

# LENGUA

Adriana Domínguez

## CHARACTERS:

Operator/Alexa/Joaquín/Jesús  
Teacher/Interviewer/Announcer  
Guadalupe/Guest/María

## OPENING

(ALL cast on stage)

**Announcer:** What's in a name? that which we call a rose. By any other name would smell just as sweet.

**Jesús, María:** (*Simultaneously*) La rosa no dejaría de ser rosa, y de esparcir su aroma, aunque se llamase de otro modo.

**Operator:** Or would it?

**Jesús, María:** ¿O sería?

## ¿BUENO?

### Characters:

Operator (*off stage*)

Alexa (*off stage*)

Guest

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Adriana Domínguez es profesora ayudante en UT-El Paso. Sus intereses principales incluyen la representación, la equidad y la diversidad en las artes escénicas. Los proyectos recientes incluyen: *Luna*, *Real Women Have Curves*, *Into the Beautiful North* (NEA Big Read Grant), *A Christmas Carol*, *en la Frontera* y *Cuerpo*. Adriana vive con su esposo y su hija en El Paso, TX, una comunidad llena de amor que no conoce fronteras.

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**Operator:** You have reached the company operator. Please say the name of the department you are trying to reach. To reach an employee, say their first and last name.

**Guest:** Alejandra Carrillo.

**Operator:** I'm sorry, I was unable to process your request. Please say the name of the person you are trying to reach.

**Guest:** (*slower and with increased articulation*) Alejandra Carrillo.

**Operator:** The person you are trying to reach is Andrew Castner, is that correct?

**Guest:** No. Alejandra Carrillo.

**Operator:** You are now being directed to Alice Drew. Is that correct?

**Guest:** No. (*Anglicizing the name*) Ale-jan-dra Ca-ril-lo.

**Operator:** Please say the name of the person you are trying to reach.

**Guest:** (*slow, deliberate and Anglicized—almost with a Southern Dialect*) A LEX AN DRA CA RIL LO.

**Operator:** You are now being transferred to A LEX AN DRA CA RIL LO.

**Guest:** ¡Ándale! Finally!

**Operator:** You are now being transferred to Andrea Finland.

**Guest:** (*hangs up in frustration*) Forget it! I'll call back later. I'll listen to some music. Alexa play music by Juan Gabriel.

**Alexa:** Hmmmm...I'm not sure I know that one.

**Guest:** Alexa play music by Juan Gabriel.

**Alexa:** Playing John Gabin.

**Guest:** ¡Ay! Alexa stop. Alexa play Tchaikovsky.

**Alexa:** Now playing Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony.

**Guest:** So you recognize Tchaikovsky but not Juanga, eh? Alexa stop.

## PRIMER DÍA

### Characters:

Teacher

Guadalupe

**Teacher:** Welcome all to your first day. I am thrilled that we will be working together this year. First thing we need to take care of is attendance.

*(Taking attendance. Students raise hands when names are called.)*

Michael. Thank you.

Violet. Thank you.

Brooklyn. Thank you.

Everest. Thank you.

*(Pause as **Teacher** is stumped by the next name)*

Gwaukdaloop. Gwaukdaloop. Come on. Don't be shy. You just need to raise your hand so we can move on.

*(Silence)*

**Teacher:** This is not good for your first day if you are already missing class...Gwaukdaloop. Final chance and you will be marked absent on the very first day of high school.

*(Teacher continues to silently take attendance)*

**Guadalupe** *(to audience):* ¿Quién es Gwaukdaloop? *(Guadalupe looks around)*

Then a very slow realization came over me. She was attempting to say my name. My cheeks burned with shame and I could feel the beads of sweat forming on my forehead and right above my upper lip. She was trying to say Guadalupe.

Do I raise my hand?

But that is not my name. But I am here, I cannot be counted absent.

Do I correct her?

¿Qué hago? Ella es la maestra.

**Teacher:** Last chance for those of you who missed attendance before I submit this to the office.

Gwaukdaloop? Are you here?

**Guadalupe:** Yo soy Guadalupe. I am here.

**Teacher:** That is what I said. Gwaukdaloop.

**Guadalupe:** But I...

**Teacher:** Have you not been paying attention?

**Guadalupe** (*to audience*): I had no idea what to say, I felt so small and my panza was doing summersaults.

**Guadalupe** (*to teacher*): Yes. I guess I was not paying attention.

**Teacher** (*genuinely concerned about Guadalupe's attendance*): You need to pay attention if you want to do well here okay? I don't have time to wait for you to decide that you want to be present in school today. I have 20 other kids that I have to work with sweetheart so we can't spend ALL day on learning names. We have a lot to get done and we are here to learn, okay honey? We need to dedicate our time to what is important.

**Guadalupe**: Pero, mi nombre. My name es Guadalupe. I didn't know you were saying MY name.

**Teacher**: Oh, but I did. I am sure the class will agree that I called you several times.

**Guadalupe**: I..it...my name is Guadalupe.

**Teacher**: I know. I said it many times.

**Guadalupe**: Pero...

**Teacher**: Oh I see.

**Guadalupe**: Mi nombre.

**Teacher** (*pleased that a solution is in reach*): You know what, we can't do this every day. Why don't we just call you Loopy? That is fun and simple.

**Guadalupe**: Well, I, that is...

**Teacher** (*interrupting*): Alright, why don't we try it on for size. Loopy? Loopy raise your hand if you are present.

**Guadalupe** (*Raises hand*)

**Teacher**: Mucho bien, Loopy. Now we can start the day and we can be ready to learn.

**Guadalupe**: And that is how I got my nickname...Loopy. I was no longer known as Guadalupe, the name of mi abuela, el nombre de nuestra reina, but reduced to Loopy. I thought we were here to learn, we were supposed to use our time to learn. Why couldn't my smart, educated maestra take the time to LEARN my name? My name, my identity, my connection to my culture. I rarely raise my hand or

participate in class; I twist inside when my name is torn apart. I become invisible.

## DIOS MÍO

### Characters: JESÚS

**Jesús** (*Sitting on edge of stage*): Every time. Every single time.

It is like I have to justify my name and presence. I know, and I get it, I carry a great weight on my shoulders with the name Jesus (*anglicized*)... Jesús. My dad and his dad, and his dad shared that name. Yet, none of us are juniors or the third... I guess the name Jesus is just about enough for one person to take on. But I never really had to think about it, everyone in the familia called me Jesús (*Spanish pronunciation*).

I never had to stress about my own given name. Not until I entered this school. Even though school started two weeks ago, even though I have clearly introduced myself as Jesús (*Spanish*), I am still told stuff like:

‘Hey Jesus (*anglicized*), are you gonna walk on water today?’

And always: ‘What would Jesus do?’

I even had a teacher tell me: ‘You know, Jay-zeus, to make it easier on yourself you might want to think of other options for your name.’

It is my name!

And the options:

Jess

Jesse

J.

With each alteration of my name, they take a little piece of who I am with them.

And it is so hard to try and find this balance of defending something as basic as my name and keeping my temper in check. I know what an opportunity I have here. I get what I have and I have to succeed. So then I thought that going by Chuy would solve some problems. Pos, forget it.

‘Do you love Star Wars that much—you go by Chewbacca?’

‘You mean like chewy, like texture?’

I have to make life easier for OTHER people by trying to find a way for them to say my name. But I feel that is what I HAVE to do.

I know that not everyone in my position in life gets to have this kind of an opportunity. This school is known for getting all graduating seniors into top colleges. And I don’t want to screw it up.

I’ve always heard and really try to live by the concept of hard work. You know, “pull yourself up by your own bootstraps”, “hard work always pays off”. And I have no problem with working hard, and clearly I do, because I am here, but something that people need to know is that I don’t have those bootstraps, so I am pulling myself up—solo, you know—often grasping at thin air. I have to make this choice of keeping my mouth shut so I can succeed, and keeping my mouth shut is forcing me to drop pieces of my identity. How fair is that? I HAVE to give up part of myself, does everyone have to do that, or just me?

## TRABAJO

### **Characters:**

Interviewer

María

**Interviewer:** Mariah. Very impressive resume.

**María:** It is María.

**Interviewer:** Yes, well... I see that you completed all of the necessary coursework and even took some additional classes to specialize in computer technology. We definitely need some help with the website and social media pages here at the office.

**María:** I would be happy to work on that for the office. I created and maintained my Department’s student government website for the last two years and I was in charge of posting and promoting all events on social media.

**Interviewer:** Would this be your first internship?

**María:** Yes, I plan on graduating next Spring and want to get as much experience so that I can be as well rounded as possible.

**Interviewer:** This all looks very promising Marcie.

**María:** It is María.

**Interviewer** (*just slightly icy*): I stand corrected. Marrriiiiiiaaa (*over exaggerating*).

**María:** It is just María.

**Interviewer:** Sure. Well, you know that even though this is an internship we do offer a very competitive salary—for interns.

**María:** This internship would provide me with such a great experience. I would be thrilled to work here.

**Interviewer:** We have over 30 applicants, very qualified candidates, vying for this position.

**María:** I know that the applicant pool is very competitive and if selected, I promise you that I will work extremely hard to validate your decision in choosing me for this position.

**Interviewer:** Yes, Mary. Many want this job and I want to make sure that we work with someone who is flexible and a team player. I want to know that I can count on you to work well with others. Is that something you think you can do in this work environment, Mary?

**María:** Yes. I work really well with others and collaborate very effectively with co-workers.

**Interviewer:** Great! We want to make sure that we work smarter and not harder here Mary and cooperation is key here Mary. And due to that method over 90% of interns have been able to land very lucrative full time positions here with us after graduation.

**María:** I completely understand that need for cooperation and fully agree. And it is pronounced Ma-

**Interviewer** (*interrupting*): Well then, Mary. I think you would be a great addition to our team, our very collaborative team. I mean your resume, just blows away the competition. I am ready to take you on if you are ready. After looking at your work, I am prepared to offer you the position. Right now. Are you ready to join us, Mary?

**María:** Really? Wow! But it...

**Interviewer** (*interrupting*): You are most welcome.

**María:** Thank you! I am so excited! And grateful!

**Interviewer:** Let's get you started on some of the paperwork so that we are all set for the start date next month. Let me just let HR know that you are on the way down to get your needed items filled out. Why don't you start with this form right here while I make a quick call downstairs. (*Picks up phone*). Hey Ronnie, a Marriiiiia Gomez, yea, you can just call her Mary, will be going down in just a few to get her intern orientation packet. Thanks for putting a rush on this Ronnie, we really need to close up this search. (*Pause*). Oh yeah, right, Verrrrroonniiccaa.

(*Interviewer leaves—takes phone with her.*)

**María:** Yes, I landed the internship. Yes, I made some amazing networks. Yes, I let her call me Mary. That destruction of María took away so much. And maybe I didn't notice it at first. I was just so happy to get it. My parents were so incredibly proud of me. My beautiful parents who gave me the name, María...because it meant something to them...means something to them.

So when my name is changed, it changes my journey. Those moments of smiling through the destruction of my name strips me of the connection of the sacrifices of my parents. As a child of immigrants, there is an intense pressure to ensure that the sacrifices that my parents made were worth it. That everything that they gave up was worth my future. So yeah, I let her call me Mary.

But you better believe that when I am CEO of this place in a few years, there will be no mistake that my name is María. Better yet, ¡Jefa María!

## GRADUACIÓN

### Characters:

Announcer

Joaquín

**Announcer:** Okay everyone, make sure that I get a chance to see your card so that I can say your name correctly when you cross the stage. This is a big moment and we want to get it right.

**Joaquín** (*to audience*): Here we go again. What will I get this time?



Jockquin, Joanquin, Joeakwquin. Never Joaquín. My poor papá va tener vergüenza when he hears my name destroyed for the millionth time. I don't think that it gets any easier. I deal with it and have gotten used to it. Not used to it. Deal with it. But my papá really takes it personally. I remember one time, my mamá had to sit him down at an elementary awards ceremony when he started to march up to the teacher announcing—or attempting to announce—my name as the student with the most reading points for the grade level. Talk about vergüenza! But I tell you what, he never did that again without making sure he wasn't going to get the ojo from mamá.

**Announcer:** Next. (*Joaquín approaches the announcer*). Hmm... this is a unique name. Can you help me out? I want to make sure that I say it correctly when I get up on stage. This is a very special day for you. And look! You are going to be the first one to cross the stage as the University Honors Representative; the highest GPA! I have to get it right. Please say your name for me.

**Joaquín:** Joaquín Chávez.

**Announcer:** It is a beautiful name. Let me try. (*Not fully correct*) Joaquín Chávez. No, I didn't pronounce it correctly.

**Joaquín** (*Interrupting*): No, that is fine. It is pretty close. Close enough.

**Announcer:** Close enough is not good enough. Let me try again.

**Joaquín:** No, it is okay really.

**Announcer:** This is your day and your name, let me try again. Give me a minute to practice and I'll get it.

**Joaquín** (*to the audience as Announcer turns around to practice*): I often feel as though I am being blamed for having a difficult name, even though it really isn't that hard—we ALL have the capabilities to make those sounds with our mouths.

I thought I had an awesome name until I entered school. My mamá and papá named me after the poem, *Yo soy Joaquín*, written by Corky Gonzales during the Chicano Movement. And I was really proud of it until I felt like I was making the lives of others difficult, as if exerting a little more effort into saying my name correctly was just too taxing. My parents thought that giving me such a strong name would strengthen my identity and connect me with my own people. Mis papás had a really hard time with school, you know. They were paddled

for speaking Spanish, humiliated when they used the wrong words... Their culture and contributions were ignored, and they still had the guts to give me such a strong name. And I appreciate it, but...

**Announcer** (to Joaquín): I am so sorry, we need to line up. I promise I am going to do my very best up there. Be proud of your amazing name.

*(As the students walk to line up for graduation and the lights dim with Joaquín at the front, the following is whispered with strength to the audience. Ideally the actors walk through the audience to get to the other side of the stage for the announcement of candidates).*

**María:** I cannot be destroyed.

**Joaquín:** I will not be suppressed.

**Interviewer:** My ancestors will prevail.

**Announcer:** I make the choice.

**Joaquín:** My worth will not be sterilized.

*(Repeat)*

**María:** I cannot be destroyed.

**Joaquín:** I will not be suppressed.

**Interviewer:** My ancestors will prevail.

**Announcer:** I make the choice.

**Joaquín:** My worth will not be sterilized.

**María:** Society will not decide for me, I will not give in. I do not have to terminate my identity.

*(Students line up to be called for graduation).*

**Announcer:** Good afternoon. It is my pleasure to begin the procession of candidates with the student with the highest GPA in the entire college (*Joaquín hands her his name card*), Joaquín Chávez (*nails the name*).

**Joaquín** (*Takes the center of the stage*): Yo soy Joaquín.

## CLOSING

*(ALL cast on stage)*

**Interviewer:** What's in a name? That which we call a rose. By any other name would smell just as sweet

**María, Jesús:** La rosa no dejaría de ser rosa, y de esparcir su aroma, aunque se llamase de otro modo.

**ALL:** What is in a name? ¿Qué importa un nombre?

**Guadalupe:** My identity.

**Joaquín:** My worth.

**Interviewer:** My connection to my culture.

**María:** It is a reminder of my journey.

**ALL:** When it is taken away or not even attempted,

**Jesús:** It creates a wall.

**Interviewer:** It makes me feel invisible.

**Joaquín:** It makes me feel that I am not even worth the effort.

**Announcer:** I feel like I am blamed. As though it is my fault for having a difficult name and making life difficult.

**ALL:** Instead,

**Joaquín:** Build a bridge.

**Guadalupe:** Try.

**Interviewer:** We try for that which is important to us.

**Joaquín:** I learned how to say Charlize Theron,

**Guadalupe:** And Martin Scorsese,

**Jesús:** And Arnold Schwarzenegger.

**Interviewer:** So remember when you call José, Joe,

**María:** Or Lorena, Lori,

**Jesús:** And Carlos, Charlie.

**Guadalupe:** That their name is a connection. Give the person the choice; don't automatically make that choice for them.

**ALL:** Please don't make me check my identity at the door.

**Joaquín:** Yo soy

**Guadalupe:** Alejandra,

**Jesús:** Jesús,

**Guadalupe:** Guadalupe,

**María:** María.

**Interviewer:** Our names are the first gifts our papás give us. That regalo may seem small but it is what ties us to our familias.

**Joaquín:** I am Joaquín.

And although I may struggle,

**María:** I hold the strength of my ancestors in my heart.

**Announcer:** I will battle the toxicity of ignorance.

**Jesús:** I will keep my story without shame.

**ALL:**

I WILL PERSERVERE!

I WILL REMAIN!

I WILL BE!

¡YO SOY!

**END OF PLAY**