I grew up in a small Southern town, and until I came to SLU-Madrid, I didn’t realize that not only was I code switching by speaking a different language (Spanish), but that I was also switching between my Southern vernacular, replete with “incorrect” grammar, slang, and rural expressions, and my “educated” English in the classroom and with professors. After learning about code switching in my theory classes and seeing how much of a role it played in my daily life, I knew it was the subject that I wanted to tackle in my ethnographic studies. Ethnography, in contrast with empirical science, seeks meaning in local cultures and attempts to understand and describe (not predict) behavior. My own multilingual relationships further sparked my interest in the field, and I gathered background information to create my research questions based on up-close and personal participant observation. My findings—such as the feeling of being at a disadvantage in a lovers’ tiff due to lack of knowledge or discomfort in using an interlocutor’s code, or the way a code switch can connote different meaning of the same word same in multiple languages—have had a deep personal impact on the way I communicate and code switch now. Furthermore, I identified several more common threads between participants’ accounts: code switching as a conveyor of a certain identity, a signal of humor, an expression of consideration, and even an authoritative assertion. Ultimately though, I was able to see that all of these meanings were tied to how code switching works as a way to manage intimacy in multilingual relationships.

The hardest thing about publishing would definitely be the attention you have to give to the minutest detail. Making sure you have cited properly, getting your grammar and usage perfect, and following the instructions of the editor have all been pretty rigorous steps in this process—but, in the end, very worth it! I would advise anyone interested in research to give it a go. Not only will you grow as a scholar, but you will gain experience that you will be able to use in post-graduate studies. Choose a topic you’re personally invested and interested in, and the work becomes play as you discover and document phenomena you come in contact with in your daily life!