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International Teaching Assistants' Perceptions of English and Spanish Language Use at the University of Puerto Rico-Mayagüez

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International Teaching Assistants' Perceptions of English and Spanish Language Use
at the University of Puerto Rico-Mayagüez

by

Edward G. Contreras Santiago

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Second Language Acquisition and Instructional Technology
Department of Secondary Education
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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family and friends who have shown me unconditional support in the best and worst of times. Thank you all for helping me become a better person and to strive for greatness.

I would also like to dedicate this project to all of those international students who trusted in me to help them reach a higher degree or achieve a better opportunity in life. You will always be my motivation.

2,975 you will not be forgotten. Te amo Puerto Rico

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Abstract

Globalization and sociopolitical factors impact migration patterns all over the world. In Puerto Rico, these factors created superdiverse environments where language users have pushed the boundaries of language in order to make sense of their worlds. Even though this language dynamic is natural for locals, it is those who visit from different countries, specifically international graduate students, that have a difficult time adjusting to Puerto Rico's rich use of English and Spanish. Understanding how international graduate students perceive the language used at the University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez (UPRM) upon arrival is essential to provide a better experience for future students. As of this writing, this study is the first to investigate the language perceptions of incoming international graduate students at the University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez.

This descriptive exploratory case study explores language perceptions of first semester international graduate students with an assistantship. I interviewed 3 first-semester students at a large, public, research university, located on the west coast of Puerto Rico. I carried out two semi-structured individual interviews and one semi-structure focus group interview. I employed data triangulation and member checked to ensure validity and trustworthiness of data.

Study findings reveal that participants did not initially perceive English as being the main language of use during their graduate studies. Participants mentioned struggles throughout their semester due to the heavy presence of English in their coursework and assistantship. Participants suggested that the university should provide more English language support to ensure the success of incoming international students. In this study, I addressed gaps on translanguaging at

superdiverse universities, and international teaching assistants' perceptions of language at the University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez campus. Based on the findings, I offer English course suggestions to enhance academic and professional opportunities for international students at UPRM.

Chapter One: Introduction

Translanguaging is a term for language practices that go between and beyond different linguistic systems and modalities (García & Wei, 2011). Specifically, translanguaging is a set of practices which includes, but is not limited to, the ability to read a text in one language and discuss, or be evaluated on one's comprehension in another language, for example using English terminology while communicating in Spanish (Baker, 2011; Canagarajah, 2011; Ceñoz & Gorter, 2013; García & Sylvan, 2011; Mazak & Herbas-Donoso, 2014). Translanguaging studies analyze various languages across the globe, and I focused on participants' perceptions of English and Spanish language use in graduate studies at the University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez campus (UPRM). Using multiple languages is important in the learning of English as Foreign Language (EFL) classes where learners have difficulty using a second language and rely on shuffling between languages to promote communication. I shed light on the complexities surrounding translanguaging practices at UPRM and promote an understanding of the forms and usefulness of using multiple languages simultaneously. Once the study is completed, I will share the discoveries with the office of Graduate Studies and provide cultural information for prospective international graduate teaching assistants. In addition, this study hopes foregrounds language concerns that international students have upon arriving to UPRM. This understanding of translanguaging is pertinent to international graduate assistants of UPRM who expect to use Spanish throughout their academic endeavors, but consequently learn that English is not a luxury, but a necessity (Herbas-Donoso & Mazak, 2014). According to Herbas-Donoso and Mazak (2014), science professors at the University of Puerto Rico in Mayagüez, use English and

Spanish in their courses, but the expectation of what languages will be used for what purposes is not clear for students before enrolling because there is not a specific written policy or articulation of the language of instruction for each course. Instead, students navigate the system and work with the unwritten rules of language use in their courses at the graduate and undergraduate level. For first-language-Spanish-speaking international students this ambiguity in terms of language use poses an inimitable challenge. These students have to adjust to the academic rigor of their courses, and the mixture of Spanish and English language use in academic contexts. As students, they need to learn how to deal with English terminology and as teaching assistants they need to use varieties of Spanish to communicate with their students.

The influx of international graduate students is part of a recent trend in education. In recent years, international students went to the United States in search of educational opportunities. The report from the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) indicated that in February 2015, there were approximately 1.13 million international students in the continental U.S. They also highlighted the number of students registered in 2015 increased 15% when compared to 2014. Although reasons to study in another country vary, one of the main motives international students study abroad is to increase their chances of obtaining a job. Altbach (2015) indicated, “in many developing countries a foreign degree has greater cachet than a local qualification. It is also true that in some countries local students unable to qualify for local institutions can gain admission to institutions overseas” (p. 3). Many international students take advantage of their graduate degree opportunity to improve or learn English to position themselves better in the workforce. The UPRM is currently the only Land Grant institution on the island and has historically been worldly recognized as an engineering and agricultural school.

While the university does not specifically define the term bilingual, the university still states the following policy:

Today, the Mayaguez Campus of the University of Puerto Rico continues its development in the best tradition of a Land Grant institution. It is a co-educational, bilingual, and nonsectarian school comprising the Colleges of Agricultural Sciences, Arts and Sciences, Business and Engineering. (University of Puerto Rico Mayaguez Campus Undergraduate Catalogue 2013–2014, 1)

Specifically relating to the policy regarding the language of instruction, the catalogue states:

Spanish is the language of instruction in most courses at UPRM, but students are required to have a working knowledge of the English language. The individual professor decides the language used in class lectures and in student evaluation activities. (University of Puerto Rico Mayaguez Campus € Undergraduate Catalogue 2013–2014, 69)

This policy shows that there is a degree of ambiguity in terms of language of instruction. Instructors and professors have the liberty of choosing the language of their preference for teaching as well as the books, powerpoints, and other classroom materials. This ambiguity is quite common for most learners born in Puerto Rico, but not for students that come from other countries where they have more monolingual language and institutional policies. This in turn propelled me to develop English courses specifically designed for international graduate students.

After working for 3 years at a language institute in the Southeastern region of the United States, I returned to the University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez Campus (UPRM) and inquired about English classes and learning opportunities for international students. At that time, UPRM had not developed a specific English program or classes for international graduate students. The director of the English department indicated that international students were constantly inquiring about an English course to enhance their possibilities to succeed at the graduate level. I offered a one-credit course titled English for International Students (INTD 6007) on Saturdays to help

international graduate students with their English skills. During those three consecutive semesters, I taught 42 international students, which represents one fourth of the international graduate student population at the university (OIIP: Oficina de Investigación Institucional y Planificación)¹. In an unofficial assessment of the course students indicated this class provided an opportunity to enhance their English skills. In addition, the class served as a space for them to inquire about certain moments where their Puerto Rican classmates, professors (me included), and students used English and Spanish interchangeably in their everyday lives. Those student inquiries about the language used on the island, and the lack of English classes for international students unintentionally defined my subsequent interest in international graduate teaching assistant perceptions of English and Spanish in the superdiverse context of Puerto Rico. The following section discusses the context of UPRM and the fields of study for international graduate students.

UPRM Context: International Student Population and Fields of Study

The University of Puerto Rico was founded in 1903 with the help of a land grant from the United States government. According to stateuniversity.com the campus of Mayagüez began as the College of Agriculture. Years later, the campus went through a curricular addition and added engineering degrees, otherwise known as “Artes Mecánicas” (Mechanical Arts). Thus, the university was renamed as the College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts (or CAAM according to its Spanish initials). This university reform led to an expansion in course offerings, with the addition of science, engineering, and shortly afterwards arts. It was not until 1966 that these faculties were broken into independent areas. At present, the UPRM has four colleges with

¹ Translates into Office of Planning and Institutional Investigation

Engineering and Agriculture Sciences being the original two and Business Administration and Arts and Sciences.

The University of Puerto Rico system consists of 11 institutions spread throughout Puerto Rico. UPRM is recognized as one of the most prestigious universities locally and internationally. It has 38 master degree programs and five doctoral degrees. What makes UPRM an even more prestigious and unique case is that it is the only government higher education public university that offers graduate programs in Agriculture and Engineering. According to Figueroa, Morales, and Sharma (2012), the College of Agricultural sciences has nine programs:

1. Agricultural Economics (M.S.)
2. Agricultural Education (M.S.)
3. Agricultural Extension (M.S.)
4. Agronomy (M.S.)
5. Animal Science (M.S.)
6. Crop Protection (M.S.)
7. Food Science and Technology (M.S.)
8. Horticulture (M.S.)
9. Soils (M.S.)

The College of Engineering has six Masters programs:

1. Chemical Engineering
2. Civil Engineering
3. Computer Engineering
4. Electrical Engineering
5. Industrial Engineering

6. Mechanical Engineering

Engineering also offers three Ph.D. programs:

1. Chemical Engineering,
2. Computer and Information Sciences and Engineering
3. Civil Engineering Infrastructure and Environmental Options

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) related fields are the programs that house the majority of international graduate students. According to the Oficina de Investigación Institucional y Planificación (OIIP), in the 2015-2016 academic year, a total of 12,271 students enrolled in UPRM, of which 92% (11,771) were undergraduate students, leaving the remaining 8% (1,000) of students to be the ones registered in graduate programs.

International graduate students² represent around 22% (227) of graduate student enrollment. Of those 227 graduate students, 212 came from countries where Spanish is the first language (Puerto Rico not included). In 2011, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) indicated that the language of instruction was a significant factor for international graduate student selection of a university. In 2011, of the 212 UPRM alumni graduate students, 81% (166 students) of them were enrolled in STEM related fields with the two most common faculties being engineering with 94 students and general sciences with 72 students. The majority of said students were from Spanish speaking countries such as Colombia, Peru, and Dominican Republic.

The idea of living in the Caribbean for a few years, inexpensive rent, and studying at a US accredited university are some of the factors that attract prospective international graduate students to UPRM. However, international students quickly learn that Spanish first is not the

² International students in this will be those who do not have American citizenship.

case at UPRM. In this institution, both English and Spanish are commonly used in assessments, assignments, materials, or lectures. Mazak, Rivera, and Soto (2016) documented the open language strategies of a Psychology course, where the professor and students used English and Spanish without limitation. Spanish and English were used in different modalities, ranging from PowerPoint presentations in Spanish with an explanation in English, exams with both English and Spanish intertwined in the prompts, and student responses in both languages. In addition to language policy in the classroom, there is a lack of follow up on requirements for gaining admission into graduate school at UPRM. This lack of policy has allowed international teaching assistants to be accepted to the university with essentially their transcripts, letters of recommendation, and the application form. Therefore, international graduate students who arrive to the university are more reliant on their Spanish language background and not prepared for the language challenges, and functions at UPRM.

Functions of English and Spanish in Puerto Rico

Puerto Rico, an island in the Caribbean, has approximately 3.4 million inhabitants. Four hundred years after its discovery and colonization, the Spanish government approved a plan that allowed a local elected parliament to govern the island, while still continuing under the rule of the Spaniards. Before that plan could take place, the Spanish-American war in 1898 changed the course of action of Puerto Rico and its citizens. This war led Spain to cede Puerto Rico to the United States in 1898, under the terms of the Treaty of Paris. In 1917, the Jones Act declared Puerto Rico an unincorporated territory, and granted U.S. citizenship to all residents that were in favor. As a Commonwealth, Puerto Rico enjoys the benefits of U.S. citizenship; it takes national pride with its Olympic and Miss Universe representation, and has benefited greatly with the government and media using English in different scenarios. Traditionally, countries that go

through countless years of sovereignty, especially those associated with the United States, experience gradual language shift (Fishman, Conrad, & Rubal-Lopez, 1996). This is not the case for Puerto Rico, even though the island has gone through several proposals and rejected a House bill to make English the language of instruction in Puerto Rico's public schools (Issue Briefing: Puerto Rico, 1999). In 1991, the Puerto Rican legislature passed a law that made Spanish, the sole official language. That law was short lived, and in two years Puerto Rico went back to its policy of having English and Spanish as co-official languages. Since language contact and policy are strongly linked to the island's political status in relation to the United States; support for one of the three language options (Spanish only, English only, Spanish and English as co-official languages) are set to be directly and indirectly associated with the three main political parties of the island (Independent party, Statehood party, and Commonwealth party). Even with the amount of language contact that Puerto Ricans have with the English language, islanders have shown resistance to adopt English as the official language of all government related areas and require both Spanish and English translations for official documents.

According to Pousada (2008) the opposition of many Puerto Ricans to learn English is a form of resistance to US culture dominance. Although supporters for Puerto Rico's independence exist, it is a small minority that has little to no impact in political elections. The real political division exists between the parties that support the commonwealth status (Estado Libre Asociado "free associated state or commonwealth") and those who are pro-statehood. Those who support the pro-statehood part are automatically associated with the English language. Even though the US has occupied Puerto Rico for over 110 years, 21 percent of Spanish speaking Puerto Ricans report that they do not speak English well (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003). This resistance toward language has also transferred to other relationship aspects with the

United States, specifically within economy, culture, and politics. Basically, the history of the English language is one filled with complications, and varied perspectives. This has brought a confusing conflict for Puerto Rican children who do not know how to approach language on the island. English has long been viewed on the island as both a tool of liberation and an instrument of oppression. Pousada (1999) discussed how children on the island are exposed to the notion of English being vital for educational and professional advancement. She also emphasized that learning English will potentially endanger their Puerto Rican identity. Consequently, it is often assumed that promoting bilingual education or educational programs that place a significant importance on English education is in some way moving away from “true” Puerto Ricanness and in the direction of statehood (Algren de Gutiérrez, 1987; Morris, 1995; Morris, 1996).

Puerto Ricans are aware that language is a crucial to have a successful career. Culture and social context play a vital role in constructing the type of language user that a person develops into. Thus, to maintain some middle ground, Puerto Ricans opted for a hybridized form of Puerto Rican Spanish, which included English words manipulated to fit Spanish rules. Speakers of the non-defined mixture of Spanish and/or English are judged as “different,” or “sloppy” speakers of Spanish and/or English, and are often labeled verbally deprived, alingual, or deficient bilinguals because supposedly they do not have the ability to speak either English or Spanish well (Acosta-Belén, 1975, p. 151). A well-known example within the context of Puerto Rican Spanish is the word ‘break.’ One of the many meanings of the word, *break* in English is a recess, or period of time in which we can relax or do something not pertaining to work. In English, we could modify with the addition of the past tense morpheme –ed we say broke (*We broke at 6*). In Spanish, we do not add –ed, we have modified the word to the point where if we want a break we say ‘dame un *breakesito*’ which in this case is the diminutive form of break. Another example is the

word 'park' from the verb to halt a vehicle. In Puerto Rico, speakers have adapted 'to park' into 'parquear'. The morphological change lies within the -k switching towards a -q because Spanish has a word similar in spelling "parque" which translates into the recreational version of "park". Puerto Ricans of all ages use these forms and are scrutinized because of their hybrid language use.

According to Pousada (2008), "Bilingualism and language contact (primarily between Spanish and English) are topics of great interest and controversy in Puerto Rico, linked as they are to the burning issues of cultural identity, political status, pedagogy, and economic development" (p. 4). As explained earlier, Puerto Ricans have been opposed to the implementation of English as the official language. To this day Spanish remains the language of community life on the island and continues to be taught since first grade, while maintaining co-official language status on the island. Puerto Ricans on the island view Spanish as the language of the people, while English is viewed as a necessary tool to survive, and progress. This notion has caused great controversy in determining everyday matters like the linguistic landscape of our street signs, and most importantly, issues regarding language policies of our public school and university system. Spanish on the island is constantly developing due to its interactions with the English language and colonial status. This exploration of language attitudes, colonial language issues, and policy has led to multiple examinations of Puerto Rican literacy practices. Although this study focuses on international teaching assistants on the island, it depicts how bilingualism functions in Puerto Rico, which portrays a more complete picture of international students understanding and struggle with the languages used. Similar to Mazak's (2008) study on Puerto Rican's English literacy practices, my study shows the diversity of language practices on the island, through the lens of international graduate teaching assistants. In addition, I shed light on

the problematic notion of globalization and how the participants of this study are not equipped to encounter the challenges of the UPRM system.

International Graduate Assistants at UPRM: A Superdiverse Community

In this study, I observed for one full semester the English and Spanish language perceptions of three international graduate teaching assistants at the University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez campus. I analyzed the language perceptions of the participants who matriculated in graduate classes and who taught undergraduate students as a part of their assistantship. Though it is generally agreed that international graduate students who study at UPRM will have to use English at some point in their program, no specific language policy exists as to how English and Spanish should be used to teach content across the university curriculum for graduate programs (Mazak & Herbas-Donoso, 2014). This belief was confirmed through a pilot focus group in the spring of 2016. Throughout the pilot interview, international graduate students from different graduate programs felt uneasy and nervous about being instructors in the classroom. The pilot participants indicated the way Puerto Ricans mixed languages and referred to scientific terms in English was surprising and something that they were not accustomed to. Instead, professors from their respective countries taught the terms only in Spanish. The result is that classes use a variety of different linguistic and non-linguistic combinations to present course material. For example, professors in engineering and agriculture use English and Spanish drawing from their different linguistic repertoires in order to convey meaning and communicate in the classes they teach (Mazak & Herbas-Donoso, 2014). Although there is evidence from Mazak and Herbas-Donoso's (2014) study that these various linguistic combinations exist, little systematic or empirical data has been collected about the ways in which international students learn to use English in the classroom. This is just one of the many examples of difficulties that this study delves into in

order to understand how language works on campus and the impact on international graduate students.

As a current faculty member of the English department, I am concerned with the international graduate student community at UPRM. The participants in the study are graduate teaching assistants. It is worth noting that a teaching assistant has a different role and responsibilities at UPRM versus the conventional teaching assistant in the United States. Traditionally, in the United States a teaching assistant aids a professor with grading or other responsibilities. At UPRM, teaching assistants are instructors of record who are in charge of preparing and teaching the course. A professor does not accompany the teaching assistant; instead, the teaching assistant teaches the course material and grade all of the assignments.

UPRM welcomes many international graduate students on a yearly basis. However, no formal research has been conducted on their language perceptions or discursive practices and translanguaging. In addition, only one study has looked at the patterns and needs of international students in the UPRM context. Buchanan's (2014) masters thesis provided insights on Colombian graduate students' migration to UPRM. Her study showed that low costs, personal connections at the university, academic prestige of the UPRM, and English language access are all motivating factors for this particular population in migrating to Puerto Rico to pursue graduate programs at UPRM. As mentioned before, many international students apply to graduate school in Puerto Rico because it allows them to engage in an academic environment where English and Spanish are used almost simultaneously. These factors have brought forth a strong community of students from Central and South America. The international student population at UPRM has made the community superdiverse.

Currently, walking around campus one can hear a variety of different languages or variations of one language. Even though the group of international graduate students might be small in comparison to the amount of Puerto Ricans, they still have an impact on linguistic and social dynamics of the UPRM and small community pockets around Mayagüez. UPRM's influx of international students and how these contribute in new and different practices at UPRM exemplify Vertovec's (2007) concept of superdiversity. Vertovec solidified his stance on superdiversity and characterized it as "a tremendous increase in the categories of migrants, not only in terms of nationality, ethnicity, language, and religion, but also in terms of motives, patterns, and itineraries of migration, processes of insertion into the labour and housing markets of the host societies, and so on" (cf. Vertovec, 2010). Puerto Rico's history with the United States and strategic location in the Caribbean has always made it superdiverse. The various shipping ports, and constitutional status of the island are some of the reasons why Puerto Rico has always been superdiverse. This superdiversity has made the island a very unique, and appealing destination for university studies. The majority of international graduate students in engineering and agriculture come from a variety of Spanish speaking countries in South America and the Caribbean. Due to the different varieties of Spanish and other languages, this context displays a unique setting where different linguistic repertoires are intertwined. For example, a student from Colombia interacting with a student from Dominican Republic while sharing an office or socializing outside of the formal context of the classroom speak a mix of varieties from Colombian, Dominican, and Puerto Rican Spanish as well as English. These international graduate assistants are consistently accessing linguistic resources as a tool for engaging and establishing roots in the UPRM community. The opportunity to study in a U.S. accredited university located in a mainly Spanish-speaking island, is an important factor for international

graduate students. However, one caveat is that even though Puerto Rico is an island in which people use Spanish for the majority of everyday tasks, this is not necessarily the reality of academia. Most academic materials at the UPRM are in English. Everything from textbooks (Mazak & Herbas-Donoso, 2014) to PowerPoint presentations are in English, or even a combination of English and Spanish.

Beyond completion of a degree, international teaching assistants also seek to improve their English language skills. UPRM serves as a bridge for them to obtain a better education that will potentially lead to jobs and other graduate programs in English speaking countries. The implications for the formal setting in which they teach is an intrinsic area for the analysis of the context of international students pursuing a graduate degree; where both English and Spanish are used in formal instruction. Since, there are no major studies that examine language practices of this community at UPRM, this study serves as an example of the language practices. Although I cannot generalize the discoveries from this dissertation, I do provide some assertions that may be replicated in similar contexts where a variety of linguistic repertoires are salient in one or more languages due to the globalization and need for more English as the language of academia.

In order to study these areas, I analyzed two different roles for each individual in an attempt to understand how they use language and navigate through the superdiverse context of UPRM. The analysis of these roles is separated into the following categories:

1. Graduate student
2. Teaching assistant/instructor

These different roles allow for a much more differentiated account of the participants' *communicative repertoire* (Zentz, 2014) as it emerges through multiple avenues and helps depict a more complete picture of language strategies and practices. These current approaches also

incorporate the need to reconsider how scholars understand and conduct research in more dynamic and diverse contexts. For instance, the use of English and Spanish and its varieties based on geographical background and nationalities (i.e., Colombians and other international students living and studying in Puerto Rico) are essential in the study of such academic contexts. These specific communities are currently being studied through the lens of different approaches.

Justification

Translanguaging practices are documented in a variety of studies at UPRM over the past few years (Mazak & Herbas-Donoso, 2014; Mazak, Rivera, & Soto, 2016; Paige-Buchanan, 2014). Translanguaging refers to a set of language practices that a person can use to better communicate with those in his/her world. These practices can range but are not limited to a discussion of a text in one language, while checking for comprehension or answering in another language (Canagarajah, 2011; García & Sylvan, 2011; Mazak & Herbas-Donoso, 2014). Even though this is the reality for many UPRM students, the opportunities for such type of language practice is almost non-existent. When international graduate students commence their studies at UPRM it can prove difficult to adapt and succeed in their graduate studies.

Rationale for the Inquiry

Many international students attend UPRM because it is a United States accredited university and has English and Spanish as co-official languages. UPRM serves as a potential springboard for international students who wish to pursue other degrees, or work in the United States. Since the UPRM is a US accredited university located in a mainly Spanish speaking island, many international students apply because of the mainly ‘Spanish language’ use on the island. However, once international graduate students arrive to UPRM they struggle largely because of English deficiencies. The university does not provide the necessary tools to improve

their English language at the academic level, or even prepare them for English language challenges once they conclude their university studies. This lack of support is apparent through the availability of only one graduate English course offered upon request³ and the large numbers of international graduate students inquire to the English department for information about English language courses. In this dissertation, I explore the language perceptions and challenges of three international teaching assistants throughout the academic semester at UPRM.

When international graduate students transition to an institution, such as UPRM, where language policies are not clearly defined (Mazak & Herbas-Donoso, 2014) it can prove difficult to adapt and succeed in their graduate studies. Several studies have explored English use at UPRM, for example, the language of science at UPRM (Mazak & Herbas-Donoso, 2014); the effects of a translanguaging classroom (Mazak, Rivera, & Soto, 2016); and, student mobility at UPRM (Paige-Buchanan, 2014). The existing literature indicates there is little research that documents international graduate assistants' language expectations in both as a student and teaching assistant. The discoveries from this study will add to the extant literature.

Dissertation Overview

This dissertation focuses on documenting language perceptions of international graduate assistants in their classroom and teaching environment. Students come with a small English background to the UPRM. However, these academic English skills are not enough to succeed at the graduate level.

The second chapter begins with an overview of the literature pertaining to earlier accounts of bilingualism (Bloomfield, 1933; Haugen, 1968), the proposal of linguistic interdependence (Cummins, 1979), the dynamic conceptualization of bilingualism (Grosjean,

³ INTD 6007 (English for International Graduate students) course offered upon request

1982), and the elimination of the concept of bilingualism altogether and translanguaging as the new discursive norm (Wei, 2011). The literature review shifts towards bilingualism in the context of UPRM. This section delves into early policies and political movements that have led to a co-official language status in Puerto Rico. I highlighted research on bilingualism in PR, with an overview of a few studies that have looked at translanguaging at UPRM. I also establish the connection between translanguaging and superdiversity (Blommaert & Rampton, 2011) as it relates to L2 identity in Puerto Rico.

Chapter three discusses the methodological approach. The section starts with an explanation of the interpretivist framework (Crotty, 1998) and how it allows for a holistic perspective, while simultaneously taking into account the complexity of a socially constructed reality. In addition to the interpretivists approach, I use Yin's 2003 exploratory descriptive case study perspective to solidify my stance on taking an emic approach for data collection because of the unpredictability and nature of the study. I discuss studies that have taken a qualitative approach and show the parallels with my study and how that influenced my methods and instruments for this study. This section also delineates my position in the UPRM and how the researcher's role is an influence in recruitment. Finally, I highlight some of the study's limitations and conclusions.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Early Definitions of Bilingualism

The term bilingualism has been difficult to operationalize and define due to its complex and dynamic nature. Early accounts of bilingualism such as Bloomfield (1933) and Haugen (1968) described it with categories, scales, and or other forms of measuring the knowledge or ability of the speaker. Bloomfield (1933) argued that to be bilingual, the individual must possess ‘native like control’ as the only sign of bilingualism. This epistemological perspective views the learning or use of a second language as two monolinguals in one brain. Another earlier account was Weinreich’s (1953) definition of bilingualism as someone who possessed and could effectively use one of the four target language skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking). The perspective started to acknowledge that bilinguals do not learn all skills simultaneously or that we do necessarily possess the same level of proficiency in all four-language skills. Haugen (1953) opposed this definition and characterized bilinguals as being able to produce meaningful utterances in the other language. Several years later, Haugen (1956) would refer loosely to bilingual as anyone who knows more than two languages, including plurilingual, multilingual or a polyglot. Despite the emphasis on proposing different definitions, bilingualism, multilingualism, and plurilingualism essentially refers to knowing a number of autonomous languages. These earlier accounts of bilingualism position languages as additive, or as separate units. These theories of how people learn languages are based on the philosophical underpinning or epistemological belief that individuals can learn and use languages at the same level of proficiency in order to be defined as a bilingual. From these perspectives, bilinguals are

categorized based on their ability to function or communicate effectively in two languages in the different and complex types of interaction they encounter in their daily lives.

These earlier accounts of bilingualism, although treated as self-contained systems, have evolved due to the complexities of the different contexts and language contact environments. Scholars began to look at language interference and speakers deviated from the norm because of their familiarity with one or more languages. Skutnabb-Kangas and Toukoma (1976) study of Finnish migrant children attending Swedish schools, looked at the extent to which the L2 was learned based on the L1. The participants had below level skills in both Finnish and Swedish in accordance with Swedish norms, and concluded that the development of mother tongue influenced the ability to learn Swedish. Cummins' (1979) hypothesis was one of the first steps in viewing languages as dual rather than separate entities. His central thesis examined two main input factors: conceptual-linguistic knowledge, and motivation to learn L2 and maintain L1. His interdependence hypothesis looked at the correlation between verbal and nonverbal ability in L1 and L2 Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency. This hypothesis also confirmed strong correlation between L1 and L2, language aptitude and IQ variables. In this bilingualism model, a bilingual's L2 competence is partially a function of competence that the child has developed in his L1, and makes possible the development of similar levels of competence in L2. In sum, he proposed the notion of cognitive interdependence, which suggested that systematically different languages could transfer linguistic practices. Cognitivists are interested in what happens in the learner's head, specifically the mental process and when learning occurs. Even though these epistemologies laid the foundational work for the field of bilingualism, these theories do not consider the entire macro analysis of how language use differs based on cultural and social contexts (e.g., academic) as well as historical factors (e.g., migration patterns). These views do

not consider entirely how interaction factors are intertwined to make meaning and communicate effectively. This prompted applied linguists to take a more dynamic approach to bilingual language use.

The following sections depict the dynamic lens of bilingualism from Grosjean (1980) to García and Wei (2014). I discuss studies of bilingualism in the Puerto Rican context and its current landscape, specifically in higher education. Thereafter, I highlight translanguaging literature and how it connects with the Puerto Rican context. I also examine several translanguaging studies that apply to educational contexts and follow that up with how the integration of multiple communities leads to a diversification of the language practices through superdiversity. Additionally, I provide linguistic landscape images that show Puerto Rican superdiversity examples at the UPRM. Once I discuss these signs and their significance to the Puerto Rican context, I further the relevancy of those signs through an explanation of research on L2 identity and follow it up with a focus on bilingualism and Puerto Rico. Finally, I connect translanguaging with superdiversity and its applicability to the Puerto Rican context.

Bilingualism as Dynamic

Since the early 1980s, applied linguists began to make a case for bilingualism as a dynamic construct. Grosjean (1982) was the first to argue for the reexamining of the two monolinguals in one person. In his book *Life with Two Languages*, Grosjean discusses social and political conditions that arise when two languages come into contact and how language policies affected minorities (or superdiverse, which will be discussed at length) in different domains. Grosjean, specifically focused on the psychological and social factors that lead bilinguals to shift between languages, but more importantly placed the focus of bilingualism on the user, and not the language itself.

The shift from language itself to user brought forth a change from a cognitive perspective to a socio-psychological perspective. Horowitz (2000) indicated that L2 learners' differences evolved over the decades, leading to a surge in literature focused on individual differences. She reports a significant change in the labels used to refer to individual differences. Whereas earlier learners were seen as innately gifted with or lacking in language learning skills, researchers characterized in terms of skills and predispositions that influence learning in complex ways. This change of perspective put an end to the primary concern of selecting specific learners to acquire a foreign language and focused more on how to predict which learners would succeed. Individual differences laid the groundwork for a more transformational look into Second Language Acquisition research and weaved multiple disciplines to further understand how people learn and adapt to language.

Similar to the impact of socio-psychological perspective to language, Dynamic Systems Theory (DST) changed the outlook from acquisition to development. Long's (1993) definition of SLA aligns well with the change of focus from acquisition:

SLA theory encompasses the simultaneous and sequential acquisition and loss of second, third, fourth, etc. languages and dialects by children and adults learning naturalistically or with the aid of instruction, as individuals or in groups, in second or or foreign language settings (225).

This definition marks a significant change in the linguistic approach to recognizing learners and communities as complex and dynamic. One of the main issues is the interaction in timescales: essentially a change in the retrieval of lexical items and how those impact second language production. De Bot and Lowie (2010) looked at the development and variation of word naming latencies in a longitudinal case study over a period of 3 years. They show that the context

of language use at larger time scales affects language processing at the millisecond level. Therefore, a DST approach emphasizes spatial and temporal dynamics, which before DST were ignored by the linguistic community. DST also allows scholars to merge psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic aspects to offer a more integrative approach to research.

Dynamic Systems Theory (Herdina & Jessner, 2002) promotes an interaction between internal cognitive ecosystems and external social ecosystems. This allows language to be co-constructed between people and their environments. Stemming from a DST perspective, translanguaging is a creative process that focuses on agent interactions, rather than belonging to a specific language system. This would entail that the concepts of bilingualism, plurilingualism and multilingualism would be dismissed (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007).

García and Wei (2014) propose that bilingualism is dynamic: “the language practices of bilinguals are complex and interrelated; they do not emerge in a linear way or function separately since there is only one linguistic system” (p. 14). The dynamic bilingualism model is completely opposite from the traditional bilingualism model, which places languages as autonomous linguistic systems. In addition, dynamic bilingualism is different from Cummins (1979) *linguistic interdependence* model because it still delineates L1 and L2 and separate linguistic features, unlike the dynamic bilingualism model which posits one linguistic system. Mazak, Rivera, and Soto (2016) suggest that “In this process of dynamic bilingualism, bilinguals have agency to continually remake the world through the languaging as they negotiate artificially imposed borders between “languages” in order to exercise their entire communicative repertoire” (p. 216). Therefore, dynamic bilingualism serves as a venue to expand not only linguistics within academia, but also to negotiate meaning and communication overall while considering two linguistic features. This model of dynamic bilingualism for the purposes of this review will be

related to the theory of translanguaging and encompasses the operational definition for my proposed study. The next section provides a contextual understanding of the setting of Puerto Rico and establishes the connection between translanguaging and bilingualism in higher education.

Bilingualism: Case of Puerto Rico and UPRM

Puerto Rico is a US territory in which Spanish and English are co-official languages. At one such institution in Puerto Rico, the University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez (UPRM), the language of administrative duties is Spanish, but the classes (not just in the English Department) can be in either Spanish or English, or through translanguaging. Mazak and Herbas-Donoso (2014) indicate that use of multiple languages happens because “no official policy exists on the language of instruction, materials, texts, or assessment at UPRM” (p. 28). The professor decides the language of books, lectures, and assignments. A student might enroll in a science course like Biology, Chemistry, or Physics using a textbook in English, while receiving a lecture in Spanish. These practices are a part of their classes as students, and are reflected in their assistantships. Clear examples of these bilingual practices are portrayed through various studies at UPRM.

Adrian Rivera (2015) assessed students’ perception of translanguaging practices held in a psychology class of UPRM. The professor of this course utilized a “flexible bilingual pedagogical approach to teaching” (ii) in, which students were allowed to use the language of preference. Students were offered two surveys: Student Background Survey and Significant Language Attitude Survey Data. The results reflected in its majority how students perceived code-switching as “appropriate, normal, and respectful” (Rivera, 2015, p. 49), when it came to the following certain criteria:

1. Student agreement on the practice of code-switching and translanguaging in the classroom as an appropriate one.
2. Considering translanguaging in the classroom as professional and respectful practice on behalf of the professor
3. Student agreement or indifference in regards of other professors code-switching in the classroom.

Mazak, Rivera, and Soto (2016) conducted a qualitative study where a neuropsychology class was the scenario of a bilingual practice where the professor offered three sections of this course through three formats of instructions: Spanish, English or Both (Spanish and English). This study examined the outcome of psychology majors while answering a written exam, paying special attention to the linguistic feature of translanguaging and how these were portrayed on the answers of nine open-ended questions. This course involved the development of exams, quizzes, and class material in both English and Spanish. The study was held in a university in, which “students were all upper-level graduate, all Puerto Ricans, and all on the continuum of Spanish/English bilingualism” (Mazak, et al., 2016, p. 219). This bilingual-based medium of instruction might have not represented a limitation in regards to the outcome of these students. All students employed translanguaging practices while answering their exams, yet more noticeable was the performance and scores of students across formats of instructions. Students who belonged to the section where both languages were used scored overall an 89% when compared with individual languages of instructions that scored a 75% for English and 77% for Spanish. From these statistics, one can infer that students who perform in a dynamic bilingual manner, “... allows teachers to “assess students’ languaging and knowledge- making, regardless of language form” (p. 134).

The rich sociocultural and political history of Puerto Rico has created an environment where multiple language use is considered the norm on the island. Studies have focused on the language diversity and different language ideologies that exists on the island (Carroll, 2008; Dayton & Blau, 1997; Duany, 2000; Mazak, 2008; Mazak & Herbas-Donoso, 2014). Dayton and Blau (1997) conducted a study of how Puerto Rican Spanish influenced the way in which use certain words in English (it is a form of translanguaging without the terminology in that year). Carroll (2008) analyzed different language components that appeared on Puerto Ricans MySpace page, and results showed that Puerto Ricans make a conscious effort in incorporating English in their pages to attract a broader audience to become “friends” or visit their page. He concluded that many Puerto Rican users of MySpace.com live in a bilingual linguistic reality floating between Spanish and English. This study is one of the few that has depicted language use outside of the classroom in the Puerto Rican context. Recently, Mazak and Herbas-Donoso (2014) conducted an ethnographic case study to describe one professor’s translanguaging practices. Through their analysis of an undergraduate science classroom, translanguaging served to apprentice the Spanish-dominant students into English for scientific purposes. They also concluded that translanguaging could help develop academic discourses in both English and Spanish.

It is worth mentioning that other prominent scholarly work has focused on language issues in Puerto Rico (Algren de Gutiérrez, E. A., 1987; Blau & Dayton, 1997; Pousada, 1999; Vélez, 2000) but with a focus on language maintenance and resistance. This study adds to the literature of language in Puerto Rico, translanguaging, superdiversity, and highlights the English and Spanish language perceptions of international teaching assistants upon arrival to the UPRM. Although these studies looked at translanguaging (Mazak & Herbas-Donoso, 2014) and

superdiversity (Mazak & Carroll, 2018), neither looked at analyzing a target population that is new to the context of Puerto Rico. In the following section, I explain the concept of translanguaging and relevant research in the context of Puerto Rico.

Translanguaging

Cen Williams coined the term “translanguaging” (1994) and originally referred to it as pedagogical receptive or productive language practice. Even though Williams coined the term, it was Baker who first translated the Welsh term translanguaging and defined it as “the process of making meaning, shaping experiences, gaining understanding and knowledge through the use of two languages” (p. 288). Although this definition does cover the general idea of translanguaging, it is limited to two languages, which is not suitable with the characteristics of dynamic bilingualism. Similarly, Lewis, Jones, and Baker (2012) also limit translanguaging to two languages and refer to it as “*both* languages are used in dynamic and functionally integrated manner to organize and mediate mental processes...” (p. 1). Canagarajah (2011) defined translanguaging as “the ability of multilingual speakers to shuttle between languages, treating the diverse languages that form their repertoire as an integrated system” (p. 401). Although this definition does not limit translanguaging to two languages, Canagarajah later adds the concept of “multicompetence” to translanguaging. This is somewhat challenging because multicompetence (Cook, 2008) refers to the resources of the individual as an interconnected whole and therefore reduces language to abstract and single structures, which in itself is ambiguous and problematic (García & Wei, 2014). Other scholars like García and Sylvan (2011) define translanguaging as “the process by which bilingual students and teachers engage in complex discursive practices in order to ‘make sense’ of, and communicate in, multilingual classrooms” (p. 389). This definition is similar to Williams’s (1994) original proposal of translanguaging. William’s definition limits

the context of translanguaging to the process of students and teachers and does not take into account other agents and environments that are pivotal to understanding all language practices. For this study, I use Wei's (2011) conceptualization of translanguaging, which she defines as practices that go between different linguistic systems and modalities and go beyond them and further argues that going beyond language transforms language and embraces creativity and criticality (see also García & Wei, 2014). The environment in which these participants engage, is one that is unfamiliar and promotes a translanguaging ideology. Puerto Ricans have manipulated and combined multiple languages is not common for the international graduate student who arrives to the UPRM. The following section discusses the impact of translanguaging in educational settings and how these practices are becoming a much more consistent factor in education.

Translanguaging in Education and Literacy Practices

The growth of translanguaging studies has created a new wave of emancipation to 20th century bilingualism that was depicted through a monolingual lens. The first translanguaging studies focused on the pedagogical implications of language. Cummins⁴ (2008) was one of the first to question the separation of linguistic resources in the classroom. He challenged the two solitudes approach in education and concluded that languages needed to be interdependent in order to enable cross-linguistic reference. In another attempt to understand bilingual pedagogy, Blackledge and Creese (2010) focused on flexible bilingualism within a Gujarati and Chinese community language school in the United Kingdom. Their conclusions support the elimination of monolingual teaching perspectives and redirect its focus towards adapting bilingual strategies in the bilingual classroom. Bartlett and García (2011) carried out a four-year ethnographic study

⁴ Although the work that is most associated with translanguaging was his 2008 piece, Cummins had been advocating and working with bilingualism for over 30 years.

of Luperon (high school) and examined its educational policies and how this ultimately affected its curriculum. The authors used a multi-methodological approach of classroom observations, interviews to, faculty, students, and parents; and organized focus groups with newly arrived students (with special attention paid to six focal students). These studies led to a reexamination of literacy practices that for the most part took place in classroom settings, but placed a heavier focus on reading and writing. Estyn's (2002) account of dual literacy in the Welsh classroom helped establish the utilization of multiple languages in the classroom that essentially 'transfer' from one language to the other. On the other hand, Hornberger (2003) provides a theoretical lens in which translanguaging could be conceptualized and contextualized through her coined term *continua of biliteracy*. Hornberger (2003), and Hornberger and Link (2012) show how educational context can provide the appropriate space to innovate and explore curricula and practices that value multiple languages. Although the term translanguaging is not used directly, Gutierrez (2008) presents the concept of a third space in what she has deemed as "sociocritical literacy," which is privileged and dependent on the student's sociohistorical lives. Through this study, "hybrid language" is used to contest traditional concepts of academic literacy. Similarly, García (2009) utilized translanguaging to go beyond pedagogic variation of output and input of language. She favors its use as a tool to help shape meaning and make sense of the bilingual worlds that most 21st century people live in today. García generalizes translanguaging as a necessary practice to survive in cities like New York, and makes it more of a reality for the dynamic of being in other environments such as home and streets.

Other studies in translanguaging placed a focus on discursive patterns among bilinguals. Heller (1999) and Contreras (2011) bring to our attention individuals interactions among discursive patterns that draw from linguistic and cultural resources used and highlight how

individuals position themselves in bilingual domains in studies. Translanguaging goes beyond describing a specific language used in domains. Heller (1999) looked at the socially constructed interactions among discursive patterns of Franco-Canadians and invited researchers to look at people interacting, and drawing for their cultural and linguistic resources, so as scholars we can define the linguistic resources that each possess. Contreras and Rivera (2017) called to our attention the different linguistic resources that Puerto Rican students use to communicate through text messages, and to not view them as detrimental or destructive to the language, but to embrace and acknowledge the multiple features that are being used simultaneously to convey message and meaning. Translanguaging serves as an umbrella term for different communicative modes that suit different orientations in education, rhetoric, literacy, and various subfields of linguistics. Recently, translingual practices have guided the rhetoric and composition field (Canagarajah, 2012; Hornery, Lu, Royster, & Trimbur, 2010). Canagarajah's (2011) study looked at Butaniah's codemeshing in academic writing through a classroom ethnography approach. This study was based on the assumption that it was possible for students to learn from translanguaging strategies while simultaneously developing proficiency. Shortly after, Canagrajah abandoned the translanguaging paradigm and began to advocate for a translingual perspective due to translanguaging focusing the majority of its attention on describing practice and not enough emphasis on treating meaning making as a social practice. Although translanguaging practices have placed a focus on cognition, I argue that translanguaging has gone beyond describing language use in relation cognitive behavior. Moreover, studies promote the exploration of social spaces as a means to support literacy practices (García & Sylvan, 2011; Heller, 1999; Hornberger & Link, 2012). These theories redefine the ever changing and complex relationship among speakers and the roles they assume as they use language. Identity plays a major role and is also

conceptualized as dynamic in nature, as language users navigate between different contexts and use multiple discursive practices based on how they position themselves in relation to these communities. Further, I explain how identity relates to translanguaging and establish a connection between the complexities of identities in superdiverse contexts.

Superdiversity

Over the past two decades, globalization has impacted the social, cultural, and linguistic diversity of communities all over the world. Recently, scholars in applied linguistics (Creese & Blackledge, 2010) have become more interested in superdiversity because it serves as the site of negotiations over linguistic resources. Vertovec (2007) coined the term superdiversity to study the migration process of the host societies and how they influenced and altered the social, cultural, and linguistic diversity of the community. Blommaert's (2013) study on Chinese text looked at how 'Chinese text' bears the traces of worldwide migration flows, and how the dynamics of these were seen through demographic, social, and cultural factors. The study emphasizes language varieties, and globally mobile scripts and how these impact different regions of the world. Although superdiversity is a relatively young field, it has rapidly made an impact on language policy and other academic disciplines.

Superdiversity is a theory that mainly focuses on migrants, societal conditions, and identifies their unpredictable nature. Even with the unpredictable nature of migration, other factors like emergence of new media, and technologies have made demographic and social change more complicated. Blommaert (2010) highlights that in increasingly diverse neighborhoods, extreme linguistic diversity may generate complex linguistic repertoires in which several (fragments of) 'migrant' languages and lingua francas are combined. According to Blommaert and Rampton (2011) "mobility, mixing, political dynamics and historical embedding

are now central concerns in the study of languages, language groups and communication” (p. 4). Superdiversity has helped frame mobility in language activities online. Varis and Wang (2011) applied superdiversity as a framework to analyze a Chinese rapper and his online activities. They conducted an analysis of MC Lianliang on different Chinese message boards (www.yyfc.com and *Baidu*), with a particular focus on multi-modal and translanguaging resources. Ambrosio and Simoes (2014) studied two non-traditional adult students perceptions of how the university played a role in the development of their plurilingual repertoires. They gathered data through biographical interviews and concluded that non-traditional adult students with more plurilingual experiences were more aware of their repertoire and valued higher education as an opportunity to further develop their language abilities. Another conclusion of the study highlighted that if the university promoted development of linguistic repertoires; it could possibly impact the students’ perception regarding learning language at an older age. Finally, Carroll and Mazak (2017) looked at the influence of internationalization on higher education and how this has forced universities to adjust or change language policies. They investigated the relationship between meso university language policies in Puerto Rico and their micro instantiations in an undergraduate psychology classroom at UPRM. While referring to Kaplan and Baldauf (1997) leveled policy distinction, Carroll and Mazak (2017) aligned these policies to the Puerto Rican context in the following way:

There is a clear macro level policy within the nation state of Puerto Rico where Spanish and English are co-official status. However at the meso (institutional) and micro (classroom) levels of higher education, language policies are much less defined. (2017)

The following table aligns the macro, meso, and micro policy concept within the context of where this study takes place for a better understanding of how these policies are portrayed in the UPRM context:

Table 1. Policy Levels in the UPRM Context

Policy type	Context	Condition
Macro level	Puerto Rico	Spanish and English as co-official languages
Meso level	University of Puerto Rico, Mayaguez Campus	Bilingual: The professor has “academic freedom”. Therefore, he/she chooses what medium of instruction will be used in the classroom setting.
Micro level	Abnormal Psychology Class	Spanish/English/Both languages can be used when it comes to performing in the class.

Nevertheless, Tollefson (1991) stated that all language policies, at the macro, meso, and micro level, are couched within the context and language ideologies present in the given nation-state, institution, and context they are implemented. Therefore, when considering the language policy of Puerto Rico, these represent a set of rules that establishes the language ideology of the island; and simultaneously justifies the immersion of bilingual practices in an academic context, and on a daily basis resulting in Puerto Rico to be considered a super-diverse island. They concluded and indicated that if language practices at the university are student centered, open language policies can be of benefit, which would mean that translanguaging would occur naturally at institutions in Puerto Rico.

These studies have laid the groundwork for analyzing multiple environments in superdiverse contexts and opened opportunities to look at the data collection of each one. My

study looks at teaching and student educational practices (Carroll & Mazak, 2017; Mazak & Herbas-Donoso, 2014) in superdiverse contexts. It will use Blommaert and Rampton's (2011) five foci for linguistic ethnography as a way of understanding the UPRM linguistic landscape, historical and political context and the influence of the language policy in the classroom. This study was not carried out as an ethnography; rather it was completed through several case studies conducted during one academic semester. Blommaert and Rampton's (2011) five developments of communication foci are:

1. The connotational significance of signs (Indexicality)- this aspect of communication places significance on language mixing, and switching. The 'switch' that occurs is not a haphazard action, instead it has significance.
2. Meaning is multimodal- combining varying modes, propelling language users to move away from language in a structured manner, and embrace a semiotic manner.
3. Indexicality and multimodality help to destabilize traditions in language study- this will allow for a mutual increase in sensitivity to a range of non-shared, asymmetrical interpretations. This helps people connect with different backgrounds, resources, communicative scripts, and places a focus on diversity.
4. Metapragmatic reflexivity about language and semiotic practice- this phenomenon where language users discuss language in context at the meta-level is now the object of empirical studies. I regard multilingual language use and metapragmatic reflexivity related thereto as one of the broad practices that students have within the UPRM community of practice.
5. Textual trajectories through a multi-scalar view of language go beyond the habitual, and travel through multiple settings.

The first of the communication developments focuses on the organic strategies of language use. In the case of UPRM, translanguaging practices are commonly seen inside and outside of the classroom. The following sign is an example of the mixing of languages and supports the Blommaert and Rampton's (2011) notion of switching not being a haphazard activity.



Image 1. Local shop advertisement

This advertisement for a dessert shop is representative of multiple languages used to convey meaning. It is common to see businesses with names in English, but somewhat uncommon for the name to be an idiomatic expression. However, because of the proximity with the UPRM, this has become common practice. In addition to the idiomatic name of the dessert shop, the names of their offerings also use multiple languages. Some words like *tres leches* and

merengue are universally accepted and used regardless of context. However, other examples like fudge, cupcakes, cheesecakes, muffins, and brownies do have translations but are not used in everyday Puerto Rico. If the term *muffin* were to appear as *mollete*, it would be highly likely that students and perhaps even the more general population would not understand what is being sold. This may not necessarily apply to our international students who have been accustomed to using the Spanish version. Similarly, this knowledge of specific Spanish terms also applies to their coursework and teaching assignments. This has proven to be more of a hindrance because of the bilingual policy at UPRM.

The second focus emphasizes multimodality and steps away from traditional language conventions. This allows for language users to not only use languages, but to also incorporate signs or other symbols to help communicate their intended message. The following is another example of a math tutor advertisement that uses multiple modes to communicate a message.

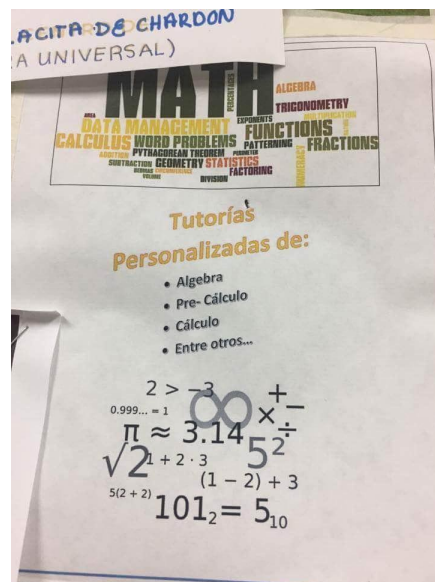


Image 2. Math advertisement using different modes

This advertisement is a clear representation of how UPRM students use multiple modes in their daily lives. The first part of the image is a “wordle” of popular terms associated with mathematics. All of the words in the “wordle” are either class subjects or technical terms in the

science of Mathematics. These technical terms in English align with Mazak and Herbas-Donoso's notion of English being the language of science. The middle part of the document is in Spanish and focuses on indicating what is being offered, which in this case is tutoring service and the courses. Important to note, when students register for courses, all of the course titles appear in Spanish, even the English courses. Finally, the bottom part of the document has symbols, equations, and signs associated with mathematics. There is no clear cohesion in regards to the placement of the symbols; rather they are placed with no particular order or structure. Moreover, it is quite common to see this type of advertisement around campus, and in some cases they include emojis or other symbols associated with computer mediated communication. Hence, something as basic as an advertisement for tutoring service will have multiple languages and signs, with no particular order or structure, yet still manages to communicate the message effectively.

The third focus looks at language through multimodality as a means to step away from traditional notions of language and place a heavier focus on breaking away from the norm. One specific example of this can be seen in the Mazak and Carroll (2016) article where they highlighted an example of a PowerPoint slide, which exhibits multiple language use.

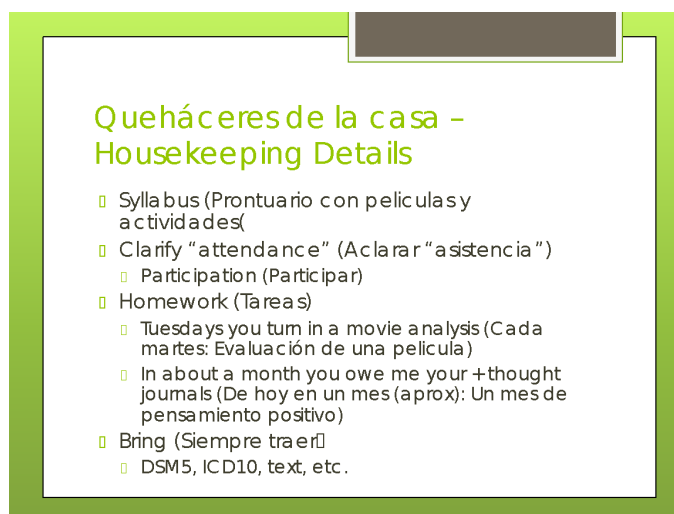


Image 3. Housekeeping details

This PowerPoint slide was taken from a psychology class in which the professor uses a multilingual and multimodal approach. Mazak and Carroll (2016) indicate that the professor of the study introduces topics of the PowerPoint in one language and then switches to another language to discuss more at length. In addition to their multilingual and multimodal approach, this study also makes the case of superdiversity at UPRM through the professor's use of metapragmatic reflexivity. The PowerPoint slide includes the American slang term *housekeeping details*, which translates into *quehaceres de la casa* and does index the same meaning in Spanish. Furthermore, this study highlights how the professor understands and is sensitive toward non-shared knowledge, which propels the professor to take a flexible bilingual pedagogical stance.

The final superdiversity descriptor is the multi-scalar view of language. Blommaert and Rampton (2011) highlight how the multi-scalar dimensions of language can be viewed within the diasporic life of a Superdiversity account. This account lends to new uses of multilingualism in linguistic landscape work. The following image represents how multilingualism is encountered through urban slang within the linguistic landscape.

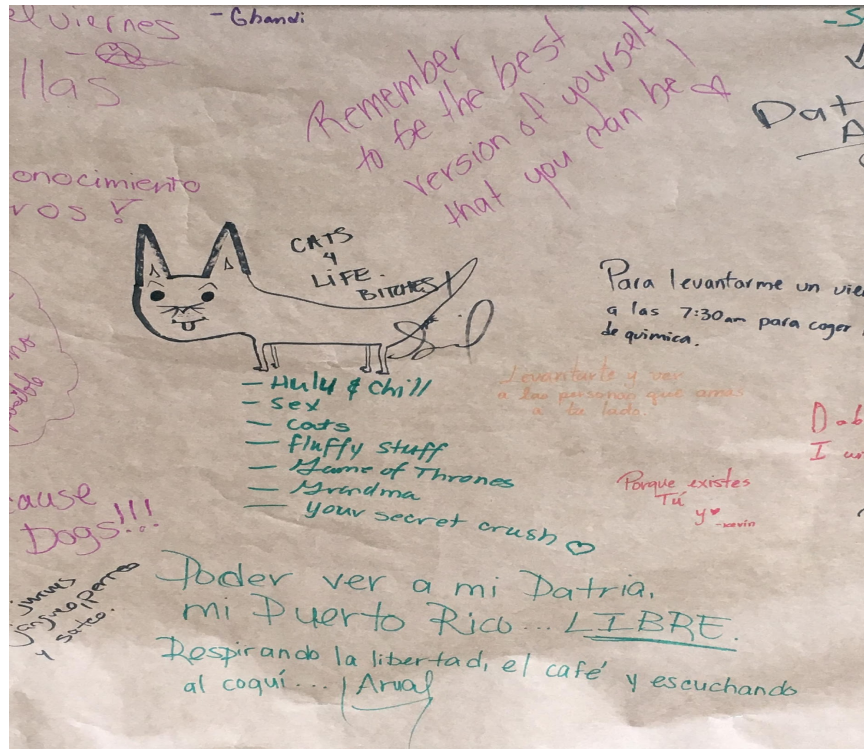


Image 4. Jueves, janguero, perreo y sateo

This is an image of a banner that was placed at the student center and asked students to share *reasons to live* (comparte razones para vivir). This picture represents a small fraction of the entire banner, and highlights several strategies of multilingualism. The phrase *jueves, janguero, perreo y sateo* is an interesting case in, which three of the four words with the exclusion of *jueves* has been modified from its original meaning or adapted and modified from English. The word *janguero* is originally derived from the phrase “hang out”, was modified to fit Spanish rules. As mentioned in the introduction, Puerto Ricans modify many English words to fit the rules and structure of the Spanish language. The word *perreo* is similar in the sense that community members adapted the noun *perro* (dog) and turned into a verb *perreo*, which refers to a dance in the genre of *reggaeton*. The reggaeton genre in itself is a mix of Jamaican dance hall and hip hop. Reggaeton is negatively associated with the urban community because of their lyrics and for the way they use multiple languages in their songs. The last word *sateo* is also associated with

reggaeton and refers to a stray animal, mainly a cat or dog⁵. The term *sateo* is used in a negative manner because it refers to a person who is promiscuous. Even though these terms are in the Spanish language, Puerto Ricans are the ones who are mainly privy to the use of these terms. Spanish speakers from other parts of the world who listen to reggaeton could infer the meaning of these terms, however it is not in their jargon.

These foci help strengthen the UPRM's case for linguistic research and solidify the link between translanguaging (discursive practices) and superdiversity (migration process). My study focuses on the types of discursive practices in formal and informal environment, and how these index international teaching assistant identities. The superdiversity and translanguaging approach as evidenced from Mazak and Herbas-Donoso (2014) and Mazak and Carroll (2016) studies are considered to be a natural practice in Puerto Rico. Rather than focus on the translanguaging practices of the Puerto Rican population, I focused on the international graduate student community at UPRM, and how they adapt to the superdiverse environment. Vertovec (2007) argued that more superdiverse studies needed to be conducted and focused on meaningful interactions in superdiverse settings. No studies have been conducted looking at international students discursive practices in Puerto Rico. This study looks at participants in two different roles in the UPRM context: as graduate students and graduate teaching assistants. Furthermore, this study pinpoints how international students use language through different environments, and how they index their identities. In the following section, I delve into the relevant research on L2 identity and bilingualism.

Research on L2 Identity and Sociocultural Turn

Historically, second language acquisition (SLA) researchers such as Norton (2000) have

⁵. The Spanish term for cat and dog refer negatively to women and men respectively.

struggled to explain the relationship between the language learner and the social worlds due to the complexities associated with the interaction of the learners in their social contexts. Norton defines identity as “a person understands his or her world, how this relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities of the future” (p. 5). Identity of L2 learners and bilinguals continues to be an area of SLA research in which an interdisciplinary approach is necessary due to the complexities of social and cultural as well as psychological aspects of the multilayer conceptualization of identities. Another challenge associated with identity and language use is the dynamic aspect of ever shifting identities and how individuals position themselves in relation to the context and the speakers as well as the historical moment in which interaction takes place. This brief historical account of SLA and identity research acknowledges some of the key studies and scholars who explored bilinguals and L2 learners as it relates to identity and language use.

In SLA, language learners have been described as interlanguage speakers, heritage language learners, immigrants, limited second language proficient speakers, ultimately portray an incomplete picture of the language learner. Ellis (1985) who pioneered the study of identity and language, acknowledged that language learners do not live in an ideal homogenous context and that it is a complex system. He focused on an ideal learner who interacts with members of the L2 community, however the conditions in which the learning took places and relationship of agency and power or sociocultural aspects of these interactions were not explored as part of this early research on the subject of identity.

Early conceptions of bilingualism focused on labeling and characterizing learners. Norton (2000) found the ‘ahistorical’ language learner concept problematic and discussed how any motivation towards learning was categorized as instrumental or integrative. Dynamic and

socially constructed model of identity and research in bilingual studies have replaced traditional language learning theories. Interest and research in identity and bilingualism has been acknowledged and explored through the lens of sociocultural theory and poststructuralism (Kramsch, 2000; Pavlenko, 2000). These studies focused on the socialization of language learning, but also the power relations associated and the role those identity markers, such as ethnicity and social background played in the language learning process. In addition, they acknowledged how this socialization process determined how individuals learn and use language. Auerbach and Paxton (1996) also pioneered this view of language acquisition and studied learners and their literacy practices. They explored the role of identity and draw from sociocultural theory and L2 studies (Lantolf, 2000). Pavlenko and Kramsch, also through the lens of poststructural feminist theories (Weedon, 1997). Pavlenko and Norton (2007) go beyond the understanding of language from these perspectives and examine the concept of communities and identities in language teaching. Morita (2004) also contributes to studies in identity in the classroom context and discusses the role of agency in L2 learning with an examination of how six female Japanese international students at a university in Canada had different experiences while learning in their content courses. She contributed to the research based on the concept of community of practices (Wenger, 1998) and how female participants in the study positioned themselves in their classroom in order to negotiate meaning. The concepts of agency, power, and how this negotiation takes place among participants is a major contribution of this study to the discussion regarding power, identity, and how these are socially constructed from the perspective of sociocultural and interdisciplinary approaches to the study of L2 learning.

Identity and Bilingualism: The Puerto Rican Context

Morris (1996), and Zentella (2007) studied the concept of identity in the context of

Puerto Ricans in the diaspora or those who migrated to the United States. Bilingualism is examined through the context of those who grow up bilingual as second-generation language learners in New York. Historically, there was a migration pattern of Puerto Ricans who moved to New York in the 1960's due to economic reasons. This migration pattern in which Puerto Ricans move back and forth from the mainland to Puerto Rico has been studied as a sociocultural phenomenon, which also includes the use of language and how Spanglish becomes an exercise of agency and also of negotiation of meaning among Puerto Ricans (Zentella, 2007). Race, identity, and language are also at the core of sociocultural approaches to L2 research. Zentella (2007) explores the concept of growing up bilingual from the perspective of the Spanish speaking population in the United States. She analyzed issues related to race and identity construction and how the use of two languages simultaneously a reflection of their worlds and how they make sense of their context while negotiating meaning.

Recently, sociolinguists have looked at language and identity in Puerto Rico due to the political implications and repercussions. In most recent years, studies in identity (Mazak, 2009; Carroll, 2009) have proposed a more dialogical relationship between language learners and how identities although intertwined for bilingual speakers, are not detrimental to the speaker. In this dialogical understanding of how English and Spanish can co-exist as part of the learners identities in formal setting (Mazak, 2009) as well as informal settings (Carroll, 2009), language learning can be viewed beyond the political implications discussed in Zentella and Morris' seminal studies. Carroll examined the role of technology in MySpace, which also adds to the literature related to Puerto Rican, bilingualism and language use in informal contexts. Mazak's and Carroll's studies are aligned with the tenets of translanguaging, and provide a plausible argument for the use of language as a resource. Hence, it can be argued that bilingual participants

in the classroom are also using their bilingualism as a style resource (Androutsopoulos, 2007) for identity performance to peers. Language learner's bilingualism in the classroom is not so much about which languages but which voices are engaged in identity performance.

Translanguaging and Identity in a Superdiverse Context: The Case of UPRM

Research in translanguaging, superdiversity, and identity have focused on issues related to ideologies, and language learning for migrant children and adults in the United States. Few studies (Carroll & Mazak, 2017; Mazak & Herbas-Donoso, 2014) expanded on the identity and translanguaging in a superdiverse setting. There are no studies that address international students, who speak different varieties of Spanish while learning English in both formal and informal graduate degree settings at UPRM. This is an area that deserves further studies, since the focus has been solely on Puerto Rican students at UPRM. This population epitomizes the definition of a superdiverse context. As a result, the study of these communities and the roles that culture and socialization play in this environment expands on the existing literature on translanguaging and superdiversity not only in the Puerto Rican context, but also in settings where speakers from different nationalities establish new communities of practice and diverse patterns of language use as a result of globalization.

This dissertation lays the groundwork to gain insights as to how international teaching assistants (TAs) at the UPRM access all their linguistic repertoires as educators and as students in their graduate degree. The main goal of the dissertation was to analyze the language use of this population of teaching assistants whose first language is not English in order to advocate for a mandatory English course that will address TA's language needs, and help them overall with the adjustment of living in a superdiverse context. Through classroom observations (both as TA's and as student) focus groups, individual interviews, and member checking, I sought to

understand how participants accessed their linguistic repertoires for their multiple academic endeavors. This study also aimed to provide a set of guidelines for administrators and policy makers to deal with issues related to language use in classrooms and how to improve the international teaching assistants' community and help with their understanding of the language dynamics of the university. Additionally, this study serves as a form of dynamic assessment of translanguaging practices since participants reflected on their discursive practices as they engage in their own discussion of language use inside their classrooms. Therefore, it is necessary to implement a theoretical framework that allows for co-construction of knowledge between the researcher and the participant.

Interpretivist Framework

According to Crotty (1998), theory is based on a set of assumptions that researchers draw upon when considering methodological approaches before deciding on particular methods. I required a theory that allowed for flexibility and that could help reveal intersections across numerous scholarly works, while simultaneously allowing for an in depth understanding of the case without clear-cut boundaries (Jiao, 2010). The complexity of a socially constructed reality has helped researchers adhere to sensitive circumstances without straightforward boundaries, which has allowed for an array of options to gather qualitative data. It was important for me to adapt an interpretivists framework because it allows for an emic lens (insider's perspective) in order to capture the holistic and inclusive picture of the participants' academic activities.

Understanding and interpreting in the sciences can bring forth controversy because other aspects like natural and social reality must be discussed, and distinguished. An interpretivists lens denies the existence of one real world; instead it promotes the idea that reality is essentially mental and perceived (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988). Thus, multiple realities exist because of the

different individual experience and the perspectives that shape them. Hudson and Ozanne (1988) also state that it is crucial for the researcher to know the context of the behavior because of how people build reality and meaning based on their situation. Interpretivism focuses on the culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social world (Crotty 1998). Interactions between the researcher and the people under investigation lead to a cooperative inquiry (Reason & Rowan, 1981), which leads the participant to have an informant role and guide the research.

Interpretivists view the world, as being so complex, that at times it might seem impossible to distinguish between cause and effect. Following Charmaz (2014), the manner in which a researcher constructs and interprets realities is just as important as the perspective of participants construing their worlds. Lincoln and Guba (1985) highlight that viewing the world holistically leads to a stance that is simultaneously shaping between entities. Therefore, it is important to not view the participants as a sum of its parts, rather to look at causality from a dynamic perspective that is shaped constantly. Although dynamic and constantly evolving, researchers come into the research environment with preexisting knowledge or understanding of the situation. Researchers have an understanding and a plan for the investigation; they must remain open to new developments. It is fitting to take an interpretive approach to see how international teaching assistants react to new language practices that surround them and how they internalize those encounters. It is imperative not to force preconceived labels of language on the participants; instead, one must let them as dynamic social actors answer the “who”, “what”, and “where”, rather than the “how many”, and “how often questions” (Buston, Parry-Jones, Livingston, Bogan, & Wood, 1998, p. 197). In this study, I gained insight into the investigated phenomenon, and depicted the UPRM academic language setting from an emic position to assist

in the development of the conceptual frameworks. The diversity of the island, and language scenarios, require an interpretive approach in order to understand the context and how that might lead to different language practices. It is important to understand that my study has a prompted research agenda, but will not be solely limited to that agenda. As themes and other information appeared, the participants and I were mindful of patterns of perceived realities in this explorative inquiry.

Positionality in the Study and University

As mentioned in the introduction, I have been teaching English and working with international students in Puerto Rico since Fall 2014. My experience with this community has given me insight at the needs of these students, specifically in regards to the use of English in their academic career. I felt that these experiences and research skills helped shape my study. My ongoing relationship with this community has helped me gain trustworthiness amongst the international student population at the university. This trustworthiness and familiarity with the community has the potential to turn into a muddy situation. My experiences in teaching English for International students (INTD 6007), word of mouth communication amongst this population, and friendships with already established international teaching assistants has granted access to potential participants. Trustworthiness has put me in a position where most of these students approach me to take the course, and improve their skills. International teaching assistants could potentially be more inclined to participate if they knew I was teaching the English course. For this and many other reasons, the English department and I took different measures to establish rapport with potential participants and the graduate school at the UPRM.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Research Design

I discussed the impact of a superdiverse context on international teaching assistants in the previous chapters as a way to underline the significance of supporting our graduate students. In the previous chapters, I outlined the impact of second language acquisition and how most bilingual undergraduate students and faculty at UPRM represent a population that is accustomed to translanguaging practices in their classrooms and its portrayal in the linguistic landscape at the university. Correspondingly, in this study I aimed to fill a gap in SLA literature pertaining to international graduate student's adaptation to a superdiverse context where the population engages in translanguaging practices. The purpose of the study was to uncover perceptions, and any difficulties that students encounter throughout their first semester as graduate students with the hopes of informing future graduate students of the difficulties of adapting to UPRM. In this chapter, I delve into several factors, and studies that solidify my choice of using a multiple case study approach. Second, I describe the participants, recruitment process, and the criteria needed to participate in the study. The section after the description of the participants contains a detailed explanation of my data collection procedure, and how the data was triangulated. Each individual data collection method (focus group interview, individual interviews, and journals) are explained in detail. The final section of the methodology section focuses on the coding of the data and the researcher's steps to organize, and code the data.

Descriptive Exploratory Case Study

I conduct this inquiry using a descriptive exploratory multiple case study (or collective

case study) design (Duff, 2008). Creswell (2012) emphasizes that in a multiple case study, the researcher takes one issue or concern but selects multiple cases to illustrate the concern. The multiple case study design follows a replication process, in which the researcher replicates the procedures for each case (Yin, 2009). Case studies allow for the exploration and understanding of complex issues, and offers a more in depth analysis of individual participants. Accordingly, I look at the initial English and Spanish language expectations of three international graduate assistants within the single site of UPRM. I also investigate the ways in which their expectations of language use change throughout the semester. Finally, I explore the three international graduate teaching assistants' suggestions about English and Spanish language for future students.

Yin (2003) suggests there are types of case studies, categorized according to their main purpose: exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory. An exploratory case study, which may be single or multiple, is conducted to define the questions of a case study. The exploratory case study determines the feasibility of the chosen research procedure, ensuring it is conducted in an effective manner. This design is intended for situations that have not been explored in detail and can help improve the research design, the data collection methods and the selection of participants. Ultimately, the goal of exploratory research is to collect preliminary information that will illuminate a phenomenon. I chose a descriptive exploratory case study method for two reasons.

First, I wanted to develop an understanding of three international graduate teaching assistants' expectations of language use in teaching and learning at the UPRM. Second, I want to explore if the participants' expectations change throughout the semester and any suggestions that students might have towards the use of English and Spanish in graduate studies. The participants in this study were first semester international teaching assistants at UPRM. For the planification

of this study, I used the following criteria to select the participants:

1. First semester international graduate students at UPRM
2. Teaching assistants (in Puerto Rico, teaching assistants are professors of record and are in charge of every aspect of the course being taught).

Yin (2003) delves into several important factors to consider when using a case study approach: (a) the focus of the study is to answer “how” and “why” questions; (b) researchers cannot manipulate the behavior of those involved in the study; (c) the researcher wants to cover contextual conditions because the investigator believes they are relevant to the phenomenon under study; or (d) the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and the context of where the study takes place. Yin’s case study traits align well with current language epistemologies that also emphasize complex and dynamic properties in SLA, and similarly look at how behaviors of the whole emerge from the interaction of its parts (Larsen-Freeman, 1997). The purpose of the case study depends largely on the nature of the case itself, and the amount of previous research done on it. Johnson (1992) indicated that the “purpose of case studies is to understand the complexity and dynamic nature of the particular entity, and to discover systematic connections among experiences, behaviors, and relevant features of the context” (p. 84). I conducted a multiple-case study approach (also known as collective case study) to provide insight and understand the dynamic nature at UPRM. This approach has similar traits to the instrumental case study, in that it helps facilitate our understanding of an issue (Stake, 2005). In addition, multiple-case studies helps to better theorize about a still larger collection of cases (p.446). Similar to Norton’s (2000) study of five immigrant women’s attempt to learn English in Canada, my study utilizes the multiple-case study approach because it allows for a greater focus on shifting subjectivities or social identities. This is extremely relevant, given that the

participants come from a country where they tend to support a monolingual ideology, and transition to an island that promotes the use of multiple languages in the classroom. Even though Norton looked at language, she did not present on the participants' linguistic ability, rather focused on their experiences and perceptions of their abilities from multiple perspectives.

Duff (2008) emphasized that a case study is a bounded system, which undertakes the detailed description and analysis of individual participants or in the case of this study. This study focused on three participants that form part of a social and academic bounded entity through the institution (UPRM), and as members of the international student community. Accordingly, through a qualitative case design, I interpreted and explained the classroom dynamics of the chosen international graduate teaching assistants in their classrooms. The SLA field involves a number of different processes, included but not limited to: linguistic, cognitive, affective and social. This interplay of different processes as well as social interactions that occur within the UPRM during a first semester of an incoming international graduate teaching assistant will provide great insight into the experiences, and challenges of this population.

In order to ensure that a case study is the best approach for my study, I used a combination of Stake (1995), and Yin's (2009) case study features. They first indicated that a case study research begins with the identification of a specific case, and that the case may be an individual or a small group in progress. This is exemplified in my study with the three participants' perceptions throughout a semester of interviews and journals of their experiences. The second feature revolves around the intent of conducting the case study, which can be either intrinsic (unusual interest and needs to be described) or instrumental (case or cases to understand a specific issue). This study is instrumental in nature because it seeks to understand language practices that might be potentially hindering graduate students. I present an in-depth

understanding of the cases (third feature) through multiple forms of qualitative data. The fourth, and fifth feature focus on the data analysis, and how at times the researcher has the option to select multiple cases to analyze. In order to carry out the analysis, the researcher must involve a description of the case. This is important in my study because of the instrumental and emic nature of the investigation. My study features multiple participants with extensive description of their previous language, and educational history. Each classroom setting is described in detail to provide a sense of what international graduate teaching assistants encounter upon arriving to Puerto Rico. My study organized themes issues in a chronological manner. The last feature calls for a conclusion about the overall meaning derived from these cases. Once the data was analyzed, I discussed the patterns of the data and teased out relevant themes. These characteristics are exemplified in the design of my study and provided the best chance to understand international teaching assistants' languaging practices at UPRM.

Furthermore, I undertook a more (macro) sociological analysis, considering the settlement of new international graduate students at UPRM and studied if there are similar patterns in regards to their language used in different educational settings. The next section explains my familiarity with the international student community, and my criteria in selecting the participants.

Participants

I employed purposeful sampling to obtain the three study participants. According to Patton (2002), purposeful sampling refers to selecting a sample from which insights can be gained. Creswell (2013) highlights that this approach focuses on the decision as to whom to select as participants (or sites) for the study, the specific type of sampling strategy, and the size of the sample to be studied (p. 155). In addition, Creswell indicates that purposeful sampling

seeks to inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study. I participated in an orientation for incoming international graduate students the week before classes began. During the orientation, I informed potential participants about the doctoral study, discussed the criteria to participate, and explained any possible risks involved. Those who wished to participate indicated their intent that same day in person or later via through the email. Once communication was established, I proceeded to obtain consent and setup interview dates.

The participants for this study were first semester international teaching assistants at UPRM. The selection of the participants was centered on the following characteristics:

1. First semester international graduate students (no participants with English as a first language are eligible at UPRM)
2. Teaching assistants (in Puerto Rico, teaching assistants are professors of record and are in charge of every aspect of the course being taught).

Data Collection Procedures

My first step for this study was to get the approval of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of South Florida (USF) and then the UPRM. Second, I sent a recruitment email to the coordinator of Graduate Studies at UPRM, which was followed up with a letter of intent to department chairs to accelerate the recruitment process. Once I obtained confirmation from the department chairs, I proceeded to email the students and confirmed their participation in the study. The data collection procedures began on August 2017 and finished on December 2017.

After the recruitment process was completed, I met with the participants individually to explain the parameters of the study and answer any questions they had regarding the data collection process. Through individually structured interviews, participants shared their short term and long-term expectations of the language used throughout the semester and discussed

how language might impact their academic endeavors. I repeated this structure during the middle and end of the semester interviews to continue to collect information about participants' ongoing expectations. During the final individual interview, I addressed the questions that pertained to expectations of English and Spanish language use in UPRM graduate studies, and participants' suggestions to support future international graduate students.

This type of rich description, and fewer participants is one of the tenets of qualitative research. This type of description also aided in eliciting data and a more thorough understanding of the participants' language practices. Duff (2008) emphasizes the importance of fewer participants because it allows the researcher to “conduct a very thorough analysis (a “thick” or “rich” description) of the case, and to include triangulated perspectives from other participants or observers” (p. 43). I took that thick analysis beyond the description of a classroom scenario and focused on other academic environments. Dyson and Genishi (2005) highlight that in case study research “any educational setting- a classroom, a school, a family, a community program-is overflowing with human experiences and with human stories (p.12). This study looked at each participant in a variety of educational settings, with the hope of understanding if these practices vary depending on the role they assume at the university. In order to triangulate the data, I gathered data from focus group and individual interviews, and member checking.

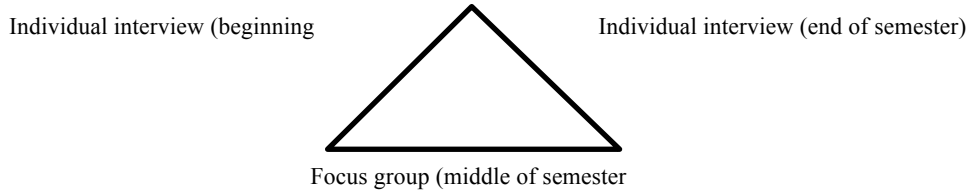


Figure 1. Data Triangulation

These data collection methods were employed to answer my research questions in the following way:

Table 2. Research Questions and Instruments

Research Questions	Instrument
1. In what ways do three first-semester international graduate teaching assistants describe their initial expectations of their English and Spanish language use during their studies and teaching at University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez?	Individual interview
2. In what ways do the first-semester international graduate teaching assistants' expectations about their English and Spanish language use in their studies and in teaching change throughout the semester?	Individual interviews Focus group interview
3. What suggestions do these three international graduate teaching assistants have for future first-semester international graduate teaching assistants about English and Spanish use at UPRM?	Individual interviews Focus group interview

I explore question #1 through initial individual interviews that inquire into what international graduate teaching assistants know and expect from the university. These questions helped me discover how they perceive the languages needed for graduate studies and how those perceptions changed throughout the semester. During the initial pilot study, international teaching assistants expected English to be present in the classroom, but not to be the sole

language of some courses. Additionally, they highlighted the importance of language for their courses and to communicate with students in their teaching assignments.

I examined the second question through follow up focus and individual interviews in the middle and end of the semester, as well as their journal entries. At the middle of the semester, I conducted a focus group interview with all three participants in order to explore answers regarding their expectations. I also carried out an individual interview to substantiate those answers from their focus group interviews and corroborated their experiences from their journal entries. The individual interview also allowed participants to share responses that they did not share in the focus group interview.

The final question was analyzed with their last individual and focus group interviews, as well as their journal entries. This question sought to provide English and Spanish language skill suggestions in order to succeed at the graduate level at UPRM. The focus group interview allowed participants to share their experiences throughout the semester. The individual interview additionally served to go over their journal entries and recapitulate all the themes and data provided throughout the semester.

Individual Interviews

In the first individual interview, I collected participant information on: teaching background, and English language experience as a learner. This interview was conducted the week before the start of the academic semester. The teaching background questions accentuated any teaching background experience that the students had, and any tools that their respective departments provided to prepare them to teach at the university level. The goal of the first interview was to become acquainted with the student. Understanding participants' background information better informed me of their prior experiences with English and Spanish in

educational settings. In addition, knowing their language background helped in teasing out follow up questions, which helped guide, my study. Finally, this interview established rapport between the participant and myself, the researcher. At the end of the interview, I corroborated dates for the second individual interview, first focus group interview, and the instructions for their weekly journals.

The second interview conducted in the middle of the semester consisted of questions pertaining to participants' experiences throughout the semester and ultimately answered research question number two, as it pertains to their expectations having changed throughout their first half of the semester. In addition, they were asked to compare the classroom population and the languages of their previous university institution with UPRM. I interrogated participants about the language they used to deliver course information, and the language of presentations, books, or other course materials.

The final individual interview was conducted at the end of the Fall 2017 semester. During that session, I asked questions that pertained to the participants' overall experiences with their teaching graduate courses, and their thoughts about their expectations to finalize the semester. The last set of questions answered research questions number three as it pertains to suggestions to improve and prepare future incoming international graduate students.

Focus Group Interviews

According to Duff (2008) "group interaction itself can prompt others to comment on themes that they might not have thought of or volunteered in one-on-one settings, and participants often find the group format less intimidating than a one-on-one interview" (p. 135). I carried out these focus group interviews to gain perspectives on international graduate students' language expectations at UPRM. The purpose of this first focus group interview was to meet

with the participants, and acquire an understanding of their experiences throughout the semester. I asked the participants questions regarding the challenges they expected to face during the semester as students and instructors. These questions helped in answering research question one by providing initial expectations of their English and Spanish language use upon arrival to the UPRM. It also served as a catalyst for future focus and individual interviews about expectations and perceptions had changed throughout the semester. Similarly, I inquired about their expectations and any upcoming challenges during the midterm and end of the semester.

In order to assess the value of my interview questions, I conducted a Pilot Study with thirty international students at the end of March 2016, and asked them to evaluate the set of questions I would use for the focus and individual interviews (see Appendix A-D, questions English and Spanish). I asked students to score the questions for clarity and usefulness using a Likert scale. Additionally, I asked them to provide sample answers to ensure that all English proficiency levels could understand the questions and make the necessary adjustments, if necessary. I tested the questions in English and Spanish with the pilot group, and students did not fully understand the questions asked in English, which prompted me to ask the rest in Spanish. Therefore, for the study I asked all questions, and wrote all my notes in Spanish to make sure the participants fully understood what was being asked, and to ensure a more valid and reliable member checking process.

Member Check

I used Gall, Gall, and Borg's (2005) definition of member checking to verify the data. They define member checking as "a procedure used by qualitative researchers to check their reconstructions of the emic (i.e., insider's perspective) by having field participants review statements in the researchers' report for accuracy and completeness" (p. 551). Through

interactions with the community I have understood some of the difficulties they have encountered in the classroom, however it is impossible to truly comprehend and appreciate the intricacies of a particular culture. Therefore, an emic approach helped me look at these situations through the eyes of the members of the culture being studied. Each participant had access to all information collected from her/him. Drawing through these various kinds and sources of information for analysis will help with the triangulation of the data. The term originates from the field of surveying and navigation in which it suggested that if the combination of several independent sources of evidence pointed to a common conclusion, then that conclusion gained strength (Bromley, 1986). The design of the study allowed for a thorough analysis of the case, and included triangulated perspectives.

Coding the Data

I analyzed, coded and converted the data into categories to understand international teaching assistants' expectations and perceptions of language throughout the semester. I transcribed the focus group, and individual interviews verbatim, and manually code for emergent themes (Poland, 1995). I analyzed the transcriptions through an initial open coding scheme in order to develop emerging categories for the data. The nature of the interviews lead to follow up rounds of coding using the preexisting coding scheme. These themes emerged from the data, and the thematic codes from earlier accounts from the literature were utilized. These codes lead to new connections between the determined categories via open coding, which enabled the researcher to group codes of similar content (Saldaña, 2012). I grouped the determined codes together in a way to report on the themes and schemes emerged. In order to ensure verisimilitude, an additional researcher independently coded the qualitative data. The additional researcher was a professor of the English department who had several publications using

qualitative methods. In addition, conflicting areas of coding were reviewed and discussed along with the chair of the committee. The coding scheme was also discussed with the inter-coders. As mentioned previously, the discussion of emerging themes with participants through member checking ensured descriptive validity, and authenticity of the content (Duff, 2008). Therefore, member checking with participants and discussions with inter-coders strengthened the accuracy, and validity of the interpretation of the data.

In regards to security of the data, I transcribed all individual and focus group interviews, and stored them on my password-protected personal computer. In addition, I assured the participants that the committee chair, and I the researcher, are the only ones reviewing the data.

Participant Profiles

The following section discusses each participant's profile, and is divided in three paragraphs. The first paragraph focuses on their respective educational background as it pertains to their bachelor's degree, the population diversity of their past university, and any educational teaching or tutoring experiences. The second paragraph focuses on English experiences throughout their academic career, and a self-description of their English language skills. In the final paragraph, I provide insight into some of the challenges that they could expect upon arrival to UPRM. In addition, I compared their answers with other participants to highlight similarities and differences. All participants have been provided with a pseudonym to hide their identities.

Lewis. Lewis was a first semester international masters' student for the Chemical Engineering department. He was born and raised on the coast of Colombia and studied in one of the most prestigious universities for engineering and mathematics. That coastal university has many faculty members who are alumni of UPRM. In terms of diversity, Lewis described this university's population as being 100% Colombian, taking into account that students came from

all over Colombia, including indigenous areas. Lewis' science background did not include a strong educational theory background, rather he took advantage of some governmental opportunities to teach basic math for mothers who were heads of households. In addition to teaching mothers who had not completed a degree, Lewis also took it upon himself to market his mathematical knowledge to tutor students at the university.

I asked Lewis questions about his experience with the English language during his life, and bachelor's degree. He indicated that English accounted for roughly 10% of his college instruction, although most of the readings were in English. He also had several courses that were taught in English but that simultaneously incorporated Spanish translations for technical purposes. When describing himself as an English user, he said "mi inglés no es avanzado, digamos un intermedio basico, y pues no he hecho algún curso adicional, lo que se es por lo que vi en el colegio, en primaria, en la universidad solo lo que se es eso" (My English is not advanced, let's say it is intermediate basic and well I have not had any additional courses. What I know is because of my elementary schooling and university). Even though he described himself as an intermediate basic user of English, he stated that he aspired to want to be able to give a presentation in English and even further down the road, get accepted to a PhD program in the United States. My experience teaching international students has helped me understand the aforementioned desire of most international students to give an academic presentation in English. Many of my former international students expressed similar desires and aspired toward being able to have enough English to be accepted into a PhD program in the United States.

Overall, Lewis is a student that is not well versed in the English language but aspires to become better so he can expand for professional reasons. He also lacked student population diversity, which may have contributed to the lack of English environments to improve his

English. Fortunately, at UPR, he did not have to carry out his entire teaching assistantship in English. In the analysis chapter, we will see how language played a huge role in Lewis' first semester, and how his student population made him even more self-conscious about English.

Christopher. Our second participant Christopher is a first semester international master's student for the Statistics program of the Mathematics department. The Mathematics department has a total of 5 different masters program, all which mainly cater to international graduate students, with Statistics being the second most popular program behind Pure Mathematics. Christopher grew up, and studied in the countryside, closer to the border with Ecuador. Similar to Lewis, Christopher had professors who studied at UPRM, and referred him to the program and the international faculty that teach at the university. He indicated that two of his biggest draws to studying at UPRM were the international faculty members at the institution, and the applied focus for the Statistics program. During his bachelor's degree, Christopher developed educational experience as a tutor, through a university support group that assisted first and second year students who were at risk or facing probation. Toward his fourth year at the university, he also taught a one-week Mathematics course to reinforce basic skills for freshmen. Similar to Lewis, Christopher had no formal academic training. Both had tutoring as their main source of experience. Similarly, they also lacked English education in their early years of academic formation.

When discussing English language experiences, Christopher highlighted that in his regions, primary schools did not have a policy that promotes learning English at an early age. He indicated that it was not until high school where he experienced English classes for the first time. Moreover, his high school English experience was described as lackluster, and that learning English was something that you had better opportunities to learn outside of school. His

university offered English courses but was mainly targeted towards completing an end of bachelor degree comprehension exam. In addition, Christopher was firm about the lack of English use at the college level “En esa universidad, todo es en español, la mayoría de los profesores tratan de manejar la bibliografía en español pero si hay profesores que manejan bibliografía en ingles pero igual las presentaciones, las clases, siempre todo es en español” (at that university, everything is in Spanish, the majority of professors try to manage a bibliography in Spanish, but there are professors that work with readings in English, but the presentations, classes, everything is in Spanish). In comparison with Lewis, Christopher has even less exposure to the English language through his university experience. He also highlighted in his initial interview that he could read in English but not speak it.

At the end of our first interview, Christopher and I discussed any anticipated difficulties. He indicated that he knew the majority of books would be in English and that it would take some time getting used to. Christopher also raised concerns about the professors potentially giving class in English, where he said: “si me llega a pasar eso, sería muy difícil para mi” (if that happens to me, it would be very difficult for me). In addition to a fear of the possibility of having to take class in English, he also mentioned a potential obstacle with the Puertorican English use and how “a veces hay frases o cosas que dicen en ingles que uno dice “que”? pero no creo que sea mayor problema” (sometimes you have phrases or things you say in English and I’m like “what? But I do not think it will be a major problem). In his short time on the island, Christopher had some encounters where Puerto Ricans express themselves in English and he had no answer or was slightly confused by their responses.

Sandy. Sandy is the third international student participant, and is enrolled in the Geology department. She was raised in a city near Bogotá, the capital of Colombia. Sandy’s background

is in Physics, and she is the only participant of the three to have a different academic degree background from bachelors to master's degree. Sandy highlighted that several faculty members had previously studied at UPRM and that her best collegiate experiences were from those same professors. Contrary to Lewis and Christopher, her university had population diversity even though they were all Spanish speaking students. Another difference is that Sandy is a research assistant and had the most educational work experience. Once she finalized her bachelor's degree, Sandy worked as a teacher in a local high school teaching Mathematics and Physics, at times having 40 students per classroom.

Sandy described her English experiences as "lazy ones". She emphasized that Colombians for the most part struggle with English and that once her friends arrived here, they would emphasize on the heavy amount of English used on the island. Once Sandy heard about the heavy English use at UPRM, she decided to take some English courses in Colombia but could not complete them due to the price. This notion of improving English through private courses or institutes is a recurring theme of all the participants. At the university, she only recalls the books being in English, but classes were always in Spanish. Similar to what Christopher had stated, English was mainly a part of the curriculum to pass an end of bachelor's exam. Likewise, she expressed that the exam was not difficult even though there was a lot of work to be done to pass the exam. Sandy also highlighted that some of the professors were bilingual because they studied abroad.

To finalize our interview, Sandy and I discussed aspects of her research assistantship and any fears to start the semester. She indicated that she worked in the seismic station of the university. This station has an employee in the office 24 hours a day, and reports any unusual activity to offices in the United States. When I asked her about any language preferences for her

assistantship she replied “Me encantaria aprender inglés y obviamente la preferencia ahora es el inglés, más o menos ya tengo idea de lo que tengo que hacer como ayudante de investigación y es basicamente todos los comandos, toda la parte teórica va a ser en ese idioma, en ingles”. (I would love to learn English, and obviously the language of preference here is English. I more or less have an idea of what I have to do in my assistantship, and basically all the commands, the theoretical part will be in English). Even though she was awarded a research assistantship (extremely rare at UPRM) she still considers herself as someone who “needs to learn English”. In addition, when she interviewed, faculty gave her an introduction to her tentative assistantship to see how she managed English, and was approved without any problem. Moreover, Sandy specified that her biggest fear for the semester was English.

Participant Profile Summary

All three participants were first semester international students from different S.T.E.M related programs. Additionally, all three participants come from Colombia, albeit cities that are distant geographically and culturally. All students had some sort of experience with faculty members that studied at UPRM. As it pertains to educational experience, all three had some sort of training and experience related to education, though not as similar to their assistantship. Ironically, Sandy had the most classroom experience prior to starting her master’s degree but was awarded a research assistantship.

In regards to the English language, all three participants expressed difficulties with the English language. Some participants went as far as to highlight specific deficiencies in their English communication skills. According to these three participants, English seems to be much more viable as a reliable resource outside of their formal educational upbringing. In order to improve their English skills, they needed to enroll in some sort of expensive private program.

None of the participants experienced English until much later in their academic career, with one participant not engaging with the language until he arrived to his high school. All three participants had to learn English in order to comply with an end of bachelor's degree comprehensive exam, which according to all three of them was not challenging at all. They also indicated that professors managed some of the readings in English, but everything else in the classroom was in Spanish. These English language-learning scenarios are completely opposite to Puerto Rico, where kids learn English in the classroom at the start of their elementary studies, and engage with the language through music, movies and even English communication-heavy cities on the island.

Finally, I discussed with each student the details of their graduate courses, and language expectations at UPRM. All participants anticipated that English would be involved in some way and expressed general concerns to communicate. Christopher expressed potential fear for readings being in English, and even more concern if the professors were to ever teach a class in English. The other two participants saw English as something difficult to manage but looked forward to the challenge, and the potential of improving for future academic endeavors, yet still lacked confidence in English oral communication. Overall, the three participants expressed a lot of insecurities and fear towards English communication, and how this might impact their graduate coursework and their assistantship.

The following chapter is the data analysis, which depicts an overall examination of the answers and discussion with all three participants. In this chapter, I present the language perceptions of students before the start of the UPRM semester, and how these were present in their assistantship and coursework. I also focus on the teaching assistantship and how it surged as a crucial theme for this study, and shed light on some potentially bigger issues for student.

Chapter Four: Data Analysis

I investigated the English language perceptions of international teaching assistants across their first semester. The data for this study were acquired through two individual interviews (beginning and end of semester) and one focus group interview (midsemester). Additionally, this study explored concerns pertaining to their teaching assistantship and graduate courses, and the linguistic uncertainties, which impacted their semester. Finally, I posit suggestions that would benefit future international teaching assistants upon arriving to UPRM.

The following research questions were a central aspect in conducting this qualitative study.

1. In what ways do the three first-semester international graduate teaching assistants describe their initial expectations of their English and Spanish language use during their studies and teaching at University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez?
2. In what ways do the first-semester international graduate teaching assistants' expectations about their English and Spanish language use in their studies and in teaching change throughout the semester?
3. What suggestions do these three international graduate teaching assistants have for future first-semester international graduate teaching assistants about English and Spanish use at UPRM?

Overview of the Study

This study was conducted with 3 (2 males, 1 female) international teaching assistants whom were about to commence their graduate studies at the University of Puerto Rico in

Mayagüez. All three participants are native of Colombia, but come from vastly different regions of the country. The participants were selected at a graduate student orientation and complied with the study criteria: a) international (non-English as a first language) students with assistantships, and b) first semester.

The study lasted for a 14-week academic semester (Hurricane María made the semester shorter). I followed a descriptive exploratory multiple case study model (or collective case study) design (Duff, 2008) was followed to collect the perceptions of language and assistantship data. The instruments utilized were an individual and focus group interview document that were piloted with a similar population at UPRM to enhance validity and provide insights into issues surrounding our international student population. These pilot interviews were used to shed light on topics pertaining to international teaching assistant issues and their process of adapting to a superdiverse (Blommaert & Rampton, 2011) context like UPRM. From those pilot interviews, I teased out the most relevant and common themes for my study and formed questions to better answer my inquiries. To corroborate the interpretation of the findings and themes, I engaged in member checking with each participant and went over the answers to further solidify my research agenda.

The first individual interview was conducted two days prior to the beginning of the spring semester. The interview questions focused on three educational related areas (see Appendix C). The first set of questions pertained to how they learned about their respective UPRM graduate programs and any support they received from their department in terms of their assistantship. The second set of questions covered their experiences as English language users and focused on themes related to languages used and population diversity at their former university. The final set

of questions focused on the languages they planned on using in the classroom and any anticipated difficulties with their assistantship and language.

The second source of data was a focus group interview that took place 8 weeks after the participants' first individual interview. In that interview, the participants were asked about their expectations and goals before the start of the semester and whether or not they felt like they were progressing towards meeting those goals. This portion of the interview was followed by questions pertaining to English and Spanish language use in their teaching assistantship and in their graduate courses. In addition, I asked participants if their perceptions of the Puerto Rican English and Spanish use had changed over time and to indicate the biggest difficulties about studying at UPRM. Finally, I inquired what they wished to know before the start of the semester that would have helped them get through it.

The final interview took place one week prior to the end of the semester. It focused on students describing their graduate coursework, assistantship, and overall life in Mayagüez. Most of the questions inquired about which language they used for different tasks and whether or not this was an obstacle to succeed throughout their graduate studies. Finally, the participants gave suggestions on how to improve the experience for future international graduate teaching assistants. During this final individual interview, I used member checking to go over the themes from the first two interviews.

This chapter describes the qualitative analysis conducted through an exploratory case study research design (Yin 2003). The nature of the research design required an inductive approach to the data, where the coding of the data drives the development of themes. The qualitative data from the three interviews were transcribed verbatim, translated from Spanish to English and manually coded for emergent themes. After an initial coding, similar content was

conceptually grouped to report the emergent themes (Saldaña, 2012). Accordingly, the qualitative data is separated in two sections to explore both assistantships attitudes and language perceptions throughout the semester.

Assistantship

The UPRM offers assistantships to the majority of the graduate students accepted into their system. This assistantship provides students an opportunity to essentially study for free, while receiving a small stipend. As I previously mentioned, teaching assistants are really instructors of record, whom are in charge of preparing the class material and give a grade to the students. Through the first individual interview, I sought to know what assistantship they earned and what it consisted of. I also asked them about their pedagogical background and whether they had received any training or instructions pertaining to their assistantship. As mentioned in the methodology section, none of my teaching assistant participants had formal training to become teachers or educators, which led me to inquire about any sort of support in that area. The following quotes are from the first individual interview that took place two days before the start of classes. I divided the information about participants and their responses to the same questions in the subsequent tables. The first column contains the research question in Spanish, followed immediately by an English translation below. The second column provides their original response in Spanish; and the third column delivers an English translation of the answer. As mentioned above, the first language of all three participants is Spanish; hence they were interviewed in that language to ensure quality of answers and to comply with IRB protocol. Therefore, the original interview questions in Spanish are in bold first with the English translation below. At the end of each section, there is a summary of the themes, commonalities, and differences between each case.

Table 3. Assistantship interview data: Lewis

Interview Questions	Participant Responses in Spanish	Participant Responses in English
Ahora que estas acá, el departamento tuyo, el de ingeniería química, ¿te ofrece algún adiestramiento pedagógico, antes de que ofrezcas clases? Now that you are over here, your department, chemical engineering, do they offer some sort of educational training before you start to teach class?	De existir, no me lo ha ofrecido aún.	If it exists, they have not offered it to me
¿Qué clases, no sabes todavía aun? What classes will you teach, do you not know yet?	No, no sé. Las personas que han estado en la facultad me dicen que probablemente laboratorio, como asistente de laboratorio, no directamente como dar la clase sino como asistente.	No, I don't know. People who have been involved with faculty have told me that it will probably be a lab assistant, not directly with the class, rather as an assistant.
¿Pero aún no estás muy consciente de que consiste? But, to this day, you are not aware of what it consists?	No, no estoy seguro.	No, I am not sure

This first question about the teaching assistantship led to some details that were a bit unfortunate. Lewis' department did not offer any pedagogical training so that he could better prepare himself to meet the challenges of handling college undergraduate students. Even more shockingly, Lewis did not know what class he would teach or even what the class consisted of two days prior to the beginning of classes. At best, Lewis has an idea based on what some professors have told him, but nothing specific in regards to the material or the population. This case was similar for Christopher, who had a vague idea of what he would teach. The following table depicts Christopher's answers to the same interview questions asked to Lewis.

Table 4. Assistantship interview data: Christopher

Interview Questions	Participant Responses in Spanish	Participant Responses in English
Al llegar acá, ¿el departamento te ofreció algún adiestramiento, antes de que ofrezcas clases?	Hasta el momento no he recibido ese adiestramiento, más que todo es como con los compañeros que ya están acá.	To this moment I have not received training, it is mainly students from the department who have told me things.
Now that you are over here, does your department offer some sort of educational training before you start to teach class?		
¿Tienes alguna idea de qué clases vas a ofrecer o de qué consiste lo que vas a hacer? me dijiste que tienes una idea de que vas a bregar con un laboratorio, sabes de qué es el laboratorio o todavía no?	Como ya hice la matricula, la directora del programa me dijo que estuviera muy pendiente de la plataforma de acá de la universidad. Ahí reparten los cursos y uno lo que hace es mirar los cursos, amigos me dijeron como, y ya simplemente veía que estaba mi nombre con ese laboratorio y ya sabía que era lo que iba a dar. Voy a dar precalculo 1.	Since I already registered for courses, the director of the program told me to check the university platform. There they distribute the courses, friends told me how to look for it, and I saw that my name was next to a lab. Next semester, I will teach pre calculus 1.
Do you have any idea of the classes that you will offer or what they consist of? You told me you had an idea of a lab of some sort, what type of lab?		

Similar to Lewis, Christopher did not receive any pedagogical training prior to the start of the semester. However, contrary to Lewis, Christopher knew the course he was going to teach, albeit through an online platform and not told directly by his director (See Table 4). In Lewis' case, he had support from students that gave him suggestions and advice towards his assistantship. The third participant Sandy, although not a teaching assistant, had a similar experience in regards to the lack of information provided by her department.

Table 5. Assistantship interview data: Sandy

Interview Questions	Participant Responses in Spanish	Participant Responses in English
<p>Al llegar acá, ¿el departamento te ofrece algún adiestramiento, antes de que ofrezcas clases?</p> <p>Now that you are over here, does your department offer some sort of educational training before you start to teach class?</p>	<p>Básicamente, todo me tocó buscarlo a mí. En eso me parece a mí que fallan un poquito porque digamos que en algo tan sencillo como que tenía que tomarme unas vacunas, mostrar evidencias de la parte médica, me lo dijeron casi a lo último, entonces fue corriendo que me tocó hacerme todos esos exámenes médicos, por ejemplo. Lo otro fue que yo no tengo a nadie acá, cuando yo llegué acá estaba completamente sola, no conocía a nadie. Sin embargo, cuando me hicieron una entrevista vía Skype yo les dije que era colombiana y que no tenía conexiones con nadie acá, ellos me enviaron un correo de un muchacho que terminó hace poco la maestría en geología y el más o menos me guío y me dio un tour de donde quedaba el departamento, cuál era el procedimiento para el tema de efectuar la matrícula y que documentos tenía que tener en cuenta.</p>	<p>Basically, I had to look for everything on my own. I think that they failed a bit in that area, something as simple as telling me that I needed to get some vaccines...they told me that a little before I moved, so I had to run and get all of those medical exams, just as one example. The other thing was that I did not have any contacts over here (in Puerto Rico), when I arrived to Puerto Rico, I was completely alone, I didn't know anybody. Moreover, when they interviewed me through Skype, I told them I was Colombian and that I did not know anybody over there. They later sent me an email of a student who had recently completed the master's in Geology and he guided me more or less and gave me a tour of the department, told me the process of how to register for courses and the documents that I would need.</p>

Sandy's case was a little different, she was not going to teach and indicated that she basically had to look for everything herself. Instead of delving more into the assistantship situation, Table 5 highlights how she took the opportunity to vent and discussed other issues involving the paperwork and vaccine process for graduate school. The department's response to her needs was through a former graduate student who was suggested as someone who could answer any doubts that she might have. Her voice portrayed genuine frustration towards her program's inefficiency to assist her during this process and evoked a lack of empathy.

Anticipated Difficulties

I asked the three participants if they anticipated any difficulties to start the semester.

Table 6. Anticipated difficulties

Participant	Participant Responses in Spanish	Participant Responses in English
Lewis	Dificultad, digamos académica comunicativa, no, no presentó ninguna. Las dificultades que veo de pronto es que no tengo vehículo, sería el transporte. Pero en términos académicos, hasta el momento no veo ninguna dificultad. Si existe alguna dificultad, no tengo ninguna orientación, que es lo que voy a hacer en cuanto a la ayudantía de catedra.	Difficulty, communication within academia, no I don't think so. The difficulties that I do see are related to not having a car, so transportation. But in regards to school, to this moment I don't see any. If one did exist, its that I haven't received any orientation in regards to my assistantship.
Cristopher	Considero que ya eso va en uno, si uno es ordenado con sus cosas no creo que vaya a tener mayor problema, igual son temas que no son complicados. De pronto con los estudiantes, por ejemplo, todavía no me asocio bien como son las calificaciones, de pronto puede que yo me llegue a enredar con eso, de pronto los estudiantes están acostumbrados a que le expliquen de otra manera, eso sí creo que pasa porque creo que acá no utilizan algunas cosas que nosotros si utilizamos. Toca acostumbrarse a lo que los estudiantes le están enseñando.	I consider that to be a very individual thing, if someone is organized with their things, I do not think they will have any major problems, similarly tasks are not complicated. A quick concern would be the students, I am not sure how they calculate grades, I might get a little confused, perhaps students are used to being explained in another way. I believe that they don't use some of the same things we use in Colombia. Just need to get used to how they are teaching the students.
Sandy	No creo que tenga problema. De pronto, que ustedes manejan el inglés, ¿a veces hay frases o cosas que dicen en ingles que uno dice "que"? pero no creo que sea mayor problema.	I don't think I have a problem. Well maybe, all of you know English, sometimes there are phrases or things you say in English that make me say, "what?" but I don't think it will be a major problem.

Both Lewis and Christopher had concerns pertaining to their teaching assistantships and the role they would carry out. Although Lewis only mentioned not knowing about his assistantship, Christopher had specific concerns on how to evaluate students and the cultural differences that exist within educational contexts between Colombia and Puerto Rico.

Sandy is clear that she doesn't believe to have any problems with her research assistantship; however, she does state concerns about the way "we" use English and the phrases that Puerto Ricans utter. Sandy's initial surprise of the phrases and words that Puerto Ricans say in English as a potential issue is not an uncommon one at UPRM. All three participants belong to Science departments, which goes in line with Mazak and Herbas-Donoso's (2014) study on how English is the language of science at UPRM. This interview question did not specify areas of difficulty, however two of the participants still expected difficulties related to their teaching assistantships. One of the responses was not related to academia, while the others focused on their assistantship.

The three students expressed a lack of understanding in regards to their assistantship. Although all participants knew they were granted an assistantship, none of them knew their responsibilities pertaining to their respective opportunity. Even more surprisingly, one of them did not know what his assistantship entailed at all. The fact that students do not receive pedagogical support is also evident within their responses and it seems that they rely more on support from their classmates. In Sandy's case, she had bigger logistic concerns pertaining to admission requirements.

Summary

These initial perceptions of the participants' teaching assistantships shed light on several issues. Overall, the three participants were not aware of the duties pertaining to their teaching

assistantships, nor they did receive any formal training. This is especially important because it highlights how some departments are not properly informing our incoming international teaching assistants about their courses and assuming that all learners are treated and evaluated the same way. Christopher's absence of Puerto Rican educational knowledge portrayed the lack of information provided to new international graduate teaching assistants. He stated not being aware of how the grading system worked and the strategies or styles that students are accustomed to at UPRM.

Focus Group Interview Mid-Semester

This focus group interview happened eight (8) weeks after the assistantship individual interviews. Previously, the participants were required to answer a set of interview questions based on their expectations of the assistantship they received to progress in their graduate studies. The goal was to know which type of assistantship they were awarded, how prepared they felt in terms of the workload, and teaching of a course to undergraduate students having no prior teaching training or experience, two days before the beginning of the semester. Therefore, the individualized interviews served to gain background information of each participant to get a better sense of their expectations, not only work wise, but also for their language perception during their time at graduate school. Furthermore, this focus group provided a different set of data when compared to the individualized interviews; because this time, the participants had a chance to share their experiences together rather than explaining them based solely on their expectations of their language use and how it has changed after engaging in graduate school for eight (8) weeks.

Focus groups provide a space for its participants to interact with each other and have a conversation on shared experiences during their time in graduate school. In addition, each

participant provided different answers, thus allowing room for them to agree and share similar ideas or have a different point of view to add during the focus group interview. In cases where participants coincided with similar ideas, this agreement eased those who are a bit introverted to open up and express their ideas and experiences with the language use during their courses, teaching, and research assistantship in the last eight (8) weeks. I divided the focus group table in four parts. The first column has the interview question in Spanish with its immediate English translation below. The next three columns are divided by participant and go from (left to right) Lewis, Christopher, and finally Sandy. As a point of clarification, there are some questions that are left in blank, which is due mainly to the participant not being there. On an important note, Christopher did not answer some of the questions because he had to attend a personal matter. Due to space constraints, I have limited the answers to only English translations of their originals.

Table 7. Early semester student expectations

Interview Questions	Lewis	Christopher
<p>¿Cuáles eran tus expectativas como estudiante antes de ingresar al RUM? ¿Esas metas se han cumplido?</p> <p>What were your expectations as students upon arriving to UPRM? Were those expectations met?</p>	<p>My goal was to get an A in all three of my courses. However, this will not be possible because of the heavy workload and because of my TAsip, which requires me to grade, assist different labs or schedule appointments with different students.</p>	<p>I had similar goals, just to get all A's, However, one particular class will be a little bit more difficult than I anticipated. My assistantship takes away so much time, but we are getting there, same goals as earlier.</p>

For this first question pertaining to expectations of student coursework, both participants highlighted wanting to obtain straight A's in their courses. Lewis was quick to indicate that his assistantship was taking too much of his time. Whether it was grading or having to assist different labs taught by his coordinating professor, his time was mainly committed to his

assistantship. Similar to Lewis, Christopher stated a similar response in wanting all A's and more importantly, that his assistantship was taking too much of his time. He also stated that he underestimated a course and that it was a little more difficult. Overall both participants expected to do exceptionally well in their first semester at the university. However, at the midway point of the semester, they were struggling with time management due to their assistantship.

Table 8. Challenges studying in Puerto Rico

Interview Questions	Lewis	Christopher	Sandy
<p>¿Cuáles son algunos de los retos que has enfrentado mientras estudias en Puerto Rico?</p> <p>Which were some of the challenges you faced while you studied in Puerto Rico?</p>	<p>My biggest challenge which isn't really as challenging is that some of my classes are in English. The presentations are in English and I do not have an excellent command of the language. Another challenge is that I do not have enough time to eat and sleep.</p>	<p>My biggest challenge is getting used to how people study here. People on the island are more used to staying up all night.</p>	<p>My biggest challenge is English, the professors that I have are from the US and having conversations is a little difficult. Other things like the food, not having a car, everything closes early, musical diversity. Those things have been more inconveniences.</p>

In this section I analyzed responses related to difficulties related to their assistantships. All three participants expressed some sort of difficulties pertaining to language or the students themselves. Lewis expressed language communication problems with his students. His students gave presentations in English, which are followed by a question and answer session. He further expressed that during these presentations he could only ask about the content of the presentations and not really engage with his students in a critical way. After some time, Lewis managed to adapt to the amount of English used in the presentations, but his coordinator still felt the need to intervene and made the change to questions in Spanish. Lewis has a common problem, which

affects most international students at UPRM. Similarly, our Puerto Rican students did not know the scientific terms in Spanish, which made dialogue difficult.

Christopher also had difficulties with his students, but not because of language barriers. He expressed difficulties in motivating his students to attend his workshops. As a point of information, all students matriculated in Pre-Calculus also have to register in a lab that accompanies the course. His frustrations stemmed from the lack of interest from his students towards the work he had prepared. Christopher was not aware of the independence factor for the labs, where students have the choice of not going. Hence, he would get a classroom of two to three students at times. This situation could have been avoided had he been given some sort of guidance towards the approach of students towards the laboratory assistant role.

Finally, Sandy also expressed difficulties regarding the English aspect of her assistantship. As I mentioned before, her assistantship involves monitoring seismic activity on the island and reporting back to an office in the United States. In addition to the complications of English, her work hours seem to interfere with her ability to complete assignments. The seismic center requires someone to be present at all times; therefore, her schedule varies from working morning, to at times working overnight.

All three participants expressed challenges with their current assistantships. Lewis and Sandy expressed issues pertaining to using the English language and how it hindered them at times. In Lewis' case it was his lack of ability to ask questions pertaining to student presentations. It became so complicated that his coordinator saw his struggles and made a change so that questions could be asked in Spanish. On the other hand, Sandy indicated that English was her biggest challenge in her assistantship because she lacks the necessary knowledge which

impacts her ability to carry out her assistantship, while also interfering with her homework assignments. In addition, she stated that her hectic work schedule was a big factor.

Table 9. Most difficult thing about studying in Puerto Rico

Interview Questions	Lewis	Christopher	Sandy
¿Qué ha sido lo más difícil de estudiar en la UPRM? What has been the most difficult thing about studying at UPRM?	Things are just a little more complex. Not necessarily more difficult, few classes have made it quite easy, its the English language, its everywhere academically.	Just acclimating myself to the pace.	As I mentioned before, the most difficult part is studying in another language, the academic load, while doing research and my homework. This has made the semester very intense, but I am learning to manage my time better. On the other hand, not having friends close by makes me feel lonely and I essentially live a routine.

The participants were asked what was the most difficult element they faced while studying at UPRM. The answers during this section varied, with two of them mostly focused on language; while the other still had an academic implication even though its focus was still different from the other two answers.

Lewis and Sandy’s answers were similar in regards to language. Both of them remarked on the difference of having their classes in a different language affected their academic experiences within UPRM. Lewis mentions how it made things a bit more complex for him, but not necessarily difficult. In addition, he also mentions how few classes make it easy for him because of English. Sandy reiterates again that studying in another language is the most difficult part for her, which has made the semester more intense for her. At the same time, both participants’ answers differ as well. Beginning with Lewis, his answer also mentions how English is everywhere academically, which connects with his sentiment that few classes have made it easy while also adding that the varying degrees of English usage in different contexts are a main component of why his experience in UPRM has been a bit more complex than what he is

accustomed to. Sandy’s answer also mentions academic load, conducting research, homework, and lack of friendships that makes her feel alone. All of the previously mentioned points make Sandy feel like she is living through a routine every day. Christopher only talks about adjusting to the pace of graduate studies in UPRM. His answer does not specifically mention language having any impact in his experience, but it does deal with an adjustment period, which is a common similarity between the three answers.

The answers provided by the participants demonstrate how even though academic experiences within UPRM differ they still connect to a common denominator. They all highlight how graduate students go through an adjustment period when they are beginning. At the same time, the answers given by Lewis and Sandy show how the challenges of a language barrier can diversely affect an incoming student’s academic life.

Table 10. Knowledge before the start of semester

Interview Questions	Lewis	Christopher	Sandy
You studied here for half a semester, what would you have wanted to know before you started the semester?	In my case everything was good. Many Colombians reached out to me and gave me an idea. Only thing is I had no idea it rained so much, and I don’t have a car so I’ve caught a cold because of it.	I had enough information from Colombians on the island, so I was good for the most part. I didn’t know the classrooms and labs would be so cold. I brought a very small jacket.	The importance of driving and maybe even though I partially knew, I wish I would have learned more English.
Has estudiado aquí para la mitad de un semestre, ¿qué te hubiese gustado saber antes de comenzar el semestre?			

In this section the participants were asked about specific things that they would have wanted to know before the semester started. Both Lewis and Christopher indicated that everything was good because of their contact with their compatriots before they arrived in Puerto Rico. Even with the information given beforehand, Lewis still adds that he would have preferred to know

about the amount of rain that regularly falls in the Mayaguez area, which would have prevented a cold that he got because he did not have a car as a transportation tool. Christopher mentioned that he would have liked to know that labs and classrooms in campus would be colder than he expected, which would have led him to bring a bigger jacket than the one he originally brought. Sandy's answer stated the importance of driving and knowing a bit more English than what she originally did when she arrived.

These particular answers given by Lewis and Christopher do not reflect anything academic. Both answers focus more on ways that would have improved their settlement in Puerto Rico and daily lives throughout the semester. Sandy's answer partially focuses on the same topic, but it also has an academic association. The latter half of the answer deals with language knowledge that would have been beneficial for her when she started working in her department.

Table 11. Challenges teaching in Puerto Rico

Interview Questions	Lewis	Christopher	Sandy
¿Y algún reto enseñando? ¿Has tenido algún reto quizás con sus estudiantes, quizás algo en particular de ellos, en sus talleres has tenido algún reto con ellos?	I had more of a challenge at the beginning. My students are supposed to give a presentation in English and I had to ask them questions in English. I did my best to understand, but I was so nervous that I only asked them about their presentations. After some time, I focused my attention to their English and I managed to understand most of it.	My biggest challenge is getting my students interested in the pre-calculus workshops. I do a lot of prepping and they don't seem to care about the work (they are not aware of the independence that students are given for their labs).	As a research assistant, the biggest and most important difficulty is English. The little time that is given for assignments, given the alternate work hours at the seismic activity center.

Table 11 (continued).

Interview Questions	Lewis	Christopher	Sandy
Any challenge teaching? Have you had any challenges with maybe a student? something in particular from your labs where you had some difficulties.	<p>My coordinator noticed the situation and arranged it so I could ask questions in Spanish. The difficulty was assessing their presentations because they knew all of the technical terms in English, but did not know them in Spanish. I would tell them the terms in Spanish and they would ask me, what does that mean? So the real difficulty went into formulating discussion questions in English, which they were used to, but I wasn't. Afterwards the difficulty came in evaluating their lab reports. They didn't organize them the way I thought was prudent, plus they were in English and I needed to give feedback in English. Luckily, my coordinator helped me evaluate the grammar and I looked at all the calculations. We have switched our feedback to be in Spanish because the language component was very complex for me, especially because I am not accustomed to those scientific conversation in English, especially the technical terminology.</p>		

In this section, I analyzed responses related to difficulties regarding their assistantships. All three participants expressed some sort of difficulties pertaining to language or the students themselves. Lewis reiterated his concerns about language communication problems with his

students. His students give presentations in English, which are followed by a question and answer session. He further expressed that during these presentations he could only ask about the content of the presentations and not really engage with his students in a critical way. After some time, Lewis managed to adapt to the amount of English used in the presentations, but his coordinator still felt the need to intervene and made the change to questions in Spanish. Lewis has a common problem, which affects most international students at UPRM. As I explained earlier in regards to Table 8, our international students are not ready to engage in academic dialogue using scientific terminology in English (get a reference for this). Similarly, many UPRM students do not know the scientific terms in Spanish, which made dialogue difficult.

Christopher also had difficulties with his students, but not because of language barriers. He expressed difficulties in motivating his students to attend his workshops. As a point of information, all students matriculated in Pre-Calculus also have to register in a lab that accompanies the course. His frustrations stemmed from the lack of interest from his students towards the work he had prepared, something, which he had voiced earlier as depicted in the discussion for Table 8. This situation could have been avoided had he been given some sort of guidance towards the approach of students towards the laboratory assistant role.

Finally, Sandy also expressed difficulties the English aspect of her assistantship. As I mentioned before her assistantship involves monitoring seismic activity on the island and reporting back to an office in the United States. In addition to the complications of English, her work hours seem to interfere with her ability to complete assignments

The three participants expressed challenges with their current assistantships. Lewis and Sandy expressed issues pertaining to using the English language and how it hindered them at times. In Lewis' case it was his lack of ability to ask questions pertaining to student

presentations. It became so complicated that his coordinator saw his struggles and made a change so that questions could be asked in Spanish. In Sandy’s case, she indicated that English was her biggest challenge in her assistantship because she lacks the necessary knowledge which impacts her ability to carry out her assistantship, while also interfering with her homework assignments. In addition, she stated that her hectic work schedule was a big factor.

Table 12. Challenges teaching in Puerto Rico

Interview Questions	Lewis	Christopher
<p>¿Has encontrado alguna dificultad al tratar de explicar o enseñar algún concepto en los cursos? (Por ejemplo: Pensar en el concepto en inglés y no poder traducirlo al español o viceversa).</p> <p>Have you had any difficulty in trying to explain or teach a concept in your courses? (For example: Thinking of a concept in English and not being able to translate it in Spanish or viceversa)</p>	<p>I have not had to switch languages, but I have seen how people say something in Spanish and then say a phrase in English and I’m like hmm okay, but then they explain it, especially my TA coordinator. For example, presentations are in English and she asks questions in Spanish and tells us what she didn’t like in English. Instructions for the lab in English, I’ve started to notice that she gives recommendations in English, but that switch is done by them, not by me. I’m not used to It or perhaps not capable of doing so.</p>	<p>Students know terminology that I do not know.</p>

For this section, I focused on a more specific detail about their teaching assistantship. Specifically, we asked them about any difficulties in their teaching of concepts to their students (Sandy recused herself from this question because she did not teach a course). Lewis indicated that he did not have to switch languages in order to communicate with his students. He did highlight that his TA coordinator would give a presentation in English and ask questions in Spanish. Lewis even noticed how his coordinator would mainly use English for giving instructions or recommendations. He is adamant that he does not engage in such practices, because he is not used to it or that maybe he lacks the necessary skills to do it. During Lewis’

answer to the question, Christopher consistently nodded in agreement. The only thing that Christopher mentioned in this part of the interview was that his students knew terminology that he did not know. Christopher’s answer is similar to a previously stated concern pertaining to his struggles with English and how they have made him work even harder to succeed at the graduate level. Both teaching assistants have once again highlighted how English is present in their classrooms. They both experience students knowing certain terminology that they do not possess in English.

Table 13. Language perception/use in graduate courses

Interview Questions	Lewis	Sandy
<p>En las clases que tu tomas también mencionaste ahorita que los profesores algunas de las presentaciones las daban en ingles ¿Algunas clases son completamente en inglés?</p> <p>In the classes you take, you mentioned that some of the professors give presentations in English. Are there some classes that are completely in English?</p>	<p>Classes are not completely in English, I would say close to 60%, because of the books, the presentations on the monitors are in English. Sometimes they forget they are speaking in Spanish and they just automatically switch to English, which is complicated for me (not used to translanguaging environment). In other courses the professor teaches in Spanish, but his PowerPoint and notes are in English. The professor of the most complex class asked us what language we preferred for the class. The three non-puertorricans “screamed” for Spanish. The other students who were Puertorrican indicated that they did not mind the use of English and that they were used to it. In fact professors, administered their partial exams in English, and we would ask them to explain the premise and they would explain any unfamiliar terminology. Even if the questions were in English, they were allowed to answer in Spanish (cite Mazak, Rivera and Soto). He also stated that professors know about their visa (I-20) and how it indicates that English is not necessary.</p>	<p>Almost all of my classes are in English, the material, explanation; I continue to work to improve my level.</p>

In the first interview question, the participants mentioned that some of their professors would use English and Spanish in the classroom. This interview question addresses that issue. Lewis states that 60% of his classes are in English with the majority of the presentations and reading materials being in English. Something interesting is that Lewis claims that his professors

forget the language they are speaking and switch between English and Spanish. This is exactly what Mazak, Rivera, and Soto (2016) alluded to in their study about English in a UPRM Psychology classroom. Students and faculty are used to translanguaging in the classroom and engage in these practices, especially in STEM field classes. This study is further supported by the fact that in the same interview question, Lewis emphasizes that the Puerto Rican students were in favor of the class being in English, while the international students voted for Spanish as the language of instruction. Finally, he noted that professors knew of his student visa and how it specifies that English is not necessary, hence supporting a language perception that focused more on what his official travel documents indicate, but then encountering a completely differently reality in Puerto Rico.

Sandy expressed that most of her courses are in English. As I mentioned before, the Geology department is one of the departments with the most faculty from the United States. Additionally, the Geology department has programs that are sponsored by federal agencies; specifically, the seismic center on campus (where she works) is part of a joint collaboration between a government agency and the private sector. Sandy continues to feel the need to justify and prove that she is working towards improving. Christopher was not present during this part of the interview; therefore he did not provide an answer.

Both participants expressed that the majority of their graduate courses were in English. They emphasized that materials for their courses were in English. Lewis highlighted how he was not used to the professor translanguaging during his lectures; causing confusion for him. Sandy said that her materials and explanation were in English and inadvertently pointed out that she needs to make improvements with her English.

Table 14. Language perception/use in graduate courses

Interview Questions	Lewis	Sandy
<p>Entonces en esas presentaciones mayormente las haces en español, pero ¿has tenido que incluir un poquito de ingles dentro de tus presentaciones?</p> <p>In those presentations that are mainly in Spanish, have you had to include some English in your presentation?</p>	<p>A little bit, some terminology is in English but we don't have to know them in English. Next semester we have mandatory presentation in English. It is supposed to last 20 minutes and revolves around our tentative thesis project. It is open to the public, other graduate students, professors and whoever wants to assist. I went to a presentation this semester and his English was basic, those in the audience asked him questions in Spanish.</p>	<p>I haven't done presentations yet, but the professors know and understand that my English isn't fluent, so they help with the writing of certain assignments or I just present or speak in Spanish.</p>

This interview question focuses on the language that participants used in their graduate school presentations. Christopher was not present for this question either. Lewis was present and indicated that during his first semester a little bit of English was required but only for terminology purposes. He stated that the following semester he has to give a 20-minute presentation on a tentative thesis project. Even though he has expressed difficulties regarding the constant use of English, he expressed a sigh of relief knowing that the audience can ask questions in Spanish.

In Sandy's case, she has yet to give a presentation in English but is confident that she will not be evaluated harshly because her faculty knows she is not fluent in English. In fact, her professors allow her to write and speak in Spanish and even assist her if needed.

This question depicted how these two participants, although immersed in English heavy tasks, are not necessarily subjected to having to communicate in English as much during their first year. Lewis explained how he only needed to refer to some terminology, but did not have to present entirely in English, while Sandy was afforded opportunities to communicate in Spanish. Earlier, both participants indicated how English was in all of their materials and PowerPoint

presentations, yet they were not expected to answer thesis related questions or even present in some classes for that matter. The UPRM translanguaging literature supports this method of classroom management and superdiverse environment where students are encouraged to use the language that best fits their situation.

Table 15. Language perception/use in graduate course reading

Interview Questions	Lewis	Christopher	Sandy
<p>¿Para tus clases graduadas, tienes que leer mayormente en inglés? ¿Y cómo te sientes respecto a eso?</p> <p>For your graduate courses, did you mainly read in English? How do you feel about that?</p>	<p>Everything is in English, I understand the readings, my problem is speaking and listening. In order to speak, I need to translate the idea in my head. I haven't had much problems that can't be solved with a dictionary. Every aspect of my teaching assistantship and classes are English (material wise), and I think this is wonderful I might not understand everything but once I get home corroborate the material. However, I do feel like I am improving my English and I feel like my classes are more English class than the subject. The real class stops being a priority, and it forces me to get home immediately to study, but I reiterate that the presentations in English are important.</p>	<p>My readings are in English and that specific subject is the most difficult and I struggle a lot because it is mainly in English.</p>	<p>Everything is in English, at the beginning it took me a long time to read a single paragraph, always ended up re-reading and used the translator a lot and at times felt I didn't understand anything. Even though I am not completely fluent, I am not as afraid anymore.</p>

For this interview question, we asked students specifically about the language they used for reading at the graduate level and how they felt about those readings. Lewis emphatically stated that everything is in English, though he felt comfortable with the readings. He quickly stated that his problem was mainly due to speaking and writing. This is not the first time where Lewis felt the need to follow up a negative attribute related to language with a positive one. He quickly focused on how speaking and listening are problematic for him. He immediately starts to talk about needing to translate ideas in order to communicate, but these are issues that can be

quickly resolved with a dictionary. Lewis takes it a step further by talking about his teaching assistantship and coursework and how they are all in English. Here, he takes a more optimistic approach towards the heavy use of English and is thankful that he is learning more English, even though it consumes a significant amount of time. This optimism turns quickly when Lewis mentions that his real class stops being a priority and that he needs to go home immediately to study. This statement is confusing because on the one hand it seems that he is thankful that this situation is forcing him to learn English, though on the other hand he is stating that his course material is playing a secondary role because he needs to focus on his English skills.

The participants stated that their readings are in English and indicated having some sort of difficulty understanding the text and at times using tools like dictionaries and translators to manage the readings. Christopher felt the struggle in one specific class because of his lack of fluency. Lewis and Sandy had similar responses and situations. Both have all of their readings in English and used tools to manage the readings. In addition, both highlighted how they lacked fluency but acknowledged the importance of having these materials in English to further their academic growth. Finally, Lewis raised an interesting point for those who lack the necessary English skills. He stated in this question that at times it felt like English was more of the subject than the actual class.

Table 16. Upbringing influence on language use

Interview Questions	Lewis	Sandy
<p>¿Crees que la manera en que te criaron ha influenciado tu perspectiva de lenguaje o la forma que usas lenguaje? Hay personas que no le gusta mezclar lenguas?</p> <p>You think the way you have been raised has influenced your perspective on language or the way you use language. There are some people who not like to mix languages.</p>	<p>I've seen that a lot in Spain, the respect for language. They are very conservative with their language, and actually in Barranquilla if you switch between languages they call you derogatory names. When I first arrived and saw that it was really weird, but I have started getting used to it and accepted that it is something cultural. I can imagine everyone here learning English from a very young age and combine both. I went to my advisor's house for a research meeting and started to talk to her 11 year old son. He was explaining his <i>Fortnite</i> game and started saying some phrases in English, there I understood that kids also switched between languages.</p>	<p>As I mentioned before, my professors are from the United States, but fortunately they understand Spanish, and I am still afraid to speak in English with them. I would love to have a conversation in English with my classmates and professors, in fact I have a classmate who are from the United States and are trying to teach me English.</p>

I asked participants if they felt that their upbringing had any influence on their perspective pertaining to language or the way people use language. Christopher had to step out briefly to take an important phone call. Lewis made a reference to Spain and how they had a deep respect for language. He said that in his city Barranquilla (coast of Colombia) they call derogatory names to those who switch languages. Lewis said upon arrival he found it weird that people would switch between languages. After some time, he got used to people switching and understood that it is a part of our culture. Lewis even told the story of a meeting at his advisor's house where he engaged with an 11-year-old on the topic of *Fortnite*. There he started to reflect on kids' language practices in PR.

Sandy reiterated that her professors are from the United States and all of the tasks are in English. She said that she was thankful for having professors that were understanding and could

at least communicate in Spanish. Communicating in English would be ideal for her, and even acknowledged the help of two classmates who are from the United States. Sandy doesn't really take a position or respond according to the question, she just continues to reflect on her lack of English skills, yet with a mildly optimistic outlook.

Both reflect on their surroundings specifically as it pertains to English. Lewis truly answers the questions and informs us about how translanguagers are viewed on the coast of Colombia. Meanwhile, Sandy doesn't really answer the question but rather focuses on her current dynamics with her faculty members and how they adapt to her lack of English. She also receives support from her classmates in helping her overcome this fear.

Table 17. Language perception/use in graduate school presentations

Interview Questions	Lewis	Sandy
<p>Entonces en esas presentaciones, mayormente las haces en español, pero ¿has tenido que incluir un poquito de ingles dentro de tus presentaciones?</p> <p>In those presentations that are mainly in Spanish, have you had to include some English in your presentation?</p>	<p>A little bit, some terminology is in English but we don't have to know them in English. Next semester we have mandatory presentation in English. It is supposed to last 20 minutes and revolves around our tentative thesis project. It is open to the public, other graduate students, professors and whoever wants to assist. I went to a presentation this semester and his English was basic, those in the audience asked him questions in Spanish.</p>	<p>I haven't done presentations yet, but the professors know and understand that my English isn't fluent, so they help with the writing of certain assignments or I just present or speak in Spanish.</p>

This question depicted how these two participants, although immersed in English heavy tasks, are not necessarily subjected to having to communicate in English as much during their first year. Lewis explained how he only needed to refer to some terminology, but did not have to present entirely in English, while Sandy was afforded opportunities to communicate in Spanish. Earlier, both participants indicated how English was in all of their materials and Power Point presentations, yet they were not expected to answer thesis related questions or even present in

some classes for that matter. The UPRM translanguaging literature supports this method of classroom management and superdiverse environment where students are encouraged to use the language that best fits their situation.

Table 18. Language perception/use change during the semester

Interview Questions	Lewis	Christopher	Sandy
<p>¿Ha cambiado esa perspectiva o se ha mantenido igual o qué?</p> <p>Respecto a cómo nosotros utilizamos el español-inglés, quizás tenías un pensamiento al llegar ah estoy iba hacer así y ahora tres meses después es algo distinto, simplemente curioso.</p> <p>Has your perspective changed? In regards to how people at UPRM use Spanish-English? Maybe you had a perspective at the beginning and now three months later it is different.</p>	<p>When I first arrived, I thought everything was going to be in Spanish, yes the books in English, but I thought that the presentations would at least be in Spanish. I thought class discussions would be in Spanish, but they were in English, all academic activities in English, even conversations outside academia. My neighbor, who is Puerto Rican, would start in Spanish, mix a few phrases in English and it is just a constant mix. To be clear, it doesn't bother me, I think it is helping me to improve my skills. My listening skills are better.</p>	<p>I feel the same way, I actually find it a bit funny. I've had several mixups, especially when I ride my bike around the island. My common words like "leant" "despincharme" are uncommon for them.</p>	<p>I knew Puerto Ricans were bilingual, so when I arrived to the university I was aware that they had great command for English and that they spoke a very funny Spanglish.</p>

In this section we asked the participants about their perspectives and perceptions of language as the semester progressed. I was interested in finding out whether or not they felt the same almost three months after our initial interview. Lewis stated that when he first arrived he

thought everything was going to be in Spanish. He knew the books would be in English, but he assumed that presentations would be in Spanish. In fact, all academic activities are in English. He even highlighted how conversations outside of academia with his Puerto Rican neighbors were occurring in English. Thus, supporting the literature on UPRM that positions it as a Superdiverse context where the neighboring areas of the university have been influenced by its relationship with the United States. Lewis further stated that his neighbors would constantly mix languages and that he felt it was helping him improve his skills, specifically listening. Christopher agreed with everything that Lewis stated and indicated that he has had several language mix-ups. For example, when he rode his bicycle around the island and citizens did not recognize some of his Spanish terms, which would be commonly used in Colombia but rare in Puerto Rico. Sandy shared a different sentiment. She knew that Puerto Ricans were mainly bilingual and that she would have to rely heavily on English. She expressed the same thought in regards to language use at UPRM, where (according to her) she had a great command of English and spoke a funny Spanglish.

The first two participants' perceptions of language use at UPRM had changed as the semester progressed, whereas as Sandy anticipated the population being bilingual. All three of them mentioned Puerto Ricans as people who speak an interesting form of Spanglish.

Summary of Focus Group Assistantship Interview

This section summarizes the key points made by participants during their focus group interview. Discussion will be focused on their expectations on their assistantship and language perceptions pertaining toward their roles as researchers or instructors of record:

Sandy. From the beginning of the semester, Sandy was aware that she needed to complete twenty (20) hours weekly at *Red Sismica* as fulfillment to her research assistantship.

These hours did not have a specific schedule to follow, for these can vary. Her main goal during her research and workload was to take her whole learning experience from *Red Sismica* and apply it during her graduate studies and future within academia. Her expectations in terms of her research assistantship include counting on a great mentor during her research and being able to do investigations in her area of interest. One major difference between her current expectations than the ones she identified in the individual interviews is that even though her schedule varied at the beginning of the semester, she was not aware that she had to complete certain time slots. One of the biggest challenges in her graduate studies is her English, and the little time she has available to complete assignments in English is not enough due to her research assistantship responsibilities and attending activities as part of her assistantship at *Red Sismica*. Regarding Sandy's statements in the data, her expectations with her Research Assistantship regarding language use are unclear. *Red Sismica* networks with other institution in the US; therefore, graduate students working in a research assistantship are expected to use English as a language of communication and networking for the nature of the work. However, Sandy does not specify difficulty in her perception of English during her research assistantship. Most of her difficulty is more towards the uncertainty of the hours she is required to complete in her research assistantship, and how her workload and assistantship does not provide enough time for her to complete her assignments in English.

Lewis. As most graduate students, Lewis' original goal was to get good grades in all three of his graduate courses this semester. His heavy workload and teaching assistantship require him to offer his sections to undergraduate students, meet with his students through his office hours or by appointment, and attend other labs as part of his assistantship. These responsibilities take a lot of his time and focus from his graduate courses. Moreover, what made

his teaching assistantship difficult was the difference in language proficiency between him and his students when it came to providing feedback on their lab reports, presentations, and class discussions. His course coordinator noticed the situation and made accommodations for him to adjust teaching practices. In addition, she also helped him in regards to providing feedback for assignments, and would take care of the grammar aspect in English while Lewis focused on technical aspects, such as the formulas in the report. During his teaching assistantship, students knew terminology that he didn't. During the eight (8) weeks that elapsed between the initial and group interviews, Lewis has shown difficulty adapting to his teaching assistantship mostly because of his lack of language perception in English when he is teaching or providing feedback to his students. As he stated, his students are used to speaking both languages and leaning more towards English when discussing scientific terms, terminology related to the course, and the completion of assignments, which are done in English. Furthermore, with his other responsibilities that require most of his time, his expectations in terms of adapting to the teaching assistantship while getting good grades has changed significantly when he realized how much is expected of him as a graduate student and instructor of record.

Christopher. In Christopher's case, he explains how it is challenging to get his undergraduate students interested in the pre-calculus laboratory. He does a lot of preparations for the course and seems frustrated when students don't show interest in the work, when it takes him time to prepare workshops and material for the laboratory. Part of the reason for this frustration is that students are not obligated to go to these workshops because its optional. Christopher's role in his teaching assistantship is to facilitate student's concerns with the material they take in the main Pre-calculus course. The lab where he works is designed to facilitate students with workshops or work with them one-on-one with their questions of the course. During the focus

group, it is not specified if he was required to make the workshops, materials, and work with students in English.

Final Participant Interviews Background

The final participant interviews were conducted seven (7) weeks after the mid semester *focus group interviews*. This was completed in the end of their first semester as graduate students, where each participant reflected their experiences as international graduate students living their academic lives in another country, and in an environment where they adapted to cultural and language differences. These questions ~~aim for the participants to~~ focus on several aspects for the study: (a) their experience and expectations as international graduate students who successfully completed their first semester in the University of Puerto Rico, Mayaguez Campus, for them to be able to give suggestions on how to better accommodate and serve our graduate student population; (b) challenges they faced in graduate school due to adapting to their multiple responsibilities such as course work, assistantship, and research; and (c) their language perception with using English, as the main language of use for most of their academic tasks, and how they feel if they have improved in English as their second language.

Table 19. End of semester description of their first semester

Interview Question	Sandy	Lewis	Christopher
¿Cómo caracterizas tu primer semestre en la UPRM? How do you characterize your first semester at UPRM?	The combination of being in a new country with its own unique culture gave me great energy. The majority of my time was spent studying with new friends and working on my research. This semester was just adapting to new challenges.	This first semester fulfilled my expectations. Everything from professors, labs, research and even infrastructure. It was a great semester with a lot of adapting, yet productive. Initially, it was challenging, but I managed to adopt to the people's way of doing things.	A semester that required a lot of planning, whether personal or academic. There wasn't enough time to enjoy activities, not even my own birthday.

This section focuses on the international teaching assistant's description of their first semester at UPRM. Sandy stated that the experience of being in a new country combined with its unique culture gave her great energy. Even though the majority of her time was spent doing research and studying, she acknowledges that it was all about adapting to new challenges. Throughout all interviews, Sandy expressed a lot of optimism in facing her new challenges with language at UPRM. Lewis felt completely fulfilled with his expectations. He was satisfied with the work he had accomplished in his research assistantship and his graduate coursework. He reiterated Sandy's notion of adapting, but felt it was a productive experience. Even though it was challenging, he managed to adapt to the way things are done on the island. This was the mindset he portrayed throughout all of the interviews as he looked to adapt to the way language was used on the island to even conducting question and answer sessions in his classrooms. Christopher had a more lack luster description of his first semester. He indicated that his semester was just full of planning for all aspects of his life. He felt like he did not have enough time to even enjoy his birthday.

Sandy and Lewis shared some optimistic perspectives on their first semester at UPRM. Even though they emphasized on the challenges, they focused heavily on adapting to different ways of doing things and making the best of the situation. In Christopher's case, he indicated that he basically had to set a schedule for everything and did not find much time to enjoy his time on the island.

Table 20. Most difficult part of studying at UPRM

Interview Question	Sandy	Lewis	Christopher
<p>¿Cuál fue la parte más difícil de estudiar en la UPRM?</p> <p>The most difficult part of studying at UPRM?</p>	<p>Most difficult part is English my classes are in English, understanding my professors, reading, among of her English tasks. In addition, conducting my research, taking classes and doing my homework is no easy task.</p>	<p>Adapting to the new environment culture and having all my class material in English. There is no public transportation. I needed to leave extra early.</p>	<p>The rhythm of study. A lot of vigor. English doesn't help.</p>
<p>¿Cuál fue la parte más difícil de trabajar en la UPRM?</p> <p>The most difficult part of working at UPRM?</p>	<p>It is an honor to work with the seismic network, but the hours are really tough. We don't have a fixed schedule and someone must be present 24/7. Working grave yard is never fun. If there is a significant event or emergency, it is very stressful, making those calls in English is draining.</p>	<p>At the beginning I would have to listen and evaluate student presentations in English. I needed to grade, ask questions and that was complicated, I need to make an extra effort. In addition, I had to grade lab reports in English. On another note, I felt like there wasn't enough time to do this work and my homework.</p>	<p>Things in the math world are explained differently in Colombia. Now that the semester has ended.</p>

In this interview question, I sought to understand the most difficult part of studying at UPRM. Sandy stated that English was the most difficult part. Specifically, her classes being in English, being able to understand her professors and readings. She also said that it was difficult to conduct the research, take classes, and do all of her homework. Similarly, Lewis stated that one of his biggest difficulties was adapting to his class material in English. This has been a recurrent theme for Lewis as he has mentioned English as a de facto difficult factor throughout the entire semester. Lewis mentioned other difficulties like adapting to the new culture and the

lack of public transportation. Christopher did not really delve into the question and gave three short responses. Since his mid-semester interview, he has emphasized how English has been a nuisance for him throughout the semester. Another repeated comment is the rigor of study mentioned in the focus group interview.

All three participants mentioned English as one of the difficult factors of studying at UPRM. As stated in the previous interviews, some were expecting Spanish to be a lot more prevalent in their graduate studies. Even though they anticipated a little bit of English, they did not expect all of their materials to be in English. The follow up interview question focused on their perception of the most difficult part of working at UPRM. As I mentioned before, one of the requirements to participate in this study was to have an assistantship.

Sandy was honored to work for the seismic center but complained about the hours. As previously mentioned, the seismic center requires someone to be present 24/7, which does not allow for a fixed schedule and requires alternating work hours and at times double shifts. One thing that caused her stress was having to make emergency calls in English. Since her assistantship is involved with a federal agency, she must call the headquarters in the U.S. if something significant happens.

As in previous interview questions, Lewis had similar views as Sandra. He pointed out his students' presentations and how having to listen to them in English and provide feedback was complicated for him. In addition to the aforementioned aspects and the grading, he also felt there was not enough time to do his assignments. Christopher had a very interesting answer. It seems that he had difficulty with the way Puerto Ricans were taught mathematics. He explicitly states that math is explained differently in Colombia.

Overall, Sandy and Lewis have similarities in having difficulties with English in their respective assistantship. Meanwhile, Christopher is having some cultural difficulties as it pertains to how students at UPRM are taught mathematics and how it is different from Colombia.

Table 21. Language used most in academic tasks

Interview Question	Sandy	Lewis	Christopher
<p>¿Cuál lenguaje utilizas más par las tareas académicas? Which language was used the most for academic tasks?</p>	Without a doubt English.	My program does not require any level of proficient, yet presentations, exams and practically all information is in English. They don't force me to respond or even present in English, but I did them in English anyways to practice and challenge myself to learn more.	I used Spanish the most, but exercises and readings were in English, which made me take more time to understand.
<p>¿Cuál lenguaje utilizaste más en tus cursos o laboratorios? Which language was used the most in courses or labs?</p>	Labs and courses were in English.	Verbally, Spanish, but the labs guides, students' presentations and course information was in English.	Spanish was the most used lg because the professors were Colombian, Argentinian and Puerto Rican.

This question and its follow-up focused on more specific details in regards to the language used in academic tasks. Sandy responded that without a doubt English was the most prevalent.

Throughout the semester, Sandy has had the most involvement with the English in her courses and assistantship. Lewis stated that his program did not require any level of proficiency. He followed up this response by saying that presentations, exams, and practically all information are in English. Lewis was quite adamant about his faculty not forcing the language issue and even took it upon himself to respond in English to practice and improve his skills. Lastly, Christopher

said that Spanish was the language he used the most. However, his materials and readings were in English, which made it take longer to understand.

All three participants mention English as being the main language in academic tasks. Even though English is the main language, there is some leniency in the language they can use in their academic endeavors. Similar to the previous interview inquiry, the follow-up question on language used in academic tasks focused on details about the language used in their assistantships. Sandy stated that her labs and courses were in English. In her graduate program, she had to take a lab in addition to her regular courses. Lewis was a little more specific as to how language was used in his courses. He stated that verbally everything was in Spanish, but the laboratory guides, student presentations, and course information were in English. Lewis engaged in common translanguaging practices with his students. Like other professors at the university, he used Spanish to discuss everything about the course, yet his students would respond and even present information in English. Christopher indicated that Spanish was the most used language. He took the opportunity to mention the different nationalities at his department to further enhance his point. All of his professors come from South America or the Caribbean.

Sandy and Lewis mentioned how English was predominant in their courses and labs. They mentioned materials being in English and for Lewis; the verbal aspect was in Spanish. Christopher expressed the same sentiment by highlighting the nationalities of his current faculty.

Table 22. Comfort with the English language

Interview Question	Sandy	Lewis	Christopher
¿Te sientes más proficiente o cómodo usando Do you feel more proficient or comfortable using English?	It takes a lot of work for me to adapt in a second language, thus I'm in the process of adopting and learning	There is a slight increase in ability compared to when I arrived, because every day I had to read in English and that built up my skills.	I don't feel more proficient I do not know how to manage the lg. I need more practice, to be more immersed.

This question focused on whether or not the participants felt more comfortable using the English language. Throughout the semester, I asked participants about their language use in teaching and coursework scenarios. Sandra started off by highlighting the amount of work she had endured to adapt to a second language. Even though she was awarded a prestigious assistantship and underwent a semester of English only classes, she still sees herself as someone who is adapting and learning. Lewis gave a much more optimistic answer and stated that he does see an increase in ability compared to when arrived to the island. He said the constant reading in English made him build up his skills. Lewis was constantly exposed to English in his courses and even highlighted several instances throughout the semester, which contributed to his build up of skills. Even though Christopher was exposed to English in the form of materials, he felt that he did not improve his language skills. He stated that he needed more practice and to be more immersed in order to manage the language.

The participants had mixed feelings as it pertained to their increased proficiency in English. Sandy felt like she was still learning and adapting to the language, not really highlighting progress. Lewis felt like he did improve compared to when he arrived because of the nature of his assistantship and the courses he took during the semester. Christopher felt like he did not increase his proficiency and felt that in order to improve his English, he would need more practice and to be immersed.

Table 23. English as an obstacle

Interview Question	Sandy	Lewis	Christopher
El Inglés, ¿fue un obstaculo para tus tareas diarias? Was English an obstacle for your daily tasks?	I would say it was because reading and understanding, looking for more information, it took me a long time, compared to my language. For example, note taking I wasn't sure if I should write it in English or Spanish and it was even worst when someone was dictating.	I didn't see it as an obstacle, more like an opportunity. If everything were in Spanish, it would have been a lot easier and quicker.	I didn't see it as an obstacle for my daily activities, it was more of an obstacle when it was more related to individual studying.

This question asked participants' viewpoints in regards of English being an obstacle in their daily tasks. Even though the question tackles a daily life approach, the participants' answers provided an academic focus. The answers are varied and each demonstrates a different viewpoint of the language barrier being an obstacle. Two answers correlate with each other because they both deal with reading. Sandy's answer is the most detailed one. She mentioned that English was an obstacle in terms of reading and understanding. Because of it, she constantly looked for information, and it took her a longer time compared to her previous coursework taught in her native language. She also provided an example in which she did not know which language to take notes in because she was not sure which one to choose. Subsequently, Lewis' answer gave a different perspective. He added that he did not see the language barrier as an obstacle, he mostly saw it as an opportunity. The perspective that he gave in his answer demonstrates how the participant utilized his language barrier as motivation to improve himself. Meanwhile, Christopher mentioned that he did not see English as an obstacle for his daily activities, rather one that impeded studying.

The answers given by the participants outline the diverse ways that English acted as an obstacle for them during academic activities. Sandy's answer demonstrated how the language barrier affects the student during lecture time. While Lewis shared a different approach with his

answer, mentioning how the language barrier gave him a good chance to improve. He also added that if everything was in Spanish, it would have been easier and quicker. Thus, his growth during his first semester would not have been the same. Lastly, Christopher redirected the question's answer towards how English was an obstacle towards his individual studying. This establishes how the barrier affected his studying habits. Furthermore, both Sandy and Christopher's answers connect because they exhibit how the language barrier affected their reading abilities.

Table 24. Methods to improve language

Interview Question	Sandy	Lewis	Christopher
Si el lenguaje fue un obstáculo, ¿qué herramientas o métodos utilizaste para continuar trabajando? If language was an obstacle, what tools or methods did you use to continue working?	I believe consistency and discipline play a huge role, my classmates would also help, and I would use a translator occasionally.	Just more time and dedication. Online dictionaries and translators. On some occasions I would ask a person who was more proficient to help revise my work.	Although not an obstacle, I used a lot of translators and apps for vocab learning.

The interview question asked participants to mention any tools or methods they utilized to work within the university if language was an obstacle for them. The answers given demonstrate the various techniques that were employed to combat language deficiencies encountered by the participants throughout the semester. Similarities can be found in specific procedures done by all participants. Even though some methods were the same across all three participants, the focuses found in their answers were different. Sandy's answer gives insight in how consistency and discipline in language input plays a huge role. She details how classmates would help her with difficulties she encountered with language. At the same time, she would also occasionally use a translator. Lewis' answer talks about how more time and dedication is needed in order to overcome these language diversities. The usage of online dictionaries was one of his

preferred methods to combat the obstacles that language presented him, alongside translators to aid him. Furthermore, in some occasions he asked his peers to help him revise his work. In contrast, Christopher mentions that language was not an obstacle for him. He still adds that he used a lot of translators and apps for vocabulary learning.

Overall, all three participants utilized a translator to aid them with any language difficulty they encountered. Even though Christopher stated that he did not find any language obstacles at all, his admittance of utilizing translators and apps shows a contradiction in his answer. Even though Sandy and Lewis demonstrate similar techniques, the frequencies of their uses highlight the discrepancies of their language obstacles.

Table 25. Recommendations for future graduate students

Interview Question	Sandy	Lewis	Christopher
<p>¿Dado la diversidad de lenguaje y fuerte presencia de Ingles en la UPRM, como la institución podría mejorar los servicios a nuestros estudiantes internacionales que tienen deficiencias en Inglés?</p> <p>Given the language diversity and strong English presence at UPRM, as an institution how could we better prepare our international students that have deficiencies in English?</p>	<p>Courses that are flexible in regard to schedule and that can help us with our progress.</p>	<p>Normally, when a foreigner or international student arrives with English deficiencies, they look for courses in English to improve. In my case, I searched but my assistants could not help me. The best things UPRM could do is have courses that focus on English, if they do exist the students need better access.</p>	<p>They could offer lg courses that allow students who don't manage the language well, to be immersed in it and familiarize ourselves in a more comfortable way.</p>

This last interview question delves into what advice the participants can give to the institution in regards of preparing its incoming international students that have language deficiencies. The answers were mostly in regards to the same topic, but two participants had a similar language focus and the other one concentrated on a different issue within the same topic. The similar answers talked in regards to language courses given in campus. While the other

answer was mostly about the course offering that the university gives to its students. Sandy's answer dealt with schedule flexibility. She mentioned how the time courses are offered could be changed in order to accommodate students better. By having a better course offering, it can help incoming and current international graduate students at UPRM with their academic progress. The answer given by Sandy does not reflect the university's language diversity, but it does encapsulate a specific topic that affects all graduate students within the institution. Meanwhile, the answers given by both Lewis and Christopher dealt with implementing language courses for the purpose of preparing international students. Lewis spoke about English deficiencies of international students and the importance of the students taking English courses with the purpose of improving their proficiency. At the same time, he also mentions that if the courses already exist then they should have better access for international students to take them. While Christopher does not specifically mention English, he adds that the university should offer language courses that helps students get familiar with it to the point they feel comfortable in utilizing in their outputs while studying and working in UPRM.

The three answers given by the participants dealt with the university's course offering. Sandy is more focused on how better time slots should be given in other to accommodate the students' schedule. Lewis and Christopher talked about how the language diversity in the university can be lowered if language courses can be given to international students during their tenure as a means of improvement. Lewis gives more focused more on the English language and describes its importance in the university's community and the need for international students to be better prepared in it.

Summary

During the study, each participant expressed their thoughts about not only the challenges they have faced during their first semester as graduate students, and graduate teaching assistants of the University of the Puerto Rico at Mayagüez. They all expressed their language perceptions with the use of English, as the second language mostly used in their academic environment. Seven weeks after the mid semester focus group interviews, the three participants were gathered for one last focus group interview towards the end of their first semester as graduate students at the UPRM. The following is a summary analyzing each participant's reactions during the focus group interview and their final thoughts about their experiences.

Regardless of the challenges Sandy faced in the beginning of the semester, she seems to be feeling positive because she focused more on the experience of moving to another country and culture and getting along with her colleagues while engaging in collaborative work. In terms of her language perception and use during her time studying as a graduate student in UPRM, she described the most difficult part of the experience was the English language for her courses, reading assignments, and communicating with her professors, since all academic activities had to be in English. Despite the difficulties Sandy mentioned, such as studying, working, and researching all while improving English as her second language, she showed resolve and was content with her research assistantship at *Red Sísmica*. She expressed it was an honor serving under this program, but as she commented in previous interviews, the only aspect she did not enjoy was the inconsistency of work hours and night shifts, which added to her stress levels when using English to receive phone calls, during her lectures in class, and lab work. Often, Sandy was unsure whether she should write her notes in English or Spanish, and she was constantly using online language tools such as translators, to compare differences between

Spanish and English for her own work. Sandy indicated that she has succeeded this semester because of her own merit, help from peers, and the online tools are how she described being able to succeed this semester and her most difficult challenge, English. To better prepare our international student population, Sandy recommends making available more flexible schedules that aligned with their assistantship.

Lewis ended his semester on a positive note, but he did clarify that the semester was challenging due to Mayaguez, Puerto Rico not having public transportation and the use of English in all his graduate courses. He described his first semester as a success due to the quality of his courses, research, facilities in the university, and help received from faculty and colleagues. Some of the difficulties encountered were adapting to a new culture and environment, having to leave his lodging earlier due to the lack of public transportation, and having all his graduate courses and assignments in English. As he mentioned before, teaching was a real challenge for him in part because his students knew more terms in English than he did and providing feedback in a second language was difficult since he was unsure if what he was writing on the reports were correct in terms of the language, not content. With no teaching experience, and limited time to focus on his teaching assistantship and course work, the semester proved to get tedious as a new obstacle presented itself.

In his defense, Lewis was not aware of the constant use of English during his graduate studies, for his graduate program does not require their master student applicants to take the TOEFL or GRE, and his department does not require him to be proficient in English to complete the program. It took him by surprise that most of his coursework was done in English. However, he did specify that during courses, professors would not force him or classmates to speak or answer in English, which means he was not pressured to use the language.

In reaction to this, Lewis would talk and present in English since he wanted to practice the language and challenge himself more by using it. Therefore, English was not required for communication, but it was heavily used for reading and writing assignments. Lewis felt he had improved slightly in his language proficiency, for he saw all the challenges as an opportunity rather than an obstacle. With the facilities, tools, and help from his professors and peers, Lewis believed he was able to successfully finish this semester. For other international students, Lewis recommended for the university to provide an English course specialized for international students to provide better access and support for this population.

In contrast to Sandy and Lewis, Christopher expressed in a shorter note his difficulties with the English language during his graduate studies. He also did not have time to enjoy off-campus or non-academic activities due to the extensive workload asked of graduate students. Being able to keep up with his studies proved to be a challenging task for him. When professors would ask him to perform tasks in English, this added pressure and difficulty to his daily tasks. In addition to the language barrier, he also had to re-educate himself in how to do math formulas and procedures, since math is taught differently in Colombia. Unlike the other participants, he was able to use Spanish for most of his academic life this semester, since all his professors are of Hispanic or Latino origin, such as Colombia, Argentina, and Puerto Rico. Moreover, his teaching assistantship was working as a tutor in a math lab to attend to student doubts and sometimes offer workshops to undergraduate students, but he was not required to use English for these tasks. Therefore, he felt he has not improved on his English proficiency due to lack of opportunities using the language. The few times he was required to use English, he did not see it as a problem for he would use translators or vocabulary apps to practice with. His recommendation for international students is for the UPRM to offer a course where this

population can immerse themselves in the language and familiarize themselves with its uses in the academic setting

Chapter Five: Conclusion

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory case study was to explore first semester international graduate assistants' language perceptions, and whether or not they changed throughout the semester. In addition, this study wanted to find out if the participants had any recommendations to improve the experience for future international graduate students. I followed a descriptive qualitative exploratory case study design that involved the use of two face-to-face semi structured individual interviews (beginning and end of semester), and a focus group interview. In this chapter I review, examine, and discuss the findings of the study. I also delve into the pedagogical implications and how they may impact the UPRM. I conclude this chapter with suggestions for future research.

Summary of the Findings

Initially, I hoped to gather a larger pool of candidates to ensure that all participants were teaching assistants; however, the Spring 2018 semester schedule changed dramatically because of Hurricane Maria. This catastrophic event made enrollment a lot smaller than previous semesters, and limited the number of participant options for the study. However, it became extremely important to not limit my study to teaching assistants, rather explore the unique situation of a research assistant as well. In the near future I hope to recreate this study with a much wider range of participants from the international student community, and see if their language perceptions change as globalization and the high emphasis on English filter into all Latin-American communities.

The creation of general information questions pertaining to other aspects of their teaching and coursework opened up possibilities that I had not expected. Therefore, in a future study I would like to have more participants, and have an additional semester to know the participants better and see if these perceptions persist.

Extensive coding and integration of findings led to conclusions. I organized the conclusions based on the descriptive exploratory research questions posed for this study:

1. In what ways do three first-semester international graduate teaching students describe their initial expectations of their English and Spanish language use during their studies and teaching at University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez?
2. In what ways do the first-semester international graduate teaching assistants' expectations about their English and Spanish language use in their studies and in teaching change throughout the semester?
3. What suggestions do these three international graduate teaching assistants have for future first-semester international graduate teaching assistants about English and Spanish use at UPRM?

Research question 1. In what ways do three, first-semester international graduate students describe their initial expectations of their English and Spanish language use during their studies and teaching at University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez? Overall, the findings of this study suggest that the three international graduate students had very different expectations of how language was going to be used on the island. All three participants expressed feeling insecurity towards using the English language. The participant profile section highlighted how each of their upbringings lacked English communication opportunities, some more than others. This is

important to note because these international students are moving to a Superdiverse city and university (Carroll & Mazak, 2017) where opportunities are more of a reality.

All three participants anticipated using English materials in their graduate courses. Christopher for example stated that he knew his books would be in English and that he would need some time to adapt. Similarly, Sandy and Lewis had a fuzzy understanding of the language of materials, even though they both said that English would be involved with readings in some ways. Overall, the participants knew they would be using English in their books to some degree.

In terms of faculty, the participants knew their departments communicated in English and Spanish. All three participants had faculty members that had previously studied at UPRM, and knew that they had command of the language. Lewis stated that a lot of his professors in Colombia had studied at UPRM and that influenced him to apply for the program here. Christopher also had faculty members that previously studied at UPRM. In fact, he claimed that his biggest draw to this university besides the program, were the international faculty who taught at the Mathematics department. Before the semester started he was worried about courses being taught in English, given the diversity of faculty. On the other hand, Sandy highlighted that her best undergraduate experiences were with professors who came from the UPRM. She knew English was a big part of the curriculum, and that the Geology department was mainly English speaking professors. This finding helps support Carroll and Mazak's (20017) Meso-level status of UPRM and how language freedom has influenced our former international faculty when promoting UPRM to potential incoming students. This lack of policy appeals to potential students as indicated by our participants because of the idea that English is a part of the institution but not completely enforced on them.

Overall, the three participants expected to use English in materials for their courses and Spanish for the lectures and discussions with faculty. None of them are expecting heavy English use because of their visa status. Their notions of Puerto Rico being a Spanish speaking island and having faculty members that are mainly from the Caribbean and South America. One of the expected difficulties mentioned was that of a potential class in English. This supports the idea that most international students are misinformed on language use in UPRM classrooms. In addition, one participant mentioned the “Puerto Rican English” as being a potential problem, albeit not a major one. This finding supports the Superdiversity tenet of indexicality (Blommaert & Rampton 2011) and how Puerto Rican English is not a haphazard process, rather their “switch” has meaning.

Research question 2. In what ways do the first-semester international graduate teaching assistants’ expectations about their English and Spanish language use in their studies and in teaching change throughout the semester? Each graduate student demonstrated a notable change with their expectations about their perception and use of English and Spanish in their studies, and teaching through their first semester as international graduate students. At the beginning, each participant expressed their concerns about the use of English during their first semester as graduate students, for mastery of the language was not a requirement for them to enter their respective graduate programs. Exams such as the TOEFL or GRE, which are tools used for graduate admissions to measure language ability and criteria, were not required. Each of the participants were aware that the use of English was common in Puerto Rico; however, they did not anticipate English as the second language to be as present in their time studying at the University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez. In their home countries, Spanish is the main language of use for all communications purposes. Once the participants moved to Puerto Rico, a country with

Spanish as its official first language, and English as its second language, they were surprised how much English was used on the island. In their graduate courses, each participant explained how they were confused and challenged at first to study, and complete assignments. They noticed how professors would talk in Spanish, and then add terms in English during class discussion and lectures. This was problematic for the participants because if they did not know the meaning of the word, or how the word itself was used within the language community.

The data collected during the mid-semester focus group interviews revealed the challenges each participant faced in their graduate courses, and teaching assistantships. While two of the three participants were awarded a teaching assistantship, their roles in it were different. Lewis' teaching assistantship involved teaching a laboratory to a group of undergraduate students, and completing a number of tasks such as preparing the class, the laboratory demonstrations, managing the facilities, and constantly providing feedback of his lab reports. As part of the requirements of the course, students were required to submit their formal written lab reports in English. This is when the English language proved difficult for Lewis since he could not give feedback to his students in English due to his lack of mastery of the English language. However, he was able to change his expectations of the language because he received support from peers and the course coordinator of the laboratories. Lewis challenged himself by using tools and resources to help him improve on his second language and searching for courses on campus where he could enroll to improve his English. Therefore, Lewis's expectation of English changed into something possible to obtain and improved during his time as a graduate student.

Christopher's teaching assistantship involved tutoring students for their math classes, and prepared workshops to aid them in their courses. For his assistantship, students had the option of

attending a laboratory class he prepared. Most did not show up, which caused frustration and anguish. His communication skills in his assistantship were not truly depicted in his interviews; rather it focused more on the amount of preparation that was needed in order to complete the tasks. However, there was one instance where Lewis mentions that his students know terminology that he does not know. This finding aligns with Mazak and Herbas-Donoso's (2014), and Mazak, Rivera and Soto's (2016) depiction of Puerto Rican students and their use of scientific English terminology. In a different instance, Lewis discussed his coursework and mentions his readings in his first interview, and stated that he knew English would be used for his readings, but that it would not be problematic. However, during the middle of the semester interview, he highlighted how he had to read a lot in English.

Sandy's assistantship was a research assistantship, which involved working with the seismic center. She stated that parts of her interview were done in English to ensure that she could communicate. Even though she passed her interview, difficulties arose in her assistantship. She indicated that English was the most difficult part of her assistantship, and combined with the extensive hours at the center, she found the experience difficult. Her difficulties lied in that she had to report seismic activity to the United States via phone call. Sandy expressed that her biggest challenge was communicating in English with her professors. All of her classes were in English, and she indicated that it improved her proficiency. She mentioned at the beginning of the semester that she didn't think English was going to be a major problem. However, after 8 weeks, she reported that English was problematic and it took her some significant time to translate single paragraphs. She benefited from having professors that were bilingual and that allowed her to express herself occasionally in Spanish. As she reached the end of the semester, her attitude towards English improved, and she overcame her fears.

Research question 3. What suggestions do these three international graduate teaching assistants have for future first-semester international graduate teaching assistants about English and Spanish use at UPRM? Altogether, the participants provided insight on recommendations the institution can do to offer more services to international students in their time at graduate school. The admission standards say, “Spanish is the language of instruction in most courses at UPRM, but students are required to have a working knowledge of the English language [and] the individual professor decides the language used in lectures and in student evaluation activities” (“University of Puerto Rico,” n.d., p. 75). In other words, the institutional policy informs international students that knowledge of both Spanish and English might be recommended during their time in graduate school, but it does not specify degree of use. Moreover, faculty also have the liberty of choosing the language to use in their courses, which means they can use one or both languages in their lectures, class materials, and assignments. The use of two languages in the classroom could result problematic because students who are not bilingual or that lack a great understanding of English, could find themselves in situations where completing coursework could be challenging. The participants suggested that UPRM open more opportunities for international students to learn, practice, and improve their English language skills. Currently, the English Department at UPRM offers an English course for international students INTD 6007 where they get a semester of English language basics in writing and speaking. However, this course is not offered every academic year.

All three participants agreed that one suggestion for future first-semester international graduate students is to learn English, even if it is just the basic understanding of it, before traveling to Puerto Rico. The data demonstrates that it is not English itself that limits the international teaching assistants in their course work and teaching. The participants have

described how the teaching and learning of materials and concepts are different in their home countries. One example is how math in Puerto Rico uses different approaches compared to how math is taught in Colombia or Argentina. A lot of professors code-switch or translanguage with Spanish and English when explaining certain concepts, and how these are used in the field. These instances can prove confusing for international graduate teaching assistants who are used to a monolingual learning and teaching environment. This among many other reasons is why getting acquainted with the language will help future international graduate students adapting to UPRM.

Students highlighted the need for English courses that would best suit their needs. However the participant's mentioned details that suggested content different according to their current proficiency level. Christopher for example indicated that he needed courses that would give him more of a foundation, since his writing and speaking skills were at a very basic level. On the other hand Lewis and Sandy do not have Basic English needs like Christopher. English courses based on graduate school level improvement like: the writing process, public speaking strategies are what Lewis and Sandy need. Currently, the UPRM does not have courses that can benefit its' international students and help them develop and strengthen their current English skillset.

Pedagogical Implications

Findings of this study have implications for language pedagogy. This study was designed study to gain insights into first semester international graduate assistants' language perceptions of a translanguageing heavy university. I also provide recommendations to enhance the experience for international graduate students.

First semester international graduate students are interested in studying at UPRM because of its international faculty, and the opportunities to learn English in a mainly Spanish-speaking island. However, the findings show that their perception on how, and for what language is used in their graduate studies is uncertain. Based on these findings, several recommendations emerge, including implications for pedagogy in practice, and suggestions for future research studies.

English is a big motivator for international graduate students to apply for a graduate school. Moreover, English serves as a springboard for these students to get better opportunities via a higher degree or even a job in their country. The key to successful integration of the English language for the international student population can be accomplished through an implementation of summer courses to help them adapt to their new surroundings. This would allow incoming students to get a grasp of how language functions, and learn the necessary skills to excel at the graduate level. The design of the courses would depend on the needs of the students. Some courses could focus on Basic English skills for lower level students like the case of Christopher, who could barely communicate in English. Other English courses would focus more on the application of these skills to complete graduate tasks, (e.g. thesis writing, poster presentation practice), this would be for intermediate to advanced students like Lewis and Sandy.

In addition to implementing summer English courses, the office of graduate studies could collaborate with the English department and other departments that mainly attract international graduate students, and establish a tool for evaluating potential candidates. This would entail that we keep the original requirements of them not talking the TOEFL or GRE, but create our own measuring tool to evaluate, and provide a report so that the department can understand some of the areas that need improvement. This could be an opportunity to create jobs for the English department and service our other prestigious programs. This new evaluation tool may provide an

alternative for universities who are looking to attract international graduate students, but that do not want to establish a TOEFL or GRE requirement, which might not attract potential students. As an educator and current faculty member to many international students, I am interested in creating meaningful opportunities to propel our international student body to achieve worldwide success. The English language should not be a barrier that limits a student from presenting his groundbreaking research at a national conference. Thus, I will share my findings with the Office of Graduate Studies and propose a plan to support our international teaching assistants. In addition, I want to propose some better practices and guidelines to ensure that this information is disseminated throughout our different programs, and professional development opportunities are created to provide concrete solutions.

The university should also consider establishing a sector or committee that establishes orientations and guidelines for our incoming international graduate population. This sector would focus on explaining cultural differences at UPRM, and also help them with other academic tasks like: creating a syllabus, evaluation policies, and establishing a network to ensure that they have the support needed to transition smoothly to the UPRM pace.

Considerations for Future Research

I collected self-reported data from the student's perspectives for this study. The exploratory nature of this study establishes a good base of themes to proceed with considerations for different types of study.

One possibility is approaching the study from a quantitative approach. Using the same premise of English perceptions, this inquiry could be disseminated through the use of a survey to all incoming international students. This would allow the researcher to reach a wider audience

and use statistical analysis to get a better overall idea of language perceptions upon arrival, and other relevant topics that participants brought up in their interviews.

Translanguaging is not the only perspective that looks at the use of multiple languages intertwined into every day discourse. Scholars like Canagarajah (2011) have developed frameworks that use a similar translanguaging base, but focus specifically on a different skill like writing. Canagarajah's translingualism approach could be applied to the participants as it pertains to analysis of rhetoric and composition. Initially, I argued against Canagarajah's criticism of translanguaging as being a framework that did not focus on meaning making. I do believe that both translanguaging and translingualism could compliment each other, and potentially lead to a study that focuses on describing the different linguistic practices, and how the participant's make meaning through their writing.

Another possible study would focus on integrating the professor's perspectives on the language used in graduate courses. Through the use of interviews, and review of teaching artifacts, the researcher could look at how professors construct their translanguaging classrooms, and the effectiveness of these choices.

Limitations

This qualitative study required a systematic approach for data collection, and analysis. The semi-controlled interview questions were based on the research questions and informed by the prior research findings and pilot study. During the data analysis, even though I tried to bracket my personal views, experiences with international graduate students and biases influenced my study design. In qualitative studies, as Patton (2002) put forth "The human factor is the great strength and the fundamental weakness of qualitative inquiry and analysis—a scientific two-edged sword" (p. 433), and it is still a debatable issue that the interpretations of the

researcher might be influenced by personal views or limited by level of understanding, interpretation and writing skills. The procedures followed during the data analysis helped to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings. During and after my data analysis of every interview, notes were taken, which worked as a member checking method and assisted with follow up interviews for further questions and clarifications. To avoid divergence from the data, I invited an independent peer reviewer to look at the data and analyze. I talked to the peer reviewer about the procedure, and he reviewed one case. Once he finished his analysis, we came together and discussed some of the findings. This descriptive exploratory case study relied solely on the description of the participants' experiences. Hence, there had to be detailed accounts and quotes of those lived experiences.

The UPRM receives students from different countries, the majority stem from Colombia, which might not be representative of the population or the situation of other international students at the UPRM. In a future study, it would be pertinent to recruit participants from other nationalities, other than Colombian. Given this self-selection bias, and the initial interview questions heavy focus on English and my status at the university, participants might have been inclined toward focusing on English.

Another limitation was the instruments that I used in the study: individual interview (2) and focus group interview. I had incorporated a reflective journal as part of the data collection, but one of the participants did not have a single entry and the other two participants only had one entry. A different data collection instrument could have provided more accurate data and ensured triangulation of the findings.

A researcher bias was in the area of interpretation or hermeneutics. Ferraris (1996) defines hermeneutics as “the art of interpretation as transformation” and contrasts it with a view

of theory as “contemplation of eternal essences unalterable by their observer” (p. 1). In times where words are taken out of context and information is lost in translation the need to make explicit the art of interpretation, and the transformative possibilities within, has never been more urgent. The tradition of hermeneutic scholarship can enrich and validate assumptions about interpretations that are vital to qualitative research. My study took into account Kinsella’s (2006) 5 hermeneutic characteristics that guided the interpretation process. The characteristics were the following:

- a. seeks understanding rather than explanation
- b. acknowledges the situated location of interpretation
- c. recognizes the role of language and historicity in interpretation
- d. views inquiry as conversation, and
- e. is comfortable with ambiguity.

It was imperative to adopt a hermeneutic approach because it is inevitable a necessity of qualitative research to attend inquires of a descriptive and exploratory nature. Furthermore, this method recognizes that interpretive inquiry is potentially problematic and thus needs to acknowledge that understanding is just as important as explanation, and that language cannot be examined in a vacuum, rather it should historically situate and inform the interpretation.

The first characteristic was exemplified through the research design of my study. My study did not focus on trying to explain a language phenomenon at the university, rather it focused on understanding the language experiences of incoming international graduate students. The second trait acknowledged that all interpretation is stated and stems from somewhere. As a faculty member who has taught international students for several years, I was aware of some of the struggles that most incoming international graduate teaching assistants, and considered all the

data through my historically and culturally situated lens. The third characteristic recognizes historicity, and the significance of language for interpretive purposes. The qualitative nature of the study relied on me, the researcher, to verbally interpret those analyzed texts and translate that into my own language. It is essential to recognize the influence of my prejudice as it pertains to translanguaging, and identifying UPRM as a superdiverse contexts. The fourth characteristic, inquiry as conversation is characterized by the need to find a common language to carry out a hermeneutic conversation between texts. As a researcher, I acknowledge my role as interpreter because I highlighted relevant features of the interviews to shed light on issues that international graduate teaching assistants face at UPRM. The final hermeneutic characteristic embraces the concept of ambiguity. Through member checking, I was able to reassure some of my interpretations by corroborating with participants. In addition, I recognize that many of my views of language in Puerto Rico are influenced by the sociopolitical status of the island, which still embraces a colonial mindset. Finally, a hermeneutic approach was necessary for this study because it acknowledges that ambiguity is inevitable and that integrating those ambiguities can help provide a better understanding of the inquiry.

This chapter provided a brief overview of key findings detailed within each research question. I drew conclusions and offered recommendations for pedagogical implications based on my findings and experiences conducting this dissertation. Moreover, I detail factors that were limitations in my study, so that future educators and practitioners can take into account when conducting research in superdiverse contexts. I also highlighted hermeneutic characteristics (Kinsella, 2006) that guided my interpretation process and influenced my approach to potential problematic biases and ambiguities in the understanding of this inquiry. These hermeneutic considerations helped me understand the importance of the researcher's culturally and historical

lens as it pertains to how a text is interpreted. I hope that sharing these first semester international graduate students' experiences will lend insight into both the development of strategies to help newcomers adapt to superdiverse contexts and into structuring courses to support them upon arrival. It is also my desire that UPR and policy makers establish some language guidelines to help ensure that future students understand how language functions on the island and more specifically at the university.

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Appendices

Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter



RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND COMPLIANCE
Institutional Review Boards, FWA No. 00001669
12901 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., MDC035 • Tampa, FL 33612-4799
(813) 974-5638 • FAX (813) 974-7091

February 22, 2018

Edward Contreras
Teaching and Learning
Tampa, FL 33613

RE: **Expedited Approval for Initial Review**

IRB#: Pro00033944

Title: International Teaching Assistants' perceptions of English and Spanish language use at the University of Puerto Rico-Mayagüez

Study Approval Period: 2/22/2018 to 2/22/2019

Dear Mr. Contreras:

On 2/22/2018, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and **APPROVED** the above application and all documents contained within, including those outlined below.

Approved Item(s):

Protocol Document(s):

[Protocol 2.19.18](#)

Consent/Assent Document(s)*:

[Adult Consent Version #1 2.17.19 English.pdf](#)

[Adult consent Version #1 2.17.19 Spanish.pdf](#)

*Please use only the official IRB stamped informed consent/assent document(s) found under the "Attachments" tab. Please note, these consent/assent documents are valid until the consent document is amended and approved.

It was the determination of the IRB that your study qualified for expedited review which includes activities that (1) present no more than minimal risk to human subjects, and (2) involve only procedures listed in one or more of the categories outlined below. The IRB may review research through the expedited review procedure authorized by 45CFR46.110. The research

proposed in this study is categorized under the following expedited review category:

(6) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

As the principal investigator of this study, it is your responsibility to conduct this study in accordance with IRB policies and procedures and as approved by the IRB. Any changes to the approved research must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval via an amendment. Additionally, all unanticipated problems must be reported to the USF IRB within five (5) calendar days.

We appreciate your dedication to the ethical conduct of human subject research at the University of South Florida and your continued commitment to human research protections. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please call 813-974-5638.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John A. Schinka, Ph.D.".

John Schinka, Ph.D., Chairperson
USF Institutional Review Board

Appendix B: IRB Approval Letter UPRM



Comité para la Protección de los Seres Humanos en la Investigación
CPSHI/IRB 00002053
Universidad de Puerto Rico – Recinto Universitario de Mayagüez
Decanato de Asuntos Académicos
Call Box 9000
Mayagüez, PR 00681-9000

26 de febrero de 2018

Edward Contreras Santiago
Instructor
Inglés

Estimado Prof. Contreras:

El Comité para la Protección de los Seres Humanos en la Investigación (CPSHI) ha considerado su petición para incluir al Recinto de Mayagüez en su estudio titulado *International Teaching Assistants' perceptions of English and Spanish language use at the University of Puerto Rico- Mayagüez*.

Luego de estudiar la autorización brindada por el Comité Institucional para la Protección de los Seres Humanos en la Investigación de su universidad, nuestra oficina determina acoger dicha aprobación reconociendo que el Comité de su institución será el principal responsable por supervisar su investigación. La aprobación tiene vigencia de un año a partir de hoy; esto es, desde el 26 de febrero de 2018 hasta el 25 de febrero de 2019. Le recordamos que la aprobación emitida por nuestro comité no la exime de cumplir con cualquier otro requisito institucional o gubernamental relacionado al tema o fuente de financiamiento de su proyecto. Igualmente, debe someter esta carta de aprobación a Rectoría para conseguir el permiso oficial para realizar su investigación en nuestro Recinto. Puede someterla a la Sra. Migdalia Milian (migdalia.milian@upr.edu) para que le ayude con esta gestión. Por último, una vez obtenga el permiso institucional, debe comunicarse con la Sra. Maira Rodríguez (maira.rodriguez@upr.edu) de la Oficina de Planificación Institucional para que le ayude con su pedido de información.

La reglamentación federal exige que toda investigación sea supervisada mientras continúe activa. Se consideran activos aquellos proyectos que aún estén reclutando participantes o haya terminado el reclutamiento pero aún se estén recopilando datos. Si vislumbra que su proyecto seguirá activo al momento de vencerse la fecha de aprobación, le pedimos que someta una solicitud de extensión a más tardar un mes antes del vencimiento de su vigencia.

Cualquier cambio al protocolo o a la metodología deberá ser revisado y aprobado por su Comité supervisor antes de su implantación, excepto en casos en que el cambio sea necesario para eliminar algún riesgo inmediato para los/as participantes. Nuestro Comité deberá ser notificado de dichos cambios tan pronto le sea posible al/a la investigador/a. Igualmente nuestro Comité deberá ser informado de inmediato de cualquier efecto adverso o problema inesperado que surgiera con relación al riesgo de los seres humanos, de cualquier queja sobre esta investigación y de cualquier violación a la confidencialidad de los participantes.

Cordialmente,


Dr. Rafael A. Boglio Martínez
Presidente CPSHI/IRB
UPR – RUM

Teléfono: (787) 832 - 4040 x 6277, 3807, 3808 -- Fax: (787) 831-2085 -- Página Web: www.uprm.edu/cpsi
Email: cpsi@uprm.edu

Appendix C: Informed Consent form Spanish Version



Hoja de consentimiento para participar en una investigación con poco riesgo

Pro # 00033944

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Se le pide participar en un estudio de investigación. Estudios de investigación incluye personas que deseen formar parte del estudio. Este documento se conoce como hoja de consentimiento. Por favor lee esta información cuidadosamente y tome su tiempo para hacer su decisión. Pregunte al personal investigador para discutir este formulario de consentimiento con usted, y de ser necesario pídale explicar cualquier palabra o información que no entienda claramente.

Estamos pidiendo que forme parte del estudio llamado

Prácticas de lengua en la Universidad de Puerto Rico en Mayagüez: Un estudio de caso de 5 instructores internacionales

La persona que esta a cargo de la investigación es [Edward Contreras Santiago]. Esta persona es conocido como el Investigador Principal. Sin embargo, otros miembros de comité pueden estar involucrados y pueden actuar en lugar de la persona a cargo. El esta siendo guiado por el Dr. John Liontas.

Esta investigación se va a llevar a cabo en la Universidad de Puerto Rico, Mayagüez.

●

Propósito del estudio

El propósito de este proyecto de investigación es para saber las percepciones de asistentes internacionales de investigación de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, Mayagüez y como perciben el uso de Inglés y Español. Yo (el investigador) usare distintos método para recoger la data. La primera fuente de data son las entrevistas individuales. Habrá un total de 3 entrevistas individuales, la primera será justo antes del comienzo de clases. La segunda entrevista será en medio del semestre y la tercera será al final del semestre escolar. La segunda fuente de data será una entrevista estilo grupo de enfoque. Habrán dos entrevistas en grupo, una a mitad del semestre y la otra al final. Esto ayudara a saber sus percepciones del Inglés y Español a través del semestre y finalmente como si han cambiado. La ultima fuente de data será unas entradas de diario que se recolectaran bi-semanalmente. Esto me permitirá ver reflexiones de distintos instantes a través del semestre. Deseo recolectar esta data para saber si percepciones de lenguaje

cambian a través del semestre y en adición saber si tienen alguna recomendación para mejorar la UPRM para futuros estudiantes graduados internacionales.

Porque se esta solicitando su ayuda?

Estoy solicitando que tome parte en esta investigación porque la misma esta analizando las percepciones del lenguaje Inglés y Español en su primer semestre. A través de los años, la UPRM ha admitido cerca de 200 estudiantes graduados anualmente por los pasados cinco años. Sin embargo, no han hecho investigaciones con este grupo para ver sus percepciones de el lenguaje utilizado en la universidad. Entender estas percepciones me va a informar si eso lo impacta a ellos de alguna forma. Adicionalmente, quiero saber que sugerencias tienen esos participantes para mejorar la llegada de futuros estudiantes internacionales a la UPRM.

Procedimiento del estudio:

Si formas parte del estudio, se te pedirá que participes de Febrero 2018 a Julio 2018. Durante ese tiempo, se te pedirá reunirte para lo siguiente de lo siguiente:

- *Este estudio se llevara a cabo entre febrero 2018- julio 2018. Dentro de ese periodo del estudio, coordinaremos de acuerdo a la data que será recolectada en la UPRM.*
 - *Entrevistas de grupo focal (2)- Sera administrado la octava semana después del comienzo de clases del semestre de la primavera y la segunda entrevista será al final del semestre. Cada entrevista durara aproximadamente 30 minutos.*
 - *Entrevistas individuales (3) Entrevistas serán administradas el primer dia de clases, a mitad del semestre y al final del semestre académico (primavera). . Cada entrevista durara aproximadamente 30 minutos*
 - *Entradas de diario en Google Docs- Estudiantes tendrán la oportunidad para expresar cualquier situación que haya sucedido en el salón de clase o referente a sus clases. Verificare sus entradas de diario cada dos semanas.*
- Los participantes serán grabado durante el grupo de enfoque y entrevistas individuales. Grabaciones de audio son necesaria para recolectar la data y para participar en este estudio; tienes la opción de no participar y no ser grabado. Estas grabaciones de audio serán compartidas solamente con el presidente de mi comité de disertación (Dr. John Liontas) y será guardado por mi (el investigador). Las grabaciones estarán en mi posesión por cinco años (como lo requiere el IRB de USF). Cuando se cumpla los cinco años, borraré los archivos de mi computadora.

Número Total de Participantes

Aproximadamente [0] individuos van a tomar parte en el estudio en USF. Un total de [3] individuos van a tomar parte en estudio en el lugar de investigación.

Alternativas / Participación Voluntaria / De baja

Usted no tiene que participar en el estudio de investigación.

Usted solamente debería tomar parte en este estudio si quiere ser voluntario. No debería sentirse obligado a tomar parte en este estudio. Usted está a libertad a participar en la investigación o darse de baja a cualquier momento. No hay penalidad o perdida de los beneficios en los cual usted tiene derecho a recibir si para de tomar parte en este estudio.

Beneficios

Usted no recibirá algún beneficio(s) por participar en el estudio de investigación.

Riesgos y Molestias

Esta investigación es de riesgo mínimo. Esto quiere decir que los riesgos asociados con este estudio son igual a los que usted enfrenta todos los días. No hay ningún riesgo adicional para aquellos que tomen parte en este estudio.

Compensación

Usted no recibirá ningún pago u otra compensación por tomar parte en este estudio.

Costo

No tendrá ningún costo adicional el tomar parte en este estudio.

Privacidad y Confidencialidad

Mantendremos su archivo privado y confidencial. Ciertos individuos tendrán que ver los archivos de estudio. Cualquier individuo que mire sus archivos tendrá que mantenerlo confidencial. Esos individuos incluyen:

- La Junta de Revisión Institucional, IRB por sus siglas en inglés, de USF y UPRM; al igual que el personal relacionado en la supervisión de las responsabilidades del estudio, el cual incluye personal del USF “Research Integrity and Compliance.”

Podremos publicar lo que aprendamos en este estudio. Si lo hacemos, no vamos a incluir su nombre en el estudio. No publicaremos nada que deje a conocer quién eres.

Se le indica que aunque el investigador tomara las debidas precauciones para mantener confidencialidad de la data, la naturaleza de los grupos focales no permite que el investigador pueda garantizar confidencialidad. El investigador quiere recordarle a los participantes que respeten la privacidad de los otros participantes y por favor no divulgar ni repetir lo que se haya dicho en las entrevistas de grupo focal.

Para respuestas a sus preguntas, preocupaciones, o quejas

Si usted tiene alguna pregunta, preocupación o queja sobre el estudio, o sufre algún problema imprevista, puede comunicarse con [Edward Contreras] al [813-417-2356].

Si tiene alguna pregunta sobre sus derechos como participante de este estudio, quejas, preocupación o problemas que quiere discutir con alguien fuera de la investigación, puede llamar al USF IRB a (813) 974- 5638 o al UPRM IRB a (787) 832-4040, Ext. 6277.

En lo que se esté llevando a cabo este estudio de investigación, no se permitirá dejar los participantes ver o copiar la información de la investigación que tenemos de usted. Luego que la investigación sea completada, usted tiene derecho de ver la información suya, como estipulado por las políticas de USF.

Consentimiento para formar parte del estudio

Declaración de la persona que obtener el consentimiento informado

He explicado de forma cuidadosa al participante de lo que ocurrirá en el estudio. Confirmando que he usado la lengua que habla el participante para explicar esta investigación y que esta recibiendo una hoja de consentimiento en su primera lengua. Este participante de investigación ha dado su consentimiento informado jurídicamente eficaz.

Firma de persona obteniendo consentimiento

Date

Nombre de persona obteniendo consentimiento

Appendix D: Informed Consent Form English Version



Informed Consent to Participate in Research Involving Minimal Risk

Pro # 00033944

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You are being asked to take part in a research study. Research studies include only people who choose to take part. This document is called an informed consent form. Please read this information carefully and take your time making your decision. Ask the researcher or study staff to discuss this consent form with you, please ask him/her to explain any words or information you do not clearly understand. We are asking you to take part in a research study called:

International Teaching Assistants' perceptions of English and Spanish language use at the University of Puerto Rico-Mayagüez

The person who is in charge of this research study is [*Edward Contreras Santiago*]. This person is called the Principal Investigator. However, other research staff may be involved and can act on behalf of the person in charge. He is being guided in this research by Dr. John Liontas.

The research will be conducted at University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez campus.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to uncover perceptions and any difficulties that international teaching assistants encounter throughout their first semester as graduate students with the hopes of informing future graduate students of the difficulties of adapting to UPRM. This study will look at each participant's perceptions of English and Spanish language use throughout different parts of the semester. In addition, I hope to attain recommendations as to how the UPRM can improve

the experience of incoming international teaching assistants. To summarize, I will gather data from focus group and individual interviews, and Goggle doc journal entries.

Why are you being asked to take part?

We are asking you to take part in this research study because the study is analyzing the language perceptions of **international teaching assistants** at UPRM. UPRM has welcomed over 200 international graduate students on a yearly basis for the past five years. However, no formal research has been conducted regarding their perceptions of English and Spanish language use upon arrival to UPRM. Knowing these language perceptions will allow for a deeper look into the role of language for students who are new to the island and possibly assist in curricular change for a population that is growing and that has few options to enhance their English language skills at UPRM.

Study Procedures:

The duration of the study is between February 2018- July 2018. During that time we will meet according to the data that will be collected in the UPRM (with the exception of the potluck dinners). If you take part in this study, you will be asked to:

- *Focus group interview (1)- Will be administered eight weeks after the beginning of the Spring 2018 semester and will last approximately 30-60 minutes and will consist of questions pertaining to: their semester in detail, language use perceptions throughout the semester and recommendations.*
- *Individual interviews (2)-The first one will be administered the first day of class, and the final interview will be administered at the end of the semester. The individual interview will consist of questions related to general information (e.g.why did you decide to study in PR?), learner difficulties while arriving to PR (if any) and some goals for the end of the semester. The duration of each interview should be from 20-30 minutes.*
- *Bi-weekly Google Doc journal entries- I will revise Google Doc journal entries on a bi-weekly basis. The participants will be asked to document any experience they have with language throughout the semester, or any other experience they wish to share.*
- Participants will be audio recorded during the focus group and individual interviews. Audio recording is necessary for data collection and to participate in this study, so you have the option to not participate if you do not wish to be recorded. A gentle reminder that these audio recordings will only be shared with the chair of my dissertation committee (Dr. John Lontas) and will be kept safely by me (the researcher). The audio recordings will be in my possession for 5 years after the Final Report is submitted to the IRB. Once those five years have passed I will delete the recordings from my computer.

Total Number of Participants

About [0] individuals will take part in this study at USF. A total of [3] individuals will participate in the study at all sites.

Alternatives / Voluntary Participation / Withdrawal

You do not have to participate in this research study.

You should only take part in this study if you want to volunteer. You should not feel that there is any pressure to take part in the study. You are free to participate in this research or withdraw at any time. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits you are entitled to receive if you stop taking part in this study.

Benefits

You will receive no benefit(s) by participating in this research study.

Risks or Discomfort

This research is considered to be minimal risk. That means that the risks associated with this study are the same as what you face every day. There are no known additional risks to those who take part in this study.

Compensation

You will receive no payment or other compensation for taking part in this study.

Costs

It *will not* cost you *anything* to take part in the study.

Conflict of Interest Statement

This study is not federally funded and there is no student-professor relationship, which means that there is no conflict of interest in participating in this study. Therefore the COI management plan does not apply in regards to this study.

Privacy and Confidentiality

We will keep your study records private and confidential. Certain people may need to see your study records. Anyone who looks at your records must keep them confidential. These individuals include:

- The research team, including the Principal Investigator, study coordinator, and all other research staff. [*Principal Investigator, Committee members*]
- Certain government and university people who need to know more about the study, and individuals who provide oversight to ensure that we are doing the study in the right way.
- Any agency of the federal, state, or local government that regulates this research

- The USF Institutional Review Board (IRB) and related staff who have oversight responsibilities for this study, including staff in USF Research Integrity and Compliance.

We may publish what we learn from this study. If we do, we will not include your name. We will not publish anything that would let people know who you are.

You can get the answers to your questions, concerns, or complaints

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this study, or experience an unanticipated problem, call [*Edward Contreras*] at [*813-417-2356*].

If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, or have complaints, concerns or issues you want to discuss with someone outside the research, call the USF IRB at (813) 974-5638.

While we are conducting the research study, we cannot let you see or copy the research information we have about you. After the research is completed, you have a right to see the information about you, as allowed by USF policies. You will receive a signed copy of this form.

Statement of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

I have carefully explained to the person taking part in the study what he or she can expect from their participation. I confirm that this research subject speaks the language that was used to explain this research and is receiving an informed consent form in their primary language. This research subject has provided legally effective informed consent.

Signature of Person obtaining Informed Consent

Date

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

Appendix E: Individual Interview Protocol (English)

First Individual Interview

General Information

1. Why did you decide to study in Puerto Rico?
2. How did you find information about the program?

Teaching Background

1. Do you have any teaching background or experience? Please describe.
2. Does your department offer any training before you start teaching?
3. What are you teaching?
4. Provide a background of the class that you teach.
5. Who are your students? Describe the demographics of your class. What are their majors?

Language Experience as a Learner

1. Describe your language experiences before arriving at UPRM as a student.
2. In which language were the classes delivered? For example: Spanish only, Spanish and English Other languages
3. Compare the populations/types of students in your home country vs those in Puerto Rico.
 - a. (Example: Are there students in the class who are not from Colombia). Describe a typical classroom population.
4. Explain the differences between languages used in UPRM vs the university where you
 - a. How are they similar? How are they different?

Anticipated Difficulties

5. Do you anticipate any difficulties to start the semester? If yes, explain why.

Appendix F: Individual Interview Protocol Spanish

Preguntas para la primera entrevista individual

Preguntas generales

1. ¿Por qué decidió estudiar en Puerto Rico?
2. ¿Cómo encontró información del programa? (Ejemplos: página web, un amigo)

Ayudantía

1. Ahora que estas acá, el departamento tuyo, ¿te ofrece algún adiestramiento pedagógico, antes de que ofrezcas clases?
2. ¿Qué clases, vas a ofrecer?
3. ¿Tienes alguna idea de qué clases vas a ofrecer o de qué consiste lo que vas hacer? me dijiste que tienes una idea de que vas a bregar con un laboratorio, sabes de qué es el laboratorio o todavía no?

Trasfondo pedagógico

1. ¿Posees experiencia previa como educador? Explique
2. ¿El departamento te ofrece algún adiestramiento (pedagógico) antes que ofrezcas clases?
3. ¿Qué clase(s) ofreces o has ofrecido? ¿En qué consiste(n)?
4. ¿Tienes estudiantes que no sean de Puerto Rico en tu salón de clase?
5. ¿Cuáles son las carreras/concentraciones de tus estudiantes?

Experiencia lingüística como aprendiz

1. Describa tu experiencia con idiomas antes de ser admitido a la UPRM como estudiante.
2. ¿En qué idioma se ofrecían las clases? Por ejemplo: solo español, sólo inglés, español e inglés, algún otro idioma...)
3. ¿Cómo era la interacción entre estudiantes en tu anterior universidad vs la interacción en la UPRM?
4. ¿Que tan diversa era la población de estudiantes en las clases que tomaste en tu anterior universidad?
5. Explica las diferencias entre el lenguaje usado en UPRM vs el lenguaje usado en la otra universidad donde estudiaste anteriormente. ¿En qué se parecen? ¿En qué se diferencian?

Experiencia lingüística como aprendiz

1. ¿Anticipas alguna dificultad al empezar el semestre? De indicar si, explique por qué.

Appendix G: Focus Group Interview Protocol

Focus group interview questions

Early semester student expectations

1. What were your expectations as students upon arriving to UPRM? Were those expectations met?

Challenges studying in Puerto Rico

1. Which were some of the challenges you faced while you studied in Puerto Rico?
2. What has been the most difficult thing about studying at UPRM?
3. You studied here for half a semester, what would you have wanted to know before you started the semester?

Challenges teaching in Puerto Rico

1. Any challenge teaching? Have you had any challenges with maybe a student? something in particular from your labs where you had some difficulties.
2. Have you had any difficulty in trying to explain or teach a concept in your courses? (For example: Thinking of a concept in English and not being able to translate it in Spanish or vice versa)

Language perception/use in graduate courses

1. In the classes you take, you mentioned that some of the professors give presentations in English. Are there some classes that are completely in English?
2. In those presentations that are mainly in Spanish, have you had to include some English in your presentation?
3. For your graduate courses, did you mainly read in English? How do you feel about that?

Language perception/use in graduate students

1. Do you think the way you have been raised has influenced your perspective on language or the way you use language? There are some people who not like to mix languages.
2. In those presentations that are mainly in Spanish, have you had to include some English in your presentation?
3. Has your perspective changed? In regard to how people at UPRM use Spanish-English? Maybe you had a perspective at the beginning and now three months later it is different.

Appendix H: Focus Group Interview Protocol (Spanish)

Preguntas para el grupo focal

Expectativas al principio del semestre

1. ¿Cuáles eran tus expectativas como estudiante antes de ingresar al RUM? ¿Esas metas se han cumplido?

Retos estudiando in Puerto Rico

1. ¿Cuáles son algunos de los retos que has enfrentado mientras estudias en Puerto Rico? estudiar cómo tal como estudiante después hay otras respecto a enseñanza.
2. ¿Qué ha sido lo más difícil de estudiarla UPRM?
3. ¿Has estudiado aquí para la mitad de un semestre?, ¿qué te hubiese gustado saber antes de comenzar el semestre?

Retos enseñando en Puerto Rico

1. ¿Y algún reto enseñando? ¿Has tenido algún reto quizás con sus estudiantes, quizás algo en particular de ellos, en sus talleres has tenido algún reto con ellos?
2. ¿Has encontrado alguna dificultad al tratar de explicar o enseñar algún concepto en los cursos? (Por ejemplo: Pensar en el concepto en inglés y no poder traducirlo al español o viceversa).
3. Pero quería hablar un poquito sobre el diseño de las pruebas, en tu caso ¿Ustedes administran exámenes?

Percepción y uso de lenguaje en cursos graduados

1. En las clases que tu tomas también mencionaste ahorita que los profesores algunas de las presentaciones las daban en ingles ¿Algunas clases son completamente en inglés?
2. ¿Entonces en esas presentaciones mayormente las haces en español, pero ¿has tenido que incluir un poquito de ingles dentro de tus presentaciones?
3. ¿Para tus clases graduadas, tienes que leer mayormente en inglés? ¿Y cómo te sientes respecto a eso?

Percepción y uso de lenguaje en estudiantes graduados

1. ¿Crees que la manera en que te criaron ha influenciado tu perspectiva de lenguaje o la forma que usas lenguaje? Hay personas que no le gusta mezclar lenguas?
2. Entonces en esas presentaciones mayormente las haces en español pero has tenido que incluir un poquito de ingles dentro de tus presentaciones?
3. ¿Ha cambiado esa perspectiva o se ha mantenido igual o qué? respecto a cómo nosotros utilizamos el español-inglés, quizás tenías un pensamiento al llegar ah estoy iba hacer así y ahora tres meses después es algo distinto, simplemente curioso.

Appendix I: End of Semester Interview Protocol

End of semester individual interview

Description of first semester

1. How do you characterize your first semester at UPRM?

Difficulties in UPRM

1. The most difficult part of studying at UPRM?
2. The most difficult part of working at UPRM?

Language Perception/Use in Graduate Courses

1. Which language was used the most for academic tasks?
2. Which language was used the most in courses or labs?

Language Perception/Use of Participants

1. Do you feel more proficient or comfortable using English?
2. Was English an obstacle for your daily tasks?
3. If language was an obstacle, what tools or methods did you use to continue working?

Recommendations from Participants

1. Given the lx diversity and strong English presence at UPRM, as an institution how could we better prepare our international students that have deficiencies in Spanish or English?

Appendix J: End of Semester Interview Protocol (Spanish)

Experiencia al final del semestre

1. ¿Como caracteriza su primer semestre en la UPRM?

Dificultades en UPRM

1. ¿Qué fue lo más difícil de estudiar en la UPRM?
2. ¿Qué fue lo más difícil de trabajar en la UPRM?

Percepción y uso de lenguaje en los cursos graduados

1. Ahora terminado el semestre, ¿qué idioma fue usado más para las tareas académicas?
2. ¿Qué idioma fue usado más para los cursos o laboratorios ofrecidos?

Percepción y uso de lenguaje de los participantes

1. Te sientes más proficiente o cómodo/a usando inglés? ¿Por qué?
2. ¿El inglés fue un obstáculo para tus tareas diarias?
3. Si el idioma fue un obstáculo, ¿qué métodos o herramientas usaste para poder continuar trabajando?

Recomendaciones de los participantes

1. Dado a la diversidad lingüística y la sólida presencia de inglés en UPRM, ¿cómo la institución podría preparar mejor a estudiantes internacionales con dudas (deficiencias) en español y en inglés?