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Heritage Spanish Speakers: Self Confidence through Study Abroad

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HERITAGE SPANISH SPEAKERS: SELF CONFIDENCE THROUGH STUDY ABROAD

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Investigative Questions:

- Do the students have a higher self-confidence in speaking their native language after studying abroad?
- Do their perceptions of their language abilities change throughout the course of their study abroad experience?
- What do heritage Spanish-speaking students feel effected their perceived language change after study abroad: improved vocabulary, advanced pronunciation or developed general knowledge of the culture?

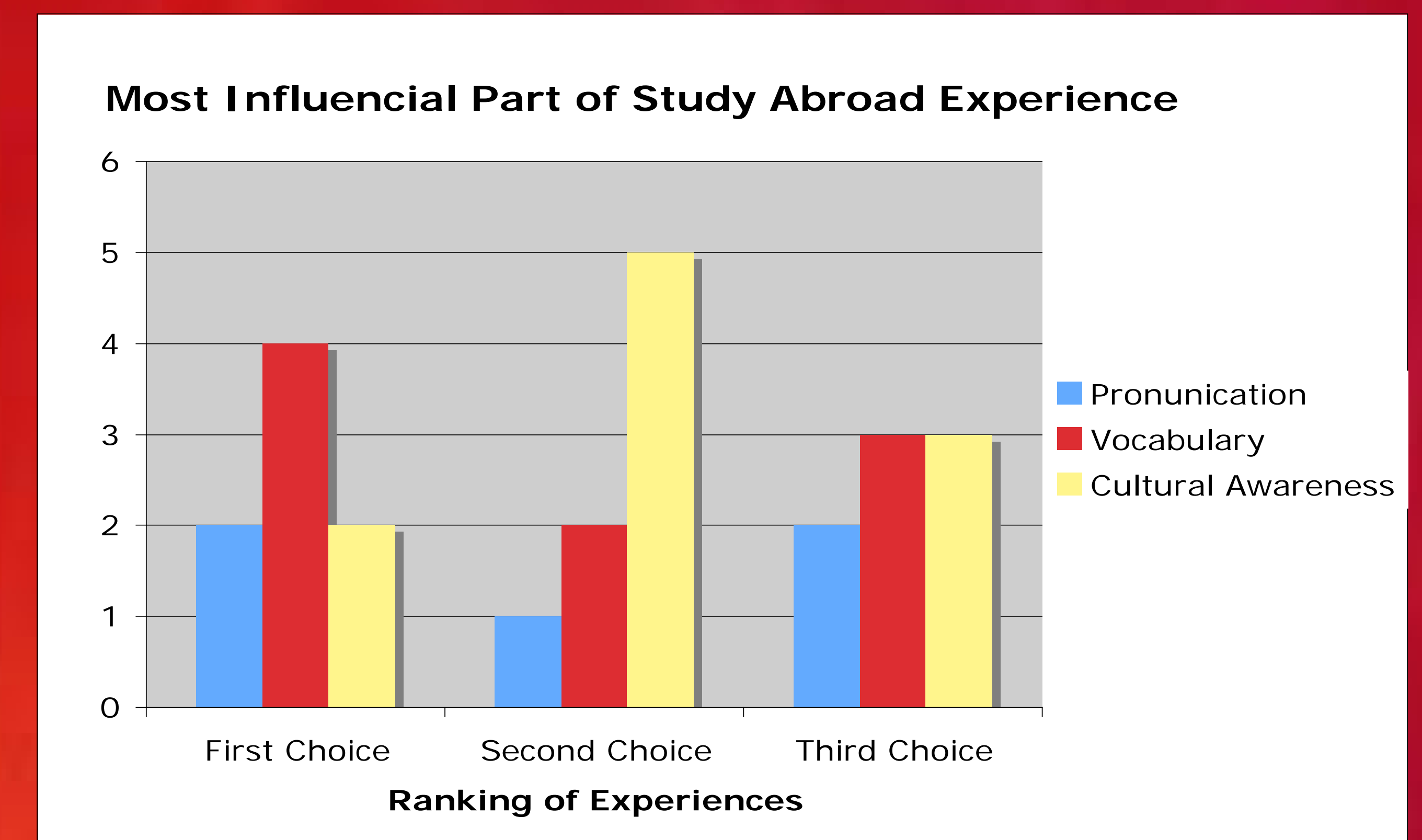
Proposal: To describe the perception heritage Spanish-speakers have of their language abilities after they have studied abroad in a Spanish-speaking country

Methodology:

- Participant group: native Spanish-speaking college students who have studied abroad in a Spanish-speaking country
- Distributed surveys to Illinois Wesleyan students who were determined to be native speakers and who had studied abroad in a Spanish-speaking country
- **Received 8 surveys back
- Administered two personal interviews with native speaking students, one who had studied abroad and one who is currently studying abroad

Results:

- All participants observed having a higher self-confidence in their native language abilities post-study abroad
- Participants showed most improvements in their vocabulary
- Closely followed by their cultural awareness



Conclusions:

- The participants self-confidence in their speaking abilities comes from greater exposure and use of their native language
- Pronunciation suffered lower influences on participants because the pronunciations vary in different parts of Spain
- Personal Interviews revealed it was an accumulation of various factors, including the culture, that gave them a larger skill set in their native language, which in turn, gave them a higher self-confidence in using Spanish post- study abroad