



**BENEMÉRITA UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE  
PUEBLA**

Facultad de Lenguas

Licenciatura en Enseñanza del Inglés

**THE INFLUENCE OF MEXICAN CULTURAL ASPECTS ON SPANISH LEARNING  
JAPANESE STUDENTS**

**T H E S I S**

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**January, 2023**

**“The influence of Mexican cultural aspects on Spanish learning  
Japanese students”**

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degree of**

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## **Abstract**

According to the Instituto Cervantes, Spanish is the second language most studied in the world along with Chinese and French. Due to this statement, more people from different countries decide to learn Spanish because of its current relevance. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to explore the affective and cultural reasons foreigners have when starting learning Spanish and if there are cultural aspects of their target language's country that help them to overcome difficulties during their learning process. It covers how culture is within the learning of a foreign language (Klippel, 1994) and how some affective factors can affect this process (Henter, 2014). This study demonstrates how necessary it is to include cultural aspects of the target language's country in the learning process of foreign learners to develop and maintain their motivations to keep learning their target language and develop into more competent users of that language. Finally, to prove the theory of my investigation I apply an online questionnaire to two Japanese students that were studying Spanish at the moment I started writing it.

**Keywords:** cultural exchanges, interculturality, affective factors, intercultural pragmatics, foreign language acquisition.

## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to my thesis director Dr. Araceli Salas Serrano for her knowledge shared with me in the process of this investigation and her patience and guidance through this experience. In addition, I am extremely grateful to professor Gabriela Alhor Martínez, and professor Juan Alberto Amador Cruz for their constructive criticism and feedback. Additionally, special thanks to my participants, who inspired me to start this research and shared with me their personal experiences and opinions to fulfill this thesis.

## **Dedications**

I dedicate this paper to my dear parents who have always supported me with affection and love and for making me the person and professional I am now. I would also like to dedicate this investigation to my beloved grandfather, who always felt proud of me and thought I would become a great professional.

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# **THE INFLUENCE OF MEXICAN CULTURAL ASPECTS ON SPANISH LEARNING JAPANESE STUDENTS**

## **CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1. Introduction**

It may represent a surprise for people to hear that the Spanish language is one of the most spoken languages in the world because people do not fully acknowledge Spanish's importance in the world. When people talk about academic development or working opportunities, they, in general, may think that learning the English language will be their way to achieve these signs of progress in one or both scenarios. The English language indeed has usefulness in the world besides it gives a sense of relevance to the people who speak this language; however, the Spanish language has acquired its own value in a global way that nowadays is the third most spoken language in the world.

For example, in The United States, the country has prioritized the implantation of Spanish courses in elementary levels of academic institutions, high schools, and universities (Vázquez Santiago, 2016). In addition, the creation of different programs for college students that have the purpose of helping these students to become bilingual citizens by teaching Spanish as a foreign language to English native students. (Vázquez Santiago, 2016)

The Instituto Cervantes (2019) says that in the world, there is a total of 580 million people who speak Spanish in the world, which represents 7,6% of the global population, 483 million people have the Spanish language as their mother tongue which makes Spanish as the second language most spoken in the world just by native speakers also, 22 million people from 110 different countries learn Spanish as a foreign language (Instituto Cervantes, 2019).

## **1.1 Justification of the study**

I would like to express my interest and doubts about Spanish as a foreign language but, most importantly, why foreign people decide to start learning Spanish and how they integrate the culture of Mexico to learn the language easily. In addition, researchers related to Spanish learning cover the difficulties of learners according to grammatical issues and learning strategies but not cultural, affective, or social difficulties that are also related to the learning process.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

There are many researchers in English learning as a foreign language who have explored different elements involved in that process. For instance, there is a group of researchers constituted by Bravo et al., (2017) that have made an investigation about motivation and autonomy in the process of learning English as a foreign language. In addition, Liu and Huang (2011) and Rochelle et al., (2011) are other researchers that cover the factor of anxiety involved in learning a foreign language in their investigations. Unfortunately, it is not the same case for Spanish learning. The number of investigations related to Spanish learning as a foreign language in other countries besides United States are limited. For example: Mendoza González, (2019) has made a research about Japanese students learning Spanish in Mexico and she mentions that it is necessary to keep working in this field in order to get more information related to the experiences and struggles of foreign students learning Spanish as a foreign language. Her research only covers the struggles those students had while learning Spanish and the strategies the students implemented to overcome them. Mendoza González (2019) suggests that other researchers should explore other elements involved in the process of learning Spanish for non-native speakers of this language, such as affective factors and cultural aspects.

### **1.3 Purpose of the study**

This paper has the purpose of exploring and giving background about the factors that make foreign students start learning Spanish as a foreign language besides if these factors are related with the culture of any Hispanic country of their interest, whether it is a country they plan to live in the future, to visit or the country where they are currently studying Spanish. Equally important, this investigation attempts to provide information about how learners integrate the culture of other countries in their process of learning in order to overcome difficulties such as affective factors.

### **1.4 Objectives**

- To explore the needs that Japanese students have to study Spanish.
- To explore the affective factors involved in Japanese students when learning Spanish.
- To provide useful information about the cultural aspects that may help Japanese students overcome difficulties when learning Spanish.

### **1.5 Research questions**

In order to guide this investigation and to achieve the objectives that were previously proposed, the following three research questions were formulated with the expectation that they can provide the answers necessary for this research.

1. Which needs make Japanese students study Spanish?
2. What are the affective factors involved in the decision of Japanese students to learn Spanish?
3. How has Mexican culture helped Japanese students to overcome difficulties while learning Spanish?

### **1. 6 Significance of the study:**

This research project could be an opportunity to discover the reasons or aspects of Spanish that make foreigners feel attracted to learn it, and if the culture of the countries where Spanish is spoken as a first language also affects their decision to learn it. There might be affective factors that spark their interest to start learning this language along with their motivation to keep learning it and to overcome the difficulties that learning a new language involve. All these elements could describe emotions, experiences, or ways of thinking that may help current or future Spanish teachers understand how important is to include cultural aspects in their teaching in order to provide foreign students with complete and more significant learning.

### **1.7 Conclusions**

As was previously stated, people from different countries are starting to learn Spanish because of its current relevancy around the world. Different researchers have explored some of the difficulties foreign learners have while they learn it. However, there are not enough investigations that explore other areas such as culture of the target language and affective factors within learning processes. Therefore, this paper's purpose is to provide information related to those two areas previously mentioned to help further research.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **2. Introduction**

In this second chapter, I will mention different authors and their works in order to provide sufficient information to understand various concepts included in this thesis. Within this chapter, concepts such as interculturality, intercultural pragmatics, cultural exchanges in a foreign language, and specific topics like Mexican culture are explained to ease the comprehension of this investigation. Additionally, affective factors and language learning will also be explored in this chapter to describe how these two concepts are related and intertwined with each other.

#### **2.1 The Spanish language**

The Spanish language is the second most spoken language in the world by native speakers, and Spanish is the third most spoken language on the Internet by foreign speakers (Instituto Cervantes, 2019) likewise it is the choice of a large number of people around the world to learn. People from different countries decide to learn Spanish as a foreign language because they might get more employment opportunities in the countries where this language is spoken and build business relationships with people that speak Spanish (Mexperience, n.d.). On the other hand, people are also interested in learning Spanish because it is giving them the opportunity to access to the culture of the countries where Spanish is spoken, giving them the possibility to understand Spanish native-speakers' lifestyle and customs, and to build relationships with them (Mexperience, n.d.). Therefore, it is prime to describe different language learning aspects such as strategies involved in the process of acquiring a foreign language that people might follow during their Spanish learning.

## **2.2 Language learning strategies**

According to Casar and Hernandez (2000) quoted by Feng and Iriarte (2018) learning strategies represent for language learners' significant tools to guide their learning and to develop their language communication by being actively involved in these processes.

Additionally, O'Malley and Chamot (1990) defined learning strategies as "techniques and devices used by second language learners for remembering and organizing samples of the second language... Strategies are the thoughts and behaviors that learners use to help them to comprehend, learn or retain information". With that being said, it is clear that students need and use different methods to organize the information they are exposed to.

On the other hand, Oxford (1990) categorized these strategies into two groups: Direct and Indirect. The first group is related specifically to the learning of meta language and the second group is related to the overall management of the learning process. It is important to see the differences between these two types of strategies and see which ones are tools and which others are behaviors that help students to learn and acquire a language.

### **2.2.1 Direct Strategies**

According to the direct strategies, Samida (2004) cited Oxford's definition. It describes that these strategies help students to produce language even when there are gaps in knowledge.

They also help to understand and use the language. These direct strategies are categorized into the following types: Firstly, memory strategies which are based on making associations (beginner learners use images, sounds, or touch to connect meaning with words or phrases) and reviewing. Secondly, cognitive strategies which manipulate the target language by repeating, analyzing, and summarizing. Learners can repeat and make use of patterns to practice the target language. Finally, compensation strategies are for comprehension of the

target language. Learners bring their own life experiences to interpret knowledge they don't know by guessing. For instance, when grammatical knowledge is incomplete, a learner may use a different form of the verb to convey the message (Samida, 2004).

On the other hand, Zare (2012) quotes Rubin's direct strategies definitions. In this case, direct strategies are categorized into two groups: Metacognitive and cognitive strategies. The first group is used to supervise and control language learning. They involve different procedures as planning, prioritizing, setting goals, and self-management (Zare, 2012). The second group refers to the steps or measures which are taken in learning or problem-solving that involve direct analysis. Zare (2012) also mentions the six major cognitive learning strategies that contribute to the language learning process which are: a) Clarification/verification, b) Guessing/inductive inferencing, c) Deductive reasoning, d) Practice, e) Memorization and f) Mentoring. These six strategies are related to the acquisition and assimilation of information such as grammar structures or vocabulary. However, none of these techniques relate to affective or cultural factors.

### **2.2.2 Indirect strategies for foreign language learning**

Rodriguez and García-Merás (2005) quoted Oxford's indirect strategies concept. The Indirect strategies are divided into three groups: metacognitive, affective and social. They say that metacognitive strategies help the learner to guide, plan and auto-evaluate their own learning while affective strategies are related to the learner's attitude towards the foreign language they are learning, the people who speak it and their culture.

In addition, affective strategies also relate to the emotional part of the learners since they allow them to control their emotions, motivation and attitudes towards the learning process of a foreign language. Finally, social strategies allow the learners to develop constantly the foreign language they are learning by interacting with people through dialogue.

Kahraman (2013), quoted by Robiansyah and Rochmahwati (2020) describes the concept of socio-affective strategies and establishes that these strategies are the mental and physical activities that learners choose to regulate their emotions and interactions with other people during their learning process.

### **2.3 Language Learning Affective factors**

According to Henter (2014), these elements have a relation with the acquisition of a foreign language (FL): Motivation, attitude, and anxiety. However, according to Min (2014) there is also another factor to take into consideration in the acquisition of a FL which is beliefs. As Dörnyei (1994) said, cited by Henter (2014), motivation is the main determinant in learning a foreign language and this factor is also responsible for the results in this process. Meanwhile, attitude is described as the most powerful determinant of behaviors by Allport (2014) quoted by Henter (2014). In other words, an attitude is a series of positive or negative reactions an individual has when he or she faces new tasks. Therefore, negative attitude and lack of motivation can become obstacles for learners. (Henter, 2014)

Talking about anxiety, Henter and Min show different characteristics of it. Firstly, Henter (2014) says that there are three types of anxiety: as a personality trait, as a state (temporary situation) or to a specific situation. She expresses that learning a foreign language can be classified as a specific situation. In addition, Henter (2014) cites Horwitz (2011) and considers that anxiety to a foreign language is a complex of beliefs, feelings and behaviors that occur during the classroom. Secondly, Min (2014) reports that there is a negative correlation between anxiety and foreign language learning that can affect any FL student. For instance, Min (2014) by quoting Khaldieh (2000) describes that students with less level language proficiency show higher levels of anxiety, while Saito and Samimy (1996) cited by Min (2014) report that as the course level increases, students' anxiety goes up as well,

meaning that students with high level language of proficiency can also show high levels of anxiety. Consequently, high-anxiety students received lower grades than low-anxiety students (Aida, 1994 quoted by Min, 2014).

Finally, Min (2014) mentions two more authors, Richardson (1996) and Li (2011), and describes that beliefs are defined as understandings or perceptions about the world, and these understandings and perceptions are shaped by various components, for example, past learning experiences and personal factors such as age and gender.

## **2.4 Cultural aspects of language learning**

As Hernandez Castro and Bohórquez stated (2006), foreign language teachers need to be more involved in the process of helping students to acquire the language they are learning. In other words, teachers have to be aware that learning a language is more than memorizing grammatical rules but a transmitter of culture. That is, people have been keeping their traditions, costumes, manners, and myths through language. Seelye (1976), who is mentioned by Hernandez Castro and Bohórquez, state that culture should also include those aspects of life that concern people the most.

Culture is an integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thoughts, languages, practices, beliefs, customs, manners of interaction and roles, rituals, and expected behaviors of different social groups; and the ability to transmit the above to succeeding generations (Goode et al., 2000, quoted by Peterson & Coltrane, 2003). Additionally, Peterson and Coltrane (2003) provide that cultural information should be presented to students in a nonjudgmental way, that does not place distinctions between the student's native culture and the culture explored in the classroom in order to let students to explore and reflect on their culture and the target culture and language in a neutral space (Kramsch, 1993). In addition to the previous statement, Klippel (1994) explains that cultural learning in a foreign language

classroom deals with three different aspects, which are: empathy and understanding, knowledge, and communicative skills. He also establishes that a foreign language course that incorporates these three elements provides its learners an enriching experience.

According to Byram (1989), language can rarely take place without implicitly teaching the culture of its speakers because language refers to their common knowledge and perceptions of the world. Hinkel (2011) also states that students may not become fully competent in the use of a foreign language if he/she does not understand sociocultural outcomes such as, norms, concepts on speech and behavior. Learners should be aware of these sociocultural manifestations in order to make their own informed choices of what to say and how to say it. Consequently, students should remain curious about the foreign language's culture as well as willing to learn about it by the guidance of their teacher (Klippel, 1994) who is the best example of successful and confident intercultural communicators. According to Klippel (1994), teacher's personal involvement with other cultures can create motivation and stimulate the learner's interest.

#### **2.4.1 Interculturality**

There are two crucial yet different definitions for interculturality I quote in this investigation. Despite the slight differences between those definitions, they can work together in order to provide a wider vision of what it means to be involved in the discovery of a foreign language's culture. Firstly, Trujillo Sáez (2002) explains interculturality as the active participation in communication helped by critical awareness and motivated by the appreciation of diversity. That is, to accept diversity and using cognitive and affective skills to learn from the interlocutor as much as possible.

Similarly, interculturality by Ortiz (2015) is the capacity of a person to interact with another one in order to understand his or her own vision of the world. In other words, to try to reach through dialogue an understanding of knowledge and practices between two beings in equal conditions. She refers “interculturality” as the capacity to exchange information between people of different cultures in order to provide and receive meaningful knowledge. In addition, interculturality consists in the effort to communicate and relate with culturally different individuals and groups and to cooperate with each other. (Walsh, 2005 quoted by Ortiz, 2015) Furthermore, Ortiz highlights these following statements by Sáez (2006):

- a) Interculturality is a permanent process of relationship, communication and learning between people or groups that have knowledge, daily practices, values and different traditions that are expressed as part of their identity.
- b) This process leads to build a mutual respect that is manifested in different practices.

In order to become competent bilinguals, learners need to know what native speakers mean when they adopt certain behaviors (Liddicoat, 2008) because according to Anthony J. Liddicoat, native speakers can be tolerant when a non-native speaker makes a mistake related to grammar or vocabulary, but cultural mismatches often creates misunderstandings between the speakers and lead to create unsatisfactory social relationships. For the purpose of creating intercultural students, they have to be engaged in interacting with others; to create dialogues that allow learners to recognize and accept other similar or different points of view.

## **2.5 Pragmatics**

Pragmatics is a branch of linguistics that investigates the ways language is tied to the contexts in which it is used (Slotta, 2018). In other words, pragmatics is the study of language use in context (Huang, 2017). In addition, Huang (2017) mentions the European continental perspective view of pragmatics that gives a deeper understanding of pragmatics. Within this perspective, pragmatics is a general functional (i.e., cognitive, social, and cultural) perspective on linguistic phenomena in relation to their usage in forms of behavior (Huang, 2017). Thus, second or foreign language learners are expected to master the pragmatic norms of the target language they are learning because pragmatics is rooted in cultural values (Clyne, 2006).

### **2.5.1 Intercultural pragmatics**

The term called Intercultural pragmatics as an inquiry that focuses on interactions among people from different cultures, speaking different languages. (The Oxford Handbook of Pragmatics, 2017, quoted by Kecskes, 2017). Intercultural pragmatics is about how the language is used in social encounters between individuals who have different first languages, communicate in a common language, and usually, represent different cultures (Kecskes, 2017). In addition, intercultural pragmatics focuses on the production and comprehension of interlocutors who represent different cultures and languages and use a common language for communication (Kecskes, 2017).

## **2.6 Language and cultural exchanges**

“Participants should be aware that people from different cultures react to situations in varied ways and to expect and respect this...” (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Tan & Chua, 2003, quoted by Lockley & Yoshida 2014). Lockley and Yoshida say that in multicultural contexts,

people who are outside their “native” context are forced to adapt their behavior according to the cultural norms of the specific place they are in while they are speaking the first language (L1) that is spoken in that place as their foreign language. In addition, Lockley and Yoshida (2014) have quoted Yasui (2008), Yashima (2013), Eisenchlas and Trevaskes (2007) and mentioned that when a foreign language student goes to a country where the language they are learning is spoken as a mother tongue, they usually desire to make local friends, learn about local cultures and share their own, yet at the same time these students can also feel marginalized, scorned or ignored by local students through disinterest, language difficulties and cultural misunderstandings.

### **2.6.1 Language and cultural exchanges in the world**

Lockley and Yoshida (2014) mention that integrating cultural exchanges in the learning language process could lead to learn appropriate vocabulary and develop discussion skills and friendships. Under those circumstances, different researchers have developed some methods with the purpose of encouraging cultural exchanges all over the world through language. In 2011, for instance, Holman et al. (2011) developed a system to connect individuals with different linguistic backgrounds called Lingua. This system provided these individuals with a digital space where they could establish conversations with a partner in order to give support to their own language learning. In other words, Lingua is a web application that provides users with suggested matches for partnerships based on the language they are interested in learning and similarities across the users’ own respective backgrounds such as general interests (Holman et al., 2011). It consists in a library, where users are able to upload images of their culture and other digital media that shows the use of their language in practice, and a chat room that includes a media viewer that enables users to bring their own videos into the conversation and watch it simultaneously with their partner while chatting. In summary,

Lingua is a space that provides its users the facility to discover and interact with other language learners and build relationships with them by exchanging both languages and cultures.

Another example happens in Japan. Nobutaka (2015) expressed that promoting research on Japan and spreading the use of Japanese language abroad is essential for a deeper understanding of Japan's policy, economy, culture and society in foreign countries.

Therefore, as the minister of education and culture of Japan at that time, Nobutaka started a program called "The Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme" which invited over 6000 people from 38 countries to Japan each year in order to enhance foreign language education. Its purpose is to invite college graduated people to work as assistant teachers of languages or sports mentors in primary schools and high schools. On the other hand, Lange and Barrett-Lennard (2010) have also developed a program for international postgraduate students at the University of Western Australia (UWA), called LACE (Language and cultural exchange) and its purpose is to help those students to integrate them into the context of the university and the Australian culture. The results of the program have shown that the international students that participated in LACE improved their ability to converse in English and improved their cultural awareness and sensitivity. Besides, the participants were provided with a sense of belonging and commitment to the university (Lange & Barrett-Lennard, 2010) according to the testimonies of foreign learners learning English in Australia.

## **2.7 Spanish in Japan**

Tinajero (2021) mentioned that the first Spanish people that appeared in Japan was in the sixteenth century; hundreds of people from Spain went to live to Japan while Spain was receiving Japanese immigrants. Nowadays, there are 70,432 Spanish speakers in Japan, meaning that not all of them are people from Spain; 70% of the population is of Peruvian

origin (Tinajero, 2021). In the Meiji period (1868 – 1912), only a limited number of people from social elites learned foreign languages through native-speaker teachers (Tsuchiya & Pérez Murillo, 2019). Tinajero (2021) mentioned that the first Spanish language classes were taught in Tokyo School of commerce and with the passing of time, many more Spanish language schools were opened. That leads to *Mundo de Alegría* which is a bilingual school in Japan where classes are taught in Spanish and Japanese and counts with primary, secondary, and high school levels. According to the founder of the school, Masami Matsumoto, quoted by Tinajero, the education was difficult for families that came from Latin America, consequently, Matsumoto decided to found *Mundo de Alegría* so the children of those families could attend school and learn in both languages. On the other hand, many young Japanese people attend classes in other institutes besides their usual scheduled classes in order to advance in their studies, for instance languages with the purpose of becoming ideal candidates for good-reputation universities (Tinajero, 2021).

### **2.7.1 Motivations and problems of Japanese learners of Spanish**

As reported by Valverde Ibáñez (2016), different Japanese learners of Spanish as a foreign language were able to produce the language by writing blogs, each learner with different purposes. For instance, Japanese students that are living abroad decide to write a blog in order to document their experiences in the country and to keep them as memories, while students who already returned to Japan use these blogs to keep in touch with the Spanish-speaking friends they made. Valverde Ibáñez (2016) explains that one of these learners' motivations is to improve their writing but most of the desires of them are related to culture.

To socialize, to explain Japanese topics to foreigners and to discuss external topics. Japanese learners of Spanish find satisfaction by providing information about their culture

and explaining it to Spanish-speaking readers. They tend to compare their culture to Hispanic culture as well. (Valverde Ibáñez, 2016).

### **2.7.2 Mexican cultural aspects**

As Yager (2014) mentioned, exposure to informal contact with native speakers of the target language, brings communicative improvement for foreign language learners. In addition, Liskin-Gasparro (1995) quoted by Yager (2014) states that foreign language students can have these informal interactions with native speakers when they feel a sense of belonging to the community where the target language is spoken. For foreigners who are learning Spanish as a second or foreign language, having interactive and non-interactive contact with Mexican culture help foreign learners to improve their linguistic skills, especially their speaking production skill along with improvements in their pronunciation. (Yager, 2014).

In addition to this, Yager (2014) describes that interactive contact is the time that Spanish foreign learners spend to have conversations with Mexican people outside the classroom, with their friends or others. At the same time, non-interactive contact is their interaction with other Mexican cultural elements such as watching TV shows, listening to music in Spanish and reading books. Additionally, it is said that interactive contact with native speakers help learners with different proficiency level because learners are exposed to informal conversations (Yager, 2014). Finally, Yager (2014) mentions that non-interactive contact brings benefits to beginner learners for instance, they can think and analyze the input they receive from songs, books without worrying about giving and immediate response that is usually necessary in interactive contact.

On the other hand, there are difficulties for Japanese students who are learning Spanish especially if they are part of academic exchange and mostly these difficulties are related to cultural elements. (Mendoza González, 2019) For example, it exists a problem with

the Spanish these students learn between the Spanish they must use because they learn a standard version of Spanish that comes from Spain which is different from the Spanish of any other Hispanic country. Mendoza González reports that when Japanese students arrived in Mexico, existed misunderstandings in their communication with Mexicans. In addition, Spanish becomes more difficult for them when they are in certain situations like doctor appointments, phone calls, or when they are in their schools because they do not understand the way Mexican people speak; Japanese learners do not understand certain expressions and other colloquial phrases and words. (Mendoza González, 2019).

### **2.7.3 ELE (*Español como Lengua Extranjera*: Spanish as a foreign language)**

Before there were lessons planned under the communicative approach, there was a mindset that considered that a student would be able to express and communicate in a target language if he or she learned grammatical tenses without taking into consideration the real usage of the language they were learning and other elements such as behaviors and cultural codes of the target language (Navarro Serrano, 2009).

However, the reality is that communication between individuals means having the capacity to interact effectively with others therefore, it is necessary to know some aspects of behaviorism, thinking, and feeling of the native speakers of the target language, such as cultural references (literature, painting, geography, etc.), ways to behave, corporal language, cultural believes, social agreements, daily life aspects, interpersonal and social relationships and values (Navarro Serrano, 2009). For that reason, the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference), quoted by Navarro Serrano (2009), considers that students have to know more than just grammatical tenses of Spanish but learn the target language's own cultural aspects so the student can act as a member of the society he or she is involved, without being misunderstood by others.

The *Instituto Cervantes* (2007) cited by Navarro Serrano (2009), proposes in its curriculum of ELE, three categories where the previous aspects are included in order to be taught to foreign students and help them to become competent speakers. These categories are cultural references, knowledge and behaviorism, and intercultural skills and aptitudes. The first category refers to the following elements: history of the language and the country where that language is spoken, types of food and cuisine, art (e.g., painters and their work), etc. The second category represents the cultural behavior of native speakers. That means that in “Knowledge and behaviorism” there is the input that native speakers acquire when they are in their childhood such as social norms and ways of acting in society as well as corporal language and manners. The last category is the process of identifying and understanding why they act and behave the way they do and putting that information in contrast with their own culture. At the end of this process, the student of the target language should be able to act the same way as native speakers in different situations from an empathic perspective.

## **2.8 Conclusion**

As was previously stated during the whole chapter; different authors were mentioned along their theories. Those theories were described in order to provide sufficient information related to language learning, affective and cultural factors in the learning process, and other elements such as cultural exchanges and interculturality in order to help my readers to follow and understand the terms used for this investigation.

Additionally, another purpose of this second chapter is also to help any reader of this paper to understand that are other areas in the language learning process that need to be explored in other different settings, with other people with several necessities. Finally, in the chapter is also included several information according to the culture of Hispanic countries

included in the process of learning of foreign students to comprehend and acquire the language properly.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3. Introduction**

*“Methodology is about how a researcher systematically designs a study to ensure valid and reliable results that address the research aims and objectives”.* (Jansen & Warren, 2020).

This chapter is about the description of each element of the methodology for this research project. It explains from what philosophical perspective is seen in this investigation, and what is its appropriate research approach.

The chapter also describes the research setting, the participant, and the instrument for the research process. At the end of this chapter is explained how the data collected will be analyzed, the criteria that will give validation to this thesis, and ethical considerations that will be considered with the participants.

#### **3.1 Context**

Nowadays, the Spanish language is acquiring significant value in the world, e.g., the government of The United States is creating and developing academic programs that have as a purpose to create bilingual students. The acquisition of Spanish as a foreign language has become a requirement to graduate from high schools and to apply to high-quality universities. (Vázquez Santiago, 2016).

Based on the information previously stated, foreign students choose to start learning Spanish in order to get more academic opportunities, however, there could exist other reasons, especially reasons that do not necessarily have to deal with academic development. Emotions, experiences, and cultural interests might be involved in their decision of selecting a language to learn besides their native language. It is prime to this project to explore and to

describe all these affective elements in order to give more personal information about this phenomenon.

This research describes the factors that generate the previously explained phenomenon by exploring the cultural aspects and background of two Japanese students of *Facultad de Lenguas*, BUAP. The participants were studying in Puebla, Mexico by the moment this research was carried out. For this reason, it was necessary to see this investigation from an interpretive paradigm since this approach is based on the idea that one can gain understanding from patterns of human behavior by observable facts and experience. Empirical research can be obtained through observation and experimentation; therefore, it is factual and trustworthy (QuestionPro, s.f.). In addition, Empirical research derives knowledge from actual experience rather than from theory (Conelly Library, 2022), so behaviors and attitudes are defined by describing the process used to study the participants along with the instruments that were applied.

### **3.2 Research paradigm approach**

The objectives of this thesis are a) to explore the Mexican cultural aspects that make Japanese people start learning Spanish, b) how these aspects help them to overcome their learning difficulties and c) how important is to include the culture of the country where a certain language is spoken as first language into foreign language courses.

Based on these objectives, the most suitable approach to use is a qualitative case study. A qualitative approach is used to gain understanding of underlying reasons, motivations, and opinions. It is also used to dive deeper into a problem and to uncover trends of thought and opinions (Bhandari, 2020). Based on the purposes of my research paradigm and research approach, a case study is a suitable qualitative research to work with because this type of research studies in depth a single case example of the phenomena in order to shed

light on a specific problem. (Neill, 2006) as it is the case of this research where two single cases represent what Japanese students face when they study Spanish in Mexico.

### **3.3 Research setting**

This investigation took place in *Facultad de Lenguas* from the *Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla* (BUAP) in Puebla, Mexico. According to Fitch Ratings (2015) quoted by e-consulta (2018) the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla reached 96,179 thousand students and that in 2018, the university is one of the public universities with a high quantity of students. 77.6 % of the student population of BUAP corresponds to the students who are studying for a degree. As it is established in the official website of BUAP, in 2018 the university welcomed more than 700 hundred foreign students, representing 22 different countries and by the beginning of 2020, more than 300 hundred foreign students started their scholarship in BUAP, representing 17 different countries.

The *Centro de Lenguas Extranjeras* (CELE) BUAP along with The *Coordinación de Educación Continua* (ECE) of The *Facultad de Lenguas* offers Spanish courses to all foreign students at the university and foreign people in general. Recently, they offered a course for September and November of this year to a maximum of 20 foreign people. (Facultad de lenguas, 2022)

### **3.4 Participants**

The participants for this project are two different Japanese students that are currently studying Spanish as a foreign language in the *Facultad de Lenguas*, BUAP. The participants have an intermediate level of proficiency which is a B1 level of Spanish proficiency according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Peter, 2021) however, this is enough for the collection of the data. It is not necessary that the

participants possess a high level of proficiency of Spanish, in terms of oral production due the fact that it will be precise to collect the data through written information. The participants have the level of proficiency necessary to be part of this project.

The participants are from Japan, and they come from the same city and prefecture, however their ages differentiate between one and other as well as their time learning Spanish. Despite these slight differences they all share the interest of studying Spanish and these differences are opportunities to get various types of views about a topic of common interest.

**Table 1.** The participants

<b>PARTICIPANTS</b>	
<b>Participant No. 1: Kuro</b>	<b>Participant No. 2: Murasaki</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age: 26 years old</li> <li>• Place of living: Tenri, Nara. Japan</li> <li>• Years of learning Spanish: 8 years</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age: 21 years old</li> <li>• Place of living: Tenri, Nara. Japan</li> <li>• Years of learning Spanish: 3 years</li> </ul>

I was able to contact them through my teacher of my Japanese courses who also helped them in their integration in the faculty of languages of BUAP. I explained them briefly the purpose of my investigation and specifically described that their participation in the investigation was going to be anonymous and for academic purpose. After that, both participants were willing to participate in this investigation.

### **3.4.1 Instrument**

The method for data collection of this qualitative research is a questionnaire. A questionnaire is a research instrument that consists in a series of different questions. This type of instrument is used to gather information from the people who are answering the questions. (McLeod,

2018) The questionnaire is a useful instrument due to the facility of obtaining large amounts of information. It is efficient and a quick instrument to work with. In addition, these characteristics make the questionnaire an instrument that allows the researcher to gather opinions, preferences, and intentions. (McLeod, 2018) For this reason, a questionnaire (Appendix 1) was a suitable instrument for this research project. It is of importance for this thesis to obtain the points of view of the participants and as well their emotions related to their decision of learning Spanish as a foreign language. This instrument could lead me to know the attitudes and the intentions that the participants have to be Spanish speaking.

The instrument planned for this investigation was intended to be a printed questionnaire that would be handed in to the participants. However, due to the recent worldwide events related to COVID19, the questionnaire was sent to each participant through an online conversation on Facebook. The questionnaire would consist of 8 different questions (Appendix 1) that pretended to ask the participants the necessary information. The questionnaire was completely written in Spanish in order to be easy to answer for the participants. Afterwards, the participants sent back the answered questionnaires through Facebook. The answers of both participants were translated from Spanish to English and then included in this writing.

### **3.5 Data collection**

As it was said in the previous section, due to Covid-19, the way to contact with the participants w Facebook's messenger. The questionnaire used as instrument for this investigation as through was sent through the same app as well as the answers from the participants. On the other hand, the period of waiting for a response from the participants was approximately one month and in that period of time I was able to reach only two prospects out of five that I was planning to have in the beginning of this investigation.

### **3.6 Validity criteria**

The type of criteria that will give validity to this thesis is the credibility criteria. Credibility criteria establish that the results of qualitative research are believable from the perspective of the participant of the research project. The participant is the only one who can judge the credibility of the results. (William, n.d.) This criterion is acceptable for qualitative research since its purpose is to describe or understand a phenomenon from the participant's perspective. (William, n.d.). In the case of this study, the participants answered voluntarily to the questionnaire, which gave their answers the credibility and validity needed

### **3.7 Ethical considerations**

The ethical considerations for this project are the informed consent of the participants as well as their voluntary participation, confidentiality, and anonymity. This research project will only reveal relevant information of the participant such as age and gender, therefore, pseudonyms were used to identify the participants. They were also informed that their answers and the results of this investigation would only be used for academic purposes.

Given the nature of the course, the instrument was applied in Spanish. Once the answers were submitted by the participants, the data was translated into English for the purpose of using it in this document.

### **3.8 Data analysis**

For the data analysis, the answers of the participants were gathered and read several times. Then, the participants' answers were organized in two different charts according to the questions in the instrument. The first chart provides the translated answers of the participants

to each question of the questionnaire. The second chart compares the participants' answers, showing the similarities and differences between both students' answers.

### **3.9 Conclusions of the chapter**

As it was previously described through the chapter, the appropriate way to lead this investigation was through a qualitative case study under an interpretive paradigm. The objectives of this research were to explore which Mexican cultural aspects influence Japanese students to learn Spanish as a foreign language, how these aspects help them to overcome difficulties during their learning process and how important it is to include the culture of the target language in the process of teaching and learning. In conclusion, with the methodology I chose for my investigation, I was able to provide an understanding of how Mexican culture motivates foreign Spanish learners to overcome their difficulties during their learning process as well as to describe what the affective factors involved in this process were by observing their experiences.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **THE RESULTS**

#### **4. Introduction**

In this chapter, the results obtained from the participants' answers to the questionnaire are displayed and explained. These results are presented individually, which means that the profile of each of the participants is provided along with their answers to the questionnaire and a discussion of results.

#### **4.1 Overview of the study**

As it has been stated during the whole investigation, Spanish language learning has been an interest for several researchers such as Mendoza González (2019) as well as the topic of cultural exchanges for Lockley and Yoshida (2014). The main purpose of this investigation is to follow and keep exploring those two topics previously mentioned. I would like to mention again that the main reasons for me to start this investigation is to describe what are the motivations for foreigners to begin learning Spanish, what are exactly those affective factors that spark their motivation to start learning that language and keep them learning it.

Furthermore, I desire to also provide information about how important it is for foreigners to include culture in their learning process to overcome obstacles. Finally, I expect that with this research I could provide more information or a more comprehensive background for further investigations related to Spanish as a foreign language and the inclusion of Hispanic countries' culture in the learning process. Therefore, this research attempts to answer the following questions to achieve the objectives previously explained:

- RQ1.- Which needs make Japanese students study Spanish?
- RQ2, - What are the affective factors involved in the decision of Japanese students to learn Spanish?
- RQ 3.-How has Mexican culture helped Japanese students to overcome difficulties while learning Spanish?

## **4.2 Results**

In this section, the participants answers are presented. The demographic information about each participant is presented and a nickname is used to identify each one of them without revealing their real name for confidentiality purposes. Below each participant's profile, a table with the participants answers is included. The answers are organized according to the questions of the instrument applied for the investigation. Both questions from the instrument and answers of the participants were originally in Spanish. However, for the purposes of this research the questions and answers were translated to English.

### **4.2.1 Participant 1**

The first participant was a 26-year-old male college student who is going to be referred with the name of *Kuro*. He is from the Tenri city located in the prefecture of Nara, Japan. From the beginning of collecting the data, he was willing to participate, and offered his help immediately. In the following table are presented the questions that were asked to him and his answers. There is a consideration along with the presented table and that is that the questionnaire that was applied as well as the answers of the participant were written in Spanish and for this paper, everything was translated to English.

**Table 2: Kuro's answers**

<p><b>1. How long have you been studying Spanish?</b></p>	<p>8 years</p>
<p><b>2. Why did you decide to study Spanish instead of another language?</b></p>	<p>Because Spanish is the 4th language most spoken in the world. Besides my mother has a Peruan friend who doesn't speak japanese. Since I was a kid I wanted to be an interpreter for both of them to make easier their communication.</p>
<p><b>3. How rewarding have you found your stay in Mexico according to your Spanish language acquisition?</b></p>	<p>Pretty rewarding.</p>
<p><b>4. Do you think learning Spanish will bring benefits to you? Which ones?</b></p>	<p>Yes I do. If you learn how to speak Spanish, you can travel to other 20 countries where this language is spoken. Language won't be an obstacle.</p>
<p><b>5. How common is to hear other Spanish speakers in your country?</b></p>	<p>Not very common.</p>
<p><b>6. Why did you decide to come to Mexico to learn Spanish?</b></p>	<p>Because I love mexican culture and its people. 2 years ago I came to Mexico for the first time and mexican people treated me kindly. They impressed me.</p>
<p><b>7. Which Mexico's cultural aspects have had an impact in your acquisition of Spanish?</b></p>	<p>I love studying with music, especially José José and Miguel Aceves Mejía's songs.</p>
<p><b>8. Which members of the school of languages have helped you with your Spanish learning process and how?</b></p>	<p>My classmates. Everytime I have a question or doubt I always try to ask them.</p>
<p><b>9. What difficulties have you experienced while trying to communicate with Spanish native speakers?</b></p>	<p>Sometimes, for example I have problems with Spanish words because they have different meanings depending on the country. Another difficulty are colloquial words and the nouns. Nouns in Spanish have gender which in Japanese we don't have.</p>

#### 4.2.2 Participant 2

The second participant is a 21-year-old male college student who is also from Tenri city, located in the prefecture of Nara, Japan. For this project I am going to refer to him as *Murasaki*. While trying to collect the necessary information from this participant, there were some difficulties. Even though he was willing to participate, applying the questionnaire to him immediately was impossible. However, as soon as he found the time, he contacted me back to apply the instrument. As was previously stated, translated answers of *Murasaki* in the questionnaire are below in Table 3.

**Table 3-Murasaki's answers**

<b>1. How long have you been studying Spanish?</b>	3 years ago
<b>2. Why did you decide to study Spanish instead of another language?</b>	I find this language very interesting. Besides, there are a lot of people who speaks Spanish.
<b>3. How rewarding have you found your stay in Mexico according to your Spanish language acquisition?</b>	Pretty rewarding.
<b>4. Do you think learning Spanish will bring benefits to you? Which ones?</b>	I was able to meet different people thanks to Spanish.
<b>5. How common is to hear other Spanish speakers in your country?</b>	Not very common.
<b>6. Why did you decide to come to Mexico to learn Spanish?</b>	Because I'm very interested in Mexico's culture. I was able to live more comfortably in terms of money. Besides, one of my friends told me that mexican people are very friendly.
<b>7. Which Mexico's cultural aspects have had an impact in your acquisition of Spanish?</b>	The diversity between each state of Mexico. Their culinary cooking, crafts, music, etc. are different in each state.
<b>8. Which members of the school of languages have helped you with your Spanish learning process and how?</b>	My classmates and professors have helped me. They did through conversations and messages.
<b>9. What difficulties have you experienced while trying to communicate with Spanish native speakers?</b>	The articles in Spanish are very difficult because in Japanese we don't have them. According to the article in Spanish you have to change the verbs conjugation and that's very difficult.

### 4.3 Similarities and differences between *Kuro* and *Murasaki's* answers

According to the answers shown in the two charts above, both participants share some opinions and experiences about learning Spanish and their process of acquiring this language while living in Mexico. In addition, the results of these charts also shown differences between their points of view and experiences. The following table is presented in order to compare more easily the similarities and differences between *Kuro* and *Murasaki's* answers.

**Table 4- Similarities and Differences**

Similarities	Differences
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The two participants acknowledge the fact that Spanish is a language that is spoken in several parts of the world (Instituto Cervantes, 2019), therefore, they find crucial to learn the language so they can communicate with different people worldwide and visit other countries where it is spoken.</li> <li>2. The two participants have experienced difficulties to learn Spanish in their hometown due to the lack of Spanish speakers since both are from the same country (Japan) and live in the same city (Tenri).</li> <li>3. Both participants agreed to come to Mexico because of its culture and people. They described Mexicans humble, kind and welcoming.</li> <li>4. Both participants agreed to have difficulties learning Spanish because of grammatical aspects of the language. Specifically, in grammar features that are non-existing in Japanese.</li> <li>5. The two participants' experience in Mexico was helpful for them to acquire the language with less difficulties by asking for help to friends and teachers.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Only Kuro pointed out to have difficulties to learn Spanish due to cultural aspects: different meaning of the words depending on its use in Hispanic countries and colloquial language in Mexico. While Murasaki only mentioned grammatical problems.</li> <li>2. Murasaki added "Mexico's lifestyle" as another of his reasons to come to Mexico, stating that while living here he did not experience problems related to money.</li> <li>3. The two participants expressed to be interested in different Mexican cultural aspects. Kuro found Mexican music as the culture factor that had a significant impact on his process of learning Spanish, while Murasaki was interested in other aspects such as Mexican food and crafts. Besides, Murasaki said that differences between Mexican states also represents something significant for him.</li> </ol>

#### **4.4 Discussion of the results**

Based on the results, both participants have their own reasons for learning Spanish and the participants believe they can get some benefits if they know how to speak Spanish. They want to learn because they know that there are many countries that speak that language (Instituto Cervantes, 2019) and they believe that if they learn Spanish, they will be able to travel to Hispanic countries, to talk with Native-Spanish speakers and become friends with them. This is exactly what interculturality is according to Ortiz (2015), the exchange of meaningful knowledge between people of different countries. In this case, the participants visited Mexico expecting to acquire significant information about Spanish language and Mexican culture through communication between the locals they met and consequently to become friends with native speakers.

This last observation matches what Lockley and Yoshida (2014) compiled in their investigation regarding language and cultural exchanges: foreign learners desire to know the culture of their foreign language's country and to become friends with the people that live there when they go to a specific country. The two participants have as motivation to socialize with people who are from Hispanic countries, and this is one of the strongest cultural motivations that a foreign language learner could have (Valverde Ibañez, 2016)

The results also provide information about the difficulties of learning a language without considering cultural aspects. Just as Mendoza González (2019) said, Japanese students find hardships while communicating with Mexican people due to the standard Spanish that is taught to any foreigner and to colloquial language in Mexico. Kuro in this case was the one who presented more difficulties in understanding Mexican people because of these factors.

#### **4.5 Conclusion of the chapter**

During this chapter, I was able to introduce the participants that kindly help me to gather information for my investigation. A brief description of each participant was provided and their answers to the questionnaire were presented in tables. Within this chapter, their experiences while learning Spanish are shown individually. In addition, those experiences are also compared to each other so I can observe the similarities and differences between my participants' stories. Finally, all this information is compared with the theories described in chapter 2 in order to provide similarities or certain patterns between this study and the participants or cases of other authors.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **THE CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY**

#### **5. Introduction**

This investigation was initiated with the purpose of providing background about Japanese students living in Mexico to learn Spanish. The objective of this project was to explore if there are cultural aspects from Mexico that impact on Japanese students' decision to learn Spanish and if these aspects have helped them to overcome difficulties related to understanding and communicating with Spanish speakers. If it is the case, to explain what those aspects are. This final chapter will present the answers to the research questions as well as the limitations of the investigation.

#### **5.1 Answers to the research questions**

In this section, the data collected to answer my research questions were provided by the Japanese students. All this information corresponds to their answers to the questionnaire I applied as the instrument for this research. The questionnaire was applied in Spanish, for that reason, the answers of the participants are in Spanish too, however for this paper the answers were translated to English.

##### **5.1.1 RQ 1 —Which needs make Japanese students study Spanish?**

Firstly, according to the first research question of this thesis, which asks what kind of necessities Japanese students have in order to start learning Spanish as a foreign language, both participants share the same needs to learn this language. These two students acknowledge the number of Spanish speakers in the world, so they consider that learning Spanish is going to become a useful tool for them to communicate with other people. They

desire to become competent Spanish speakers in a world where Spanish is spoken by 580 million of people (Instituto Cervantes, 2019). However, the affective factors that these two participants have for studying Spanish differ from one another and these differences will be explained in the following section.

### **5.1.2 RQ 2 — What are the affective factors involved in the decision of Japanese students to learn Spanish?**

The second participant, *Murasaki*, feels passionate about Spanish as a language and about Mexico and its culture. He feels attraction and curiosity towards the ethnicity of this country and how different its nations are even though they are part of the same country. He mentions that some Mexican elements such as culinary cooking, music and crafts are cultural aspects that have impacted him. While the first participant, *Kuro*, has a feeling to overcome possible language barriers in his life. He does not want the language to be an obstacle for his personal life. In addition, he mentions that he would like to become an interpreter and help others to communicate with each other regardless of the language they speak.

### **5.1.3 RQ3 — How has Mexican culture helped Japanese students to overcome difficulties while learning Spanish?**

Finally, the participants recognize that some cultural Mexican aspects have helped them to improve their Spanish level of proficiency. They say that Mexican people's hospitality is the cultural aspect that was more significant for them since when they had problems to understand Spanish or when they had doubts about certain grammar information, they were able to ask Mexican friends, professors or classmates for help because they were willing to

solve the participants' doubts. Besides, other Mexican elements such as music, dancing, customs and food, are elements that sparked these Japanese students' motivation to start and keep improving their Spanish proficiency level.

As it was said previously, the answers for the three research questions will be explained in this section. In the answers it is noticeable that there are slight differences in the affective factors that move these two participants to learn Spanish, however, those affective factors exist as well as a common necessity to learn Spanish and cultural aspects that help and push these participants to keep learning in a more significant and easier way.

## **5.2 Summary of key findings**

According to the answers to the questionnaire that was applied, the participants achieve to learn Spanish to fulfill their own purposes, whether for academic purposes or just to create relationships with other Spanish speakers, the participants think that acquiring this language will be useful to them. The results also show that Mexican culture has had an impact on their acquisition of the language and in their own lifestyle. On the other hand, there was an aspect that surprised me while I was collecting the answers for the questionnaire of the participants. Contrary to my initial thoughts, I was expecting that their struggles with the Spanish language were more related to cultural differences, for example, idioms or specific expressions, however, my participants answered that their struggles were also related to differences between the grammar of Japanese and the grammar of Spanish.

## **5.3 Contributions of the study**

With this investigation, I was able to notice that, in fact, the Spanish language has a great value and presence in the world and many people who are not native Spanish speakers are aware of that. With that being said, Spanish teachers have a certain responsibility to incorporate the culture of Hispanic countries, in this case Mexico, to their classes in order to

increase foreign students' motivation and to help them develop their language competence with the purpose to communicate with other Spanish speakers. The study might guide some future Spanish teachers to create meaningful activities for their Spanish classes.

#### **5.4 Limitations of the study**

Due to Covid-19, the possibility to gather a decent number of participants was not possible. It was planned to have at least five participants for this research, however, this investigation started to be developed at the beginning of the pandemic. Therefore, the number of participants was reduced to two participants in total. In addition, the process of gathering the results for the questionnaire of the research was also slow because of the same previous reasons. My participants were in Japan by the moment I was doing the investigation, so I had to contact them in specific hours due to time difference between Mexico and Japan.

#### **5.5 Directions for further research**

While doing this research project I had the opportunity to observe the impact of my country's culture in the acquisition of Spanish language in Japanese students. It would be appropriate to give this investigation the other point of view: To investigate Mexican students who are learning Japanese how Japan's culture has impacted them as students of the language in order to compare profiles and keep developing the relationship between these two countries.

#### **5.6 Final conclusions**

In conclusion, the Spanish language has a big importance and value around the world and many countries are aware of that. We cannot deny that many foreigners are more interested in learning this language for their own purposes. As a Mexican student who is learning Japanese, and a person who achieves to become a Spanish teacher, I found the process of

making my research project pretty rewarding and that is because it felt personal. It has a special meaning to me the importance that my culture and my language have in a country that has surprised me with its culture and language as well. I feel respect and fascination for Japan and its culture. It was a unique opportunity to see those same feelings towards my own country from others' perspectives.

### **5.7 Reflections as a researcher**

As personal experience, the process of analyzing and writing chapter 4 was illuminating for me because I am a Japanese language learner. During the process of creating this chapter, I was able to notice some similarities and differences between my participants' learning experience and mine. For instance, I was able to feel related to the difficulties of the participants of learning Spanish and how hard it is for them to acquire the language in Japan, a country where there are not many Spanish speakers. So, it happens to me, I present the same hardships of learning Japanese here in Mexico, a country where there are not many Japanese speakers. At least, not in our regions of living. The two participants are from Tenri which is a city where it is not common to hear Spanish speakers while I am from Puebla which is a city where it is not common to hear Japanese speakers. This lack of interaction with other speakers represents difficulties for them and me.

On the other hand, I was able to appreciate the fact that being involved with the culture of the country where the language someone is learning is spoken is crucial for their progress of learning it. *Murasaki* and *Kuro* were able to learn in an environment that became significant for them. All the moments they lived in Mexico and the feelings they were able to experience by living with Mexican people, listening to music, and exploring other Mexican cultural elements made their learning significant and helped them to progress in their language learning. On the contrary, I was not being able to keep my Japanese learning

process because of lack of exposure to Japanese culture. In my personal experience, I was not being able to find the cultural resources that could spark my motivation to keep learning the language.

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## Appendix A: Questionnaire

*Apreciaremos si es posible su disponibilidad para contestar el presente cuestionario. Su identidad no será revelada, así como la información obtenida será usada únicamente para investigación.*



**Instrucciones:** Responda el siguiente cuestionario lo más libre y honestamente posible.

1. ¿Cuánto tiempo ha estado estudiando español?
2. ¿Por qué decidió estudiar español en lugar de alguna otra lengua?
3. Del 1 al 5, donde "1" es la opción más baja y "5" la opción más alta, ¿qué tan enriquecedora ha sido su estadía en México en cuanto a su adquisición del español? (Marque con una "X" la casilla correspondiente)

1	2	3	4	5

4. ¿Cree que estudiar español le traerá algún beneficio?, ¿cuál?
5. Del 1 al 5, donde "1" es la opción más baja y "5" la opción más alta, ¿qué tan común es oír a otros hablantes de español en su país? (Marque con una "X" la casilla correspondiente)

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1	2	3	4	5
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6. ¿Por qué decidió venir a estudiar español a México?
  
7. ¿Qué aspectos culturales de México (tales como interacción con hablantes nativos, lugares turísticos que haya visitado, historia del país, arquitectura, música, etc.) han influido en su aprendizaje del español?
  
8. ¿Qué otros miembros de la facultad (compañeros de clase, maestros) le han ayudado en su proceso de aprendizaje del español y de qué manera?
  
9. ¿Qué dificultades ha encontrado al comunicarse con hablantes nativos del español?

*Para más información, preguntas o dudas sobre este cuestionario, puede contactarse al siguiente correo electrónico: [pam.paaaam@outlook.com](mailto:pam.paaaam@outlook.com)*