle with her husband anytime that she considered furthering her education. Through her current employment, she has an opportunity to learn and be exposed to English, while her husband continues working hard labor jobs where English is not required or spoken. By taking English classes, Rosa has the opportunity to

overcome her limited role as a caretaker of the family (MacPherson, 2005) and become more independent and financially stable. In Gordon's 2004 study, the Lao men resented that their wives could gain economic independence and exert decision-making power based on the women's ability to speak English. This appears to be similar to Rosa's current situation. Unlike the Lao men, however, Rosa's husband has never resorted to violence against her, but instead continually ridicules her desire to pursue additional education.

Research has also indicated that learning English can alienate the language learner from her family (Hansen & Liu, 1997; Norton Peirce, 1995; Skilton-Sylvester, 2002). While Rosa is not alienated from her family, she and her husband simply coexist in the family and rarely speak without arguing (Interview #2). Her other family members seem indifferent for the most part, with the exception of one daughter-in-law, who encourages Rosa to study more at home and to continue learning. The family does not see a change in her economic status since she is still working a minimum wage job, but she believes they see her as more confident and hopes they see her as a role model now that she is taking classes (See Appendix B, #1 and #8).

Rosa stated that modern Costa Rican women are expected to work, study and to have opinions (See Appendix A, #24). She feels that since she is a hard worker and is very outspoken, all she needs to do is learn English to be, in her words "*una Tica moderna*," or a "modern *Tica*." From the beginning of the study through its conclusion, Rosa became more and more vocal and opinionated regarding her English acquisition and use. Her confidence and self-perception grew as the study continued and in the final

interview she claimed that “*quiero superarme, no me importa que diga otra gente,*” that she wants to get ahead in life, that it does not matter what other people say. Like the immigrants studied in North America, Rosa also exhibits a determination to make her life better and comes to the conclusion that English is the key.

While she did not believe that she changed during the study, it was clear that she was constantly negotiating and constructing her identity just as the North American immigrant women did. At home, she took on the role of wife, caretaker and provider for her family. In class, she described herself as a helpful classmate and diligent in her studies. Her current teacher described her as a leader in the class, a willing volunteer to practice dialogues, perform role-plays and to lead the homework review. Around the school while she is working, she is constantly interacting with people from other countries, attempting to communicate in English with many students. While observing her through the day, she appears to be most content when she is struggling to communicate in English with someone. The administration of the school values her hard work and it is clear that she does not see herself as simply the cleaning woman, but rather an integral part of the school.

Mariela

Mariela’s language learning experience differs greatly from that of Rosa and most of the North American immigrant women. Throughout the data collection process, Mariela made clear that her pursuit of further education was to support her family and to prepare for the future. In her opinion, preparation for the future entails excelling at her job, taking additional classes at university and learning and using more English. She

believes this combination will allow her to support her family. Unlike the families of Rosa and the immigrant women, Mariela's family is extremely encouraging and supportive. Perhaps this difference is due to the lack of a dominant male figure in Mariela's life. She is older than both of her brothers and since one is disabled, he is unable to work or contribute to the family. Even in her last serious relationship, her boyfriend was proud of her accomplishments and encouraged her to investigate other job opportunities. There has been a glaring lack of male involvement in her life that has allowed her to develop academically and professionally on her own terms, rather than according to someone else's expectations. She has not encountered any power struggles or problems in her family due to learning English. Her experience has been very positive.

Since Mariela is learning English in her own country, she does not have to adapt to a new culture. She does however, walk a fine line between what is expected of women in Costa Rica and what she expects for herself. Mariela explained that the ideal *Tica* has changed considerably in the last ten to fifteen years (See Appendix C, #4) and that today, in addition to being a mother, a caretaker and homemaker, she is expected to study and have a well-paying job. In contrast to twenty years ago, Costa Rican women can have the same jobs and receive comparable salaries as men do as guaranteed by the passage of equality laws in 1998 (Saint-Germain & Morgan, 1991). Mariela is, at twenty-nine years old, practically an old maid in Costa Rican society. Women generally have children in their early twenties and juggle university and child-raising. She felt it was more important to establish her financial security, as well as that of her family, than to start her

own family as a young woman. She wants to get married and have children someday, but also expects to continue working.

Mariela's experience as a receptionist at the school parallels some of the women in Norton's study. The learners' social identities are constantly changing due to movement between social groups which means the learner must continuously negotiate his or her identity whether it be consciously or unconsciously (Marx, 2002). Throughout the day, Mariela interacts with many different groups of people. At home, she identifies herself as daughter and financial provider. At work, she interacts seamlessly between English speaking students, Spanish speaking teachers and administration, and tourists that arrive looking for information. She negotiates her identity in each interaction, switching constantly from Spanish to English and vice versa. Many of the Spanish teachers at the school speak very little English and this puts Mariela in a position of translator between teacher and student. At the school, she moves easily from one social interaction to the next, quickly reading a situation, negotiating and constructing her identity continuously.

Discussion

After the data collection was completed and I had finished reviewing all I had collected, I looked at the big picture and reflected on what I had learned. Rosa and Mariela provided me with a tremendous amount of information and insight into the identity negotiations they experience as *Ticas* learning English. While their experiences and situations were very different, there were some commonalities I believe to be important to those teaching women English as a second language or as a foreign language. I also found comparing

their experiences to the experiences of immigrant women in North America quite interesting, although not as different as I had expected.

Identity Negotiation and Construction

Both Rosa and Mariela are negotiating their identities on a daily basis. They both have to as Marx (2000) states “consciously or unconsciously” negotiate their identities continually. Rosa has fewer opportunities to speak English and has relatively little experience speaking the language. She is motivated to learn English however, to change her identity of a cleaning woman. She strove for knowledge and practice during the data collection period and consistently referred to getting ahead in life and having a better job. I believe that her desire to change her station in life was a motivating factor for learning English and that it was closely interrelated to changing her identity of an unskilled laborer.

Mariela had a somewhat different experience. She has more experience speaking English and has more opportunities to speak English at work. She is required to speak English on a daily basis due to her job and is constantly interacting with various groups of people. Due to her English knowledge, she has gained membership to the student groups, the English teacher groups, and has been able to communicate well with tourist groups. Since she is a native Spanish speaker, she also is part of the Spanish-speaking group of the school. Hansen and Liu argue that one’s identity is derived from group membership (1997, p. 567) and group membership is also based on language (Hansen & Liu, 1997; Gardner, Masgoret, Tennant, & Mihic, 2004; Norton, 2000; Ullman, 1997). Therefore, Mariela’s identity fluctuates as she moves among the various groups daily. At

this point it should also be noted that it is likely that Mariela's educational background also helped her gain access to various groups, that her access was likely not entirely based on her ability to speak English.

The negotiation and construction of identities in this study are similar to what occurred in Norton's study of five immigrant women (2000). In the Literature Review, I showed that researchers found that while learning another language, learners' social identities will change (Gardner, et al., 2004; Norton 1997) as social identity is established and maintained by language (Hansen & Liu, 1997; McNamara, 1997). While Rosa and Mariela are learning English in their home country and the immigrant women are learning English in a new country, in both studies, the women's ability to speak English opened new opportunities in the workplace, educationally and in social groups. In the future, Rosa and Mariela will have greater economic opportunities due to their English education even while living in a Spanish-speaking country. Because of identity negotiation and construction, the immigrant women will have greater economic futures, but also will be able to communicate more easily on a day-to-day basis in their new country. For Rosa and Mariela, English is not necessary for daily communication but it does enhance their self-image and allows them to communicate with visiting English-speaking foreigners.

Implications in their families

The women in both Gordon's (2004) and Norton's (2000) study experienced changes in their family lives due to learning English and in this study, only Rosa experienced any negative repercussions in her personal life.

Rosa overcame negative comments and her husband tried to dissuade her many times before and throughout the data collection period, but she persisted and continued to learn English. He was verbally abusive, but unlike some women in Gordon's study, he has never been violent. He was clearly bothered by the knowledge that she was becoming more independent and was preparing herself for the future. She shared that they argue frequently, but she will not stop coming to class, nor will she leave her job at the language school.

She felt that she was a role model not only for her granddaughter, but also for her daughter and daughter-in-laws. She wanted them to see that she will not allow her husband to control her future and that she is the only person who can control her future. She felt very strongly that she became more and more in control of her life the more English she learned. At the age of forty-nine she felt she is finally preparing for a better life.

Mariela had a completely different experience in her home. There was not a dominant male figure in her home and she and her mother work together as the decision-makers in the household. Learning English has proven to be a salvation for her family and she is fully supported and encouraged to continue her studies. There was not a power struggle in her home, just support. She views herself as an encouraging sister and helps her younger brother and sister learn and practice English. She believes that because they live in a touristy area, the ability to speak English is essential to her family's economic survival.

Both women demonstrated determination and effort throughout the study. They both work close to sixty hours a week yet still find time for classes and studying. Their understanding of their future possibilities is important and they are working towards being well-prepared and ready for jobs working within the tourist industry. It is common knowledge in the town that those who do not pursue English education will soon find that manual labor jobs are the only available. More and more *Ticos* from the country's capital, San Jose who have better educational opportunities, are coming to work with tourists and are displacing local workers who cannot speak English. Rosa and Mariela are wisely preparing themselves so that they cannot be displaced.

In the following and final chapter, I will reflect on the major findings of the study and recommendations for further study. I will also discuss the limitations of the study and the study's implications for teachers of the English language.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

After traveling through Costa Rica, I decided to embark on an adventure and teach English at a language school in the tiny country. Before I left the United States, I had become certified to teach English as a second language and through the coursework, became interested in identity studies relating to language learning. The research of Bonny Norton was of particular interest of me as a second language learner myself, and more importantly, as an English teacher. As I began my new teaching position, I began to reflect on the differences between the women in Norton's identity studies and the very women I was teaching. I finally had a research question for my capstone and began to narrow my study. The purpose of the study was to investigate how Costa Rican women negotiate and construct identities while learning English as a foreign language and if they encountered any problems in their home lives due to their changing identities. In this chapter, I will revisit the literature review, discuss the conclusions, the limitations of the study and make recommendations for further study.

Literature Review Revisited

I modeled and designed the study after Norton's study to have a better understanding of how Costa Rican women negotiate and construct their social identities while learning English. Norton defines social identity as how people view themselves in

relation to the social world, how their view is constructed over time, and from that view, how they perceive their future possibilities (Norton, 1997, p. 410).

For language learners like those in this study, social identity is based partly on language choice (Hansen & Liu, 1997; McNamara, 1997). As the language learners become more proficient in the target language, they are part of more social groups and they must be able to negotiate between multiple group memberships. To negotiate between various groups, language learners like Rosa and Mariela need to have multiple and changing identities.

The learner's social identity is continually shifting due to changing social contexts (Marx, 2002; McNamara, 1997; Morita, 2004; Norton, 1997). When the context changes, learners take on different identities (Skilton-Sylvester, 2002). The learner becomes adept at negotiating her identity based on her social situation. In other words, a language learner's identity is constructed by language (Norton, 1997, p. 419) and she establishes her identity by how she chooses to use language (Freed, 1995). The women in the study, Rosa and Mariela, negotiated their identities on a daily basis and had daily encounters with both Spanish and English speakers. Each woman established her identity in one social group, and upon moving to another social group, had to negotiate and construct another identity. Their identities were constantly in a state of flux while they were negotiating between numerous groups.

As language learners construct new identities based on their language use, often they encounter problems in their families created in part by their new identities. In studies conducted in North America, researchers found that the female language learners

felt more empowered and had more opportunities to speak English than did their male spouses or relatives (Frye, 1999; Gordon, 2004; Norton, 2000). The men often were uncomfortable that the women had more social power than they did, based solely on the ability to use English and the perception of unbalanced power sometimes alienated the woman from her family (Hansen & Liu, 1997; Norton Peirce, 1995; Skilton-Sylvester, 2002). This was clearly seen in Rosa's experience learning English. Her husband was opposed to any sort of additional education for her and constantly subjected her to ridicule. Mariela had a different experience and was not alienated from her family.

All major identity studies of female English language learners have taken place within North America. The immigrant women are not only learning a new language, but they are also absorbing and adjusting to a new culture. Their identities and home lives are changed not only by learning a new language but also by adapting to the new culture. The lack of literature regarding identity studies of women learning English in their home countries inspired me to investigate the identities of the Costa Rican women I teach.

Major Conclusions

The North American immigrant women in Norton's study and the women in this study were constantly negotiating and constructing their identities. Even though Rosa and Mariela were learning English in their home country of Costa Rica, they moved between social groups on a daily basis. The shifting identities were most clearly seen in their interactions at the language school where they both speak English. While Rosa rarely speaks English outside of the school, she interacts with various social groups at the school. She speaks with the Spanish language students, the English students and

professors and also with the bilingual administration. Outside of the school, her identity is not based on language because all her social groups are Spanish speaking.

Mariela has more experience and opportunity to speak English on a daily basis. She is part of numerous social groups and moves between them smoothly based on her English-speaking ability. At work, she negotiates her identity as she interacts with students, colleagues, the administration and tourists. At home, she speaks Spanish, but her ability to speak English influences her identity and interactions at home and in her neighborhood. The women in Norton's study had similar experiences establishing and maintaining their identities in their workplaces and in their homes.

Norton's findings regarding power struggles in the language learners' homes were not directly reflected in this study. Rosa's husband was vocally opposed to the English classes, but never was violent towards her. She also did not take his mockery to heart, rather thought he was the one with the problem, not her. She also knew that he was probably jealous that she had the opportunity to learn English while it is unlikely he will ever learn English. Her other family members were indifferent for the most part and did not impact her learning in any way.

Mariela had even less of a power struggle in her home; instead, her family encouraged and supported her education and English classes. Her experience was completely unlike the immigrants in Norton's study. She did not have a dominant male figure in her family and she has never experienced any negative comments regarding learning English (See Appendix C, #6). It seems that Costa Rican women do not experience the same power struggle or violence in their homes due to their English

language abilities as do the immigrant women in North America. These findings are influenced by key differences between the Costa Rican women and the North American immigrant women: in Costa Rica, they are not assimilating to a new country or culture, nor do they have to speak English to survive.

Immigrants go to North America in pursuit of a better life or to escape war or other problems in their own countries. When they arrive, they must adjust to a new climate, culture, country, social rules and language. As they are learning English, they are also learning new cultural and societal rules and this affects their identities (Skilton-Sylvester, 2002). The direct influence of culture and society on language learning is not directly addressed in this capstone or in much of the literature regarding identity studies. It is fairly clear however, that learning a new culture and rules affects the identity of a language learner and it seems likely that language learners in North America have to negotiate between more social groups than do the women in Costa Rica.

The Costa Rican women do not have to absorb the cultural expectations of women living in North America. They do not have to evaluate the behaviors of North American women and decide how best to assimilate into those social groups. Rather, the Costa Rican women are learning English prepare for their futures and for the future of their families.

Both Rosa and Mariela could avoid speaking and hearing English if they did not work at the language school. They have an opportunity to practice English and meet people from around the world, many of whom speak English. In contrast to the immigrant women, Rosa and Mariela can survive and live comfortably in Costa Rica

without speaking English, but because of their jobs, they speak English. The motivating reasons for the immigrant women and Rosa and Mariela to learn English are similar: to have a better life and prepare for the future. However, the survival of the Costa Rican women is not dependent on their English abilities whereas the immigrant women have no choice but to assimilate, learn the language and survive.

It is important to note that this study may have found different results had it been conducted by another researcher who was unknown to the women. I had personal relationships with both women and it is possible that the results are affected by their unconscious desire to emphasize identity negotiation and construction.

Limitations

This study has two major limitations. First, there were only two Costa Rican women able to complete the study. Secondly, the study took place over a sixteen-week period, a rather brief time to investigate identity.

The study started with three women, but one woman stopped participating after the initial questionnaire and interview because of obligations at her university. She was taking more than full-time coursework and did not have the extra time to complete the journal part of the study. This of course, was a disappointment to me. The results are quite limited with just two women participating.

Although I modeled the study after Norton's study, I was unable to follow the women for two-years as she did. After sixteen weeks of collecting data, I was able to observe some identity changes and note how the participants negotiate and construct their

identities, but I believe the results were limited by the short time period. I would argue that additional longitudinal identity studies ideally should be longer than sixteen weeks.

Recommendations for Further Study

There remains a significant gap in the literature concerning identity studies of women learning English in their home countries. How do they negotiate and construct their identities? Does the pursuit of English threaten their home lives? This study was a preview of what may be found in future studies around the world in EFL settings. To begin to close the gap, additional studies must take place and would hopefully take into consideration the following suggestions based on my experiences.

As previously mentioned, the study was limited by the small number of participants as well as by the relatively short time that data was collected. In a future study, I would recommend studying a larger group of women. A larger group of women would allow for more variation and perhaps clear patterns would emerge. It seemed that I chose two women from opposite ends of the spectrum in regards to education, family structure and age. I would recommend that the group consist of women with varied educational background. It is also possible the results may be different if urban women were studied. This capstone focused on rural Costa Rican women and throughout the data collection, I wondered if the results might be different with women living in urban areas of Costa Rica.

While sixteen weeks seemed like a long period of time at the beginning of the study, it did not allow sufficient time to document identity changes. In Rosa's case, it

would be interesting to follow her and her husband's interactions for the next year as she becomes more and more proficient in English and begins looking for other jobs. In the next year, Mariela could become romantically involved with someone and it would be of interest to see how a traditional Costa Rican man deals with a highly educated and well-employed woman. I would recommend that any additional identity studies take place over a much longer period of time to allow for additional development.

Furthermore, I would suggest studying women from another country. While Costa Rica is still predominantly a male-dominated society, it is much more liberal than some of its Central American neighbors such as Nicaragua or Guatemala. The women of Costa Rica have more access to education and equal opportunity to work than do women in the rest of Central America (Saint-Germain & Morgan, 1991, ¶ 118).

My final suggestion would be to study women based on their current level of English speaking ability. Norton began her study with five women all at the initial stages of learning English so their experiences were somewhat similar. The results between Rosa and Mariela were sometimes difficult to interpret and compare because their abilities were so different. Due to this, their opportunities to speak English were extremely different and the opportunities to speak English are directly related to the negotiation and construction of their social identities. Perhaps the results would be different if the women in the study had more similar speaking abilities at the beginning of the study.

Final Reflection

Through this experience, I have a much better understand of the identity changes that female English language learners undergo as they begin to acquire the language. At first glance, this may not seem critical to teachers of English as a Foreign Language. It is however, quite important to remember that students have varied expectations and home lives. Their group memberships will be affected by learning the language and will impact their social identities. This may or not have consequences in their personal lives. Teaching in a foreign country means that we do not entirely understand the culture and the culturally expected behavior for women and it is possible that female language learners will experience negative comments and ridicule similar to Rosa's experience with her husband. It is important for EFL teachers to encourage women to continue studying and perhaps to ask how their families feel about their new language abilities. In addition, it is easy as an EFL teacher to forget that teaching English not only gives the students the opportunity to have a better-paying job. Learning English also opens up their possibilities for the future, which changes their identities for the better (Norton, 2000). They also have more opportunities to speak with people from around the world and can negotiate easily between many social groups, regardless of where the speakers are from. EFL teachers have the opportunity to impart more than just the language to their students, they offer new group membership and access to new social groups, and through that, a better understanding of the world around them.

Without language, one cannot talk to people and understand them; one cannot share their hopes and aspirations, grasp their history, appreciate their poetry, or savor their songs. I again realized that we were not different people speaking separate languages; we were one people, with different tongues.

Nelson Mandela (2000). *The long road to freedom*. Austin, Texas: Holt, Rinehart & Winston p. 307.

APPENDIX A: INITIAL QUESTIONNAIRE

Sus respuestas son completamente confidenciales./ Your answers are completely confidential.

General

1. *¿Cuántos años tiene usted? / How old are you?*

2. *Su nivel de educación / Your level of education*

____ *primaria / elementary*

____ *colegio / high school*

____ *clases en la universidad / university classes*

____ *me gradué de la universidad / I graduated from university*

3. *¿Cuántos años de clases de inglés lleva? / How long have you taken English classes?*

____ *menos que un año / less than a year*

____ *1-2 años / 1-2 years*

____ *3-4 años / 3-4 years*

____ *más que 5 años / more than 5 years*

4. *Estado civil / Marital Status*

____ *soltera / single*

____ *casada / married*

____ *unión libre / committed relationship*

____ *divorciada / divorced*

____ *otra (por favor, explique) / other (explain please)*

5. *¿Tiene hijos? / Do you have children?*

____ *si ¿Cuántos? _____ Yes. How many?*

____ *no*

6. *¿Está en clases en la universidad ahora? / Are you taking classes at university right now?*

____ *si (Por favor escribe que está estudiando) / Yes, please explain what you are studying _____*

____ *no*

7. ¿Está trabajando? / Are you working presently?

___ si / yes

___ no

8. Si contesto que si, trabaja, ¿dónde trabaja y cuales son sus responsabilidades? / If you answered yes, where do you work and what are your responsibilities?

Aprendizaje y uso de ingles / Learning and English Use

9. ¿Por qué está aprendiendo ingles? Marque las opciones que la describan. / Why are you learning English? Mark the options that describe you.

___ mejor oportunidades de educación / better educational opportunities

___ mejor oportunidades de trabajo / better job opportunities

___ para comunicarse con amigos de otros países / to talk with foreign friends

___ para competir para trabajos en el pueblo / to compete for other jobs in town

___ para prepararme para el futuro / to prepare myself for the future

10. En su opinión, ¿cual es su nivel de hablar ingles? / In your opinion, what is your English speaking ability?

___ principiante / beginner

___ principiante – intermedio / beginner to intermediate

___ intermedio – avanzado / intermediate to advanced

___ avanzado / advanced

11. ¿Dónde habla ingles? (Por ejemplo, en mi trabajo, en mi casa, con amigos, en la escuela etc.) / Where do you speak English? (For example, at work, at home, with friends, in the school etc.)

12. ¿Dónde lee y escribe ingles? (Por ejemplo, en mi trabajo, en el periódico, en clases etc.) / Where do you read and write English? (For example, at work, in the newspaper, in classes, etc.)

13. Cuando habla ingles, ¿cómo se siente? / When you speak English, how do you feel?

___ muy segura / very confident

___ segura / confident

___ más o menos segura / more or less confident

___ no estoy segura / not confident

___ frustrada / frustrated

Por favor, explica su respuesta. / Please explain your answer.

14. *Para usted, aprender inglés es...* / For you, learning English is...

muy importante / very important

importante / important

más o menos importante / more or less important

no es importante / it's not important

Por favor, explica su respuesta. / Please explain your answer.

Identidad / Identity

15. *¿Cómo se describe?* (Por ejemplo, madre, hermana, esposa, trabajadora etc.) / How do you describe yourself? (For example, mother, sister, wife, worker etc.)

16. *¿Qué papel tiene en su familia?* (Marque las opciones que la describan) / What role do you have in your family (Mark all that apply).

madre / mother

hija / daughter

hermana / sister

abuela / grandma

tía / aunt

17. *Por favor, ordene jerárquicamente la posición que desempeña según su opinión.* / Please order your roles in hierarchical order.

madre / mother

hija / daughter

hermana / sister

abuela / grandma

tía / aunt

otro (por favor, explique) / Other (Explain please)

18. *¿Contribuye con dinero para su familia?* / Do you provide financially for your family?

si / yes

no

19. *¿Si hablara inglés mejor, usted podría contribuir con más dinero para su familia?* / If you spoke English better, could you contribute more money to your family?

_____ *si* / yes

_____ *no*

Por favor, explique su respuesta. / Please explain your answer

20. *Si tiene una relación romántica, explique su papel en la relación.* / If you have a romantic relationship, explain your role.

_____ *novia* / girlfriend

_____ *esposa* / wife

_____ *amante* / the other woman

21. *¿Qué tan importante es su relación familiar?* / How important is your relationship with your family?

_____ *de mucha importancia* / extremely important

_____ *muy importante* / very important

_____ *más o menos importante* / more or less important

_____ *no muy importante* / not very important

_____ *no es importante* / not at all important

22. *¿Qué tan importante es mantener la relación con sus amigos?* / How important is maintaining your relationships with your friends?

_____ *de mucha importancia* / extremely important

_____ *muy importante* / very important

_____ *más o menos importante* / more or less important

_____ *no muy importante* / not very important

23. *¿Qué tan importante es mantener la relación con otros estudiantes en la escuela de idiomas?* / How important is maintaining relationships with other students at the language school?

_____ *de mucha importancia* / extremely important

_____ *muy importante* / very important

_____ *más o menos importante* / more or less important

_____ *no muy importante* / not very important

Expectativas / Expectations

24. *¿Qué expectativas hay para las mujeres en Costa Rica?* / What expectations are traditionally held for Costa Rican women?

25. *¿Cuáles expectativas tiene su familia de usted? Por ejemplo, trabajar, ganar dinero, ir a la universidad, aprender inglés etc. / What expectations does your family have for you? For example, work, earn money, go to college, learn English etc.*

26. *¿Qué espera de sí misma? / What do you expect for yourself?*

27. *Si tiene una relación romántica, ¿qué espera de su pareja? / If you're in a romantic relationship, what do you expect of your partner?*

28. *En su opinión, ¿qué similitudes tiene su vida diaria con la de su madre? / In your opinion, what similarities do you have in common with your mother?*

29. *En su opinión, ¿cuáles diferencias tiene su vida diaria con la de su madre? / In your opinion, how is your daily life different from that of your mother?*

30. *En su opinión, ¿cómo han cambiado las vidas de las mujeres en Costa Rica en los últimos 20 años? / In your opinion, how have the lives of women changed in the last 20 years in Costa Rica?*

31. *¿Piensa que usted ha cambiado por su experiencia y aprendizaje de inglés? / Do you think that you have changed from your experience of learning English?*

32. *¿Cree que la habilidad de hablar ingles puede cambiar su futuro? ¿Cómo?* / Do you believe that speaking English can change your future? How?

Gracias! Si tiene otros comentarios sobre el tema, por favor compártalos conmigo.
Thanks! If you have other comments about the topic, please share them with me.

APPENDIX B : FINAL QUESTIONNAIRE

Aprendizaje y uso de ingles / *Learning and English Use*

1. *¿Por qué está aprendiendo ingles? Marque las opciones que la describan. / Why are you learning English? Mark the options that describe you.*

- mejor oportunidades de educación / better educational opportunities*
- mejor oportunidades de trabajo / better job opportunities*
- para comunicarse con amigos de otros países / to talk with foreign friends*
- para competir para trabajos en el pueblo / to compete for other jobs in town*
- para prepararme para el futuro / to prepare myself for the future*

2. *En su opinión, ¿cual es su nivel de hablar ingles? / In your opinion, what is your English speaking ability?*

- principiante / beginner*
- principiante – intermedio / beginner to intermediate*
- intermedio – avanzado / intermediate to advanced*
- avanzado / advanced*

3. *¿Dónde habla ingles? (Por ejemplo, en mi trabajo, en mi casa, con amigos, en la escuela etc.) / Where do you speak English? (For example, at work, at home, with friends, in the school etc.)*

4. *¿Dónde lee y escribe ingles? (Por ejemplo, en mi trabajo, en el periódico, en clases etc.) / Where do you read and write English? (For example, at work, in the newspaper, in classes, etc.)*

5. *¿Con que frecuencia habla ingles? / How often do you speak English?*

- mas que 5 veces al dia / more than 5 times a day*
- mas que 1 vez al dia / more than 1 time a day*
- mas que 3 veces la semana / more than 3 times a week*
- menos que 3 veces la semana / less than 3 times a week*

6. *Cuándo habla ingles, ¿cómo se siente?* / When you speak English, how do you feel?

___ *muy segura* / very confident

___ *segura* / confident

___ *más o menos segura* / more or less confident

___ *no estoy segura* / not confident

___ *frustrada* / frustrated

¿Su seguridad de hablar ingles depende de con quien esta hablando? Does your level of confidence depend on with whom you are speaking?

7. *Para usted, aprender ingles es...* / For you, learning English is...

___ *muy importante* / very important

___ *importante* / important

___ *más o menos importante* / more or less important

___ *no es importante* / not important

Por favor, explica su respuesta. / Please explain your answer.

8. *¿Quién le apoya su deseo de hablar y practicar ingles?* / Who supports your desire to speak and practice English?

9. *¿Usted siente motivación para hablar ingles en su trabajo?* / Do you feel motivated to speak English at work?

Identidad / *Identity*

10. *¿Cómo se describe?* (*Por ejemplo, madre, hermana, esposa, trabajadora etc.*) / How do you describe yourself? (For example, mother, sister, wife, worker etc.)

11. *Por favor, ordene jerárquicamente la posición que desempeña según su opinión.* / Please order your roles in hierarchical order.

___ *madre* / mother

___ *hija* / daughter

___ *hermana* / sister

___ *abuela* / grandma

___ *tía* / aunt

____ *otro (por favor, explique) / Other (Explain please)*

12. *¿Qué tan importante es su relación familiar? / How important is your relationship with your family?*

____ *de mucha importancia / extremely important*

____ *muy importante / very important*

____ *más o menos importante / more or less important*

____ *no muy importante / not very important*

____ *no es importante / not at all important*

13. *¿Qué tan importante es mantener la relación con sus amigos? / How important is maintaining your relationships with your friends?*

____ *de mucha importancia / extremely important*

____ *muy importante / very important*

____ *más o menos importante / more or less important*

____ *no muy importante / not very important*

14. *¿Qué tan importante es mantener la relación con otros estudiantes en la escuela de idiomas? / How important is maintaining relationships with other students at the language school?*

____ *de mucha importancia / extremely important*

____ *muy importante / very important*

____ *más o menos importante / more or less important*

____ *no muy importante / not very important*

15. *¿Siente que usted es parte del sistema social de la escuela? / Do you feel like you're part of the social network at school?*

Si, no, ¿piensa que si hablara más inglés sería parte del sistema social de la escuela? / If you answered no, do you think that by speaking more English you would be part of the social network?

16. *Para hablar inglés mejor, ¿tiene que entender y adaptarse a otra cultura? / To learn English better, do you have to understand and adapt to North America culture?*

Expectativas / Expectations

17. *¿Cuáles expectativas tiene su familia de usted? Por ejemplo, trabajar, ganar dinero, ir a la universidad, aprender inglés etc.* / What expectations does your family have for you? For example, work, earn money, go to university, learn English, etc.

18. *¿Qué espera de sí misma en el próximo año cuanto a las clases de inglés?* / What do you expect for yourself in relation to the next year of English classes?

19. *¿Piensa que usted ha cambiado por su experiencia y aprendizaje del inglés?* / Do you think that you have changed from your experience learning English?

Gracias! Si tiene otros comentarios sobre el tema, por favor compártalos conmigo.
Thanks! If you have other comments, please share them with me.

APPENDIX C: DIARY QUESTIONS

Semana 1 / Week One

¿Cómo ha cambiada desde tomar clases de inglés? / How have you changed since taking English classes?

¿Esta diferente ahora que antes de empezar las clases de inglés? / Do you think you are different now than before you took English classes?

Semana 2 / Week Two

¿Ha notado su familia algo diferente en usted? / Has your family noticed anything different about you?

Semana 3 / Week Three

¿Cuáles son los beneficios de hablar inglés como mujer en Costa Rica? / What are the benefits to speaking English as a Costa Rican woman?

Semana 4 / Week Four

En su opinión, ¿Cómo es la mujer ideal en Costa Rica? / In your opinion, what is the ideal Costa Rican woman like?

Semana 5 / Week Five

Si yo preguntara a su familia, como es usted, ¿cómo te describirían? / If I asked your family, how would they describe you?

¿Cree que sus descripciones cambiarían si hablara más inglés? / Do you think their descriptions would change if you spoke more English?

Semana 6 / Week Six

¿Ha tenido una experiencia con alguien que no apoyo su deseo de aprender inglés? ¿Cómo le respondió? / Have you had an experience with someone who didn't support your desire to learn English? How did you respond?

Si no, en su opinión, ¿por qué hay gente que no quiere que otras aprendan inglés? / If not, why do some people not want others to learn English?

Semana 7 / Week Seven

En su opinión, ¿las mujeres que hablan inglés tienen más oportunidades que los hombres que no hablan inglés? ¿Qué opinan los hombres? / In your opinion, do women who speak English have more opportunities than men who do not speak English?

Semana 8 / Week Eight

Ya me ha dicho como su familia te describiría. Si yo preguntara a sus compañeros de trabajo como es usted, ¿cómo te describirían? ¿Hay una diferencia entre las descripciones? / You have already told me how your family would describe you. If I asked your work colleagues to describe you, what would they say? Is there a difference between what they and your family would say?

Semana 9 / Week Nine

¿Qué opina usted de la cultura de los gringos? / What do you think of North American culture?

Semana 10 / Week Ten

¿Cómo te parecen las mujeres de los EEUU y Canadá? ¿Qué piensa usted de los valores de ellas? ¿Son parecidas a las ticas? / What do you think of North American women? Their values? Are they similar to the values of Ticas?

Semana 11 / Week Eleven

¿Hay una relación entre cultura y el idioma ingles? Por ejemplo, ¿usted se siente 100% tica cuando habla ingles, o siente un cambio en si misma cuando habla ingles? / Is there a relationship between culture and English? For example, do you feel 100% Tica when speaking English or do you feel a change in yourself as you switch from Spanish to English?

Semana 12 / Week Twelve

¿Cómo le parece su experiencia en este proyecto? ¿Esta más consciente de su aprendizaje de ingles? Si ha cambiado en las ultimas 15 semanas, ¿cómo? / Describe your experience in this study. Are you more conscientious of your language learning? Have you changed in the last 15 weeks? How?

APPENDIX D: TIMELINE OF DATA COLLECTION

Week One: Distribute questionnaires.

Week Two: Collect questionnaire, brainstorm interview questions, schedule and conduct first interview.

Week Three: Distribute diary question 1

Week Four: Distribute diary question 2

Week Five: Distribute diary question 3

Week Six: Distribute diary question 4

Week Seven: Distribute diary question 5

Week Eight: Distribute diary question 6

Week Nine: Distribute diary question 7

Week Ten: Distribute diary question 8

Week Eleven: Distribute diary question 9

Week Twelve: Distribute diary question 10

Week Thirteen: Distribute diary question 11

Week Fourteen: Distribute diary question 12 and the final questionnaire.

Week Fifteen: Collect diaries and final questionnaire and review. Brainstorm final interview questions.

Week Sixteen: Conduct final interview.

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