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Understanding Foreign Language Teachers’ Beliefs and Classroom Practices: A Multiple-Case Study of Four Teachers’ Experiences With LinguaFolio

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Understanding Foreign Language Teachers’ Beliefs and Classroom Practices: A Multiple-Case Study of Four Teachers’ Experiences With LinguaFolio

by

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A DISSERTATION

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Understanding Foreign Language Teachers’ Beliefs And Classroom Practices: A
Multiple-Case Study of Four Teachers’ Experiences With LinguaFolio

Gabriel E. Cote Parra, Ph. D.
University of Nebraska, 2009

Adviser: Aleidine J. Moeller

The purpose of this multiple-case study was to understand the beliefs, classroom practices and experiences of four foreign language teachers using LinguaFolio, a self-assessment tool that allows learners to reflect on their language knowledge and cultural experiences. This study involved four Spanish teachers in four Midwestern towns. Data were collected using different methods including in-depth interviews, observations, field notes, and document analysis.

Consistent with multiple case studies, after analyzing each case separately, a cross case analysis was performed to contrast and compare the themes across the four cases. As a result, three interrelated themes emerged: a facilitator role; fostering self-regulated learners; and moving from teaching to learning. As facilitators, teachers played a more supportive role that implied modeling and scaffolding ways of learning, facilitating knowledge and creating an optimal environment for learning. All Participants agreed that LinguaFolio has helped learners become self-regulated learners, more creative, reflective, organized and accountable for their own learning. The four participants claimed that moving from a teacher-centered to a learner-centered approach allowed them to empower learners. Findings also revealed that although the four participants faced challenges with
first-time LinguaFolio users, they agreed that after some time, students were able to
demonstrate what they knew about the language and culture, reflect about their learning
and self-assess their own language progress.
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# Table of Contents

Chapter 1—Introduction ............................................................................................. 1

Context of the Study ............................................................................................. 1

  From The European Language Portfolio (ELP) to the LinguaFolio USA ................. 1

  LinguaFolio Nebraska .................................................................................... 3

Purpose of the Study ............................................................................................ 7

Research Questions .............................................................................................. 8

  Grand Tour Questions .................................................................................... 8

  Sub-Questions ................................................................................................ 8

Limitations of the Study....................................................................................... 8

Significance of the Study ..................................................................................... 9

Definitions and Terms.......................................................................................... 10

Organization of this Manuscript .......................................................................... 12

Chapter 2—Literature Review ................................................................................... 13

  Introduction ...................................................................................................... 13

  Teacher Beliefs ................................................................................................. 13

  Teacher Change and Classroom Practices ......................................................... 14

Chapter 3—Methodology ......................................................................................... 20

  Introduction ...................................................................................................... 20

  Participants Selection ....................................................................................... 21

  Sites .................................................................................................................. 23

  Data Collection Procedures ............................................................................ 23

    Interviews ..................................................................................................... 23

    Classroom Observations ............................................................................... 24
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goal Setting</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collecting Evidence</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-reflection</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-assessment</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications for Future Research</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Thoughts</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendices</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 1</td>
<td>Characteristics of the Participants</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2</td>
<td>Characteristics of the Schools</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3</td>
<td>Themes and Descriptors in Rachel’s Case</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4</td>
<td>Themes and Descriptors in María’s Case</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 5</td>
<td>Themes and Descriptors in Jane’s Case</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 6</td>
<td>Themes and Descriptors in Sue’s Case</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 7</td>
<td>Themes Across the Cases</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A</td>
<td>First Contact E-Mail</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B</td>
<td>Second Contact E-Mail</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C</td>
<td>Interview Protocol</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix D</td>
<td>Observation Protocol</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix E</td>
<td>Informed Consent Form</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix F</td>
<td>Los Lugares Interesantes (TPRS)</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix G</td>
<td>Lesson Plan</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix H</td>
<td>Lesson Plan</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix I</td>
<td>Un Anuncio</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix J</td>
<td>Horario de Hacer los Anuncios</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix K</td>
<td>Self-Reflection Guide</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix L</td>
<td>Lesson Plan</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix M</td>
<td>La Zapatería</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix N</td>
<td>Lesson Plan</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix O</td>
<td>Proposal Sheet</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix P</td>
<td>Proposal Self-Assessment Sheet</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix Q</td>
<td>Class Activity</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix R</td>
<td>Lesson plan</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix S</td>
<td>Class Activity (Indirect Object Pronouns)</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix T</td>
<td>Homework</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix U</td>
<td>Lesson plan</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abbreviations

ACTFL .................. American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages.

FL ........................ Foreign Language

LF ........................ LinguaFolio

Int. (I, II) ............... Interview (I: 1st; Int. II: 2nd)

FN ........................ Field Note

Obs. (I, II) .............. Observation (I: 1st day; II: 2nd)

NCSSFL ................. The National Council of State Supervisors of Foreign Languages.

UNL ..................... University of Nebraska at Lincoln.
Chapter 1

Introduction

Context of the Study

The National Council of State Supervisors of Foreign Languages sponsored and adopted LinguaFolio USA as an official project aimed at helping educators, schools and other institutions to connect U.S. standards and proficiency guidelines to the internationally accepted Common European Framework for Languages (NCSSFL, n.d.).

LinguaFolio is a systematic collection of best pieces of work chosen by students that allows them to self assess and reflect on their language and cultural experiences (Kohonen, 2001; NCSSFL, 2006; Van Houten, 2004).

From The European Language Portfolio (ELP) to the LinguaFolio USA

The European Language Portfolio was developed as an application of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEF) “which is intended as a common basis for all kinds of products for planning, carrying through and evaluating modern language teaching and learning” (Schneider & Lenz, 2001). The Principles and Guidelines by the Council of Europe ascribes to the ELP the following properties: (a) it is a tool to promote plurilingualism and pluriculturalism; (b) it is the property of the learner; (c) it values the full range of the learner’s language and intercultural competence and experience regardless of whether it was acquired within or outside formal education; (d) it is a tool to promote learner autonomy; (e) it has both a pedagogic function to guide and support the learner in the process of language learning and a reporting function to record proficiency in languages; (f) it is based on the Common European Framework of Reference with explicit reference to the levels of competence specified in the model;
(g) it encourages the learner’s self-assessment (which is usually combined with teacher assessment) and assessment by educational authorities and examination bodies; and (h) it incorporates a minimum of common features, which make it recognizable and comprehensible across Europe (Principles, 2000).

According to *The Principles and Guidelines* approved by the Council of Europe the components of the ELP are: *The Language Passport, the Language Biography and the Dossier*. *The Language Passport* provides an overview of the individual’s proficiency in different languages at a given point in time; the overview is defined in terms of skills and the common reference levels as described in the Common European Framework. Students record formal qualifications and describe language competencies and significant language and intercultural learning experiences including information on partial and specific language competencies. This section of the portfolio includes evidence as regards self-assessment, teacher assessment and assessment by educational institutions and examinations boards. The information entered in the Passport states on what basis, when and by whom the assessment was carried out (Principles, 2002, p. 3).

*The Language Biography* facilitates the learner’s involvement in planning, reflecting upon and assessing his or her learning process and progress. It encourages the learner to identify what he/she can do in each language and to include information on linguistic and cultural experiences gained in and outside formal educational contexts. The Biography section is organized and designed to promote plurilingualism i.e. the development of competencies in a number of languages (Principles, 2000, p. 3).
The Dossier offers the learner the opportunity to select materials that document and illustrate achievements or experiences recorded in the Language Biography or Language Passport (Principles, 2000, p. 3).

In 2005, the Year of Languages, The National Council of State Supervisors for Foreign Languages (NCSSFL) adopted the LinguaFolio initiative as the official project (NCSSFL, 2006). Initially known as LinguaFolio USA!, this project is based on the European Language Portfolio and adapted to meet National Foreign Language Standards. LinguaFolio USA! is aligned with the American Council of the Teaching of Foreign Languages Performance and Proficiency Guidelines. LinguaFolio USA is intended to: (a) encourage the learning of all languages; (b) emphasize the value of knowing many languages-plurilingualism and pluriculturalism; (c) contribute to global understanding; (d) promote autonomous learning and the ability to assess one’s skills; (e) facilitate articulation among language programs based on a clear and commonly accepted description of language proficiency; (f) serve as a tool to assess language learning; (g) recognize and value heritage languages; and (h) promote language learning as a life-long endeavor (NCSSFL, 2006).

In the United States, several projects have been piloted (Nebraska, Kentucky, Indiana, Virginia, among others) and implemented within the LinguaFolio to fit specific needs, resources and initiatives.

LinguaFolio Nebraska

LinguaFolio Nebraska developed through a collaborative effort between the Nebraska Department of Education and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln was initially named Nebraska World Languages Portfolio (NWLP). It was piloted with 10 teachers in
Lincoln Public Schools and 25 Spanish teachers across Nebraska. As a result, revisions and changes have helped LinguaFolio Nebraska become a more user friendly and effective tool for learners and teachers. Re-named the Nebraska LinguaFolio, a 5-year study was undertaken to measure the impact of using LF with 7-12 learners.

Nebraska LinguaFolio is based on the objectives of the European Language Portfolio with the needs of the United States educational system in mind (NCSSFL, 2006) and “designed to enhance students’ reflection and analysis of their own learning in grades 7 – 12 through a language journal, a series of checklists identifying language knowledge, skills, cultural understanding, and proficiency levels” (Moeller, Scow, & Van Houten, 2005).

Although there is not a unique LinguaFolio, all of them are comprised of three main components: My Language Journey which aims to help students understand and explore their current and past experiences with language and culture as well as their current learning habits and strategies; Passport which aims to help students understand their level of proficiency in the language being learned as well as their growth in proficiency; and a Dossier of Evidence which aims to help students understand their language growth through the creation of goals, collection of evidence representing achievement goals, and reflections on the learning experience (LinguaFolio Nebraska Teacher Guide, n.d.). The LinguaFolio Nebraska, aligned to the ACTFL proficiency guidelines, is being implemented in 64 classrooms across Nebraska, and it aims to (a) develop reflectivity and autonomous learning in students; (b) increase value of multi-purpose language learning, heritage languages and interculturality; and (c)
provide common criteria for evaluating language competence (Moeller et al., 2005, p. 135).

In order to fully understand the implementation process of LinguaFolio and how teachers integrate it into the language classroom, I conducted two informal pilot research projects in three Midwestern high school Spanish classes. The first, a case study investigated language teachers’ perceptions on how LinguaFolio influences language proficiency among Spanish language learners. The second, a multiple case study aimed at understanding how two high school teachers were using LinguaFolio in two Midwestern high school Spanish classes. Findings from the first study revealed that LinguaFolio provides learners with meaningful and authentic learning experiences that allow students the opportunity to personalize their learning. Data from the second study showed that LinguaFolio allows students to become more active participants in the learning process. I also found that the optimal use of LinguaFolio may require an investment of time, a full understanding of all its components, and an adaptation derived from the particularities of every classroom.

In 2006, prior to the research studies mentioned above, I was invited to take part in a Summer Spanish Immersion Program, a ten day professional development opportunity for K-12 teachers offered through the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Initially funded in 2003, the Improving Teacher Quality Grant was funded again in 2004, 2005, 2006, 2008 and 2009. The program immerses participants in the Spanish language and culture in an effort to improve language, culture and literature skills as well as acquaint the participating teachers with the LinguaFolio for implementation in their
classrooms. More than 140 Spanish teachers have taken part in these two-week Summer Immersion Programs.

One of the purposes of the Spanish Immersion program is to offer foreign language teachers firsthand experience in using LinguaFolio. It provides language teachers with research-based strategies, pedagogy, and technology that can be implemented in their classrooms. Simultaneously, teachers are provided with theoretical foundations on autonomous learning, self-assessment, goal setting, and reflection and tools that enable participants to use the online LinguaFolio. In order to provide continuing professional support to participating teachers as they implement the LinguaFolio Nebraska, the program initiated, developed and maintained a Blackboard website to facilitate interaction among participants and instructors, as well as hosting on site regional workshops.

During the immersion program, I played different roles that allowed me to become familiar with LinguaFolio. First, as a BlackBoard discussion participant, I actively contributed to the online discussion of the book, “La Ciudad de las Bestias” (City of the Beasts). This text served as the venue for discussions aimed at building community among the participants and to ensure careful reading of the text as they shared interpretations and reactions. I responded regularly to participants’ comments and insights while reading the book. Second, as a native Spanish speaker, I tutored participants during meals and breaks during the immersion; I specifically assisted advanced students on language structure usage. Third, as a conversation facilitator and resource person, I interacted with participants during group work, responding to questions and helping them with pronunciation.
That Summer Immersion Program awakened my interest in LinguaFolio; I wanted to understand how teachers were implementing and using LinguaFolio on a regular basis. Their experiences and challenges fascinated me. More importantly, I started wondering whether teachers, as a result of implementing LinguaFolio, changed their beliefs about teaching and learning and what the impact of the LinguaFolio was on their classroom practice. My curiosity increased as I read research studies that revealed the way beliefs affect teacher instructional practice and curricular decisions (Pajares, 1992; Prawat, 1992). Williams and Burden (1997) noted that “teachers are highly influenced by their beliefs, which in turn are closely linked to their values, to their views of the world and to their conceptions of their place within it” (p. 56). Similarly, Richardson et al. (1991) in their study on beliefs and practices in reading found that teachers beliefs were closely related to their classroom practices.

According to Schraw and Olafson, “virtually all [research on teacher beliefs] has focused on what students know and believe, while very little has been said thus far about the role of teachers’ epistemological beliefs and world views, and how these world views affect classroom practice” (2001, p. 59). Accordingly, the present research is an attempt to study teacher beliefs in the context of implementing LinguaFolio from the perspective of the teachers themselves.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this multiple-case study is an attempt to understand foreign language teachers’ beliefs and classroom practices in the context of implementing LinguaFolio. This study involved in-depth interviews, observations, field notes, and document analysis in order to explore teacher beliefs and classroom practices.
Research Questions

This study attempts to answer these specific questions:

Grand Tour Question

What happens to teacher beliefs and classroom practices by using LinguaFolio?

Sub-Questions

1. How do teachers describe the LinguaFolio implementation process?
2. How do teachers describe their teaching practices and beliefs before the implementation of LinguaFolio?
3. How do teachers describe their teaching practices and beliefs after the implementation of LinguaFolio?

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study are inherent in qualitative research. First, the findings of this multiple case study may not be generalizable. As Patton (2002) explained, “[t]he purpose of a case report is not to represent the world, but to represent the case” (p. 460). In other words, this multiple case study will help to understand how teachers change their beliefs and practices as a result of implementing LinguaFolio. Second, although I conducted non-participant observations, the researcher’s presence might have influenced the participants’ behavior. According to Patton “the observer may affect the situation being observed in unknown ways” (p. 306). Third, according to Patton “[f]ield work should last long enough to get the job done-to answer the research questions being asked and fulfill the purpose of the study.” I observed the teachers’ interactions with their students for two hours; although perhaps a longer time devoted to data gathering would have allowed a deeper understanding of the problem. Fourth, I did not conduct an entry
survey. Since I was interested in teachers who have changed due to the use of LinguaFolio, I invited 18 Spanish teachers to participate in a study from among those who had been implementing it. On a voluntary basis, two open-ended questions were administered to these potential candidates.

Finally, being a FL teacher and a co-researcher of LinguaFolio might have resulted in a subjective observation on my part or might have affected the way the participants reported the information during the interviews. Nevertheless, I assumed an “emphatic neutrality” (Patton, 2002) that suggests to remain, as a researcher, in the middle ground between becoming too involved and remaining too distant. Having assumed this stance allowed me to remain impartial towards the participants and the central phenomenon being investigated. I tried to be unbiased while gathering data, analyzing it and writing the report. As Patton (2002) noted, “the investigator’s commitment is to understand the world as it unfolds, be true to complexities and multiple perspectives as they emerge, and be balanced in reporting both confirmatory and disconfirming evidence with regard to any conclusion offered” (p. 51). I was always critical and reflective to ensure impartiality.

**Significance of the Study**

This study is significant in that it will help to explain if and how the change process occurs in the language classroom. This study will provide the participants with an opportunity to reflect upon the process they have gone through while implementing LinguaFolio. Although the LinguaFolio Nebraska has collected data on goal setting, student achievement, and the implementation of LinguaFolio (Moeller, 2004) minimal research has been centered on the use of LinguaFolio in Nebraska. Therefore, a multiple
case study describing four teachers’ experiences on the use of LinguaFolio will provide an in-depth understanding of the issues involved in its implementation and teacher practices. It will also provide foreign language teachers with an opportunity to challenge themselves to look at their own classrooms and discover opportunities for improvement.

Ultimately, this multiple-case study may help foreign language teachers to better understand the multiple facets of LinguaFolio. It may also help LinguaFolio designers to find ways for its improvement.

**Definitions and Terms**

The following key terms are operationally defined in order to establish a consistent and common meaning throughout this study.

*Case Study*—”a case study is an exploration of a ‘bounded system’ or a case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context” (Creswell, 1998, p. 61).

*LinguaFolio Nebraska*—LinguaFolio Nebraska is a student centered self-assessment tool that consists of three important characteristics: it helps develop reflective and autonomous learning; demonstrates the value of multi-purpose language learning, heritage languages, and interculturality; and provides common criteria for evaluating language competence (Moeller et al., 2005, p. 135).

*Member checking* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985)—Member Checking “is a process in which the researcher asks one or more participants in the study to check the accuracy of the study. This check involves taking the findings back to participants and asking them (in writing or in an interview) about the accuracy of the report” (Creswell, 2005, p. 252).
Meta-matrices—”Meta-matrices are master charts assembling descriptive data from each of several cases in a standard format. The simplest form is a juxtaposition-a stacking-up-of all of the single-case displays on one very large sheet or wall chart” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 178).

Multiple-Case Study—Also known as collective case study (Stake, 1995), “in which multiple cases are described and compared to provide insight into an issue. A case study researcher might examine several schools to illustrate alternative approaches to school choice for students” (Creswell, 2005, p. 439). “In a collective or multiple case study, the one issue or concern is again selected, but the inquirer selects multiple case studies to illustrate the issue” (Creswell, 2007, p. 74).

Nonparticipant Observer—”Nonparticipant observer is an observer who visits a site and records notes without becoming involved in the activities of the participants. The nonparticipant observer is an “outsider” who sits on the periphery or some advantageous place to watch and record the phenomenon under study (i.e., the back of the classroom)” (Creswell, 2002, p. 212).

Observational Protocol—Observational Protocol “is a form designed by the researcher before data collection that is used for taking field notes during an observation (Creswell, 2002, p. 223).

One-on-one Interviews—One-on-one interview is a data collection process in which the researcher asks questions to and records answers from only one participant in the study at a time.
Open-ended Questions—Open-ended questions allow participants to “best voice their experiences unconstrained by any perspectives of the researcher or past research findings” (Creswell, 2002, p. 214).

Peer debriefing—“A process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytic session and for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer’s mind” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 308).

Triangulation—“Triangulation is the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals (e.g., a principal and a student), types of data (e.g., observational field notes and interviews), or methods of data collection (e.g., documents and interviews) in descriptions and themes in qualitative research” (Creswell, 2005, p. 252).

Organization of this Manuscript

Chapter 1 provides the context of the study, background information on LinguaFolio, teacher beliefs, classroom practices and teacher change. This chapter also introduces the purpose of the study, research questions and the definition of key terms. Chapter 2 presents a review of research focused on teacher beliefs, teacher change and classroom practices. The main definitions on teacher beliefs are provided along with the main factors encompassing its relationship to classroom practice and teacher change. Chapter 3 describes the methodology and procedures used to collect and analyze data for this study. Chapter 4 presents a thorough description of the participants’ beliefs and their practices during the two-day observation. Chapter 5 presents the analysis and discussion of findings.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the philosophical foundations and research literature on teacher beliefs, teacher change and classroom practices. First, I will provide the main definitions of teacher beliefs and the main factors encompassing its relationship to classroom practice. Then, I will present the different factors affecting teacher change and classroom practice, followed by the major models used to study teacher change. Finally, I will provide a review of the main studies on teacher beliefs and how these beliefs might have an impact on teacher practice or vice versa.

Teacher Beliefs

There is no consensus as regards the definition or the terms used to refer to beliefs. The term teacher belief has been used interchangeably with other terms such as: attitudes, values, judgments, conceptions, principles of practice, personal constructs, and epistemologies (Clandinin & Connelly, 1997; Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992).

Beliefs have been described in very diverse ways. Kagan (1992) suggested that teacher belief is a particularly provocative form of personal knowledge that is generally defined as pre- or in service teachers’ implicit assumptions about students, learning, classrooms, and the subject matter to be taught (p. 66). Similarly, Alexander, Schallert, and Hare (1991) regard knowledge and beliefs as an overlapping concept. They argued “knowledge encompasses all that a person knows or believes to be true, whether or not it is verified as true in some sort of objective or external way” (p. 317). Defining beliefs as a form of knowledge might not consider the differences between belief systems and
knowledge systems. Nespor (1987) made the distinction between beliefs and knowledge. Beliefs rely more on affective and evaluative components than knowledge. Pajares (1992) described beliefs as values, “which house the evaluative, comparative, and judgmental functions of beliefs and replace predisposition with an imperative action” (p. 314), underscoring the evaluation and judgment elements associated with beliefs.

For this study I am using the following definition: “Beliefs are an individual’s understanding of the world and the way it works or should work, may be consciously or unconsciously held, and guides one’s action” (Richardson, 1994, p. 91). This definition was chosen because in the context where the study takes place, beliefs can be seen and described as a way of understanding the classrooms, students, the nature of learning, the teacher’s role in a classroom, and the goals of education.

**Teacher Change and Classroom Practices**

Like most educational aspects, teacher change encompasses a wide range of perspectives and conceptions. Teacher change has been described by researchers “in terms of learning, development, socialization, growth, improvement, implementation, of something new or different, cognitive and effective change and self-study” (Richardson & Placier, 2001, p. 905).

In search of understanding the intricacies of teacher change, several models have been developed and implemented through professional development programs. Guskey (1986) introduced *The Model of Teacher Change* that suggests that significant change in teacher beliefs and attitudes occurs primarily after improvements in student learning. In other words, teachers may adopt new methodologies, pedagogical strategies or classroom
practices only if they work in their classrooms. For example, the use of these methods, strategies or practices may result in an increase in student achievement.

Drawing from two theories on teacher change, Richardson (1994) developed a third model regarding how teacher change occurs. The first theory suggests that teachers change their beliefs after they change their practices (Fullan, 1985; Guskey, 1986) while the second theory suggests that a change in teacher beliefs is followed by a change in their practices (Richardson, Anders, Tidwell, & Lloyd, 1991, as cited in Richardson, 1994, p. 90). Richardson’s model suggests that this “change process may begin either with changes in beliefs or changes in practice” (p. 90).

Studies have shown that a change in practice might be followed by a change in teacher beliefs. Beijaard and De Vries (1997) focused their study on the development and change of teacher beliefs. After interviewing eight experienced secondary school teachers, they found that teachers’ personal experiences in the classroom appear to be the most important source for changing their beliefs about learning. Changes took place after an incident made them realize that they had to teach differently. This study also developed four patterns of development or change of teachers’ beliefs about student learning: internally-driven vs. externally-stimulated, radical change, versus gradual changes, individual versus collaborative, and content of teachers’ beliefs.

Other studies have focused on the relationship between teacher beliefs and classroom practices. According to Johnson (1994), teacher beliefs affect perception and judgment that may affect their classroom practices. This relationship is echoed by Turnbull’s (1999) study that found that four ninth-grade French teachers modified their methods to render them compatible with their own beliefs. Often times teachers
compromise their beliefs in order to respond to their classrooms practices. Graden (1996) found that six French and Spanish teachers from three public schools subordinated their beliefs in order to respond to their students’ low proficiency, or lack of motivation. Although these six teachers believed that “the use of the target language is preferable for reading instruction, and that oral reading interferes with reading comprehension” due to the poor student performance and lack of motivation, teachers’ practices varied noticeably from their beliefs about appropriate reading instruction.

Other studies suggest change occurs as a result of professional development. Findings indicate that entering a Master’s degree, a teaching program or a certification program may result in a change in instructional practice and beliefs. Cryns and Johnston (1993) conducted a five-year case study of an elementary classroom teacher studying the changes she experienced as she entered a Master’s program and how these changes influenced her classroom practices. Cryns and Johnston found that the teacher’s reflective thoughts evolved as a result of the scholarly encounter provided by the master’s program which fostered critical self-reflection. At the end of the program, the participant became more eloquent and refined when discussing her teaching practices, and “expanded her understanding of her classroom practice and its connectedness to the larger social and political world” (Cryns & Johnston, 1993, p. 157).

Similarly, Freeman (1993), through a longitudinal study of change in teacher practice, examined how four foreign language teachers integrated new ideas from a masters’ program into their practice. Freeman introduced four concepts that emerged as findings: conception of practice that “guided them in the face of new problematic situations on their classrooms”; tensions understood as “simply competing demands
within their teaching”; articulation, “the process through which the teachers gain access to their thinking about their classroom practice”; and local language which “voices the teachers’ explanations of teaching prior to entering the in-service program” and professional language “a discourse, built upon a set of socially constructed facts.” According to this study, participants “reconstructed their classroom practice, using professional discourse to rename their experience and thus to assign new or different meaning to their actions” (p. 485).

Brownlee and Boulton-Lewis (2001) suggested that changes might occur as a result of the implementation of a teaching program with a group of 29 pre-service graduate teacher students in Australia. Employing questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, researchers used a research group and a comparison group, and surveyed participants at the beginning and at the end of the study. They found that the research group students demonstrated an increased sophistication of their epistemological beliefs, suggesting that the program helped them to develop such beliefs.

Hart (2004) examined 14 pre-service elementary teachers participating in an alternative certification program in an urban setting. This study employed a beliefs survey and weekly logs as data sources. The survey was applied before and after the program. Hart found that the program was successful in changing pre-service teacher beliefs. For example, at the beginning of the program, teachers believed that succeeding in math depended more on the memorization of formulas; however, at the end, most of them disagreed with those statements revealing a change in their beliefs in a direction consistent with the National Council on Teaching Mathematics Standards (1989). Data
from the weekly logs supported the responses on the survey and the philosophy of the program.

In their study Levin and Wadmany (2006) examined the evolution of teacher beliefs on learning, teaching, and technology. Conducted in Israel, this study examined the integration of technology–based information-rich tasks in six 4th-6th grade classrooms using questionnaires, interviews, and classroom observations as data sources. They found that all six participants changed their beliefs and educational practices. They found that participants changed their behaviorist and transmissionist views to more varied views and discarded direct instruction, adopting practices focused on more collaborative learning. They also found that it is easier to change classroom practices than educational beliefs. This study did not present any evidence indicating that changes in teacher beliefs were followed by a change in teacher practices or vice versa.

Howard et al. (2000) trained 41 experienced teachers on constructivist teaching practices in an attempt to promote epistemological change. The study employed an epistemology questionnaire before and after the four-week training. Howard et al. found that this training resulted in significant changes in teacher beliefs “from objectivist orientation to more constructivist ones” (p. 459).

Additional research studies have identified other factors that affect teacher change over time, and the regularity with which these changes occur. Schiro (1992) studied 76 educators’ perceptions about the changes as regards curriculum belief systems during their careers. Data were collected from written curriculum life histories, inventories, curriculum vitae, conversations and interviews. Schiro found that educators make changes in their beliefs about curriculum approximately once every four years; the first
main change occurs about three years after entering the work force; changes are associated with changing of schools, grades they teach, or movement from teaching to administrative positions. Schiro also found that the major stimuli for change in their curriculum and instructional beliefs system is their everyday educational practices.

Fisher (2006) conducted a longitudinal study of two teachers who were involved in a large-scale program to change the way literacy was taught in England. The study involved interviews and observations over three years. Fisher found that teachers made considerable changes to the organization, and management of their teaching as well as to planning and contents. However, their pedagogical approach did not change. In other words, this study revealed the unchangeability of teacher practice. Evidence regarding participants’ change of beliefs was not provided.

Finally, it is necessary to point out that many of the studies on change, classroom practice and teacher beliefs presented in this review were conducted in educational contexts different from that of the foreign language learning and teaching. Taking into account that minimal research has been centered on the use of LinguaFolio, conducting this research on LinguaFolio will add value to this gap. It will also contribute to a better understanding of its implementation and the impact it may have on the learning and teaching of foreign languages.
Chapter 3
Methodology

Introduction

This research adopts a multiple-case study “in which multiple cases are described and compared to provide insight into an issue” (Creswell, 2005, p. 439). Because the purpose of the study is an attempt to better understand teacher beliefs, classroom practice and change, I selected a multiple case study as it allowed me “to show different perspectives of the issue” (Creswell, 2007, p. 74). Consistent with case study, this research involved the study of an issue through four cases bounded by time and space (Creswell, 2007). I focused on the experiences of Jane, Rachel, María and Sue (pseudonyms), four Spanish teachers who were using LinguaFolio during the spring of 2008. In order to have a better understanding of the four selected cases, I gathered several sources of information. I conducted eight one-on-one interviews, eight classroom observations, and analyzed teachers’ lessons plans and field notes.

Conducting a multiple-case study allowed me to compare and contrast four single cases. According to Yin (2003), “even if you can only do a “two-case” case study, your chances of doing a good case will be better than using a single-case design” (p. 53). I experienced the benefits of having four cases throughout the development of the study. First, the four cases were developed concurrently, so that as I moved between the cases I was able to attune my research skills to get the most out of the interviews and the classroom observations. For example, while listening to the first interview recordings, I realized that I had made rather blunt comments that did not encourage the first participant to talk openly. Keeping this in mind, while interviewing the other participants I tried
creative icebreakers and more subtle comments that encouraged them to talk more comfortably and explicitly. As the cases unfolded, I was able to modify and refine the observation and interviewing strategies. According to Patton (2002) “The purpose of a research interview is first and foremost to gather data, not change people” (p. 405). I discovered that participants expressed their ideas differently. For example, Sue was a conversationalist, so she described and provided several details about every question asked. In contrast, Rachel was more cautious and sometimes I had to rephrase the questions and provide probing questions to help her express her ideas. Second, I collected a more robust set of data that I compared and contrasted resulting in more powerful inferences across the cases. “It is believed that understanding [the individual cases] will lead to a better understanding, perhaps better theorizing, about a still larger collection of cases” (Stake, 2000, p. 437).

Consistent with qualitative research, first, the sample population was observed within its own natural setting; one private and three public schools where Spanish is being taught. The interviews were also carried out in the setting where the actual learning process is taking place. As Hatch (2002) put it: “Qualitative studies try to capture the perspectives that actors use as a basis for their actions in specific settings” (p. 72). Second, this multiple case study allowed me to “collect as many detailed specifics from the research setting as possible, then set about the process of looking for patterns of relationship among the specifics” (Hatch, 2002, p. 10).

**Participants Selection**

The selection of participants was guided by the purpose of this study that attempted to understand if teachers of foreign languages experienced any changes as a
result of implementing LinguaFolio. Since I wanted to include participants who had changed their teaching as a result of using LinguaFolio, I used purposeful sampling to select the four cases. According to Patton (1990), “the purpose of purposeful sampling is to select information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study” (p. 169). I invited 18 Spanish teachers who had been implementing LinguaFolio and who had participated in the Summer Spanish Immersion Program at UNL (see Appendix A). On a voluntary basis, two open-ended questions were administered to these potential candidates (see Appendix B). The questions were asked in order to obtain specific information about the LinguaFolio implementation process and how its implementation had impacted the way they teach and the way their students learn. Jane, Rachel, Maria and Sue responded to the questions and expressed their willingness to take part in the study and reported that they had changed their teaching due as a result of using LinguaFolio. Table 1 shows a brief description of the four participants.

Table 1

*Characteristics of the Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Years of Teaching Experience</th>
<th>Years of Using LinguaFolio</th>
<th>Language Proficiency *</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Intermediate Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Novice High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Advance High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Advance Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Language proficiency according to the Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview (SOPI) and the Standards-Based Assessment & Measurement of Proficiency (STAMP) test results.
The Sites

The core of this research study was carried out in the classrooms of four high schools located in Midwestern towns. Table 2 shows the characteristics of the schools where the research was carried out.

Table 2

Characteristics of the Schools *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher/School</th>
<th>School Population</th>
<th>Students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch program</th>
<th>White non Hispanic</th>
<th>American Indian</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Asian/Pacific Islander</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rachel’s School</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria’s School</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane’s School</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sue’s School</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Public School Review (n.d.)

Data Collection Procedures

Multiple sources of information were collected in this study. According to Creswell (2007), “the data collection in a case study research is typically extensive, drawing on multiple sources of information” (p. 76).

Interviews

I conducted eight one-on-one interviews. I interviewed each teacher twice following an interview protocol (see Appendix C). I used open-ended questions that I
The relaxed pace of these interviews allowed the interviewees to explore and recount events that helped me collect the appropriate data. As Hatch (2002) stated: “Although researchers come to the interview with guiding questions, they are open to following the leads of informants and probing into areas that arise during interview interactions” (p. 94). The interviews were conducted after the class observations and elicited information in order to answer the Grand Tour Question: What happens to teacher beliefs and classroom practices by using LinguaFolio? I audio recorded the interviews in order to transcribe and analyze the conversations. During the interviews I took notes about the most remarkable features stated by the FL teachers, the variations and unplanned questions. According to Hatch (2002), “these notes help me keep track of what guiding questions have been addressed and where I want to go next with the interview” (p. 112). Through these interviews I obtained the participants’ perspectives about what happens to teacher beliefs and classroom practices by using LinguaFolio.

**Classroom Observations**

In addition to the interviews, I observed Jane, Rachel, Maria and Sue’s classrooms on two occasions. These four FL classrooms were observed over a period of three weeks. I conducted approximately two hours of class observations for each classroom. Although none of the class observations were recorded, I observed each teacher twice following an observation protocol (see Appendix D). As a non-participant observer, I sat at the back of the classroom taking notes about the various teacher attitudes and behaviors and how students responded to the activities suggested by the teacher. All the classroom visits were pre-arranged and focused almost exclusively on
classroom practices while using LinguaFolio. These observations allowed me to support and contrast the data collected through the interviews and lesson plans. Three of the main advantages of collecting data by observing are “observations provide a check on what is reported in interviews” (Patton, 2002, p. 306), “the opportunity to record information as it occurs in a setting and to study actual behavior” (Creswell, 2005, p. 211). During the first visit, all teachers introduced me to their classes, and explained the purpose of my visit to them. Some students were curious about my presence. For example, in all the classrooms, at first, one or two students stared at me, but after a while they continued working on their assignments. It seemed that my presence did not interfere much with their class activities, or the way they behaved.

**Artifacts**

Another important source of information was the analysis of documents. I analyzed the teachers’ lesson plans to complement the information from class observations and interviews. “The main advantage of this type of data collection is that it does not influence the social setting being examined” (Hatch, 2002, p. 25). The use of the teachers’ documents helped me compare and contrast the information from the class observations and interviews.

**Data Analysis**

Data were analyzed in two stages. First, each case was analyzed separately. Then, the four cases were contrasted and compared through a cross-case analysis.
Case Analysis

I followed the interpretive analysis model suggested by Hatch to analyze each case separately. “Interpretation, by definition, involves going beyond the descriptive data” (Patton, 2002, p. 480); it “is about giving meaning to data” (Hatch, 2002, p. 180).

Using MAXqda, computer software, I conducted the interpretive analysis. According to Creswell (2005), the use of computer analysis programs facilitates “the process of storing, analyzing, and sorting the data” (p. 234). I transcribed the data verbatim from the interviews into Word files. I then exported the data to a MAXqda file to perform the open coding and analysis of the text data. This software offers a myriad tools that facilitated the separate case and the multiple-case analysis. For example, the visualization and sequence of coding, the creation of memos and the text comparison chart among others.

The interpretive analysis included eight steps:

1. Reading the data to gain a sense of the whole. “The logic of the interpretive model parallels that of the inductive model in that pieces are put together in meaningful relation in order to construct explanations that help readers make sense of what’s being examined” (Hatch, 2002, p. 181).

2. Reviewing impressions previously recorded in research and in protocols. During the interviews, I took notes focused on the research questions. “The whole idea of making a record of impressions during the process of gathering and processing data is to capture potentially fruitful explanations that can be systematically examined later” (Hatch, 2002, p. 182). I think that part of the coding process began to take shape during this note taking process. I
synthesized the information into practical units. I then used those sentences and headings previously highlighted as the spinal cord of the coding.

3. Reading the data, identifying impressions, and recording those impressions in memos. I created memos with my initial ideas. While re-reading the data, I identified the recurring themes. Once I narrowed and refined the interpretations I returned to “the data in a systematic search for places that relate directly to the interpretations in [the] memos” (Hatch, 2002, p. 187). I read the data several times. This careful reading helped me make connections between the memos, the teachers’ voices, my observations, lesson plans and my field notes.

4. Studying memos for salient information. I reduced the amount of information by focusing on the recurring memos. I continued to make connections between the memos. This became the record I used to describe the data analysis when I wrote the final report.

5. Re-reading data, coding places where interpretations were supported or challenged. MAXqda software allowed me to create a code system that helped me identify color codes. I highlighted in green sentences, comments, expressions and words related to teacher change; I highlighted everything related to teacher beliefs in blue; and I highlighted in red everything related to classroom practices. Highlighting the data in these three different colors helped me identify and support the interpretations of the collected data more easily. I used magenta and other colors as other themes emerged.
6. Writing a draft summary. The voices of the teachers became a key element to write thus first draft. “The better case studies are the ones in which the explanations have reflected some theoretical significant propositions” (Yin, 1989, p.113). My reflections of the events helped to explain this particular phenomenon.

7. Reviewing interpretations with the participants. The main goal of this step was to agree with the participants on the way I described and analyzed their classroom experiences. In order to ensure that my data analysis was valid and reliable, I employed member checking and peer debriefing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) to improve the likelihood that the findings and interpretations produced through the data analysis are credible and consistent with what the participants had said and done.

8. Writing a revised summary and identifying excerpts that support interpretations. In this final step, I refined and clarified interpretations and supported them with excerpts from the data.

Cross-Case Analysis

In a multiple case study, “the researchers have an obligation to provide interpretation across the cases” (Stake, 2006, p.39). Thus, after analyzing each case separately, I performed a cross case analysis. Using the MAXqda2 software, I compared and contrasted the themes across the four cases based on the following descriptive categories: teacher beliefs, classroom practices and change. A text comparison chart helped me to visualize and to create a systematic comparison across cases. As a result,
three interrelated themes emerged from the four cases: A Facilitator, Fostering Self-Regulated Learners; and Moving from Teaching to Learning.

**Verification Procedures**

In order to improve the likelihood that the findings and interpretations produced through the data analysis were credible and consistent to what the participants had said and done, I employed three verification procedures.

1. **Member checking**, the process of asking participants on the accuracy of their accounts (Creswell, 2005). I asked all the participants to look at my analysis of their in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis to confirm if the analysis was a true representation of what they said and believed. I reviewed several aspects of the study with the participants. For example, I asked them to review the way I described and analyzed their classroom experiences and lesson plans. Participants also reviewed the interpretations of their interviews.

2. **Peer debriefing**, “a process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytic session and for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer’s mind” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 308). I engaged in an extended discussion with a fellow graduate. I presented the analysis of the data to him to explore inquirer biases and to clarify the meanings and the basis for interpretations. Based on his comprehensive experience on qualitative research, he provided me with constructive feedback on my data analysis.
3. Triangulation, according to Creswell (2005), triangulation is the process of corroborating evidence from different individual types of data or methods of data collection. I conducted multiple interviews, classroom observations and analyzed lesson plans. Collecting data from several sources of information provided different perspectives on the issue.

**Ethical Considerations**

I gained approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of Nebraska at Lincoln. This study is part of a larger study called: Improving Teacher Competency and Student Learning in Foreign Language Classroom Research. The Protocol was granted to work with four FL teachers and their students in one private and three public urban Midwestern schools. This permission determined that there were no risks involved for human participants. I contacted participants via email inviting them to participate. After teachers agreed to participate they signed the Informed Consent Form (see Appendix E) that explained the specific conditions and requirements of the study.

The real names of the persons and places have not been used in this study to protect the privacy of the participants. I had met the participants initially during a Summer Immersion Program in 2006.
Chapter 4

Description and Understanding of Cases

This chapter presents a thorough description of the participants' practices and findings based on the interviews, the observations and document analysis. The four cases are presented and analyzed separately. The themes that emerged from this analysis are presented in Tables 3, 4, 5, and 6.

Each case is presented in the following order. First, a description of the context of the inquiry is presented, then an introduction to the participating teachers, the classroom and finally the school. Next, a description of the classroom practices based on the observations followed by a description of the themes as they emerged after the coding process.

Case Study 1: Rachel

Introduction

At the time of the study, Rachel was teaching Spanish to 55 students in grades 7 through 12. She had used LinguaFolio for the last four years. She is at the Intermediate Low level of proficiency in Spanish according to the SOPI and STAMP test results reported. Rachel teaches in a technology-rich classroom equipped with a computer, a VCR, a document camera, projection system and two TV screens (one placed on the front wall and one in the middle of the room hanging from the ceiling). Rachel shares her on-campus class with an off-campus class via a closed-circuit television system. She travels from one school to the other every other week. These two schools are only seven miles away from each other. This allows students from both campuses to have the opportunity
to have a face-to-face interaction with her and with their closed-circuit classmates through the distance learning system.

Based on the timetable agreed in advance with the rest of participants, I was able to attend only one of these two schools. However, I had the opportunity to observe the off-campus class via the close-circuit system. The school I visited was located in a quaint old town with a rich history. This town contained many preserved brick streets built in the early 1990s with locally made bricks. This small rural town has a population of 1656; one elementary school and one high school make up the school district that serves 493 students.

The first visit to Rachel’s school was on a rainy morning in the middle of spring 2008. Thinking I was at the main entrance, I tried to push through a big glass door to gain entry. Fortunately, a teacher inside the hallway directed me to another door. I thanked him and rushed into the school as heavy rain poured outside. As I entered the building one of Rachel’s colleagues greeted me in a very friendly manner and offered to take me to the secretary’s office.

Rachel’s school projected a warm and friendly atmosphere. Students outside the main office were waving their hands and greeted me with ‘hola’ (hi). The physical education teacher and the secretary were willing to help and guide me around the school and the school principal also greeted me cordially. The warm environment and the community feel in this small school made me feel at home.

Beliefs

Teaching.

I guess, before, I looked at [the teacher] as more up here; here is the teacher and here is the student, OK? The teacher was above and the student [pointing at a
lower level] . . . Now, I look at it more like this [putting her hands at the same level] we are more even.

Rachel believes that through the use of LinguaFolio she has established a student-teacher relationship based on egalitarianism. In other words, Rachel believes that students and teachers share the same opportunities and responsibilities towards learning. Within this scenario, teaching is an opportunity to facilitate and self-discover and she views herself as “facilitator rather than an instructor.” In the attempt to let them discover, Rachel describes her role as a teacher “more as someone who doesn’t necessarily give the answer but leads them to the answer.”

Rachel also believes that through most of the classroom practices she is trying to develop independence in her students. She claims,

I am trying to get them not to be so dependent upon me but on themselves and knowing that they have all the information with them, there is a need to remember, “where do I look?,” “where do I try to find?”

In other words, Rachel provides learners with opportunities to self-discover their own way of doing things and experiencing learning. “It’s more interactive, it’s more them doing the work, and them discovering. And it means more to them than it does when they’re sitting there and listening to the teacher talks.”

**Learning.** Rachel believes all students are capable of learning and achieving their potential. According to Rachel, anyone can learn, “it doesn’t matter if you have special needs, or anything like that, you’re able to see what, even special needs kids, they are able to thrive in that type of environment because it’s safer.”

Rachel believes her students are unique individuals. “I see them all separate, they all are at different levels.” Although learners may experience differences in age and level of language, Rachel believes her classroom is a safe and comfortable place where
learners are free to ask for help and make mistakes. More importantly, Rachel believes that through this sort of practice, learners become actively engaged as they become proficient in a foreign language. “I don’t stand up there and talk all the time, they do more interacting with each other; and sometimes I interact with them at the same level to try get them to see that, you know.”

According to Rachel her attitude towards her own learning process has helped her to better understand her learners’ struggles and intricacies of their language process. “I see myself as somebody that is still learning all the time, that I am still learning, I’ve never stopped learning. More than I did before.”

**Practice and Observation**

**First day.** Walking towards Rachel’s room, I was wondering how and where to spend the ten minutes left before her class began. However, as I reached her classroom door, I was surprised by a wonderful set of posters of family trees full of beautiful pictures and drawings. Through basic Spanish writing skills, students had been able to name and describe family members.

Suddenly the bell rang announcing the class change catching me by surprise. At that moment Rachel came out and cordially invited me to join her class. The class started with some technical adjustments to the closed-circuit equipment. The off-campus students were not able to see what was going on in Rachel’s class. Similarly, the image shown on Rachel’s computer and on both screens was blurred. After a while Rachel adjusted the image and was able to start her lesson.

Since the students were getting ready for an oral presentation, the technical difficulties did not stop them from continuing what they were doing in the previous class,
or what they had been working on at home. In fact, everybody was designing a poster to present his/her family members. The five students were engaged in three specific tasks: (a) some were writing the scripts and some difficult expressions on index cards, (b) others were rehearsing orally, and (c) one girl was coloring the drawings while another was gluing some magazine cut-outs.

Rachel’s classroom is spacious and light. There were five on-campus students (girls) sitting at four rows of tables and six off-campus students (two girls and four boys) sitting at three rows of tables as seen on the two television monitors. Student products were displayed around the classroom: sentences, expressions, verbs, and words on posters and bulletin boards in Spanish. There was a large poster with the acronym SMART, hanging on the left wall, written downwards forming an acrostic, so that the first letter made one of the main components of a well-written goal (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Time bound)

Since this was a very small class, Rachel had the opportunity to go around the class assisting each student individually. While she was helping an on-campus student, she was interrupted by an “excuse me Mrs. X,” coming from an off-campus student. “Si” (yes), she replied. The student continued, “Teacher, can I include a picture of my pet?” “Sure, you can,” Rachel said. Meanwhile, I saw two girls rehearsing their oral presentation. First, one of them described her family followed by three questions asked by her classmate. She answered them with short answers. Then, they switched roles and the other girl listened to her attentively as she described her family tree and asked no more than three questions. The importance of this student-student interaction is that it helps them to strengthen their self-confidence. It also helps them to build rapport and be
prepared to present the exercise in front of the class. During my observations, I evidenced how this sort of practice helps learners to build rapport. For example, I saw one girl helping her classmate to pronounce a sentence correctly.

By the end of the class, Rachel reminded the students about some of the key aspects they should keep in mind when presenting their oral reports. For example, they were told they could use their index cards as a resource but not read the entire script from their index cards.

**Second day.** The class started immediately after the customary technological adjustments. Rachel was able to set the camera and sound while the students entered the classroom. After a brief greeting, Rachel asked them if they had questions, or comments on their oral reports due that day. Most of the on-campus and off campus students seemed to be ready to start the class. However, some of them were still rehearsing or working on details. The ones who seemed to be ready were reading their index cards. Others were scribbling on their papers.

Rachel allowed 15 more minutes to get started. During this time, an off-campus student asked Rachel a question. She was unable to recognize exactly what he was asking so the student was told to put his notes on the camera to be read. He had to zoom-in his notes for Rachel to be able to read his question. The on-campus partners did not feel like they were being interrupted, instead, two girls stopped what they were doing and started taking some notes about Rachel’s explanations. In other words, on-campus students take advantage of the extra explanations sometimes required by their off-campus classmates.

After this explanation, Rachel encouraged her students to start the oral presentations. The students became excited about the idea, although some of them looked
hesitant. Then, an off-campus student volunteered to start his oral report. Everybody was silent and attentively listening to his presentation. The oral report was about family members; he introduced his family using short but precise sentences in Spanish. When he finished, Rachel congratulated and praised him and his classmates joined her with a round of applause. An on-campus student raised her hand, and Rachel encouraged her to start. She used a colorful poster to introduce her family members. The class followed the same procedure until all the students had presented their reports. At the end, Rachel made a few comments and encouraged them to continue practicing their oral skills. The students were pleased to have made their oral presentations, especially since they were being congratulated for their work. They had also had the opportunity to listen to each other and share their oral skills with off-campus students.

The class continued with a reading exercise. Rachel invited her students to open their books and to follow the reading (see Appendix F). The reading that was entitled *Los Lugares Interesantes* (Interesting Places) introduced the expression *pensar en algo* (to think about something). The students were told to fill in the blanks by using the pictures provided while Rachel read the text out loud. The text also reviewed the names of family members. Students responded with alertness during the reading and kept filling in the blanks. Rachel stopped after reading the first three sentences and asked one of the off-campus students to complete that specific part. He hesitated but was helped by an on-campus girl when she blurted out the answer. Then Rachel asked the student to read the same sentence again.

While reading the text, another student asked the meaning of the word *lago* (lake). Rachel did not answer the question directly but asked the student to review a vocabulary
list. After the student reviewed the list, he was able to remember the meaning of the word.

At the end of the exercise, students were asked to answer orally comprehension questions about the passage they had just read. These questions served two purposes; they helped the students review family related words, as well as reinforced the use of the expression being taught.

The class ended with a brief reminder of the homework and some general announcements, one of them being about a change in scheduled activities.

**Themes**

"A facilitator rather than an instructor." Throughout the implementation of the LinguaFolio, Rachel has moved from a teacher-centered to a student-centered approach. As a result, she views herself more as a "facilitator rather than an instructor." This new role played by Rachel was reflected in the classes that I observed. Rachel helped learners to self-discover and use their background knowledge and experiences to find out new learning situations. For example, during a reading exercise a student did not recognize the meaning of the word ‘lago’ (lake). Instead of answering the question directly, Rachel asked the student to review a vocabulary list. After the student reviewed it, he was able to remember the meaning of the word. In this new environment, Rachel assumed the role of a guide “who doesn’t necessarily give the answer but leads them to the answer.”

Rachel also views herself as a learner, “not necessarily as a teacher.” Since this facet mirrors her learners’ views and needs, it helps her to understand what they are going through more easily. More importantly, Rachel is exposing learners to participate in learning vicariously (Bandura, 1997) where one learns by observing others perform.
Indeed, students could see her as the more capable partner who “is still learning all the time.” Rachel models ways of learning that allows learners to imitate and replicate them. She is also showing that learning a foreign language is a long and demanding process.

Playing the role of a learner has positively affected the student-teacher relationship.

Before, I looked at this, as more up here, here is the teacher [higher level] and here is the student [lower level]. The teacher was above the student. Now, I look at it more like this [putting her hands at the same level]. . . . We are more even. They do know there are the boundaries, but yet it’s so much safer for them.

This student-teacher relationship based on equality is advantageous for Rachel and her students in several ways. Rachel has discovered the importance of learning from them. It has made her become “more patient [and] not afraid of their questions.” She is willing to address their questions, and not being afraid of things she might not know. As Rachel put it, “because I teach doesn’t mean that I don’t have things to learn and things to know. Similarly, learners feel safer to ask questions because “they know I won’t get mad at them.” Instead Rachel scaffolds a learning process that articulates what they know about the language and those aspects still to master.

**Fostering independent learners.** Rachel is trying to develop independent learners through most of her classroom practices. As she put it, “I am trying to get them not to be so dependent upon me but on themselves.” Rachel provides learners with opportunities to self-discover the most relevant way of doing things and experience learning independently. When learners are engaged in class activity or homework assignment, learners should be able to realize that they have all the information with them. However, there is a need to remember, “Where do I look? Where do I try to find?” In other words, learners should be capable of controlling certain aspects of their learning process. For
example, when working on their own they should be able to think of variations that match the task requirements, the knowledge they possess and their learning abilities.

It is important to note that Rachel produces relevant learning opportunities that encourage learners to become more active, responsible and collaborative participants. “It’s more interactive, it’s more them doing the work, and them discovering.” During these activities, learners rely on the guidance and support from Rachel who fosters effective student involvement. As she explained: “…It means more to them than it does when they’re sitting there and listening to the teacher talk.”

On a regular basis, these activities start with a vocabulary exercise in which students get familiar with the new words or review old ones. A few days prior to my visit, learners participated in a game to review the family names in which they asked certain questions like: what does he like? What is he like? What is she like? Then “…They tried guessing the family word, without looking at their notes” They were supposed to use only the questions asked by their classmates.

Usually, at the end of a lesson students review the vocabulary again. They have an activity where they have to interact with others. One of the activities they enjoy the most is the one in which “one has one part of the puzzle, and the other has the other part of the puzzle, and they have to communicate to try to figure out what the piece is” Reviewing becomes an essential part of the class and involves student interaction and cooperation.

Rachel claims that through this sort of practice learners become actively engaged as they develop their language proficiency, “I don’t stand up there and talk all the time, they do more interacting with each other; and sometimes I interact with them at the same level.”
Thinking outside the box. Rachel claimed that LF has changed “the whole process.” Before using LinguaFolio Rachel “did not have much vision” of her role as a teacher. LinguaFolio has helped her to be “more accountable,” “more organized,” and “more prepared” to what she is going to be teaching. According to Rachel, now it is much easier to make sure that she met everything that she wanted them to meet in a chapter or a class period. “LinguaFolio changed the whole thinking pattern of how I teach. . . . My thinking process was very . . . in a box.”

According to Rachel, LinguaFolio has also changed the way she plans her classes. Planning is “not so much oriented by the textbook.” Rachel creates and supplements a lot of things. The idea is to provide learners with activities and materials that fit with what she wants them to be able to do. When planning a lesson, Rachel puts emphasis on the language skills that learners can use for real communication purposes outside the school. For example, “when they are in WalMart, what would they be able to say to someone who speaks Spanish.”

The lesson plan (see Appendix G) Rachel designed for the second lesson that I observed provided her with a quick reference to the topic, activities to be done and the number of book pages that she would cover. Although the lesson plan did not present an objective for the class, I cannot assure that Rachel did not have one in mind. This type of lesson plan gives Rachel the main idea of what the class is about; however, it does not describe each activity in length. Although it shows the number of the pages to be covered, (p. 180) there is not a complete description about the type of exercises or content knowledge covered in those pages. For example, her lesson plan stated “practice vocabulary,” however, one cannot infer from this statement what these activities are.
Such lesson planning helps her in figuring out what to teach and to visualize the general purpose of the class.

According to Rachel, LinguaFolio changed the whole thinking pattern of how she teaches. This also includes an attempt to change parental involvement. Parents can keep track of their children’s progress. Every time Rachel has a teacher parent conference she takes with her the students binders and folders. “Parents can see what they’re doing and what they’ve learned.” However, most of parents are still more focused on their children’s grades rather than their actual learning.

_A dual environment._ Rachel shares her on-campus class with a distance-learning program through a closed-circuit television system. The benefits of sharing this dual environment may result in more student interaction and participation through a technology-rich environment. Rachel’s students develop all sorts of projects that can be shared through the closed-circuit television system. On a daily basis students interact and learn from each other as I evidenced during the second class I observed. During oral exercise Rachel asked an on-campus student to complete a sentence. Since he seemed to hesitate, an on-campus girl blurted out the answer. Then the off-campus student was able to read the complete sentence.

Most of the interaction takes place when on-campus and off-campus students present their outcomes at the end of chapter. In so doing, “they show their projects and they’ll be speaking on the microphone.” Sharing this dual environment has allowed learners to “get used to a lot of technology . . . with different programs that they wouldn’t be able to use otherwise.” For example, the software students used to record their voices. Rachel gives them situations where they have to create quick dialogues with a partner.
For example, “calling an ambulance, telling their mom: ‘I am hungry, I would like some cereal’, or making a doctor’s appointment.”

Although, the interaction between on-off campuses is not extensive, the importance of this interaction mediated by a closed television system is that learners are exposed to and participate in real communication.

Since Rachel visits each classroom every other week, she is able to go into the students’ portfolios and see what they have done. Keeping a portfolio not only helps them keep their work and share it with Rachel for her next visit, but it also helps them become more resourceful as they become more creative. Rachel serves as a guide rather than as the source of what they produce.

On the other hand, the dual (on-off campus) environment Rachel works in largely determines the way she moves around the class. In order to have control over the off-campus students, she has to keep an eye on the monitor most of the time. However, she is able to move around the class, and assist on-campus students individually as required. Her concern about off-campus students might make her seem over-controlling and stricter. However, she is just concerned about the off-campus students’ safety. On the second day of my observations, she was a little nervous since she was not able to see them on the monitor screen very well and did not know what was going on in the off-campus classroom. She had to stand up at the monitor to watch them more closely. At this point, on-campus students were rehearsing for an oral presentation so it did not interfere with the flow of the class.
Table 3

*Themes and Descriptors in Rachel’s Case*

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<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Descriptors</th>
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<tr>
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<td>student-centered approach</td>
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<td>- Rachel</td>
<td>a guide</td>
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<td>- Learners</td>
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<td>- Classroom environment</td>
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<td>“more accountable”</td>
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<td>- Rachel</td>
<td>“more organized”</td>
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<td>- LinguaFolio</td>
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<td>- Lesson plans</td>
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Case Study 2: María

Introduction

At the time of the study, María was teaching Spanish to 62 students in grades 7 through 12. María had been using LinguaFolio for the last four years and was rated at the Novice High level of proficiency in Spanish according to the SOPI and STAMP test results reported.

I was amazed by the idea of visiting a rural town rooted in Czech history and with a population of 1737. It was really easy to follow the driving directions María had given me based on the only traffic light in town. As I passed it by, I was surrounded by the peacefulness of small villages. This school district provides education to 530 students kindergarten to grade 12.

The day of the first interview with María was cold and windy. In fact, I had a hard time walking due to the intensity of the winds. The strong winds almost caused the loss of the interview protocol I had with me. After a brief battle with the winds I managed to put away all my papers and I headed to the school building. On my way, I saw a big poster honoring the girls’ basketball team as state champions.

As I entered I greeted four students who were standing by the main hallway waiting to be picked up. They seemed to be very excited about their early leave. No need to ask where the secretary office was since it was right in front of me. Down the hallway, colorful posters displayed student work. Cases displayed trophies and medals from sport competitions.

As I entered the secretary office, a very jovial woman greeted me with a big smile while saying, “Hi, you might be the person who is going to work with teacher María.” I
assumed that she had been told about my visit. I just politely nodded yes. Immediately, she announced my visit through the speaker. And said, “Ms. ‘X’ will come and get you.”

After a while, María showed up. She was so happy to see me again. I thanked her for giving me the opportunity to observe her classes. Since I had arrived a little earlier, she took me to the teachers’ room and waited there while I enjoyed a hot cup of coffee. It was lunchtime, four teachers gathered together to eat their lunch and talked about the next parent conference. I reviewed the questionnaire and double-checked the digital recorder I would use during the interview. The bell rang, and I rushed to María’s room. Two of the teachers waved their hands and said bye, bye. I smiled back and left.

Once in her classroom, and after a few minutes, I realized that María’s classroom was different from the others classrooms observed. When I took a closer look at the way the desks were arranged, I realized that it was in a pentagon-shaped classroom and wondered if this was designed to serve an instructive purpose or to use the space better.

During my first visit the desks were arranged in two three-sided rows facing the teacher’s desk at the left side of the room. There was also a cluster of four desks in the middle of the classroom. Interestingly, none of them was facing the white board at the right side of the room. In other words, the desks/tables were not facing the board. The lights provided good illumination and were placed on the ceiling in the same way as the form of the desks. Since this was a five-sided classroom with desks facing three of the walls, there were open spaces at the back of the room. This open space allowed María to move freely around the classroom. Like the other classrooms I visited, I saw stacks of papers containing didactic material, shelves, and cabinets filled with books, index cards, photocopies and students’ work and portfolios. The Mexican, Spanish and the American
flags shared one side of the back wall. There was also a screen, a VCR and a TV set. On one of the back walls there was a large bulletin board displaying student projects. A wall calendar placed on one of the front walls served as a reminder of the upcoming important events including extracurricular activities.

**Beliefs**

**Teaching.** “I provide the building blocks, and I provide structure and techniques for them to apply what they learn. And then I love the creative part that comes from my students.”

Maria believes that her role as teacher has become “more as a facilitator of knowledge.” However, her classroom practice goes beyond the use of a foreign language; it promotes academic honesty and responsibility.

And some kids, they think that, you know, I try to really encourage them to be honest with themselves and their LinguaFolio, because they want to make it all pretty, like they’re doing all the right things all the time, you know, we say, I want to focus on or whatever, but we don’t necessarily accomplish that, and so, I am really, you need to have some “oops. I can do this better.” It needs to reflect reality.

Maria also believes that incorporating LinguaFolio has helped her to move from a textbook driven teaching to a more partnership in learning in which learners are part of the decision making process.

Everything was so very linear and very textbook oriented. And it was definitely . . . I said: “you will learn this”; and “I will test you on this.” I didn’t really ask them what they were . . . what they got . . . what they were going to learn. . . . So, it becomes more a partnership in learning than what we had before.

**Learning.** Maria believes that implementing the LinguaFolio has promoted a learning environment in which learners become more active and responsible, “kids are
cooperative, and there is so much freedom to be creative.” More importantly, “they own what they learn.”

María also believes that LinguaFolio supports the different roles learners play in the classroom. For example, it has helped learners to envision the true purpose of learning a foreign language. As she explained, “My learners, actually . . . they provide so much more variety to any task, because they are going to base what they do with projects, with activities . . . they are going to base it on their interests as much as possible.”

María thinks that this way of learning may result not only in a more advantageous but also pleasant classroom experience, “I find that they grow faster because they are pushing to do something, and they are proud of themselves when they are able to come up with something that shows their growth.”

*Practice and Observation*

*First day.* The class started with a brief review of direct object pronouns. María asked her students two wh-question words, as a key to identifying the direct object pronouns. A couple of students said in unison, “What and Whom.” Then, María asked them which pronouns could replace the name of the direct object and the students told her the corresponding pronoun in Spanish.

María introduced the theme of the day; the expression “*acabar de*” that is equivalent to “to have just done something.” María asked her students to open their books to page 314 and gave a brief explanation about how to use this phrase. She explained to them that this expression refers to the very recent past. She pointed out that in Spanish “*acabar de*” is followed by an infinitive. She also conjugated the verb form and her students repeated all its different forms.
After that, she read the first example from the book. As she read the first part of the sentence: “Ellos acaban de” (they have just); she waited for the students to complete it by saying, “salir de la casa” (left home). Using the same technique the class completed four more sentences. When they seemed to have understood the concept, María announced a game.

In order to play the game, she divided the students into two teams (one team on the left side and the other on the right side). Then, María asked each group to write down five statements they would ask their opponents. The students spent ten minutes creating them.

There were no clear explanations of the rules of the game from the beginning, resulting in a misunderstanding when one point was awarded to a team. At that moment, María explained the score system to them: 1 point if correct, 1 point if the other team fails to answer, and 1 point for correcting the opponent. The students continued playing the game. A representative of each group would go to the board and write the complete sentence based on the statement provided. If the answer was correct, they were awarded 1 point. However, if they did not write it correctly their counterparts could challenge them and designate a representative to correct the sentence on the board.

María interrupted the game for a while to orally review the conjugation of “acabar de.” She pronounced the personal pronouns and the students conjugated the verb form. Then, they continued playing the game. The class ended with announcements about extracurricular activities that would take place the next day.

The lesson plan Maria wrote for this lesson provided her with a reference to the main activities to be done (see Appendix H). For example, one of the activities is
described as follows: “Leemos y hacemos la pagina 314” (Read and do page 314).

Although this type of lesson plan gives María the main idea of what the class is about, it does not specify the details of each activity. For example, based on the lesson plan one cannot infer what page 314 is about, the sort of activities or the time devoted to each one of them. Only one of the activities, a challenge competition, is explained in more detail. For example, it is stated the time students would be given to prepare a set of five statements, the points to be awarded, and time to answer and correct challenges. This planning helps María to figure out the sequence of the activities to teach.

**Second day.** The class started in a very different way. Maria asked her students about the ideas they had brought for their television commercials. In the preceding class, María had discussed the activities they had to do in order to produce the T.V. commercial. For example, they had been told to work with a partner in order to write, produce, film and present a television commercial in Spanish. The complete instructions had been provided in the activity description sheet given to the students in the previous class (see Appendix I). The sheet explained all the details in order to design the commercials; it also showed a written example and a rubric. The rubric included three levels of performance: Excellent, Average and Needs Work. The criteria of the performance included: Length, Use of Spanish, Creativity of Product, Props, and Music & Costumes.

The students worked in pairs, however there was one group that consisted of four students. When María asked them about their proposals, only one group expressed a clear idea, the rest of them were in the process of putting their ideas together. The students gathered together and started to brainstorm the products they would design. “How about
“this . . . and that” were frequently heard comments. Maria went around the classroom assisting them.

The group of four students was very active suggesting ideas, however, coming to an agreement on a single product seemed to challenge them. María realized the situation so she went to them and spent some time assisting the group. They wanted to challenge themselves and come up with two projects. However, Maria suggested that it would be much better to complete one project first and then think about doing a second project.

The other groups were at different stages of development. One girl and one boy were designing a commercial with a chamber to help short people grow automatically. They named their product *ALTOMATICO*, a made-up word using two concept words: *ALTO* (tall) + *AUTOMATICO* (automatic). Their originality was linguistically creative and described their product. They wanted to be sure about this new word so they talked to Maria who praised their creativity.

The other girls were thinking of an instant tanning spray. They were concerned about how to present and describe the characteristics of their product. They seemed to have a rough draft of the instructions for marketing. One of them was looking up a word and also reviewing the grammatical structures they might use.

Another two girls were working on index cards; they were writing down ideas on how to videotape their commercial. They had developed their ideas and written the script. At this point, they were more concerned about the sound track and images they would use. One of them stood up pretending she was being filmed and acted out parts of the dialogue.
María went around the classroom helping students with pronunciation and expressions. For example, two girls were struggling to find a specific word. Maria approached them and asked a couple of questions regarding what they wanted to express. Based on Maria’s explanation, they decided which word to use.

Maria had already set the schedule for filming the commercials (see Appendix J). In spite of this, one group of students seemed to have a small problem with the time they had first chosen. María asked the whole class whether there was a group that could switch the hour and date for filming with these two students. One group volunteered and the timetable was modified immediately. One student asked about the role of the tech crew. María explained that they would be in charge of technical support, for example, cameras, microphones and sound tracks.

At the end of the class, students handed in the scripts to be reviewed. María said that she would look at them. Her students agreed to continue working on the changes suggested.

**Themes**

“A facilitator of knowledge.” As a result of the LinguaFolio, María views herself “more as a facilitator of knowledge.” According to María she provides the “building blocks,” structure and techniques “for them to apply what they learn.” What María loves the most is “the creative part” that comes from her students. Once students are given “the building blocks” they are free to create what they find suitable to put into practice the new knowledge and what they are supposed to learn. For example, in the second class I observed, the students designed a commercial based on the input and the specific
directions provided. They put into play their creativity to produce the TV commercials described earlier.

In the first class that I observed, María scaffolded her students learning process by giving them input in the target language. María did not present the topic in a contextualized way (a story) but introduced learners to the examples from the book, which consisted of isolated sentences. María presented the examples orally and the students followed them in their books. Exposing learners to oral and written input facilitated the acquisition of the grammatical structures and captured their attention.

María guided the students’ responses and provided enough time for them to complete the structures. Although María used a grammar-based task it was interactive allowing learners to put into practice their oral skills. According to María, kids at the beginning level need an explanation how the structure works first and then they should be provided a challenging task, moving from skill getting to skill using. In this particular situation, students were challenged when asked to participate in a game in which they competed to actively using the structure that had been taught. Before introducing the students to the game, María reinforced the conjugation of the verb forms to be used in the game. This time the students’ participation took the form of group repetition of the correct verb conjugation. All the students seemed to be repeating. This was a quick and easy way for the learners to get ready to start playing the game that followed.

According to María being a facilitator encompasses significant responsibilities that include preparing, coaching and encouraging them. She also corrects them when necessary. “It’s my job to correct them when they’re confused and sometimes to motivate them to perform well.” Rachel has found that correcting learners while working in small
groups is “less threatening for them.” María discovered that correcting them in front of the whole class has a negative impact on them and prevents them from participating openly in front of the class.

The role of a facilitator implies creating the right environment for learning. María provides learners with the optimal conditions for learning. Sometimes, María tells them with whom to work. She has found that students work best with groups that match their own comfort zone. In these microenvironments, “they feel attracted to their partners and styles.” Students working in small groups give Maria the opportunity to provide personalized assistance and guidance. “I find that I can assist them individually more than I did before.” During the pair work I observed, students worked with enthusiasm.

The classroom practice goes beyond the use of a foreign language; LinguaFolio promotes academic honesty and responsibility. It also advocates a learning environment in which learners become more active and responsible towards learning. This attitude involves tasks that were considered only for teachers. For example, they self-assess their progression; “where am I at? What can I do?” Taking into account that they save all their work through a term or a chapter, they are able to go back and assess their work. Sometimes, they are honest enough to say ‘what a disaster.’ Sometimes things work, and they are proud of what they can achieve, ‘Look at what I can do.’

This way of learning may result not only in a more advantageous, but also pleasant classroom experience. Marias has found that “they grow faster because they are pushing to do something, and they are proud of themselves when they are able to come up with something that shows their growth.”
**LF: A partnership for learning.** Throughout the implementation of the LinguaFolio, María has moved from a teacher-centered to a partnership-centered environment in which “the teacher is an important part of the team but it’s not all about what the teacher is doing.” It is important to note that Maria is always there to guide and support them throughout their learning process.

Pair or group work is a key component of María’s class. Students get together to propose, design and develop several projects that are based on the content knowledge María plans for each class. During the second day that I observed María’s class, students worked in a pair group activity to put together their ideas on how to produce a T.V. commercial in Spanish. Although the learners “are cooperative, and there is so much freedom to be creative,” María directed and led them towards a product that started with the guidelines she provided. It is important to point out that it is only after the students are given the main directions (guidelines), that they are able to put into play their creative and language skills to produce their T.V. commercials.

The learning environment of this partnership of learning gave the participants the opportunity to interact and learn Spanish in a cooperative way. For example, María went around the classroom helping learners not only with the correct use Spanish but also with ideas on how to better advertise their products.

It’s a radical change, since LF things have become . . . language acquisition is much more a partnership instead of something that I hand to them and it’s their job to grasp it and be assessed on it. Now, I provide the knowledge, and then we work together to find meaningful ways for them to express the language.

LinguaFolio promotes a shared responsibility towards learning. LinguaFolio has helped María to play a different role as a foreign language teacher. In this new scenario, María has recreated a project-oriented setting that is partnership-centered rather than
teacher-centered. María plays an important part of this “partnership in learning.” Before LinguaFolio, María followed a very linear and very textbook oriented curriculum. It was definitely teacher-centered “you will learn this, and I will test you on this.”

LinguaFolio has also helped María to assess her students differently. Before LinguaFolio, Maria measured from point A to point B or student A and student B. Now assessment is based on their growth. In other words, “you take what your student A is in the beginning and at the end, or you take where all your students are. It’s all about all of them…” Assessment is more fair and accurate. It shows “what kids can do.”

**LF: Empowering learners.**

The biggest change to my role as a teacher is that it makes me give students more power; because I was more teacher-centered. Before LinguaFolio, I was like “OK, this is what it is. This is what I want to see you doing, and bla . . . bla . . . bla . . .” And now, it’s like “what do we see?” You know it’s a lot more interactive, or sometimes just plain student-centered.

LinguaFolio promotes a shared responsibility towards learning rather than a fixed educational environment controlled only by the teacher. According to María before LinguaFolio, “everything was so very linear and very textbook oriented.”

LinguaFolio has helped learners become fully involved in a learning process that is “much more interactive.” As María put it, “I have the students create things themselves, not just looking at a text, and following this pattern, this formula, but rather coming up with their own types of applications of the process.” According to María, in this “student-led” learning setting, learners are not passive observers any more. They create dialogues, skits, situations and projects. Through these activities, they practice languages skills (writing, reading, listening and speaking) usually in collaborative groups. María believes that LinguaFolio has promoted a learning environment where “kids are
cooperative, and there is so much freedom to be creative.” “It becomes their job to make things happen, to set their goals. More importantly, “they own what they learn.”

The LinguaFolio empowers learners to play a more effective role that involves tasks that were thought of as only for teachers. For instance, LinguaFolio users set their own goals. According to María, “goal setting teaches kids to set realistic goals, specific and measurable goals.” María encourages her students to be explicit when setting their goals. In other words, it is not enough for a student to state “I want to do better” but to fully explain the tasks he or she would do to make it better. For example, how they want to accomplish certain goal and how they would measure whether they have done it or not.

The reflection process: “. . . needs to reflect reality. LinguaFolio gives learners the opportunity to think and reflect about their class involvement, their participation, their knowledge about the target language and its culture. María guides this reflection process and encourages learners “to be honest with themselves and their LinguaFolio.” The reflection process “needs to reflect reality.” Although María does not set limits for their reflections, she encourages them to reflect on “their ability to either understand, speak, or write in their target language.”

This reflection process has helped learners to envision the true purpose of learning a foreign language. María pointed out that through this process they have found ways of improvement expressed in a simple “‘oops. I can do this better’.”

Based on their reflections, María has identified that “they want to speak, they want to communicate.” This has made María provide them with several opportunities to use the language in a real context like all those exercises she suggested in class. Sometimes, the students are challenged to find meaningful and innovative applications of
a pattern. For example, María has asked them to write her notes about their prom dress, what they are doing at home, their little brother or dog. These notes enhance their creativity and involve students in a real use of the target language “I want the language to be real to them” (see Table 4).

**Case Study 3: JANE**

**Introduction**

At the time of the study, Jane was teaching Spanish to 85 students in grades 8 through 12. Jane had been using LinguaFolio for the last four years. She is at the ‘Advanced High’ level of proficiency in Spanish according to the SOPI and STAMP tests results reported. Jane started studying Spanish at the same school that she has been teaching in for the last six years. In the spring of 2001, as a sophomore, Jane went to Spain for a month to study culture, arts, grammar and translation.

Jane teaches at a coeducational high school with more than 900 students, located in a residential area in a Midwestern town with a population of 241,167. The school ambience was dominated by a catholic influence. At the top of the main entrance a message from the Gospel reads, “*Teach me, Lord, your way that I may walk in your truth.*” Religious icons reflected the strong Catholic faith of this community and its school. When I walked in, I was delighted on seeing *Bienvenido*, the Spanish word for ‘welcome’, at the top of the entrance hall. This welcome message was also written in 14 other languages.
Table 4

*Themes and Descriptors in Maria’s Case*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Descriptors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“A facilitator of Knowledge”</td>
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<tr>
<td>- María</td>
<td>“building blocks”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>scaffolding</td>
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<td>solid input</td>
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<td>personalized guidance</td>
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<td>- Learners</td>
<td>creative part</td>
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<td>pair / small group</td>
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<td></td>
<td>self-assessment</td>
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<td>pleasant experience</td>
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<td>LF: A Partnership for Learning</td>
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<td>- María</td>
<td>guidelines</td>
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<td>- Setting</td>
<td>partnership-centered</td>
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<td>project-oriented</td>
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<td>- Learners</td>
<td>group work</td>
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<td>cooperative</td>
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<td>partnership of learning</td>
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<td>shared responsibility</td>
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<td>LF: Empowering Learners</td>
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<td>- Learners</td>
<td>more power</td>
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<td>more interactive</td>
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<td>own what they learn</td>
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<td>- Learning</td>
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<td>“student-led”</td>
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<td>freedom to be creative</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Goal setting</td>
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<td>specific</td>
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<td>measurable</td>
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The Reflection Process: “…needs to reflect reality.”

| - Students reflections | |
| - María | varied learning opportunities |

I visited Jane’s school for the first time on a bright sunny morning. Serving a much larger population of students, I had a hard time finding a parking space. First I tried
the back parking lot, but it was reserved for teachers. I drove around to the front parking lot where I found only one vacant spot.

I realized how big this community was when I entered the main office. Four parents were waiting for some help; two students were filling out forms (I assumed early leaves) a girl was calling her parents; the secretary handed a razor to a student who was sporting a three-day beard. One parent was requesting instructions on how to donate two paintings for a fund-raising activity that would take place over the weekend.

When the secretary approached me, I introduced myself and explained to her that I would interview and observe Ms. Scow’s class as part of a research study. No questions were asked and I was told to fill out a form. Then, I was given a visitor tag that I put on the upper left side of my shirt. Although the secretary was taking care of many things, she realized that I did not know where Ms. Scow’s room was and requested a student escort me to her classroom.

**Beliefs**

**Teaching.**

[LinguaFolio] is helping me become the teacher that I want to be. . . . A teacher who connects the class to [the students’] real lives and helps them grow not only, like with the goal setting, they can do that in any class but they are learning in my class. So they can apply it to other things that they study or even in their real life.

Jane believes her classroom practice has given the learners the opportunity to use the language they are learning while interacting with the real world out there. She stated: “I think that they found out that people are really friendly and enjoy the fact that they speak Spanish with them.”
Jane also believes that LinguaFolio has helped her to become more cooperative and reflective. As a result, she has been constantly looking for ways of improvement. “I am always making changes, and it’s making me a more reflective teacher.”

**Learning.** Jane believes that LinguaFolio “helps [learners] become better students in general. . . . I mean, they’re encouraged to think outside the box; look around.” In other words, LinguaFolio has given learners the opportunities to exploit their potentials on their own.

Jane also believes that implementing LinguaFolio, has helped Jane’s students to become more responsible and inventive at the same time. She stated:

So it seems like they have to use their creativity and figure out how they’re going to use the Spanish. It’s more fun for them, it’s more interesting, I think they become better aware because of it, they have to find what is meaningful for them in the project, instead of just relying on me to make it meaningful. You know, they have to, kind of, take ownership of their learning.

Jane also believes that the reflection process is one of the most beneficial parts of LinguaFolio for both teachers and students. First, learners are able to think about what they do to accomplish their goals and how to improve their learning process. Jane explained:

Well, I guess my favorite part about [LinguaFolio] is thinking of ways that students can reflect on their learning process. They don’t think that that necessarily comes naturally to them, I think they are kind of inclined to just do the assignments and turn them in, and not look back.

Second, the LinguaFolio has helped Jane to reflect on the way she has implemented it, and how to improve her teaching in order to give learners meaningful learning scenarios. As she put it:

It’s been good for me to continually revise the way that I do LF, so it’s keeping me reflecting, always trying to figure out how can I make this better so that they
learn more and they enjoy Spanish class more, or get more out of it, you know make it more of a personal experience.

**Practice and Observation**

*First day.* I arrived five minutes before the class began. Meanwhile, I took a quick glance at Jane’s classroom door and the surroundings outside of it. There was a big poster announcing a dance festival in Spain and a welcoming message that said, *Bienvenido a una clase de Español con la Maestra X,* (Welcome to teacher X’s Spanish Class). Through the glass pane in the door, I saw the students getting ready to leave; as the students came out, Jane invited me to come in. By the time the bell had rung for the second time a new group of students was walking in. Some of them waved their hands saying “*hola*” (hello).

Jane’s classroom was decorated with large posters and equipped with a laptop, a projection system and a smart board. The classroom was spacious and full of light. There were 21 students (9 boys and 12 girls) sitting in six rows. There were shelves full of books, dictionaries, hundreds of flash cards, work sheets, photocopied exercises, and games on one side of the room. There was also a shelf where students kept their class work and portfolios. The classroom was also decorated with several student products, posters from different countries where Spanish is spoken and two of Diego Rivera’s paintings. This gave the students the opportunity to learn some of the culture behind the language they were studying.

A two-sided message hung from the bottom-left corner of the board. On one of its sides, it said, on a red background: *Sólo Español* (Only Spanish); when it was shown, only the target language was spoken. For example, when the students gathered together for oral, or written exercises in groups. On the other side, on a green background, it said,
“We can speak English.” When Jane turned the message over, it was the time for grammar explanations or announcements to be made. I found it really instructive and helpful. It gave the students the idea that the process of learning a language can even involve the use of their native language.

When the bell rang for the third time, most of the students had already taken their seats. Jane, standing in front of the smart board (at the front of the classroom), selected with a touch of a finger the ‘Hail Mary’ in Spanish. Everybody stood up and after making the sign of the cross they started praying.

After the prayer, the children sat down quietly and the class continued with the reflection on the chapter they had already covered. At this time, Jane asked her student to complete the reflection on Chapter 11 (see Appendix K). The smart board showed the instructions on how to fill in the form. However, most of the students did not pay too much attention to the written instructions since they had been using the same format for the last 11 chapters. The format had two parts; first, they were asked to select the best three pieces of work from Chapter 12 and to justify their selection by explaining why the activities were significant to them. Second, based on the selected evidence, the students had to write about their progress and the learning language skills gained in that chapter. They described what they had learned by highlighting what they could not do at the beginning of the chapter.

Jane then began the review of the exam on Chapter 12. After every student was given his/her marked test paper, Jane started reviewing the answers of the test orally. It was a quick review; she went through all the questions and read the correct answers aloud in Spanish. Although she went through the review quickly, students were able to follow
her. She spelled out some confusing words from one of the fill-in-the-blanks exercises.

No questions were asked by the students and the papers were passed to the front row so that the first students in those rows collected them to hand into the teacher.

The teacher directed the class to open their books to Chapter 13 in order to review the objectives. Jane then introduced the new vocabulary; students were asked to brainstorm the words related to fiestas y celebraciones (parties and celebrations). Placed in small groups of no more than three persons, they listed all the words they knew about this topic. Meanwhile, the teacher handed out a vocabulary sheet. They were instructed to categorize all the words into two groups. Jane divided the board into two; on one side she wrote El cumpleaños (birthday), and on the other side La boda (wedding). Taking turns going to the board, students completed the two-column word list they had gathered in their groups. One of the first words was música (music). Jane asked, “Should I write it on one side or on both?” The students replied, “On both.” As the students were classifying the words on the board, they completed their own lists in their notebooks.

Once the students became familiar with the new vocabulary, Jane did an oral exercise using a Power Point presentation. She asked questions related to birthdays and weddings; students answered them orally. For example: Jane asked, “For your birthday, what kind of cake do you prefer?” More than four students answered these questions in the target language. However, there were no comments on preferences or likes about cakes. When Jane asked, “When were you born?” Several students answered it by saying the date of their birthday in Spanish.

At the end of the class, Jane reminded them about their homework. It was about the project they were developing on banking processes.
Jane taught her lesson the way she had planned it (see Appendix L). In her lesson plan, she listed the step-by-step procedures she needed to perform. Although she did not allocate any specific amount of time to each activity, the pace of her class allowed her to complete all the activities.

**Second day.** The class started as it had in the previous class. On the smart board Jane displayed the list of daily activities including a prayer in Spanish. All the students joined in with the teacher repeating the prayer with respect and devotion. I stood up as Jane started praying along with the rest of the students. Then, I realized that I was a non-participant observer and I reminded myself that I needed to be objective in my appreciation.

When the students sat down, Jane passed out a work sheet with a warm-up exercise. The students went through the *busca palabras* (word search), an exercise in which the students matched words and pictures to familiarize themselves with the clothing vocabulary being learned. Then, taking turns, they went to the board and categorized the words into female and male garments. Jane divided the board into two. She wrote BOYS on the right side and GIRLS on the left side. When they doubted where to place a word, Jane helped them by asking the class in Spanish, “Do you boys wear this or that?” Or she confirmed the correct answer with the girls by asking, “Hey girls, do you wear this or that?” The students then knew where to write that item. Jane also counted on the prior knowledge the students had acquired to connect the old material to the new. For example, when a student hesitated about where to put a word, Jane reminded him about the exercise they had done before; this helped him to remember and answer correctly.
After the review of the exercise, the students started working in pairs on a textbook exercise. Writing in their notebooks, they had to describe what Juana and Alfredo were wearing. Jane approached one student who seemed not to be interested in completing the task; after a brief talk, he completed the exercise. Although most of the students used the textbook to complete the task, one girl also used her notes. She seemed to be interested in finding a particular expression or word.

Jane reviewed the exercise orally. Although the class was directed in the repetition with the correct pronunciation modeled by Jane, they responded differently to the teacher’s model. Most of them repeated after her; others practiced what they wanted to repeat; then, some repeated what was new for them and others pretended to be repeating. This caught my attention as on this occasion Jane did not require them to repeat in unison.

The next activity was based on a Power Point Presentation (see Appendix M). Jane showed a set of slides related to clothing. First, she showed the façade of a famous shoe store; then she asked, “¿Qué clase de prendas puedes encontrar allí?” (what kind of garments can you get there?) “Zapatos” (shoes) the students answered. Then she helped them with the word formation and pronunciation of Zapatería (shoe store). However, she did not tell the students the meaning of the word in Spanish, at once, but rather she used an interesting strategy. Once again she used their prior knowledge from previous lessons. She asked them about the name of the place where jewelry is sold. One of them said, “joyería” (jewelry store). Then she explained the same word formation technique to them to create the Spanish word for ‘shoe store.’ Based on Jane’s explanation, one student said the word Zapatería and Jane had the rest of the class repeat the word altogether. Not
many repeated the correct pronunciation; therefore, she pronounced the word louder and then all of the students repeated it with better pronunciation. Jane, using the Power Point Presentation again, showed different pieces of clothing and followed the same strategy. When she asked them for the word in Spanish, one or two students answered correctly and the rest of the class repeated the word altogether.

Jane used two different strategies to check her students’ understanding. Sometimes, she asked questions to find out whether the students knew the meaning of a word. For example, she asked them, “When do you wear this?” She also asked questions about the color and size of the articles. Students responded more easily to these two types of questions.

The next activity was a game as described in Jane’s lesson plan (see Appendix N). The class was divided into two teams. The three rows on the right made up group A and the three rows on the left made up group B. Jane asked them in Spanish, “What do you wear when it’s cold? The first group to raise their hand was supposed to go to the board and write the answer. If they failed, the other group was able to challenge the answer and correct it. The game continued with similar questions, such as: what do you wear when it’s hot? What do you wear when you go to church? What do you wear when you play sports?

At the end of the class, Jane explained the homework for the next class. The students were told to design a new uniform. Also, they had to write and describe, at least, seven articles of clothing.
Themes

Systematic and sustained change. Jane has used LinguaFolio for four years and has progressively adapted it to meet her students’ needs. During the first year, Jane had her students set their goals and reflect on them at the end of each chapter. However, this experience seemed “too vague for them, and they just had a hard time to keep themselves accountable.” According to Jane, sometimes, although the goals students set were related to the content to be covered did not correspond to the activities that had been planned for that specific chapter. For example if a student would say, “I want to be able to order something at a restaurant” and Jane had not planned to go to a restaurant, then students were not able to develop that particular goal.

During the first year, her students did not understand the whole purpose of “their reflecting” and some times, it would make them feel bad because “if they did poorly then they would have to say ‘why I didn’t study.’” Along with her students’ feedback, Jane evaluated LinguaFolio at the end of every semester. This reflection helped her to identify those aspects “that worked or didn’t work.”

Using LinguaFolio has helped Jane to be more cooperative and reflective. Jane’s reflections have been motivated by her students’ comments and her continuous search for the ideal LinguaFolio. She has been constantly looking for ways of improvement based on her own experience, reflections and the ideas gathered from other teachers. “I am always making changes, and it’s making me a more reflective teacher.”

One of those changes was to introduce her students with an overview of the contents and general objectives to be covered in a chapter. Based on this overall idea of the course, the students proposed what project they were going to do for the chapter.
“That’s their project proposal. . . . That was a big change that was made.” Although the students decided for themselves the type of proposal they wanted to develop, Jane approved them and gave feedback on them. Giving the students the opportunity to design their proposals changed their response and increased their level of involvement.

In the second year, Jane introduced the ‘Investigación Cultural’ (cultural inquiry), in which learners put together knowledge, culture and their creativity into a product “through the lens of the chapter.” The idea of the cultural inquiry was to give learners the opportunity to “develop a project and actually do it.” Learners put into play their language and art skills. “They really liked it because they could draw a bunch of stuff or made dioramas or whatever.”

Although during the first attempts learners were exposed to good writing practice, Jane seemed not to be happy with their outcomes because “there was not really an authentic language piece in it.” After an end of the year revision, Jane started to think of the variations to be done to the next year’s project in which learners would encounter the language in real context.

In the third year, Jane wanted to give her students the opportunity to use the target language in an authentic way, “doing something ‘real life’ with [their] Spanish” not just a “random project to do.” In so doing, learners became “more excited because . . . they were encouraged to think outside the box.” They were required to think of a product that would reflect what they were going to do with a particular chapter. This change exposed learners to use the target language in a more natural context. “Some kids have gone over to social services, to baby sit kids and speak Spanish with them. Some of them have gone to different grocery stores and spoken Spanish with the employees there.”
Even though learners were using the target language in real-life contexts, Jane realized that doing proposals every chapter “seemed like too fast and they didn’t have enough time to really put it all together.” Then, Jane decided to have her students develop a proposal every two chapters. Then, students would have more ideas to come up with a project, and “they would have enough time to complete it.”

The projects were really diverse and involved different types of skills (reading, listening, speaking an writing) Maybe, “they are going to read a kids book and pick out things that focus specifically on fiestas (parties).” Others “are going to get their hair cut and speak Spanish with the hair cutter.” Learners are not constrained in their proposals as long as they have “to do with the chapter.” There are, however, certain rules students should consider in order for them to practice all the communicative skills during a school year. Every semester, they have to choose two different categories. “They can do ‘hablar’ (to speak) and they can do ‘escuchar’ (to listen) but they can’t do ‘hablar’ (to speak) and then ‘hablar’ (to speak) again in the same semester.”

The cultural inquiry project required detailed planning and careful development. It starts with a proposal sheet (see Appendix O) that describes the details of the product. Along with the cultural component, students must, in some ways, include vocabulary and the grammar that was studied. Students can watch a movie like The Wedding Planner although it is an American movie, “they’ll still get the Spanish language even though it is not necessarily Spanish culture, but they’ll still get authentic language.”

Once the projects are finished, the students show their classmates their final products. Most of the time is an “oral presentation for their peers, like a Merry-go-round, like concentric circles that everybody visits.” This serves two purposes, first, it is an
opportunity to learn from others and gather more ideas for the next time, and second, the students provide feedback to their classmates and self-assess their own proposals (see Appendix P). As Jane reported: “It’s become more meaningful for the students and less like we are doing this just to do it, and more . . . ‘OK. I see the point. It’s helped me grow.’”

One can infer that Jane’s reflections are mainly based on her students’ response towards LinguaFolio. Fortunately, Jane decided to adapt it to better server her goals and help students improve their outcomes and accountability.

_Giving voice to the learners._ LinguaFolio has changed Jane’s vision towards the learning process her students go through. It has made her more aware of it. “It’s a help for you to establish goals, you work towards them, and then you reflect.” Through the reflection process learners would eventually realize what they know and can do with the target language. LinguaFolio has given learners the tools to reflect on their actions. More importantly, reflecting on their response towards the learning process will help them to suggest ways of improvement. As Jane put it,

I think it is really valuable for students to be able to reflect on their own in the same way that I am always analyzing partner activities that we are doing in class or the way I introduce material, I am thinking how can I make it change for next time. So I think it’s important for students to be able to think like that, too.

Jane has learners reflect on two questions. Before answering the questions, learners choose two or three assignments they have done during the chapter or “whatever three pieces of work from this chapter.” Students select those assignments they enjoyed doing, graded papers or “just activities that they did with a partner in class.” The first question asks them to describe the importance of the selected pieces; “basically why they are meaningful.” Here learners express “what they did, what they thought of it, like
expectations, how it went.” The second question is, “what can you do now that you weren’t able to do at the beginning of the chapter?” Although Jane wants her students to express their ideas and say things like “now I can talk about services at the bank”, ‘I could get my hair cut.”’ their reflections are too general. Some of them just say, “I know more vocabulary’ Achieving high levels of reflection may take more time and practice. Jane hopes to have them say “like their specifics. What can you . . . what skills do you now have?” This is not a natural process for learners. They “are kind of inclined to just do the assignments and turn them in, and not look back.”

Jane is trying to include more reflection in the activities that she plans. Usually, after a partner activity students are required to informally reflect on their performance. Maybe they write about “how well it went for you? How much Spanish you used?” The idea is to have them “consciously be thinking ‘how am I doing on this’, ‘am I putting my whole effort on this?’” It seems that LinguaFolio is a way for them to “take ownership of their learning.

Learning is “more fun . . . more interesting.” “[LinguaFolio] is helping me become the teacher that I want to be. . . . A teacher who connects the class to [the students’] real lives and helps them grow not only . . . in any class but . . . in their real life.”

Jane believes that LinguaFolio “helps [learners] become better students in general.” The LinguaFolio has provided learners with a variety of opportunities to show what they know about the language. This is an important characteristic of LF that other assessment tools do not necessarily do. For example, sometimes, a test does not necessarily measure what they know. After implementing LinguaFolio, students have
been able to demonstrate what they know through the activities and tasks they do and keep in their portfolios. According to Jane, her students have suggested outside the school activities that allow them to use language in a natural context. LinguaFolio has helped Jane to structure the projects better, to “put all together.” Learners are able to interact with the real world out there. “They have to somehow encounter Spanish directly . . . I want them to see vocabulary in an authentic context.”

In search of new and challenging experiences, Jane’s students have taken advantage of the large Spanish speaking population in this town. Jane and her students have been able to go to a bank where Spanish is spoken; to have their hair cut with a Latino hair cutter and to talk to people in a grocery store. At the time I visited this school, students were working on a project on banking processes for monolingual Spanish speakers. During the field trip to the bank they became familiar with the vocabulary and the process of opening a bank account. They also found out about forms and other services offered by the bank to a Spanish speaking community.

As a result of implementing LinguaFolio, Jane also believes that students have become more responsible and inventive. They have to use their creativity and figure out how to put into practice the language skills they are learning. For example, the idea of going to hair cutters who spoke Spanish came from some students who were familiar with them and found it interesting to have their hair cut and practice Spanish in a different and real way outside the classroom. These types of activities make learning “more fun for them, it’s more interesting.” LinguaFolio has given learners the freedom “to find what is meaningful for them,” to personalize their goals and suggest activities
that allow them to use the target language and practice what they are learning outside the class.

**Students’ reflection: “to take ownership of their learning.”** One of the most beneficial aspects of the LinguaFolio for both teachers and students is reflection. On the one hand, the LinguaFolio has helped Jane reflect on the way she has implemented it. She has always tried to “make it more of a personal experience” to figure out ways of improvement so learners can learn more while they enjoy Spanish class.

On the other hand, students can reflect on their learning process. Most of the time, learners are inclined to just do the assignments and turn them in. LinguaFolio is an instrument that allows self-assessment and reflective learning skills and strategies (Van Houten, 2004). Reflection had not been part of the learners’ role. “They don’t think that that necessarily comes naturally to them.” However, through the reflection process, LinguaFolio has encouraged them to reflect on their language competence and the cultural understanding.

Jane believes that this reflection process would eventually reveal what the learners know and can do with the language. Generally, at the end of a chapter or unit, students select two or three pieces to reflect on. It could be graded papers, activities that they did with a partner in class or the assignments they enjoyed doing. Two questions guide their reflections. The first one involves a reflection on the importance and relevance of their items chosen. The second one requires them to describe the skills they have gained during the process; what they can do with the language and were not able to do at the beginning of the chapter. Some times, they describe their improvements in terms of strategies used, the way they feel working in pairs or at home. Other times, they
describe their improvements in terms of their skills. They express things like, ‘now I can talk about services at the bank,’ ‘I could get my hair cut.’ However, sometimes their comments are too general and reflect things like ‘I know more vocabulary.’

Even though it takes time for them to really reflect in a more profound way, this reflection process has helped learners to “think outside the box and look around.” Reflecting on their actions, and attitudes towards learning has been an opportunity for them “to take ownership of their learning.” Learning has become something more than doing and turning assignments in, it has become a thoughtful process that engages learners in assessing their performance as well as suggesting ways of improvement. More importantly, learners will set their goals more carefully since they have realized what they need to do to accomplish those goals, and the type of activities they would eventually do to achieve those goals (see Table 5).

Case Study 4: SUE

Introduction

At the time of the study, Sue was teaching Spanish to 65 students in grades 7 through 12. Sue had been using LinguaFolio for the last four years. She is at the Advanced Low level of proficiency in Spanish according to the SOPI and STAMP test results reported. Sue started studying Spanish in high school and then graduated from college with a major in two languages: Spanish and French. She has been teaching Spanish for 12 years, and has taught at this school for 5 years.

Located in a village with a population of 908, the school district is made up of two schools and serves 472 grades kindergarten through 12. Sue’s school houses grades 7
Table 5

*Themes and Descriptors in Jane’s Case*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Descriptors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Systematic and Sustained Change</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- LinguaFolio</td>
<td>four years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>adapted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Jane</td>
<td>more cooperative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>reflective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Cultural inquiry</td>
<td>culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>students' creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>language in context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Students’ products</td>
<td>natural context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>diverse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>meaningful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Giving Voice to the Learners</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- reflection process</td>
<td>collect evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>products selection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>think / reflect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ways of improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>learners’ ownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learning is “more fun… more interesting”</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Learners</td>
<td>demonstrate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>authentic context</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>more responsible</td>
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<td></td>
<td>inventive</td>
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<td></td>
<td>freedom</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>meaningful learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Students’ Reflection: “… to take ownership of their learning…”</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Learners’ ownership</td>
<td>self-assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>reflective learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Think outside the Box</td>
<td>reflecting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ownership</td>
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<td></td>
<td>goal setting</td>
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through 12 serving 233 students. After having driven for 25 minutes I abandoned the highway and took a country road, after a couple of minutes, I saw the brick building of Sue’s school. The treat of a rain shower made me hurry and reach the main entrance as fast as possible. The glass doors helped identify the secretary who cordially welcomed me and told me that Mrs. “X” was expecting my visit. She walked me to the hallway from where she pointed her class. Sue was about to finish her class. I took a quick glance at the front of the class, but I was intrigued about what I saw inside her classroom.

When I entered Sue’s classroom, I had the impression of being in a Latin American tienda (store) full of piñatas, costumes, puppets and dolls. But when I looked up at the ceiling, I saw flags from several Spanish-speaking countries (Mexico, Argentina, Venezuela, Ecuador, Spain, among others) that made me change my first impression. All of these articles provided the classroom with a culturally rich environment.

Of course there were lots of educational materials such as: books, flashcards, racks filled with student work, work sheets and photocopied exercises. There were also four cabinets labeled: Spanish I, Spanish II, Spanish III and Spanish IV. There were three computers with Internet access, a TV set and a VCR. On the right-hand side the bulletin board had four pyramid-shaped posters showing the name and number of the chapters for each class. From that day on there were only two chapters to cover since Sue erased the chapters already studied. In this way, the students kept track of their progression and were encouraged to reach the top of the pyramid.
The desks were distributed in five clusters; each cluster had four or five desks pushed together. This arrangement served two purposes, it allowed the students to interact with each other and allowed Sue to move freely around the classroom.

**Beliefs**

**Teaching.** Sue believes that as a result of LinguaFolio, she “aimed to teach differently.” When teaching, Sue keeps in mind the uniqueness of each individual. “I teach to everyone. . . . I teach with everyone’s strengths in mind and weaknesses in mind, you know, I mean, I guess we can. . . . ‘Are you a kinesthetic learner? Are you a naturalist?’” In other words, teaching differently involves providing ample opportunities for all type of learners to achieve their goals, improve learning and develop their potential.

Sue also believes that implementing the LinguaFolio has given her the opportunity to become “more goal oriented,” to search for excellence and to reflect on her own actions.

So I find that everyday I am rethinking. *Did I like the way I did that? Or I liked the way I did this.* Perhaps, I want to . . . I want to do this for the next day. So I guess, for the LinguaFolio . . . I am always aiming higher. I’ve just taught that to the students.

This reflection process has allowed her to search for improvement. More importantly she has communicates her commitment to excellence and change to her students. “I’m even thinking about my seventh and eighth graders, you know, what can I do to make them better students by the time they reach Spanish I.” The importance of Sue’s attitude towards sharing with her learners her goal setting and reflection strategies might help learners adopt LinguaFolio more easily.
**Learning.**

Through the LinguaFolio process, I am finding that, it’s kind of, creating an underlying passion for the students to go beyond, even if they don’t teach, even if they say, don’t do Spanish for them to teach. I do believe that LinguaFolio is, kind of, an underlying characteristic of that.

Sue believes that the learning process she promotes allows learners to become more involved in their own growth. As she stated: “I guess, it makes the students more accountable; they have to keep track of what they are proud of and if you are proud of it. . . . They are going to keep track of that. I really do believe that.”

Sue also believes that LinguaFolio has changed the way students learn. In this environment, learners are accountable for playing an active role while learning, “There should be partner activities, group activities where they are conversing; there should be communication activities where, you know, you have to tell your partner ‘that’s not the right way to say it.’”

This type of environment is more “student-oriented” in which “they need to be in charge of setting those goals. They need to be in charge of reaching those goals.” According to Sue, “students are generally more accountable for their work” because she has placed more responsibility in her students’ hands. In so doing, students are able to reflect own their own progress. As Sue explained, when they reflect, “I just want a full reflection, have them reflect on every goal, have them write if they were happy with their work, what they could have done better, and what they actually learned.

**Practice and Observation**

**First day.** The class started with an oral review on how to conjugate *er* and *ir* Spanish verbs in the preterit. Sue reminded her students that the easiest way to conjugate verbs with these two endings was to drop the ending *er* and *ir* and then add the
corresponding suffix. She invited her students to help her with the suffixes to conjugate the correct verbal for each pronoun. When Sue pronounced the personal pronouns, all the students repeated the corresponding ending. One student interrupted the exercise to remind the whole class that one of the endings needed an accent. Sue congratulated him for the opportune comment. When the endings were completed, Sue asked them to conjugate two verbs; one ending in *er* and one ending in *ir*. Once again, orally, Sue said the pronouns aloud and the class repeated the correct conjugation all together.

The class continued with pair work on verb conjugation. Students pulled out their conjugation tables and asked each other the preterit forms of different verbs ending in *er* and *ir*. Taking turns, and after having agreed on a verb ending either in *er* or *ir*, one student gave his / her partner a personal pronoun; the partner had to conjugate the preterit form of the verb for that particular personal pronoun. The exercise ran smoothly with minor interruptions of laughter and loud voices that were silenced by Sue. The students helped each other to complete the task, For example, sometimes one of the students in the group reminded the others of the verb ending. Meanwhile, Sue approached a pair of students who seemed to be having a disagreement about the pronunciation of a word. Right after that, Sue called the group’s attention and conjugated more verbs. She repeated the verb and a personal pronoun for the students to respond with the correct verb conjugation.

The class continued with an exercise from the book. Sue asked them to open their books to page 385 (see Appendix Q). It was a different exercise that involved putting the preterit of the verbs into practice (the ones that had just been reviewed). Sue asked the questions and the students answered them. For example:
Sue: “¿A dónde fueron tus amigos y tú?” (Where did you go with your friends?)

Students: “Fuimos a la ciudad.” (We went to the city)

Sue: “¿Cómo fueron?” (How did you go?)

Students: “Fuimos en tren.” (We went by the city’s metro)

Based on these answers, Sue talked a little bit about the Mexico City metro. They discussed why Mexico has one of the most advanced public transportation systems in the world. One student asked about the population in Mexico City. Sue answered the question and talked about some other cultural facts related to that city. After that, Sue introduced the next pair-exercise for them to reinforce the use of the preterit form of these verb endings. The students kept working with the same partners. Pretending they had gone on vacation to Mexico City last spring, they asked each other questions based on the prompts from the textbook in a written and oral form (see Appendix R). While the students were working in pairs, Sue went around the classroom helping them with the more difficult words, and talking about some of the pictures used in the exercise.

While the students were working in pairs on the textbook exercise, three students were told to work on the three computers to complete an online exercise. They would then be replaced in turn by the rest of the students. Sue interrupted the pair work for a while to show some other online exercises they could complete on their own. Before the class ended, most of the students had been able to work on the computers.

In her lesson plan (see Appendix S) Sue had set three objectives that described what she aimed to teach. Sue also included a bell ringer, follow-up activities and a closure. She also included materials students would be using. Sue taught her lesson the
way she had planned it without major changes. In her lesson plan, she listed the relevant actions she needed to perform. The way she planned her lessons allowed her to adjust her lessons on a daily basis. Sue stated:

I write my lessons plans out for the entire unit. I might write, *day one: ‘I want to be here’; day two ‘I want to be here’; day three*. . . Then, I copy and paste those into my weekly plan. Then, when I get to my weekly plans every night before I go to my bed I can fine tune my lesson plans one more time. Maybe, I think that, we really hit that part hard, I think we need to reiterate that grammar point for the fourth time. And I can check out my list. Sometimes, I feel like we didn’t quite get enough out of the activity.

**Second day.** The class started with a quick self-review of the goals students had written for this chapter. They were supposed to write or rephrase the goals they had set for this chapter on a sheet of paper. Sue reminded them about the speaking, listening, reading, and writing goals they could have written, and also about the main goal of the course. She also told them that if they were not able to remember their goals, they could look them up in their planners but they should mention this in the review. Once the students had finished, they put the sheets in the corresponding rack on a table on the left side of the classroom.

On leaving their papers, Sue reminded them about the scrapbook they were preparing for the next day. After some questions from the students about the quantity and kind of pictures to be used, the class continued with a quick review of indirect object pronouns. Sue named the pronouns and the students repeated them with the corresponding indirect object pronoun. She also asked them the questions that would identify an indirect object pronoun. The students answered giving the key elements of those questions: for whom, and to whom.
Since the students seemed to have remembered the grammatical essence, she wanted to confirm this by challenging them through the next exercise. Sue wrote “Te leo un librito.” (I read a little book to you) on the board, and asked: “Class, Cual es el objeto directo aqui?” (Which is the indirect object here). “Un librito,” (a little book), the students answered. Sue then asked, “Cual es el pronombre?” (what is the pronoun) The students answered, “Te” (you).

The class continued with an online exercise in which they have to complete the sentences with the indirect object pronoun and the present tense. Sue explained an important feature of this site that showed a vocabulary center in which students were able to see the translation of the main verbs used in that particular exercise. Sue went through the vocabulary center asking them about the meaning and use of some verbs. However, Sue was interested in the exercise on indirect object pronouns. Therefore, she asked them to complete the first exercise. It was a fill-in-the-blank exercise in which students had to write the indirect object based on a statement provided. She challenged them by saying, “How about the first one?” She read, “Número uno, (number one): “Julio gives me a kiss.” The students completed the exercise with the correct indirect object pronoun (see Appendix T). Sue continued to read the statements in English and the students provided the answer in Spanish. Five examples were modeled and then students were told to complete the rest as an extra credit assignment.

After that, the whole class became excited because Sue announced a game. However, before starting to play it, they reviewed the present tense conjugation of the verb decir (tell). Sue asked the class: Como se dice Decir?” (What do you say decir?), “tell,” one student replied. The students grabbed their conjugation tables and helped Sue
complete the conjugation of the verb *decir*. Sue pronounced the personal pronouns and the students conjugated the present tense of the verb *decir*. Sue asked for the imperative form of the same verb; one student replied: “*Dime*” (tell me). Sue reviewed this particular verb because the students needed it to play the game.

In order to play the game, the class was divided into two groups. Sue asked the practicum student to join one of the groups in order to have six people in each group. One representative of each group was sent out of the classroom. The game was called “*rumores*” (rumors). Sue started the game by whispering a statement to one of the students of each group. Then, he/she passed the message on to the next player. They continued in this way until it reached the last person in the group. At that moment the students who had been sent out returned to the class and were told the message. These two students went to the board and wrote down the message they had received. Although what they wrote was somewhat changed, students enjoyed practicing listening, speaking, writing and reading. Sue encouraged her students to do their best, and assisted them throughout the game. For instance, once she told them, “If you don’t get it, you might say: “*Repita por favor*” (repeat please). She also praised her students using Spanish expressions, such as: “*Muy bien*” (very good), and English words like: Come on!, Go!, and Wow!

At the end of the game Sue and her students went through the structure of the indirect objects by using the sentences from the game. Then, she invited them to go back to their seats, and told them about another assignment for the next class (see Appendix U). She gave them a work sheet and explained how to complete the two-part exercise. In part A students had to write the indirect object pronouns according to the sentences
provided, and part B was a fill-in-the-blank exercise in which students had to write the indirect object pronoun. Although most of the students worked on their own, some helped each other to complete the exercise. Sue reminded them that they were supposed to be quiet and working by themselves.

In the last part of the class, Sue shared a grammar-based videotaped exercise showing the use of the indirect object pronouns. Students listened to the differences between direct and indirect object pronouns, and were exposed to several examples. One student took notes about the explanations. Sue interrupted the video by making some comments and asking questions about some of the exercises. The video also showed a review of the verb “decir” (to tell) in the present tense. Once again, Sue interrupted the video and had the students repeat the present tense of that verb. The students repeated all the forms in a group.

Finally, Sue reminded them again about the scrapbook for the next day. Some students wanted to know whether they could present digital pictures and Sue said that they could use a Power Point presentation. By that time students were waiting for the bell to ring. Sue followed her lesson plan without major changes (see Appendix V).

**Themes**

_“Students as a Vehicle for Change.”_ Sue believes that as a result of LinguaFolio she “aimed to teach differently.” LinguaFolio has provided her with the tools that instill a different way of teaching that is stretching well beyond her classroom and reaching the community she is in. Sue promotes a change in her students’ attitude that ultimately impacts the communities they come from. “I have found that students can go home and teach so many more things. I cannot teach their parents.”
Teaching differently is associated with the way Sue views her students as “a vehicle for change at the community level.” Sue provides learners with communication and social skills that may help to break cultural barriers. These skills may help them establish those linguistic connections with people outside the school who do not speak English. Keeping in mind that Spanish may serve as the bridge to close that gap, Sue believes that the first thing to do is to learn the language and its culture, “if they just can say, hola, como estas? (Hi, how are you?). . . . Making connection with someone who is bagging groceries or helping. . . . That’s pretty profound in itself.”

The teacher as a guide. Implementing LinguaFolio requires plenty of guidance and modeling from the teacher. Sue’s guidance varies depending on the course she teaches. In Spanish I and II, Sue writes the goals as a class. However, as the students move forward (Spanish III and IV) “they are on their own. . . . They know what is a good goal and what is not.”

Writing a good goal is a demanding task, especially for beginners who write too general or unattainable goals. “In Spanish I, they might say, I want to speak fluent Spanish at the end of Spanish I.” Sue helps them to fine tune their goal writing skills by having them reflect over them and using all the resources provided by the LinguaFolio. One can infer that during the reflection process the students not only improve their knowledge about the language, but also become better learners.

Sue has implemented different strategies for learners to become familiar with good goal writing techniques. Sometimes, students share their goals with each other and assess them based on the SMART acronym to make sure that they are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound. Adopting the acronym SMART “has
helped tremendously specially those struggling to write good goals.” Regardless of the experience students may have in goal writing, this an essential tool for keeping goals specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound.

Despite the fact that learners share their goals and review them with each other, Sue assesses those goals on a ten-point scale to verify how they meet the SMART acronym. The goal writing process is completed when learners reflect on their goals once again. This reflection takes place at the end of each chapter or term. At this point, they compare the goals they had set and what they did to achieve them. Other times, like during the second class I observed, students went through a quick self-review of the goals students had written for that chapter. This makes them be aware of the goals and what they do to achieve them. It is important to note that, during this activity, Sue reminded them to keep in mind not only the goals they had set for the chapter, but also the main goal of the course.

Another way Sue guides students is through the process of collecting the evidence to support the goals they set at the beginning of each chapter. Taking into account that it takes time for the students to realize what to keep as good evidence, Sue assists in the selection of the best pieces to be kept in their dossier of evidence. In Spanish I and II, Sue strongly influences what evidence to keep. She asks them the type of exercises they did, the activities they completed in order to find out what might be related to the goals they set. “Remember that [exercise] we did when we listened to the people coming to the DJ.” Somewhere along the end of Spanish I or in the beginning of Spanish II, they realize what to keep or throw away based on their goals. At this time, “they get it.” They are able to filter through their notebooks and look for everything that shows they have
achieved those goals. They know where to look. “‘Here it’s a good example I am going to pull.’”

**Empowering learners.** Sue fosters a new way of learning in which students take the initiative and responsibility towards learning a foreign language. Although Sue promotes this type of learning from students enrolled in Spanish I, it is not until they reach Spanish III or IV that they become more concerned about the role they should play as learners. According to Sue, “as the students progress, they take ownership of their learning process” resulting in a more meaningful learning experience. At this time they may negotiate simple decisions before engaging in a class exercise, a pair work or a homework assignment. According to Sue, they become curious about the passages to be read, the questions to be answered or the length of a response. In other words, students want to improve their performance and outcomes by making clear what the teacher expects from them.

Empowering learners is directly related to the way Sue enables learners to take charge of their learning process and to become more involved in their own growth. In this environment, learners are accountable for playing an active role while learning. Sue wants her lessons to be “more student led.” In so doing, she provides learners with partner and group activities where students help and learn from each other. During these pair or group activities students correct one another. Sometimes it is more effective and easier to understand how the language works when it comes from someone their own age than coming from an adult who responds with, “‘um, not quite right’. ‘You need to change that.’” When learners work with others their potential is increased and they “are generally more accountable for their work.”
In a student-oriented environment like the one Sue promotes, learners are fully involved with keeping track of their progress. During my first visit, two posters showing two Mayan pyramids caught my attention (one of them for Spanish I and the other for Spanish II). These posters stated the chapters to be covered in a year. The main purpose for these pyramids was to help students keep track of the chapters covered. They sometimes alerted Sue when she failed to mark up a chapter covered. ‘Miss. X, you didn’t mark up this or that. We’re done with that chapter.’

In addition with this simple idea of crossing out the chapters covered in order to make visually clear student progress during a term, the reflection process is particularly important for learners to become aware of their real improvement. Throughout the chapter, they collect the evidence pertaining to the goals they set. At the end of the chapter, they reflect on what they did during the chapter in order to accomplish their goals. Usually, on the back of the work sheets the students record, based on three questions, on what they did, what they learned and the things they can do better the next time. The reflection is over each goal they set at the beginning of the chapter. Sue has found that most of the time this reflection points out if they “were happy with their work,” the potential things they could do better, but above all what they actually learned.

Reflecting is an evolving process and the students build self-confidence, take responsibility and strengthen their reflective abilities as they move through the courses.

I see more responsibility with my older students than my younger students. In Spanish I, they don’t always keep track of their things; and then as they progress through their first year, maybe in Spanish II, they are more accountable for themselves. You know, because as they work hard on that and they choose the goals they’ve got to keep track of that. They just seem to be more responsible.
At the end of the school year, learners reflect on the year goals, they “go back, and measure their success. “Three questions guide this assessment, “What did you like the most of the school year in this classroom? What did you like the least? What can be improved upon?” Although this is a more complex reflection since they have to “synthesize and analyze to another level,” at this point learners have gained experience and confidence to reflect on the whole learning process.

Apart from strengthening their reflective skills, the end of the year reflection process engages learners in a more complex thinking process. “Now, they are thinking a little wider than just a chapter, they’re thinking about year goals.” Ideally, learners embark on a reflective process in which they really measure their abilities from the time they start the course until the time they end. Throughout the course, learners compile all their work, which “gives them the opportunity to really see their progression.” “It’s really empowering to hear them, to have them realize about their own growth.

**Goals setting: ‘A life skill.’** Sue believes that goal setting evolves from a class exercise to a more thoughtful experience that may impact students’ lives outside the classroom. This process may start with a short-term goal that empowers learners to think beyond the class time. Sue is not teaching to a test “I want to make sure that they are ready for the next level, thinking beyond my year, thinking beyond their year.”

Sue gives her students the opportunity to think beyond a class period and has her students “write their own goals in regards to school.” She allows them to write goals “for life-long learning.” As “a life skill,” Sue believes that goal setting might influence her students positively beyond the language class. One can infer that giving learners tools and preparing learners in skills that can be used outside the classroom is preparing learners
for their future academic lives where they will be able to put into play their experiences in real-life arenas.

Table 6

*Themes and Descriptors in Sue’s Case*

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<th>Themes</th>
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<td>“Students as a Vehicle for Change.”</td>
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<td>- Sue</td>
<td>to teach differently</td>
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<td>reaching the community</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>- The reflection process</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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Chapter 5

Cross-Case Analysis and Interpretation

This chapter presents an analysis across the four cases. A comparison of the four cases revealed similarities and differences within the three themes that emerged: A Facilitator, Fostering Self-Regulated Learners and Moving from Teaching to Learning. An overview of the themes across cases is presented in Table 7.

Table 7

Themes Across the Cases

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes/Participants</th>
<th>Rachel</th>
<th>María</th>
<th>Jane</th>
<th>Sue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>“I view myself more as a facilitator rather than an instructor.”</td>
<td>“I see myself, due to LinguaFolio, more as a facilitator of knowledge, I provide the building block.”</td>
<td>“I allow them to discover and figure out, give them the basis of what they need.”</td>
<td>- Modeling and scaffolding ways of learning.</td>
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<td>- Facilitating an optimal environment for learning.</td>
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<td>Fostering Self-Regulated Learners</td>
<td>“Something that is more independent a little bit about what they are learning.”</td>
<td>“The biggest change to my role as a teacher is that it makes me give students more power.”</td>
<td>“I think [LF] helps me make it like a more focusing experience.”</td>
<td>LinguaFolio has given learners the freedom “to find what is meaningful for them.”</td>
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<td>Moving from Teaching to Learning</td>
<td>“Depending on what the theme of the chapter is, we usually do an activity where they’re interacting, where they are using those words.”</td>
<td>“Once we have like, you know, base vocabulary and I have like maybe a structure or a project or something that I want them to work on.”</td>
<td>“So it just kind of goes introduction, guided practice, some kind of a partner practice and then independent practice.”</td>
<td>“However, before starting to play it, they reviewed the present tense conjugation of the verb decir.”</td>
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A Facilitator

All the participants agreed that implementing LinguaFolio requires continuous guidance from the teacher. This is reflected in their daily practice and is mirrored in the way teachers see themselves. Rachel stated:

I view myself more as a facilitator rather than an instructor; a more... I give them what they need to do that, allow them to discover and figure out, give them the basis of what they need, but then try to be there to help them figure out together what they want.

Similarly, María reported:

I see myself, due to LinguaFolio, more as a facilitator of knowledge, I provide the building blocks, and I provide structure and techniques for them to apply what they learn. And then I love the creative part that comes from my students.

For Sue and Jane the guidance involved in helping first time LinguaFolio users to overcome certain obstacles that dealt with the new and changing role students played in this student centered environment was challenging. Sue reported, “In some occasions, they get it and in others it’s really like pulling teeth. You know, for them to be detailed in their goal writing, in their reflection, excuse me, that’s been another challenge.”

Mostly, LinguaFolio has given participant teachers the tools to facilitate a more meaningful learning experience in which their practices are mainly described as modeling, scaffolding learning, facilitating knowledge and creating an optimal environment for learning. Sometimes, as Sue reported, this promoted interaction with their students outside the classroom.

The other thing I do with LinguaFolio is that they also keep a video with them or audio; there are some exercises like at the end of the chapter where they may go out in the hallway and speak with me, and some of them are actually speaking into the computer. They take their voice with them. Hopefully, it gives them the ability to go back and to listen to how they have changed.
As facilitators, teachers play a more supportive role that implies modeling ways of learning. According to María, a facilitator of knowledge provides the “building blocks.” This also implies helping learners understand the role they should play in this new way of learning in which learners are supposed to self-discover and use their background knowledge and experiences to discover new learning. Before LinguaFolio, learners were supposed to be instructed and turn papers in. Now, they personalize their own goals, and critically self-assess their performance.

Rachel stated,

At the beginning of the chapter they write their goals for themselves based on the objectives that I give them overall, and then they make their goals personal. And they need to keep track of that throughout, and then at the end.

It appeared to this researcher that the support from the teacher is pivotal in helping learners scaffold their learning process. All participants experienced having undergone a transition to a much more involved and engaged form of learning in which the learners create and discover rather than receive or assimilate information. In doing so, Jane and Rachel have engaged learners in an interesting and enjoyable self-discovery experience. Jane stated:

[It] seems like they have to use their creativity and figure out how they’re going to use the Spanish. It’s more fun for them. It’s more interesting . . . I allow them to discover and figure out, give them the basis of what they need, but then try to be there to help them figure out together what they want.

For María, who has used LinguaFolio for four years, the responsibilities associated with being a facilitator include preparing, coaching and encouraging learners throughout the process. She explained:

Well, because most of my students are at the beginning level, so they need to have some base knowledge to begin with and so it’s my job to present the language, to explain how structure works. It’s my job to explain variations for them. And then,
uh, it’s my job to entice them, or to give them a challenge, you know, to them for [putting] that particular knowledge into practice.

One can infer, however, that learners are creative after their teachers provided them with the essential information or knowledge from a textbook or their guidelines. For example, students write their goals based on the objectives stated by their teachers. According to Maria, “At the beginning of the chapter they write their goals for themselves based on the objectives that I give them overall, and then they make their goals personal.”

Of equal importance are the particularities of the course being taught, participants mentioned the importance of adapting and providing the appropriate support to learners according to their particular needs, their proficiency, experience and the time devoted to using LinguaFolio. For example, learners who use the LinguaFolio for the first time required an adequate amount time to become good goal writers. Jane stated:

I’ve noticed that in Spanish II and in Spanish I since I’ve been doing LF that I almost actually write the [goals] as a class . . . really good goals. . . . In Spanish I group, we need to write them together. Spanish II what I’ve ended doing now over the last couple of years is we write the goals, like maybe two of them, and then they’ve come up with their great goal and the other two goals that we have written together. But Spanish III and IV, they are on their own.

Overall, however, despite the particularities present across all cases in this study, the role of facilitator is essential to the way the four participants guide their learners throughout their learning process.

*Fostering Self-Regulated Learners*

Participants agreed that throughout the implementation of the LinguaFolio they have moved from teacher-centered to student-centered approaches giving learners the opportunity to become more creative, reflective, organized and accountable for their own
learning. The characteristics described all point to one simple conclusion about the role learners are playing: LinguaFolio has helped learners become self-regulated learners.

According to Bruning, Shraw, Norby, and Ronning (2004), “self-regulated learning refers to the ability to control all aspects of one’s learning, from advanced planning to how one evaluates performance afterward” (p. 118). It is important to recall that the LinguaFolio users set their goals and self-assess their progression. Jane reported:

I think [LinguaFolio] helps me make it like a more focusing experience, because like the fact that we work with the objectives . . . the chapter and then they, kind of, decide where they want to go with that, like coming up with this project, which is their goal writing; and then reflecting, and then at the end of the semester, they look back through all their reflections, and come up with . . . what you can do now that couldn’t do at the beginning of the year, you know, so, it’s a kind of, a whole year reflection.

The four participants were directing learners towards becoming independent learners through most of their practices. They provided learners with opportunities for self-discovery and to experience learning independently. All four participants talked about the relevance of a stimulating autonomous learning. Becoming an autonomous learner allowed them to take advantage of several ways of self-improvement. First, they learned how to become involved effectively in class activities. Second, learners became more active, responsible and collaborative participants. Third, they realized that learning may result not only in a more advantageous but also pleasant classroom experience wherein they played a more challenging and leading role. Maria pointed out:

The biggest change to my role as a teacher is that it makes me give students more power, because I was more teacher-centered. Before LinguaFolio, I was like “OK, this is what it is.” “This is what I want to see you doing,” and bla . . . bla . . . bla. . . .”

All participants noted that LinguaFolio promotes a more committed learner through goal setting, collecting evidence, self-reflection and self-assessment
**Goal setting**

Although participants agreed that LinguaFolio provided learners with an opportunity to take initiative and responsibility towards learning, they encountered goal setting as a challenging experience. However, after careful guidance learners were able to personalize their goals based on the general objectives suggested by their teachers.

In regards to goal setting participants claimed that this may impact students’ real lives outside the classroom. According to Zimmerman (1990), “self-regulated students proactively seek out information when needed and take the necessary steps to master it” (p. 4). “LinguaFolio has given learners the freedom ‘to find what is meaningful for them’ to personalize their goals and suggest activities that allow them to use the target language and practice what they are learning outside the class.”

Participants also agreed that goal setting allowed them to suggest activities and devise ways to achieve their goals. For María, setting realistic, specific and measurable goals helps them to be explicit. More importantly, they have to discover ways to measure whether they have achieved them or not. For Jane, the goal setting process is complete when the students go over those goals at the end of the term and reflect on them once again. For Sue, allowing students to set their own goals prepares them “for life-long learning.”

Rachel stated,

I give them the objectives that I have for them, and then they have their goals in their minds throughout the chapter, and they look at what they’re needing, so something that is more independent a little bit about what they are learning, because someone might need something else that someone else doesn’t need.
Collecting Evidence

Once learners set their goals for a specific project, term or school year, they start working toward completion of those goals. This involves creating activities, collecting evidence and recording their progress.

According to the four participants, they guide the process of documenting the achievement of goals with material evidence (quizzes, assignments, reports, projects, etc.) until the learners grasp the purpose of it and understand the characteristics of what represents good evidence.

For Sue guidance for first time LinguaFolio users is essential in the selection of the best pieces to be kept in their dossier of evidence. Sometimes Sue suggests to them what evidence to keep. As she stated:

What I have to eventually do is . . . you know . . . we did the following listening activities, any of those might be related to your listening goal. So you, kind of, have to note take for them so they know what to pull out.

Although learners are used to handing in their assignments, they are guided until they are able to select their best examples that indicate the completion of the goals they set at the beginning of the unit or term. Sue stated, “And, uh, somewhere along the end of Spanish I or the beginning of the Spanish II, they get it. They just know, ‘hey this is my goal’. And here it’s a good [evidence] example I am going to pull.”

Self-reflection

All the participants said that self-reflection is also a demanding process that requires lots of guidance and assistance on the part of the teacher. For Rachel, it is moving away from a teacher-centered environment, where students are too focused on their grades and are likely to turn in papers that lack reflection on their actions or the
process they went through to produce those assignments. LinguaFolio users record
evidence and assess their learning progress. Rachel pointed out that,

They need to keep track of that throughout, and then at the end, like Tuesday, they
will be doing their reflection to see how they met their goals. And they’re going
through and find the evidence. They all have a binder where they’ve stored other
information, or whatever they’ve done that applies to their goals and find that
evidence to put in there.

All four participants pointed out that LinguaFolio users not only reflect about
their own experiences, but also suggest ways of improvement. Most of the time, and
under the teacher’s guidance, learners indicate the sort of actions they should undertake
in order to redirect their learning process. Sue reported:

And then when they reflect, I just want a full reflection, have they reflected on
every goal, have they written if they were happy with their work, what they could
have done better, and what they actually learned. So every student’s grade is
based on their goal not on one another’s.

The participants also pointed out that learners reflect on their class involvement,
their participation, their knowledge about the target language and its culture.

For María,

they can reflect on anything they want, they can talk about their class
involvement, their participation, if they have done something like maybe, we have
watched a film or something. They can, in German, for example, they can also
reflect on their knowledge of the culture, or history. They can, I really try not to
limit them. But I definitely I want the majority of their reflection to be in regards
to their ability to either understand, speak, or write in their target language.
More importantly, this reflection process has helped learners to envisage their role
as a learner and the actual purpose of learning a foreign language. Participants described
reflection as evolving, essential, and beneficial for both teachers and students. Reflection
is also seen as a way for learners to think honestly about of their learning growth. Maria
stated:
To be perfectly honest [reflection] depends on the caliber of the students, a really good student or a student dedicated to learning they handle that. A really good student, they are going to do that naturally anyhow, so LinguaFolio is a very tangible way for them to process that, and they’ll go back and look at that. But then you have students that they are trying to, they think that it’s going to please you. So when I see that going on that’s when we kind of work on it together. Or I say, this is OK. This is what you need to do and I will give them some very specific things that I need them to be looking for. And some kids, they think that, you know, I try to really encourage them to be honest with themselves and their LinguaFolio, because they want to make it all pretty, like they’re doing all the right things all the time, you know, we say, I want to focus on or whatever, but we don’t necessarily accomplish that, and so, I am really, you need to have some ‘oops. I can do this better’. It needs to reflect reality.

_self-assessment_

LinguaFolio has fostered a learning approach that involves more than doing and handing in assignments. Learners are truly committed to self-assessing their performance, keeping track of their growth and suggesting ways of improvement.

Jane reported,

They reflect on the project that they did. If they don’t present just they turn it in and then the student will say, like, well, I don’t know . . . there’s a point . . . It’s hard to see why I’m doing this, because they weren’t able to see what it meant to them, you know like, they weren’t really getting out of it what I wanted them to get out of it. So now it’s the project and the presentation, they are sharing with their classmates, and they are learning from each other and getting more ideas for the next time. So, it’s been like a graduation over the years, but I feel like it’s become more meaningful for the students and less like we are doing this just to do it, and more . . . OK. I see the point. It’s helped me grow and the students.

The four participants agreed that LinguaFolio has provided learners with a variety of opportunities to self-assess their progression and to show what they know about the language through their portfolio. Shrum and Glisan (2005) stated: “A portfolio documents the growth and the development of students over a period of time; it is a rich description of a learner’s work and offers perspectives that tests do not provide” (p. 383).

Jane reported:
They demonstrate what they know but in a different way, and it is nice because, whereas a test isn’t very creative, I don’t really think it puts their talents to work necessarily. With the LF they are taking a personal interest in it, and then they’re showing me what they can do. So they have to apply the grammar and the vocabulary in some way to a cultural situation... like reading a book... watching a movie or whatever.

Sue added,

I guess, [a portfolio] makes the students more accountable; they have to keep track of what they are proud of and if you are proud of it... they are going to keep track of that. I really do believe that. They do both [online and paper-based portfolio]. Well, they do most of it is the paper-based, the only thing they do online is the self-assessment, where they go, and do the self-evaluation of whether they like, of the things they like, and their abilities, their proficiency.

LinguaFolio has allowed learners to demonstrate what they know through the activities and tasks they keep in their portfolios. Jane stated, “LinguaFolio has given learners the freedom ‘to find what is meaningful for them’ to personalize their goals and suggest activities that allow them to use the target language and practice what they are learning outside the class.”

To summarize, although the four participants faced challenges with first-time LinguaFolio users, they agreed that after some time, students were able use the evidence they kept in their portfolios to demonstrate what they knew about the language and culture, reflect about their learning and self-assess their own language progress.

**From Teaching to Learning**

The four participants claimed that empowering learners is directly related to the way they enable learners to take charge of their learning process and become more involved in their own growth. They also agreed that learners are responsible for playing an active role while learning. Even though all wish their lessons to be “more student led”
most of their classes start with directions/input from the teachers that guide the work, or activities suggested and to be carried out by the students. Rachel stated:

I try to tell them that grammar isn’t necessarily important here, I just want you to write as much as you can, and getting them to try to think in Spanish, giving them a certain amount of time to come up with their response, and making sense as much as they can. And then we do speaking; I give them the guidelines of the situation. This is the situation, I want them to create a dialogue to resolve this conflict, how would you do that, and then they present that.

Similarly, María added,

Once we have like, you know, base vocabulary and I have like maybe a structure or a project or something that I want them to work on; then, I almost always do some kind of . . . where they create a dialogue, they create a skit, they create a situation, they create a project. They write it, talk about it, usually in collaborative groups in cooperative groups.

Typically teachers started their lessons by reviewing topics and vocabulary orally. They asked questions using English (L1) or Spanish (L2). For example, María asked in English about the pronouns that can replace the name of the direct object. Students were requested to answer them in L2. Jane reviewed the answers of a test orally. She read the correct answers aloud in Spanish. There was not much student interaction since they were comparing and correcting the wrong answers.

Most of the time the opening activity is based on a review of previous material. Teachers reviewed grammatical structures and vocabulary that is relevant to the continuation of the lesson. Jane reported, “So it just kind of goes introduction, guided practice, some kind of a partner practice and then independent practice. It could all happen in one day, or it could be studied over two days . . . and then start again.”

In the first classes I observed, the four participant teachers presented the grammatical structures to be mastered, then, learners suggested and implemented several
activities to practice what the teachers presented and what they would like to achieve as a goal.

The second class I observed, María, Sue and Rachel started their classes differently. They did not review grammar. Instead, María started by asking her students about the ideas they had brought for a TV commercial they were supposed to design. Sue started her lesson with a quick self-review on the goals students had written for this chapter. They were supposed to write or rephrase the goals they had set for this chapter on a sheet of paper. Rachel started her classes with technological adjustments required to connect on/off-campus classes. Rachel only asked them if they had questions or comments on their oral reports due that day. Since there were no questions asked, she gave them some time to start their oral reports.

Following the reviewing activities, the teachers presented the grammar structure using the textbook. For example, María introduced the theme of the day using the textbook. She explained it by reading the examples from the textbook. She also conjugated the verb form and her students repeated all its different forms. Likewise, in Jane’s class, students followed her instructions through a warm-up exercise in which they matched words and pictures to familiarize themselves with the clothing vocabulary being learned. Jane commented:

I introduce [the grammar] like in a story or somehow they can see it in context, and they take some notes on it, partner activities, individual, and then quiz and then, there is like a project, kind of comes up, with the vocabulary and the grammar, and now usually happens toward the end of the chapter, usually.

Once the teachers explained the grammar, the students completed the exercises from the textbook or worksheets. They worked in pairs or individually. While students were on task teachers moved around the classrooms helping students with grammar,
pronunciation and expressions and unknown words. For example, during my class observations, Rachel went around the classroom assisting each student individually; Sue helped learners with the more difficult words and Maria helped learners not only with the correct Spanish vocabulary but also with ideas on how to better present them to the classroom.

Once learners understood the grammar, teachers reinforced the structure with a game, or an interactive activity using flash cards or a Power Point presentation. This activity is presented in the form of a competition. Thus, the class is divided into teams and each group is given a specific task to accomplish. For example, Maria asked each group to write down five statements they would ask their opponents.

Since the main concern of this communicative activity is to check students’ understanding and assimilation of the topic taught, teachers emphasize the structure to be used during the game by having their students hear and actively use the structures.

Rachel stated,

Depending on what the theme of the chapter is, we usually do an activity where they’re interacting, where they are using those words. For example, for this last chapter, they did the family; so a typical day, was, they did a game where they were/had the family names, so they tried to guess you the family word, without looking at, by asking certain questions like: what does he like? What is he like? What is she like?

Jane reported,

Well, I study what structures I wanted to emphasize, and I would prepare something like what you saw during the first observation more OK, here is the concept, now the structure, and then I give them some homework assignment or something, we might play a game working with those structures.

It appeared that teachers relied on games to emphasize the structure taught and to check students’ understanding of the topic. It is also important to point out that oral repetition played an important role before playing games or during any other activity. For
example, Jane had her students repeat the correct pronunciation of the answers expected from a pair work exercise. María had her students repeat the correct verb conjugation before starting a game. Although I do not have evidence, it seemed that repetition helped learners to produce and participate more actively in those activities.

The whole class became excited because Sue announced a game. However, before starting to play it, they reviewed the present tense conjugation of the verb decir. “Como se dice Decir?” Sue asked the class. “Tell,” one student replied. The students grabbed their conjugation tables and helped Sue complete the conjugation of the verb decir. Sue pronounced the personal pronouns and the students conjugated the present tense of the verb decir. Sue asked for the imperative form of the same verb; one student replied: “Dime” (tell me). Sue reviewed this particular verb because the students needed it to play the game. (Notes from the field)

Finally, there were two aspects that marked the end of the classes. First, all participants reminded their students about their assignments for the next class and second, they reminded their students about their extra curricular activities. For example, María noted, “foreshadowing helps them to know if they have to be gone for track, tennis, or trap shooting or whatever.”

In conclusion, teachers presented the grammar to be covered and then the students developed activities based on the teachers’ directions. Most of the time, the introduction of the new topic is preceded by a review of the previous lesson. It was customary for teachers to go around the classroom assisting their learners with grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary. By the end of the class, announcements were made and teachers reminded their students about homework.

Although during most of the lessons I observed teachers seemed very traditional in their teaching approaches, I cannot assume that all their classes were grammar based on a daily basis. Indeed, during some of the lessons I observed students were allowed to
suggest different activities. One can infer, however, that learners are actively involved in the learning activities after their teachers provided them with the essential information, input or knowledge from a textbook or classrooms resources.
Chapter 6

Synthesis and Implications

Introduction

The present study sought to examine foreign language teachers’ beliefs and classroom practices in the context of using LinguaFolio. I was particularly interested in understanding what happens to teacher beliefs and classroom practices when using LinguaFolio. The research questions guiding my study were: (a) how do teachers describe the LinguaFolio implementation process? (b) How do teachers describe their teaching practices and beliefs before the implementation of LinguaFolio? and (c) how do teachers describe their teaching practices and beliefs after the implementation of LinguaFolio?

The majority of this study took place in the classrooms of four high schools located in Midwestern towns where I observed and interviewed the four participants. Taking into account that I was interested in teachers who have experienced changes due to the introduction of LinguaFolio, I used purposeful sampling to select the participants that would match that specific criterion. I collected data from classroom observations, and interview with participants. The teachers’ lesson plans complemented the data. Once data were transcribed, I analyzed the cases separately. I also engaged in a cross-case analysis.

Revisiting the Research Questions

This section aims to look back at the questions that guided this research study. The purpose is to synthesize all the information that was presented in the findings sections. Chapter 4 provided information about the four cases and Chapter 5 focused on
the cross-case analysis. The summary of the research questions also takes into account the context of the study and previous research studies, the research methods and the limitations of the study.

**Research Question 1: How do teachers describe the LinguaFolio implementation process?**

Implementing LinguaFolio has facilitated a more meaningful learning experience in which teachers and students have reflected on their roles in order to function in a new learning environment. For example, teachers now view themselves as facilitators rather than instructors. In doing so, teachers are committed to creating an optimal environment for learning in which they play more supportive roles. This implies modeling ways of learning and providing opportunities for learners to suggest meaningful activities in the classroom and real-life situations outside the classroom that engage them in the use of the target language while monitoring and reflecting on their own learning process. In this new way of learning, learners are supposed to self-discover and to look for creative applications to put into practice the target language and culture they are learning.

It is clear that the effective use of LinguaFolio requires time and dedication on the part of the student and teachers. The teachers facilitate and carefully guide learners through this process. This study confirmed what the first pilot research pilot study concluded that effective use of LinguaFolio requires an investment of time, a full understanding of all its components, and an adaptation derived from the particularities of every classroom.
**Research Question 2: How do teachers describe their teaching practices and beliefs before the implementation of LinguaFolio?**

The way teachers described their teaching practices and beliefs before the implementation of LinguaFolio have been documented throughout the previous two chapters in this study. What follows is the synthesis of this information that highlights the most important aspects.

Before implementing LinguaFolio, teachers were in favor of a teacher-centered approach in which they were responsible for the instruction based mostly on a textbook. Reflection was almost neglected. Consequently, they did not reflect much neither on what they were doing nor the way they could improve their teaching practices. Instead, they were committed to following a textbook and testing their children according to what was indicated by the textbook.

Before LinguaFolio the students played a passive role. They were instructed to turn papers in without considering either the main goals to be accomplished or the purpose of certain activities. Learners were supposed to do what they were told.

**Research Question 3: How do teachers describe their teaching practices and beliefs after the implementation of LinguaFolio?**

Implementing LinguaFolio has allowed teachers to promote a shared responsibility towards learning. The LinguaFolio has given learners the opportunity to play a more effective role that involves tasks that before were thought of as only for teachers. For example, the LinguaFolio has given learners the opportunity to monitor and self-regulate their own learning. For instance, LinguaFolio users set their own goals, self-assess their progression and self-reflect on the language and culture they are acquiring.
However, coming from teacher-centered classrooms, these changes became a challenge for both teachers and learners. Teachers who used to direct most of the actions in the classrooms started placing more responsibility on their students. Students who used to being instructed became more involved and started to take an active part in the decision making process.

As teachers started implementing LinguaFolio, they shifted from a teacher-centered to a more student-centered approach where teachers played different roles that made them become more reflective and aware of the learning process. Therefore, they were always looking for ways of improvement that exposed learners to self-discover ways of experiencing learning. More importantly learners were allowed to suggest ways of improvement based on their reflection and self-assessment.

LinguaFolio helped teachers and learners become more goal-oriented. Although before LinguaFolio teachers may have set their goals, they did not explicitly share them with their students. Now, that teachers feel a sense of partnership in learning with their students, the teachers set general objectives for the learners who then personalize these goals. Indeed, learners are free to choose which project to develop, or actions to be taken in order to accomplish their goals. Giving the students the opportunity to personalize their goals provides diverse opportunities for all types of learners to achieve their goals (e.g. students work on different projects towards the achievement of a general objective). This was also evidenced in the first pilot study that I conducted that revealed that LinguaFolio provides learners with meaningful and authentic learning experiences that allow students the opportunity to personalize their learning.
Implementing LinguaFolio has also expanded language learning outside the walls of the classroom providing learners the opportunity to interact within the Spanish speaking community in the real world. Most of the projects learners embarked on involved them in interactions with native Spanish speakers. This way of learning provided motivation, authentic language use and gave students life-long communication skills.

**Grand Tour Question: What happens to teacher beliefs and classroom practices by using LinguaFolio?**

Implementing LinguaFolio has helped teachers change their practices and beliefs. This study did not identify what happened first to produce this change in beliefs, however, according to Richardson, (1994) the “change process may begin either with changes in beliefs or changes in practice” (p. 90). Taking into account that LF promoted a shared responsibility towards learning rather than a fixed educational environment controlled only by the teacher, learners were given the opportunity to play a more active and engaging role when learning. Consequently, teachers and learners experienced a different learning environment in which learners were able to control some aspects of their learning process, from goal setting, collecting evidence, self-reflection to self-assessment. Students were able to decide what they wanted to learn and what sort of projects they might embark upon depending on their interests and the content area they were studying. LinguaFolio enabled learners to take charge of their learning process and become more involved in their own growth. This was also evidenced in the second pilot study that I conducted that revealed that LinguaFolio allows students to become more active participants in the learning process.
Although teachers gave more freedom to the learners they were still in charge of planning and directing the activities. In other words, after teachers set the general objectives, learners were allowed to personalize them. Textbooks were used as instructional aids and were complemented by other didactic materials including online resources.

**Implications for Using LinguaFolio**

This study has some implications for how to use LinguaFolio. LinguaFolio has helped learners to become self-regulated learners, however teachers are required to continuously guide this process, especially in the understanding and implementation of four key aspects: goal setting, collecting evidence, self-reflection and self-assessment.

**Goal Setting**

Although goal setting was found to be a challenging experience, after careful guidance learners were able to personalize their goals based on the general objectives suggested by their teachers.

**Collecting Evidence**

Once learners personalized their goals for a specific project, term or school year, they started collecting their best pieces of work (e.g., quizzes, tasks, or pair/group projects) that they included as evidence of achievement.

**Self-reflection**

Since this is not a naturally developed skill, along with goal setting, it was one of the most challenging and demanding processes that required explicit guidance and assistance from the teacher.
Self-assessment

Learners were truly committed to self-assessing their performance, and keeping track of their growth. It was proven that learners at the end of their first year were able not only to reflect and self-assess their own experiences, but also to suggest ways of improvement.

Implications for Future Research

The following are some recommendations for further studies based on the findings and limitations of this research study:

1. Similar studies that incorporate a larger sample. Comparative studies should then be conducted to document differences in the use of LinguaFolio between similar/different environments. This study could compare diverse cultural, economical and social backgrounds of the sample population.

2. For the purpose of this study I was more focused on on-site students. It is important to highlight that exploring the use of LinguaFolio within distance-learning environments could be another interesting study to be conducted. Such a study could determine the significance of online portfolios.

3. Examining the effects of the Summer Immersion program. Conducting a qualitative study to understand how novice and experienced participants in summer programs use the LinguaFolio. This would help to identify the optimal training process for LinguaFolio users. Also findings could be implemented in future versions of the summer program.
Final Thoughts

This study allowed me to experience the nuances of qualitative research and to reflect on the process itself. As I embarked upon the study of the real world situations of foreign language teachers, I exposed myself openly to whatever emerged and became flexible enough to adapt to the participants but maintaining neutrality during the gathering and analysis of the data.

Conducting this study also allowed me to reflect on learning and teaching a foreign language. I found that the LinguaFolio gives FL learners an opportunity to play a more active and engaging role when learning. I also found that teachers give more responsibility to the learners when using their LinguaFolio due to the reflection and self-assessment required of the learner.

I am certain this experience has improved my vision as a researcher and teacher. Now, I feel I am prepared to conduct an investigation within the academic community in Colombia. More importantly, I will adopt a self-reflective approach throughout my daily practice in order to find the ideal approach of learning a foreign language.
References


*Public School Review*. Retrieved October 28, 2006, from:

http://www.publicschoolreview.com/school_ov/school_id/50009


Appendix A

First Contact E-Mail
Dear LinguaFolio teacher,

My name is Gabriel Cote, as a Doctoral Candidate in the UNL CEHS Teaching, Learning and Teacher Education Department, I am one of the research assistants associated with Dr. Moeller’s study *Improving Teacher Competency and Student Learning in the Foreign Language Classroom*.

I am inviting you to participate in a research project aimed at understanding foreign language teachers’ beliefs, change and classroom practices. You were selected from the LinguaFolio pool of participants since you are teaching Spanish and you are implementing the LinguaFolio program.

This study is part of my dissertation as a Doctor of Philosophy at the College of Education and Human Sciences at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

Participation in this study will involve two phases. Participation in this study involves two phases. For the first phase you will respond two open-ended questions via e. mail. It will take no more than 10 minutes to answer them. Based on the results, four participants will be selected to continue to the second phase. Those individuals selected for the second phase will be compensated with $100 to be disbursed at the end of the 2007-2008 school year.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please reply to this email and I will send you the detailed description of the procedures on how to access and respond to the on-line survey.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Gabriel Cote, M.A.
Research Assistant
Office: (402) 472 5313
E-mail: gabcjgote@yahoo.com
University of Nebraska, Lincoln
Appendix B

Second Contact E-Mail
Second Contact E-Mail

Dear LinguaFolio Teacher,

I am Gabriel Cote, and you may remember that I have contacted you in the past concerning LinguaFolio research. I am planning to conduct a qualitative study associated with Dr. Moeller’s research. I am inviting you to participate in a study that investigates foreign language teachers’ beliefs, change and classroom practices. You are invited to participate in this study because you are currently implementing the LinguaFolio. Participation in this study involves two phases. For the first phase you will respond two open-ended questions via e. mail. It will take no more than 10 minutes to answer them. Based on the results, four participants will be selected to continue to the second phase. Those individuals selected for the second phase will be compensated with $100 to be disbursed at the end of the 2007-2008 school year.

Participation in the second phase will involve up to three 60-minute interviews, two 45-minute class observations, and the analysis of your lesson plans for the classes to be observed. The study will be conducted during the spring of 2008.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please reply to the following two questions:

1) Describe how LinguaFolio has changed the way you teach.
2) Describe how LinguaFolio has changed the way your students learn.

Answering these two questions will indicate that you are interested in participating, and it will also provide me with the necessary information to determine whether you qualify for participation in the study. Upon receipt of the response to these two questions, I will send you the detailed description of the study for your review.

Feel free to contact me at any time with questions or concerns.

If you should not be interested in participating in this study, please respond to this e-mail with an indication that you are not interested.

I thank you in advance for your time. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Gabriel Cote, M.A.
Research Assistant
Office: (402) 472 5313
Home: 402 323 0781
E-mail: gabrielcote@yahoo.com
University of Nebraska, Lincoln
Appendix C

Interview Protocol
Interview Protocol

First interview
1) Tell me a little bit about your teaching on a regular day.
2) Tell me about your experience of participating in the LinguaFolio project.
3) Can you describe how you use the LinguaFolio in your classroom?
4) Describe the effect that this experience has had on your teaching practices.
5) How would you describe your teaching practices after the implementation of the LinguaFolio.

Second Interview
1) How would you describe yourself as a teacher as result of the LinguaFolio?
2) How do you view learners as a result of LinguaFolio integration, any differences?
3) How would you describe your lesson plans before / after the implementation of the LinguaFolio.
4) Describe the impact that the LinguaFolio has had on your assessment practices.
5) What have you learned about teaching and learning from your participation in the LinguaFolio project?
Appendix D

Observation Protocol
Observation Protocol

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What I Observed</th>
<th>My Reflections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E

Informed Consent Form
Title of Project:

MEASURING AND UNDERSTANDING FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS’ BELIEFS, CHANGE AND CLASSROOM PRACTICES: A MIXED METHODS STUDY.

Purpose of the Research:
This project is part of the larger Improving Teacher Competency and Student Learning in the Foreign Language Classroom Research study. Its specific purpose is to measure and understand the resulting, if any, changes teachers of foreign language experienced as a result of implementing LinguaFolio. You are invited to participate because you are teaching Spanish as a foreign language, and because you are currently implementing the LINGUAFOLIO program.

Procedures:
Participation in this study will require approximately a maximum of 4 hrs of your time, and is not considered as part of your duties. First you will be interviewed two times. These two sixty-minute interviews will be audio-taped with your permission. The interviews will be completed after school hours, and may be conducted in person or via phone. I will take notes during the interviews. Also, two 60-minute observations will be conducted at different times and on different days. The researcher will sit in the back of the classroom taking notes. The observations and the interviews will be completed during four to six weeks starting on the first week of March, 2008. The researcher will also collect some documents represented by the teacher’s lesson plans for the classes to be observed. These documents cannot have any form of identifiers to protect the anonymity of participants.

Risks and/or Discomforts:
There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research. In the event of problems resulting from participation in the study, psychological treatment is available on a sliding fee scale at the UNL Psychological Consultation Center, telephone (402) 472-2351.

Benefits:
You may find the learning experience enjoyable and the outcomes may be helpful to you while implementing LINGUAFOLIO, and teaching Spanish as a foreign language.

Confidentiality:
Any information obtained during this study which could identify you will be kept strictly confidential. The data will be stored in a locked cabinet in the investigator’s office and will only be seen by the investigator during the study and for three years after the study is complete. The information obtained in this study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings. The audio tapes will be erased after completion of the study.
**Compensation:**
Compensation for participating in this study will include:
- $100.00, to be distributed at the end of the 2007-2008 school year.

**Opportunity to Ask Questions:**
You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study. Or you may call the investigator at any time, office phone, (402) 472-5313 or after hours (402) 326 8482.

If you have questions concerning your rights as a research subject that have not been answered by the investigator, you may contact the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board, telephone (402) 472-6965.

**Freedom to Withdraw:**
You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the investigators, the University of Nebraska or your school district. Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

**Consent, Right to Receive a Copy:**
You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature certifies that you have decided to participate having read and understood the information presented. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

________________________         ____________________
Signature of research participant   Date

**Name and Address of Investigators**
Aleidine J. Moeller, PhD, Principal Investigator
Office: (402) 472-2024
E-mail: amoeller2@unl.edu

**Name and Phone number of investigator(s)**
Gabriel Cote, Research Assistant:
Office: (402) 472-1353
E-mail: gabrielcote@yahoo.com
Appendix F

Los Lugares Interesantes (TPRS)
Los Lugares Interesantes (TPRS)

Hoy vamos a ir al acuario empiezo al día a las seis. Pienso en ver los pescados (peces)

. También mis hermanos piensan en ir al campo. Van a ver los pájaros

. Mis abuelos van a ir al circo. Piensan en ver los elefantes

Luego mis padres piensan en ir al lago. Van a ver los sapos

. Mis primos y yo vamos a ir al museo de antropología. Pensamos en ver los dinosaurios

. Mi hermana menor va a ir al zoológico. Ella piensa en ver los monos
Appendix G

Lesson Plan
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spanish 4</th>
<th>Spanish 1</th>
<th>Spanish 2</th>
<th>Spanish 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NONE</td>
<td>TLW - PRACTICE VOCABULARY AND ESSENTIAL ESCUCHA Y HABLA CHECK PG. 180-182</td>
<td>TLW - STAMP TEST CHECK PG. 170 ACTS. 1-5</td>
<td>TLW – PRACTICE VOCABULARY AND ESSENTIAL PRESENT MURAL PROJECTS DO GOALS AND REFLECTIONS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NONE</td>
<td>TLW - PRACTICE VOCABULARY COMMUNICATIVE 7-1 TPRS (UNA LLAMADA) UNA LLAMADA ACT. W PEER EVALUATION</td>
<td>TLW - STAMP TEST PRACTICE VOCABULARY ESCUCHA Y HABLA (7)</td>
<td>TLW - PRACTICE VOCABULARY FINISH GOALS AND REFLECTIONS “ESCUCHA Y HABLA” READ PGS. 168-169 ACTS. 1-5 PG. 170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NONE</td>
<td>TLW - PRACTICE VOCABULARY CONTINUE WORK ON “UNA LLAMADA” LISTENING QUIZ 7-1</td>
<td>TLW - PRACTICE VOCABULARY AND ESSENTIAL TPRS (IMPERFECT) REVIEW IMPERFECT FROM PG. 168-169 READ ARTICLE</td>
<td>TLW - PRACTICE VOCABULARY VIEW VIDEO DO VIDEO WORKSHEET WORK ON ACTS. 1-5 TPRS (7-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NONE</td>
<td>TLW - PRACTICE VOCABULARY PRESENT “UNA LLAMADA” W/PEER EVALUATION STUDY FOR QUIZ 7-1</td>
<td>TLW - PRACTICE VOCABULARY COMMUNICATIVE 7-1 LISTENING QUIZ 7-1</td>
<td>TLW - PRACTICE VOCABULARY COMMUNICA. ACT 7-1 LISTENING QUIZ 7-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NONE</td>
<td>TLW - PRACTICE VOCABULARY QUIZ 7-1 ESCUCHA Y HABLA ACT.</td>
<td>TLW - PRACTICE VOCABULARY “MI NIÑEZ” ACT. W PEER EVALUATION QUIZ 7-1</td>
<td>TLW - PRACTICE VOCABULARY ESCUCHA Y HABLA CHECK PG. 170 QUIZ 7-1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix H

Lesson Plan
Lesson Plan

Spanish II
Tuesday, April 8, 2008
Anticipatory Set: Repaso de los pronombres de complemento directo

Introduction of la expresión *acabar de*. Leemos y hacemos la página 314

Practicamos con una competencia de “challenges”
create two teams
10 minutes: teams create list of 5 quehaceres
rotating challenges: 1 pt. if correct
1 pt if other team misses
1 pt. if you can correct opponent
(30 seconds to answer challenges)
(15 seconds to correct challenges)

Homework: none
Appendix I

Un Anuncio
Activity Description:

"¡Nuevo! "¡Mejor! "¡Sus dientes serán más blancos!" "¡En el sabor de frambuesas!" Such are the claims of those beloved television commercials. Even en España and en México, people are intrigued by commercials. Whether it's a new gadget that makes butterfly-shaped french fries or deodorant that also works as mosquito repellent, we've seen advertisements for just about everything. Just about...

Working with a partner, you will write, produce, film, and present your own television commercial an español. First, decide on a creative, original product. Avoid the ordinary! Invent your own product to sell. Consider what would make this item sell (price, color, flavor, unique use). Then write a script that will be sufficient for a 45 second commercial (at least 10 lines of text) which you will also submit to your teacher.

When you videotape your commercial, add music (instrumental -- no English!), costumes, props, and of course, your fabulous product! Keep in mind that the primary focus is your use of Spanish to "sell" this product!

Primary Activity Standard: Communication: Standard 1.3

Students present information, concepts, and ideas to an audience of listeners or readers on a variety of topics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length:</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Needs Work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commercial is at least 45 seconds long.</td>
<td>Commercial lasts from 30 - 44 seconds.</td>
<td>Commercial is shorter than 30 seconds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Spanish:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commercial contains at least 10 complete sentences. Spanish is clear and grammatically correct</td>
<td>Commercial contains at least 10 Spanish sentences. Spanish is somewhat clear but contains several errors</td>
<td>Commercial doesn't contain at least 10 sentences. Spanish is difficult to understand with many errors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity of Product:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Product and its description are extremely creative (original or humorous).</td>
<td>Product and its description are average (seems rather ordinary)</td>
<td>Product and its description lack creativity (not much effort is given to this).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Props, Music, &amp; Costumes:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commercial uses great props, music, and costumes</td>
<td>Commercial uses props, and music or costumes (not all 3)</td>
<td>Commercial uses only a prop for a product (nothing else).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix J

Horario de Hacer los Anuncios
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Filmers</th>
<th>Tech Crew</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix K

Self-reflection Guide
Mis trabajos favoritos

Select 2-3 pieces of work that best represent your accomplishments during this chapter.

1) Explain why you selected these pieces of work to include in your portfolio. Why are they significant to you? **Talk about each piece individually.**

2) Based on the evidence that you chose, what can you do now that you couldn’t do at the beginning of the chapter? What new Spanish skills do you have?
Appendix L

Lesson Plan
Lesson Plan

Lunes 14 de abril
1. Calentamiento. Reflexión del capítulo 12: selecciona 2-3 tareas importantes:
   PASS BACK (apuntes del banco)
2. Repaso del exámen 12.
3. Intro to vocab. 13
   a. look at the objetivos for cap. 13
   b. brainstorm palabras para fiestas, celebraciones
   c. compañeros: categorize las palabras: usa banco de palabras con fotos y escribe
      ideas en dos columnas- la boda y el cumpleaños.
   d. When finished, write ideas on the board, send 1 rep. up from group, review w/
      class.
5. PP:
   a. ¿En qué día naciste?
   b. ¿Quiénes son tus padrinos?
   c. ¿Qué clase de pastel prefieres?
   d. ¿Has asistido a una boda?
   e. ¿Qué hiciste en la recepción?
TAREA: Work on reflexión del banco – miércoles.
Appendix M

La Zapatería
La Zapatería
Appendix N

Lesson Plan
Lesson Plan

Martes 22 de Abril

2. Hand in Buscapalabras
3. 10 apuntes: vocab sheets, pronunciación
5. Game: PP: ¿Qué llevas cuando hace frío? ¿Cuando hace calor? ¿A la misa? ¿Para jugar a los deportes?
6. Tarea: WS: Nuevo uniforme: can use revistas, label parts (at least 7 articles of clothing) & write 7 sentences about how each article of clothing will look. Each sentence needs a verb!
Appendix O

Proposal Sheet
# Mi investigación cultural #____
## Project Proposal for Capítulos____

This sheet is due: _______________  
Nombre _______________
Fecha _______________
Compañero _______________

### Themes/topics:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capítulo</th>
<th>Capítulo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Project details:

1) The project that I propose is: ________________________________

2) This is how this project relates to the theme(s) of the current chapter:

3) Circle the category that will be the focus of this chapter’s project (you can only do one per semester):

   HABLAR      LEER      HACER      ESCUCHAR/MIRAR

4) Here are the **specific** steps that I will need to do in order to complete this project:

   1. ____________________________________________
   2. ____________________________________________
   3. ____________________________________________
   4. ____________________________________________
   5. ____________________________________________

5) The tangible product that I will create as my visual aid to help document my project is:

   ____________________________________________
Appendix P

Proposal Self-Assessment Sheet
## Proposal Self-Assessment Sheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mi Nombre ___________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is my idea for my investigación cultural? What will I do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What does my idea have to do with the current chapters?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do I expect to increase my knowledge of Spanish-speaking culture/s?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What product(s) will I put together for my visual aid?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compañero/a ___________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S How is this project SPECIFIC to the theme of the chapter? How is culture SPECIFICALLY incorporated into this project? Possible improvements?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T How will the TANGIBLE product(s) (for the visual aid) document this project? Possible improvements?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A How is this project APPROPRIATELY CHALLENGING (not too easy, but not too difficult)? Possible improvements?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R Is it REALISTIC that the student could complete this project this quarter? Possible improvements?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix Q

Class Activity
The preterite of *ir* is irregular in the preterite. Notice that the preterite forms of *ir* do not have accent marks:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Preterite Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(yo)</td>
<td>fui</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(nosotros)</td>
<td>fuimos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(tú)</td>
<td>fuiste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(vosotros)</td>
<td>fuisteis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ud.</td>
<td>fue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(él/a)</td>
<td>fue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ellos)</td>
<td>fueron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ellas)</td>
<td>fueron</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The preterite of *ir* is the same as the preterite of *ser*. The context makes the meaning clear.

*José fue a Barcelona. José went to Barcelona.*

*El viaje fue un desastre. The trip was a disaster.*

**Strategy**

Using memory devices
Here's a memory tip to help you remember the subjects of *fui* and *fuí*

The "**u**" form ends in *-í* (fuí).

The "**e**" and "**ie**" form ends in *-a* (fue, fuiste).

**Gramatica Video**

Want more help with this preterite? Watch the Gramatica Video.

**Adónde fuiste?**

**Hablar**

A student at your school wants to know where you went last week.

Modelo

A — ¿Adónde fue diez?  
B — Fue al parque de diversiones.

2. A — ¿Adónde fue el profesor?  
B — Fue al centro de la ciudad.

3. A — ¿Adónde fue el profesor?  
B — Fue a un museo.

4. A — ¿Adónde fue diez?  
B — Fue al cine.

5. A — ¿Adónde vas este fin de semana?  
B — Voy a un concierto.

6. A — ¿Adónde vas el fin de semana?  
B — Voy al parque.

**Enriching Your Teaching**

**Teacher-to-Teacher**

Fill your classroom with travel posters, advertisements, banners, souvenirs, ticket stubs, and anything you can find to correspond with the theme of vacation places and activities. Provide students with a library of Spanish-language travel magazines and books to browse through. This linguistically and culturally rich environment will enhance learning.
Appendix R

Lesson Plan
Lesson plan

Spanish II – Period 3

Objectives / Standards
- Reinforce preterit tense with ER/IR verbs
- Reinforce irregular “ir” in preterit, while reviewing modes of transportation and places (from Spanish I)
- Focus on question word most associated with “fui/fuiste/fue/etc”) – ¿Adónde?

Bell Ringer
- Activity will be review of ER/IR conjugations in the preterit tense that was started the prior class period
  o Students will attempt charts on own, share as an entire class
  o Comprehension check will be done with students on the bottom portion (Part B of Bell Ringer wkst)
    ▪ Exercise will be completed as a table, comprehension check will be done with individual students

Lessons (Modeling and Understanding)
- Flashcards will be used to quiz a partner (back and forth)
  o Card has subject and infinitive with regular ER/IR verbs in the preterit tense, as well as “hacer”, “ir”, and “leer”
- Actividad 11, page 382 – concentrating on “ver” and “ir” as well as recognizing “adónde” and places.
- Actividad 13, page 384 – sole concentration on “ir”, places, and transportation.
- Computer conjugating on students own or ER/IR pret. Verbs, and a second with “ir”
  o website focuses on reading a paragraph and filling in blanks as they appear
  o second website contains 10 different statements or questions conjugating only “ir”
- First graded/assessment done using only ER/IR verbs in preterit tense – will be worked on while others are at computers

Closure
- Students will be asked conjugations orally as they are wrapping up work
Assignments turned in - those working at slower pace will have homework
Appendix S

Class Activity

(Indirect Object Pronouns)
Más trabajo voluntario

A. Write the indirect object pronouns that correspond to the following phrases.

1. A Javier y a Sara  
6. A Luz y a ti  
2. A Diego y a mí  
7. A ti  
3. A la Dra. Estes  
8. A nosotros  
4. A Uds.  
9. Al Sr. Pérez  
5. A Tito  
10. A mí  

B. Now, fill in the blanks in the following sentences with the correct indirect object pronouns.

1. La Cruz Roja ______ ayuda a las personas de la comunidad.
2. Nuestros padres ______ hablaron a mi hermano y a mí del reciclaje.
3. Mi profesora ______ ayudó a decidir qué trabajo voluntario me gustaría hacer.
4. ______ dice el profesor al estudiante que es importante separar las latas y el plástico.
5. Las personas ______ escriben al director del centro de reciclaje para recibir información sobre el reciclaje.
6. ¿Tus padres ______ dicen que debes ayudar a los demás?
7. ______ traigo unos juguetes a los niños en el hospital.
8. Los ancianos están muy contentos cuando ______ decimos que volvemos mañana.
Appendix T

Homework
Homework

This web page is part of my old site. The new site is at http://www.colby.edu/~bknelson/SLC/. This site will be removed 12/15/2007. -- Barbara

Spanish Grammar Exercises © Barbara Kuzum Nelson

PRONOMBRES DE COMPLEMENTO INDIRECTO
Indirect Object Pronouns

Tab or click anywhere on the page to see errors replaced by the symbol = . Make corrections to your answer or click on the ? to see the correct answer.

Complete the sentence with the correct IO pronoun and the present tense.

verb review

1. Julio gives me a kiss.
   Julio ______________ un beso.

2. I read the book to Isabel.
   Yo ______________ el libro a Isabel.

3. Alejandro brings them balloons.
   Alejandro ______________ globos.

4. I loan you (fam.) my shirt.
   Yo ______________ mi camisa.

5. They serve her more shrimp.
   Ellos ______________ más gambas.

6. You teach us a lot of verbs.
   Ud. ______________ muchos verbos.

7. Antonio orders guacamole for me.
   Antonio ______________ guacamole.

8. We tell you (pl.) the rules.
   Nosotros ______________ las reglas.

9. Who makes churros for you (fam.)?
   ¿Quién ______________ churros?

    Nadie ______________ galletas a Lola.

11. I rent my condo to him.

http://www.colby.edu/~bknelson/exercises/IO.html
4/23/2008
Appendix U

Lesson Plan
Lesson plan

Spanish II – Period 3
Date: 4/23/08

Objectives / Standards
- Reinforce indirect object pronouns as well as demonstrate use of pronouns
- Demonstrate both tenses of “Decir” (Present and Preterit)

Bell Ringer
- Students will be filling in the chart used to locate indirect object pronouns.
  o Students will then share their answers aloud as a class
  o Reviewing their meanings will also need to be done for those absent
    ▪ Students will again look back at yesterday’s Powerpoint that was used to explain what an indirect object is as well as when a pronoun is used.

Lessons (Modeling and Understanding)
- Website used to reinforce their understanding of the indirect object that was shared the class period before. The verb “decir” is seen in a few examples.
  o Ask students to provide it’s definition
- Students will discuss a verb seen throughout the Chapter and used in our Chapter expression – “Tell me/Dime.”
  o Students will see and learn these conjugations through strategies practiced in SpanishII.
    ▪ Decir – a “go” verb and stem-changing
    ▪ Once chart is fill out, pronunciation will be practiced.
- Rumores/Teléfono – students will be split into two or three groups of 5 or so. One students from each group will got to the hallway so that they can be told the rumor – “Les digo….”
  o The rumor has the use of IO pronouns, preterit conjugations and chapter vocabulary.
  o Students tell their group the “rumor” and incorporate “Me dice que…”and the last person of the group records on the board at thr front what they are being told. The group with the closet correct rumor will score points.
  o This will be done 3 to 4 times and a winner rewarded.
- Students are then assessed on the indirect object pronoun they were using via worksheet.

Closure
- Students will be asked conjugations of “decir” orally as they are wrapping up work, as well as IO pronouns

Assignments turned in - those working at slower pace will have homework