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Classroom Practices and Perspective Transformation in an Adult Elementary Spanish Classroom

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CLASSROOM PRACTICES AND PERSPECTIVE TRANSFORMATION IN AN
ADULT ELEMENTARY SPANISH CLASSROOM

by

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Dedication

For my dad,

Stephen D. Johnson,

a loving father and papa, an honorable man,

who wanted this accomplishment for me

even more than I wanted it myself.

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In my life, my highest aspiration is to honor my God. I thank God for keeping me, guiding me, and ordering my steps.

Abstract

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The purpose of this research was to explore students' experiences of perspective transformation and the classroom practices contributing to that transformation in a first-semester, college Spanish class.

Purposeful sampling was used to choose a college-level Elementary Spanish I class to study. The qualitative case study design required the collection of three kinds of data: 1) participant observation in the classroom, 2) student learning journals, and 3) one-on-one interviews conducted with eight students purposefully sampled from the class. The criterion for selecting interview participants was evidence in the participant observation and learning journal data of the early stages of perspective transformation.

The participant observation data provided a description of the classroom setting and the instructional techniques therein. Six classroom practices were identified as characteristic of the classroom: 1) direct grammar instruction, 2) English as the primary language of instruction, 3) small-group oral language practice, 4) sidebars on culture and society, 5) learning journals, and 6) the viewing and analysis of a film.

Analysis of the learning journals and one-on-one interviews with the researcher revealed multiple categories of learning reported by students, of which three were determined most likely to be indicators of perspective transformation: 1) learning about differences, 2) learning about connections, and 3) learning about learning. Additionally, the four instructional techniques reported as most important for these categories of

learning were 1) sidebars on culture and society, 2) the viewing and analysis of the film, 3) small-group oral production, and 4) learning journals.

In addition to the categories of learning and instruction, analysis of the interview data revealed that the impact of participants' transformative learning was 1) increased openness to language and/or culture and 2) desire for real-world contact with the language and/or culture.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This study examined students' experiences of perspective transformation and the classroom activities contributing to that transformation in a first-semester, college Spanish class. Drawing on literature from the fields of adult education and foreign language education, this research contributes to the understanding of classroom practices that best support adult students through their initial stages of perspective transformation. The case study design employed qualitative methods to collect data through participant observation, student learning journals, and one-on-one interviews which were analyzed to answer the research questions.

Research Problem and Context

As part of the general education requirement for college and university students in the United States, elementary Spanish courses require students to demonstrate factual knowledge, such as the vocabulary and grammar, and proficiency with language skills. A typical course description for first-semester, college Spanish might include statements about students demonstrating mastery of the present verb tense, vocabulary, the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing), and cultural knowledge. Despite the undeniable importance of learning this content, this knowledge is only the beginning of learning for many adult students.

Studying a foreign language can be a catalyst for students to engage in critical reflection about language and culture including how language and culture affect the way they interact with the world. This critical reflection can lead to another important kind of learning, conceptualized by Mezirow (1991) as transformative learning, which is

distinguished from other kinds of learning by the presence of perspective transformation. Perspective transformation is a process of interpreting experience in a new way, from a new perspective, and may begin in a classroom as a result of critical reflection and consciousness-raising.

While transformative learning has not traditionally been an explicit objective in adult foreign language classes, its importance is highlighted when one considers that few college students who study foreign language go on to attain linguistic proficiency (Byram, 2010; Malone, Rifkin, Christian, & Johnson, 2005). Attaining proficiency is an investment of time that many students cannot make. The United States government (National Virtual Translation Center, 2007) estimated that in order to attain only a general proficiency in a language linguistically and culturally similar to English, one needs about 600 hours of instruction. On a typical college schedule of 45 classroom hours per three-credit, semester-long class, 600 hours equals more than 13 semesters of foreign language instruction. To put the numbers in context, 13 semesters is enough language study to qualify as a language major in most bachelor's degree programs. Advanced proficiency in a language requires even more classroom hours. In addition, if one studies a language with significant linguistic and cultural differences, such as Hindi or Russian, the number of required hours jumps to 1100, or more than 25 semesters of language instruction, nearly twice the amount of study required for a language major. A general proficiency in Arabic, which English speakers find very difficult to learn, would require 2200 hours, or more than 50 semesters of instruction, which are more hours than required for an entire Bachelor's degree. It is no wonder, given the challenge of time and effort

that gaining proficiency represents, that most students never become linguistically proficient.

A survey of foreign language enrollments in the United States (Furman, Goldberg, & Lusin, 2007) revealed that while 8.6% of postsecondary enrollments were in foreign language courses, only 1.4% of those enrollments were in advanced courses. The large majority of the students studying foreign language in American postsecondary institutions are not majors studying advanced content courses, but rather students taking elementary and intermediate language courses to fulfill degree requirements or for other reasons such as intercultural understanding or career motivations (American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages [ACTFL], n.d). Given the number of hours required to become proficient, it is clear that students who fulfill only a two- or four-semester requirement are not attaining linguistic proficiency. So then, if not the ability to converse in the target language, what do these students take away from their language study? Even in cases where students never achieve proficiency in foreign language, because they took the course simply to fulfill degree requirements or because they find the subject difficult to master, students may still experience a meaningful perspective transformation as a result of studying foreign language.

Contemporary standards for language learning require a more comprehensive approach to language learning (ACTFL, n.d.; MLA, 2007), one that is broader and more interdisciplinary than what is typically represented in college course descriptions (Klee, 1998). No longer are students of foreign language expected to simply memorize vocabulary and grammar. Language instruction should help students "develop insight into the nature of language and the concept of culture and realize that there are multiple ways

of viewing the world" (ACTFL, n.d., p. 3) and help "in gaining understanding and in developing their abilities to think critically about how languages work" (p. 6). The Modern Language Association (MLA, 2007) took a similar position by stating that students should learn "critical language awareness, interpretation and translation, historical and political consciousness, social sensibility, and aesthetic perception" (p. 4).

While these are important goals, the question for many language teachers is how to promote this kind of learning. "Language teachers tend to agree with the notion that what needs to be taught is critical language awareness, interpretive skills, and historical consciousness, but while they find the idea inspiring and exciting, they also find it difficult, if not impossible, to implement" (Byram & Kramsch, 2008, p. 20). How does an instructor teach for critical consciousness? This difficulty expressed by Byram and Kramsch can be resolved by evaluating classroom practice through the lens of transformative theory. I believe that Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory can serve as a framework in order to: a) understand the ways that adult students experience learning critical consciousness, b) understand the impact of this kind of learning on students, and c) understand how to promote this type of higher learning.

Language teachers especially are in an ideal position to promote perspective transformation among their students because language and culture are integral to the shaping of an individual's worldview. According to Mezirow (1991), "Approved ways of seeing and understanding, shaped by our language, culture, and personal experience, collaborate to set limits to our future learning" (p. 1). In order to expand the limits of their learning in all areas of their lives, students must move beyond their own cultural and linguistic norms and begin to see the world through a wider lens. Studying another

language is an opportunity for an adult student to begin the process of perspective transformation.

Research Purpose and Questions

In this study, I explored the perspective transformation experiences of students enrolled in Elementary Spanish I at an urban, Southern community college. By examining students' classroom experiences through the lens of transformative theory, this study contributes to resolving the issue raised by Byram and Kramsch (2008) of how to teach languages for critical consciousness. The purpose of this research is to describe how the participants experienced perspective transformation and the classroom activities they perceived as promoting and contributing to their transformation. My research questions are: 1) In what ways did the participants experience perspective transformation? 2) How do the participants describe the impact of their perspective transformation? 3) What classroom practices and activities do the participants perceive as contributing to this transformation?

Assumptions and Limitations

Based on Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory and the researcher's own experiences as a college Spanish instructor, this research is based on the assumption that transformative learning occurs for many students in many contexts and that this kind of learning can be fostered by the instructor through classroom practices. It is also assumed that a foreign language classroom is fertile ground for transformative learning because of the juxtaposition of languages and cultures experienced during foreign language study.

This research is meant to explore students' experiences while enrolled in a first-semester Spanish class; yet perspective transformation is a process that can unfurl over a long period of time. For that reason, this investigation is delimited to identifying and analyzing the early stages of perspective transformation, those most likely to occur when students first encounter a new language and culture.

Definitions

Adult: For the purposes of this study, an adult is an individual at least 18 years of age. I use the term in order to emphasize the contrast between the adult student, a legal adult who voluntarily enrolls in a course or program of study, and a minor child enrolled in compulsory education.

Student: In this study, I use this term to refer specifically to the adult learner enrolled in a college-level foreign language class. I alternate between *he* and *she* when using pronouns to refer to the language student to avoid gender bias.

L1: The native or home language of the student.

L2: The second or foreign language being learned, the target language.

Direct Instruction: When an instructor explicitly teaches a topic by presenting and explaining the content to the class, this is referred to as direct instruction. A teacher-centered approach, direct instruction is often contrasted with other teaching models in which students explore, discover, or research subjects with the instructor acting as facilitator or guide.

Second Language Acquisition: A reference to the field of study or body of literature describing how a second language is learned. Often abbreviated SLA.

Text: Any material used for language instruction. A text may be audio, video, or written. A text can be art, a reading, a viewing, or a performance.

Authentic Text: Any text in the L2 designed for real-world use but appropriated for language instruction. An authentic text is not specifically designed for language instruction.

Organization of the Study

In chapter 1, I introduced the research problem and its context, the research questions, assumptions and limitations of the study, and definitions of terms. Chapter 2 is a review of the relevant literature to provide the reader with a background in (a) transformative learning theory, (b) foreign language teaching and learning, (c) traditions and approaches in higher education, and (d) previous studies related to this research. Chapter 3 contains a description of the design of the study and a rationale for the methodology. Data collection and analysis methods are detailed. In this chapter, I also explore my own role as researcher in the study.

In chapter 4, I describe the case, a first-semester Spanish class, in order to present findings related to the setting for this research and to outline the instructional approach and activities. Chapter 5 presents the findings of this research by exploring students' reports. I analyze the data collected through student learning journals and one-on-one interviews and describe the themes and categories that emerge. Chapter 6 contains conclusions from the study, implications for adult foreign language education and recommendations for further research.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

This research draws on two fields of inquiry in order to make sense of the data collected. In this chapter, relevant literature in adult learning and foreign language education will be examined.

Transformative Learning Theory

A dichotomy exists in the kinds of learning that adults experience. In the context of a foreign language classroom, students learn the content: discrete units of grammar, vocabulary, and cultural information. Students also learn the skills necessary to use the content in linguistic contexts such as conversations or written communications. Mezirow (1991) referred to this learning of content and skills as instrumental. Alternatively, students may experience another kind of learning in a foreign language class that Mezirow described as transformative learning. Transformative learning is also referred to as transformational learning; for the purposes of this study, the two terms are synonymous. In transformative learning, the student is able to critically reflect on his or her own meaning perspectives, or assumptions about how the world works, and interpret experience from a new perspective.

Meaning perspectives. It has been said that we do not see things as they are, rather we see them as we are. Viewing the world through the lens of one's beliefs, assumptions, experiences, and linguistic and cultural norms was referred to by Mezirow (1991) as a *meaning perspective*. It is the tendency of people to see the world from a fixed perspective according to certain expectations, and it is how individuals make sense out of their experiences. Mezirow (1997) also used the term *habit of mind* to refer to

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meaning perspectives. "An example of a habit of mind is ethnocentrism, the predisposition to regard others outside one's own group as inferior" (p. 6).

The information a student takes in through her senses is filtered through the lens of her meaning perspective. New knowledge that is consistent with her previous expectations is accepted and integrated. New knowledge that is not consistent with her meaning perspective will suffer one of several fates: (a) It may be discarded, dismissed as an aberration or impossibility and filtered out by the lens of her meaning perspective, or (b) the new input may be modified to better fit into the preexisting worldview of the student, interpreted according to the existing meaning perspective, or (c) it may cause a conflict between the previous frame of reference and the new information. If this conflict is explored, it can lead to a transformation of the student's perspective.

Several sociolinguistic elements contribute to the formation of one's meaning perspective including social norms and roles, cultural and language codes, common sense as a cultural system, and ethnocentrism (Mezirow, 1991). All of these elements allow people to live within their native language and culture's structures and readily discard any input from the world that does not fit in their system. The common language of a group of people bonds them into a "dialogic community" (p. 56) that shares meaning through common symbols. Becoming indoctrinated in the codes and assumptions of one's native language and culture is a normal part of childhood and serves to mold young people into productive members of their group. Sometimes referred to as the ideology of a social group, meaning is passed on to younger members of a group through this social indoctrination.

Each of us "breathes in" an ideology as we live and grow in our society. Each person takes on or takes in the prevailing set of assumptions about reality – the meaning perspective – of the particular social group that provides the immediate context for his or her socialization…Through the process of enculturation, a person develops a self-identity and a self-interest, both of which reproduce the reality framing and value assumptions of the social group and the larger society. (Kennedy, 1990, p. 99)

Metalinguistic awareness. Because of the nature of first language and culture acquisition, the concept of meaning perspective is intertwined with early language acquisition. Some children grow up in environments where they are exposed to more than one linguistic and cultural perspective. Bi- and multilingual children, whose meaning perspective has integrated the values and assumptions of at least two frameworks, are better at some kinds of problem solving than monolinguals and have greater metalinguistic awareness (Bialystok, 1988; Fromkin, Rodman, & Hyams, 2003). Metalinguistic awareness is an individual's consciousness about language and how language works, about issues such as the arbitrary relationship between sound and meaning or the possibilities for language use. Metalinguistic awareness gained by children through second language learning results in higher proficiency with written language and improved ability to manipulate linguistic structures (Demont, 2001). A lack of metalinguistic awareness may cause an individual to believe that his own native language is the only one that is logical. However, bi- and multilingual people are more likely to recognize that all languages are based on arbitrary symbols and complex grammars.

For monolingual adults entering an elementary foreign language course, metalinguistic awareness may be difficult to develop. Their common sense, which is a cultural construct embedded in their meaning perspective, tells them that *shoe* is the only possible word for what they wear on their feet; "zapato" in Spanish and "鞋子" in Chinese just do not feel right. Teaching an adult a new vocabulary word is not simply memorizing the sound, spelling, and arbitrary relationship to an idea. More challenging is the task of increasing that adult's metalinguistic awareness and broadening her worldview so that the possibility of a new, equally valid word can be integrated into her meaning perspective.

Other related terms. Many fields of study deal with the concept of meaning perspectives as being the underlying determiner of how individuals interpret experience, although this idea is often referred to in other ways. Whorf (1956) explored the concept of language structures and the effect these structures had on constraining people's interpretations of reality. Kuhn (1962) referred to *paradigms* and Foucault (1972) used the term *episteme*. Mezirow (1991) included the term *schemata* in his discussion of meaning perspectives. In language assessment, it is considered valuable to activate a student's general *schemata* (O'Malley & Valdez Pierce, 1996), or framework of background knowledge and expectations that can help him interpret a text. However, a student's schemata is culture-specific and, for second language learners, new knowledge may clash with the existing schemata causing conflict between the student's meaning perspective and the set of assumptions inherent in the text.

Perspective Transformation

According to Mezirow (1991), perspective transformation is the hallmark of transformative learning,

Perspective transformation is the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world; changing these structures of habitual expectation to make possible a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrating perspective; and, finally, making choices or otherwise acting upon these new understandings. (p. 167)

Transformative learning theory outlines a 10-step process through which individuals undergo perspective transformation. The steps Mezirow (1991) identified are:

1. A disorienting dilemma

2. Self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame

3. A critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural, or psychic assumptions

4. Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change

5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions

6. Planning a course of action

7. Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans

8. Provisional trying of new roles

9. Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships; and

10. A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective. (pp. 168-169)

Other researchers have conceptualized the process of perspective transformation in different ways. What all of the models have in common is a movement from the disorienting dilemma to critical reflection, then to conscious action, and finally to integration, resulting in a new, broader meaning perspective.

The initial stages of perspective transformation require an individual to recognize a conflict between an experience and his or her own meaning perspective, and then to reflect on and examine that conflict. These early stages are crucial to perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1991). The facilitator, whether a teacher or supervisor, can inhibit perspective transformation by stifling critical reflection, or can promote the transformation by creating an environment where critical reflection is encouraged and valued. In a classroom setting, a student, recognizing a conflict, may begin to ask questions during class discussion or exhibit other indicators. Mezirow listed some signs or indicators that perspective transformation is, in fact, taking place in an individual. These indicators include:

Seeking assistance from a wider variety of sources of knowledge; taking a more critical stance; looking at helpers as resources for finding one's own answers rather than as authorities who will provide the answers; testing boundaries and assumptions; actively looking for patterns of behavior and avoidance in oneself; greater awareness of emotions, physical states, intuition, and dream symbolism; and searching for forms of assistance compatible with one's learning style. (pp. 193-194)

By looking for these and other indicators, an instructor who is familiar with the process of perspective transformation can create an environment where the early stages of

the process, namely the disorienting dilemma and critical reflection, are supported, validated and encouraged.

Disorienting dilemma. The disorienting dilemma is the event that precipitates perspective transformation. When a student is confronted with evidence that conflicts with his or her existing meaning perspective, a sense of imbalance may result challenging the student's sense of order and meaning. This event may lead to a process of self-examination and critical reflection often experienced as intense and emotional. "A disorienting dilemma that begins the process of transformation also can result from an eye-opening discussion, book, poem, or painting or from efforts to understand a different culture with customs that contradict our own previously accepted presuppositions" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 168).

In an adult foreign language classroom, the conflict caused when students encounter a language and culture different from their own may cause a disorienting dilemma. Especially for students with little previous contact with other groups, they may struggle to make sense of the clash of symbols, values, and assumptions as they learn to speak and act in a new way.

A disorienting dilemma may come from other sources beside the classroom environment. Students' experiences in life can have a deep impact on their learning (King, 2000; Mezirow, 1991). Three categories of dilemmas are identified (Mezirow, 1991): self-induced, induced by life circumstances, and induced by other people like a teacher or friend. How the process begins is not as important as how it is continued and promoted through subsequent experiences. In reality, it is likely a mix of experiences both within and outside of the classroom that help to bring a student to the disorienting

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dilemma where she questions her assumptions about reality. In the context of adult language education, King (2000) found that classroom activities have a more prominent role than life experiences in promoting transformative learning.

Critical reflection. Critical reflection has been established as a crucial element in certain kinds of learning, especially for adult learners (Kitchener & King, 1990; Mezirow, 1991). Scholars have expressed in different ways the kinds of learning dependent on the presence of critical reflection. In addition to Mezirow (1991), Säljö (1979) and Freire (1970/2000) contributed ideas which have impacted the study of adult learners.

When Säljö (1979) asked adults what they understood by learning, their answers fell into two general categories. First, they responded that learning is the simple acquisition of information or behavior. In a foreign language class, that would be the equivalent of learning the content and skills. The second category of learning that adults described in Säljö's study was more complex. This learning, which Säljö referred to as real learning or understanding, requires adults to make sense of information in relationship to the real world and to themselves. It is a process by which adults acquire a new point of view, reorganize beliefs and ideas, or reevaluate assumptions. This reorganization and reevaluation requires adult learners to critically examine their own beliefs, values and behaviors in the light of new information. The difference between the two categories of learning that Säljö identifies is the presence of critical reflection.

Säljö's reevaluation is similar to the type of learning referred to by Freire (1970/2000) as conscientization. Freire made the distinction between conscientization and what he termed banking education. Banking education refers to the process of an

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instructor transferring chunks of knowledge into her students' brains without the students engaging in a process of interpretation. In contrast, conscientization occurs when those chunks of information become points of critical reflection and awareness-raising. Other foreign language education researchers have discussed critical reflection. Knutson (2006) described a process of developing cross-cultural awareness based on students' critical reflection on differences and similarities between the home and target cultures. Brady (2006) expounded a concept which he called dialogically engaged language communal communication in which critical awareness is crucial to deep learning.

Taylor (1994) explored the development of intercultural competency as a form of transformative learning. Supporting cultural awareness and the ability to critically reflect on difference, Chávez, Guido-DiBrito, and Mallory (2003) presented a model of individual diversity development that emphasizes critical reflection in order to progress from one level to the next. In this model, students begin unaware of foreign perspectives, knowing only their own. As the student progresses through individual diversity development, they go through a dualistic phase, which is inherently ethnocentric, progressing as they increase their understanding of the relative nature of difference. Students are in the final phase of this model when they are able to critically evaluate aspects of both their own and foreign perspectives, making choices about what works best for them. This model contains some substantial parallels to Mezirow's (1991) concept of perspective transformation.

Activities promoting perspective transformation. Researchers have found that certain kinds of activities foster critical reflection and perspective transformation in an adult classroom. According to Cranton (2006), these include consciousness-raising

activities where students become critically aware of their own and others' beliefs and begin to question familiar roles, activities that involve experiential learning where the student ventures into the real world to explore the subject matter, journaling and arts-based activities. Group work, also called collaborative learning, may foster transformative learning by giving students a space where they can share feelings and reactions and reflect on new experiences (Pilling-Cormick, 1997). Nevertheless, research has shown that, while the results may be positive, student reactions to collaborative learning may initially be unfavorable (Hughes Wilhelm, 1997). Brookfield (1990), Tisdell and Thompson (2007), and Guy (2007) recommended using pop culture media, and Freire (1970/2000) emphasized the importance of dialog.

In her study of church volunteers, Preciphs (as cited in Mezirow, 1991) found that transformative learning flourished in an intimate, emotional environment. This emphasis on feeding the spiritual and emotional needs of the individual is supported by Bolman and Deal (2001) who wrote about what they perceived to be spiritual hunger in organizations, a need for meaning. Some of the learning activities in Preciphs' study were dialog, storytelling, linking personal struggles with social issues, and sharing significant experiences. Personal struggles and experience were also fundamental to the experience of perspective transformation in consciousness-raising groups during the women's movement (Hart, 1990).

The body of literature dealing specifically with perspective transformation in foreign language education is small and much of this literature is theoretical in nature (see Foster, 1997; Goulah, 2006). However, the empirical research conducted on the topic of transformation in language education indicates that perspective transformation is

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prevalent in adult language classrooms (see Buttaro & King, 2001; Johnson & Mullins Nelson, 2010; King 2000). King found that class discussions were the classroom activity most often cited as contributing to students' perspective transformation.

Some language scholars have studied the power of language learning from the perspective of teaching culture through art (Mikayla Ortuño 1991, 1994) or through personal contact with the target culture (Byram & Kramsch, 2008), yet do not make clear the distinction between learning discrete units of information and undergoing a transformation in perspective.

Foreign Language Teaching Standards

One organization with influence over content standards in the field of foreign language education is the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). In the Standards for Foreign Language Learning (ACTFL, n.d.), five concepts are emphasized as the core principles of language instruction: communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities.

Communication is at the heart of second language study, whether the communication takes place face-to-face, in writing, or across centuries through the reading of literature. Through the study of other languages, students gain a knowledge and understanding of the *cultures* that use that language and, in fact, cannot truly master the language until they have also mastered the cultural contexts in which the language occurs. Learning languages provides *connections* to additional bodies of knowledge that may be unavailable to the monolingual English speaker. Through *comparisons* and contrasts with the language being studied, students develop insight into the nature of language and the concept of

culture and realize that there are multiple ways of viewing the world. Together,

these elements enable the student of languages to participate in multilingual

communities at home and around the world in a variety of contexts and in

culturally appropriate ways. (p. 3)

These standards frame foreign language education as the process of exposing

students not only to a new way of speaking, but also to a new way of thinking, acting and

of viewing the world. The five principles established by ACTFL seem to encourage

transformative learning through language study.

Social and Psychological Aspects of Language Learning

In addition to studying language as the product of learning and as a tool for

learning, much research exists on the social and psychological aspects of language

learning. These external and internal processes related to language learning appear to

have significant effects on language acquisition. Language acquisition does not occur in a

vacuum, but rather is inextricably intertwined with who we are, how we perceive

ourselves, and how we perceive others.

Areas of study which directly impact this research include acculturation,

motivation, and sociocultural contexts.

Acculturation. Acculturation is the process of engaging and adapting to another

culture. While this field of study is less interested in communicative competence than in

the social and psychological aspects of language learning, research in acculturation

theory has made clear that the two processes, both communication and acculturation, are

intertwined (Clément, 1986). Stauble (1980) explained that language acquisition is

hindered by social and psychological distance between the learner and the target language

group. Schumann (1986) found a number of social and psychological variables contribute to language learning. He created a model for acculturation in language learning that hypothesizes that language acquisition is only one factor in acculturation. In Schumann's model, a greater degree of acculturation provides for a greater degree of language learning.

One of the most disappointing aspects of Schumann's work (1986) from a language teacher's perspective is that Schumann described immersion second language learning and did not attempt to extrapolate to the language classroom from his acculturation model. In fact, he explicitly stated that he has "no proposal to make concerning language teaching" (p. 385). Despite these issues, Schumann's model of acculturation is important to this research because it became a reference point for subsequent scholarly work on acculturation (Citron, 2001).

Motivation. The study of motivation in language students in many ways parallels the study of adult learning. In the field of research on motivation, researchers identify two major categories in language learning motivation. First, students may have an instrumental motivation for learning, meaning that the students see learning as a required step in order to achieve a goal. Students in this category are motivated to learn because of what they will get out of the learning, what the learning will help them attain.

In contrast, students may also have an integrative motivation (Gardner, 2001) for language study. In this category, students identify personally with the target culture, feel affection for the target culture, or desire to communicate with people from the target culture. This integrative motivation for learning is associated with much higher learning outcomes in the research.

Connections to transformative learning theory. Describing students' attitudes

and motivations in language study can be a valuable predictor of success in the language

classroom. Clearly social and psychological factors are dynamic and can be influenced

(Gardner, 2001). Can teachers improve students' potential for success by helping to shape

their attitudes about language study or about the target culture? If transformative learning

has the potential to alter students' perceptions of reality, change their patterns of thinking,

alter the way they interpret experience and interact with the world, then it is reasonable to

conclude that social and psychological factors can be altered as students' perspectives are

transformed. Since these factors are important to student success in language study, then

it is also possible to conclude that transformative learning can affect students' linguistic

proficiency by altering social and psychological factors like acculturation and motivation.

Such a conclusion gives transformative learning a place of high importance in the

communicative foreign language classroom. In fact, Citron (2001) who drew on these and

other aspects of second language research for his work, proposed that "having a mind that

is open to other ways of looking at the world might help one to learn a new language" (p.

105).

Transformative learning theory proposes that certain kinds of learning can open

students' minds to new ways of viewing and interacting with the world. Citron (2001)

stated that "having a perspective that is not limited by one's own cultural and linguistic

experiences, but rather is open to the contrasting cultural and linguistic patterns of other

peoples can aid one in acquiring a second language" (p. 111). Therefore, promoting

transformative learning in foreign language classrooms is an important step in promoting

linguistic and communicative competence. Whether or not communicative competence is

an intended outcome of instruction, clearly students achieve greater success in foreign language learning when they also possess higher levels of ethno-relativity (Citron, 2001), increased integrative motivation, and more positive attitudes toward the target language group.

Sociocultural contexts. The study of the sociocultural contexts of language learning is a relatively new field (Cross, 2010). Theorists may prescribe methodologies that "conceive of teaching as little more than the sum of its parts-collections and patterns of behaviors and techniques" (p. 434), but language instructors negotiate the sociocultural contexts of their own teaching, of their students' learning, and of the classroom as an ecosystem. It has become clear that no one prescription for teaching and learning could possibly encompass all variables and all contexts.

The study of teachers and students as individuals impacted by and, in fact, defined by psychological and social factors is wide and expanding. Researchers and educators are becoming more aware of the fact that "social activities and the language used to regulate them are structured and gain meaning in historically and culturally situated ways" (Johnson, 2006, p. 238). The language we teach is inextricable from the sociocultural contexts in which it is used. In addition, the teachers and students of a language are also rooted in specific yet evolving contexts with their own culturally situated identities (Knutson, 2006).

Any study of the sociocultural contexts of second language acquisition requires a rethinking of some key SLA assumptions about the role of language and culture in the classroom. Zuengler and Miller (2006) described research in the sociocultural contexts of language learning: "These researchers focus not on language as input, but as a resource

for participation in the kinds of activities our everyday lives comprise. Participation in these activities is both the product and process of learning" (pp. 37-38).

Critical Pedagogy

If the sociocultural contexts of learning are described and explored, inevitably social injustice and power inequity will be uncovered. Critical pedagogy is a theoretical framework for teaching that empowers the teacher to provoke social change. Pennycook (2001) includes in the scope of critical language pedagogy any critical approach dealing with questions such as which languages and which varieties of a language are taught in schools, how to develop critical language awareness, and how ideology and language intersect. Osborn (2006) associated critical pedagogy with teaching for critical consciousness and social justice. Norton and Toohey (2004) agreed that critical language pedagogy includes the relationship between language learning and social change and expanded the domain to include "the ways that social relationships are lived out in language and how issues of power, often obscured in language research and educational practice, are centrally important in developing critical language education pedagogies" (p. 1).

Metalinguistic awareness, discussed previously as an element of one's meaning perspective, is also considered to fall into the domain of critical pedagogy (Reagan & Osborn, 2002). If linguistic knowledge is knowledge <u>of</u> a language, then metalinguistic awareness is what you know <u>about</u> language including topics such as the social context of language use, language ideology, and language variety.

Teaching language in order to inspire students to higher levels of consciousness, to social critique and action, or to personal empowerment is not a new concept. Freire

(1970/2000) taught literacy skills to Brazilian adults to open their eyes to their oppression and empower them to action. Proponents of critical pedagogy propose many of the same techniques advocated for foreign language teaching under other theoretical frameworks. Guy (2007) explained that using pop culture such as cinema in the classroom can "be a vehicle for challenging structured inequalities and social injustices" (p. 15).

How does critical pedagogy differ from traditional views of educational practices? Pennycook (2001) defined classroom practice as a political struggle, advocating "a view of the classroom as a microcosm of the larger social and cultural world, reflecting, reproducing, and changing that world" (p. 138). An instructor who employs critical pedagogies in the classroom is doing "dangerous work" (p. 138) in part because critical pedagogy resists the primary social purpose of education, which Pennycook described as the reproduction of cultural and social conditions of a group through the education of the younger members. As Kennedy (1990) wrote, the purpose of education is to indoctrinate the young with the social ideology that will help them be successful members of their group. Schools, including colleges and universities, are in their simplest form social institutions that prepare students to function and even thrive in the society in which they live.

To frame the issue in the vocabulary of transformative learning theory, *traditional pedagogy* reinforces the meaning perspective adult students have inherited from their social conditioning. *Critical pedagogy* seeks to transform students' meaning perspective, seeking out the conflict with students' assumptions and interpretations and then engaging in critically reflective classroom activities in order to understand the weight of the conflict. A language educator who employs critical pedagogies in the classroom is

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engaging in work with the potential to change not just how and what students learn about language, but also how students view and interact with the world, their ideas, values, and beliefs. Transformative theory and critical pedagogies both aim to inspire students to consciousness and social action (Heany & Horton, 1990).

Foreign Language Teaching Approaches

A substantial body of literature exists on specific foreign language techniques and methods that are most effective for specific learning outcomes. Students and teachers often have conflicting ideas about which methods are most effective (Taylor, 2009), but teachers usually prefer techniques designed to expose students to the most authentic language and culture possible (Abrams, Byrd, Boovy, & Mohring, 2006; Di Carlo, 1994) and include the use of authentic media texts such as film and television and contact with native speakers and communities (Byram & Kramsch, 2008; Kramsch, 1993). Many of these activities also promote critical reflection and can be catalysts for transformative learning in addition to learning content (Guy, 2007; Tisdell & Thompson, 2007).

Over the last century, new foreign language teaching approaches, methods and techniques have found their way into college classrooms. The terms *approach*, *method* and *technique* are often used interchangeably, but can have quite different implications. Brown (2002) defined *approach* as a large over-arching set of principles that teachers use to guide decisions about how class will be conducted, "a set of assumptions dealing with the nature of language, learning, and teaching" (p. 9). A *method* is a set of prescriptive rules for instruction based on the principles of the approach, and a *technique* is the specific activities or functions that are generated as the method and approach are applied in the classroom. In addition to *technique*, I also use the terms *classroom practice* and

classroom activity to describe the specific tasks, routines, assignments and other instructional techniques used in the classroom. Whether discussing methods, techniques or activities, all of these are rooted in a specific approach, or way of thinking about language instruction that guides the classroom.

In order to understand the techniques, practices and activities in a foreign language classroom, it is important to recognize the philosophical orientations that inform practice. Several recognized trends in approach have historically dominated college classrooms. I will not discuss every trend in foreign language teaching over the last hundred years, which are many, but rather I will restrict my discussion to two categories which constitute the major approaches to language teaching employed by contemporary language teachers (Swaffar, 1989): the traditional approach, often called the grammar-translation approach, and the paradigm that has dominated the last 30 years of research, the communicative approach.

The traditional approach to language teaching is one that students throughout history, and in today's classrooms, will recognize from their personal experiences as language learners. A mainstay of foreign language classrooms in all of recorded history, it is most often called the Grammar-Translation Method, also known as the Classical Method and the Traditional Method. Brown (2007) categorized this method as comprised of a "focus on grammatical rules, memorization of vocabulary and of various declensions and conjugations, translation of texts, doing written exercises" (p. 16). The traditional approach to language teaching breaks language components into discrete units of memorized information which are then presented to students in their own native language, also called the home language or L1. All instruction generally takes place in

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the L1 focusing on the language skills of reading and writing. The foreign language, normally referred to as the target language or the L2, is not used for self-expression or communication, but rather to translate L2 texts into the L1.

In contrast, the communicative approach to language teaching teaches language for communication and exchange. This approach first came into view in the 1970s (Mitchell & Vidal, 2001) and has steadily gained prominence. Brown (2007) described this approach as distinguished by several qualities:

1. Classroom goals are focused on all the components of CC [communicative competence] and not restricted to grammatical or linguistic competence.

2. Language techniques are designed to engage learners in the pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purpose. Organizational language forms are not the central focus but rather aspects of language that enable the learner to accomplish those purposes.

3. Fluency and accuracy are seen as complementary principles underlying communicative techniques. At times fluency may have to take on more importance than accuracy in order to keep learners meaningfully engaged in language use.

4. In the communicative classroom, students ultimately have to use the language, productively and receptively, in unrehearsed contexts. (p. 241)

The communicative approach is widely understood to be the current paradigm of language education theory and research, although it is not employed universally in practice. Many classroom instructors still employ older approaches, particularly the Grammar-Translation method (Brown, 2007). According to Brown (2002), the trend in

language education is toward a "post-methods" or pragmatic approach to instruction that picks and chooses activities best aligned with specific learning objectives.

Adult education philosophies informing approach. The traditional, grammar-translation approach used in the Western world is an outgrowth of the liberal arts philosophy of education. In the liberal arts tradition, which has its roots in ancient Greece and Rome, the goal of education is for the student to develop intellectually. Traditionally, Latin and ancient Greek are the languages thought most important for promoting intellectual development and increasing the learner's understanding of the classics in literature, philosophy and science (Brown, 2007). Latin and ancient Greek are classical languages useful for reading and translating, but with no possibility to be used in a real-world context. For that reason, in the traditional liberal arts foreign language classroom, activities emphasize the skills of translation and reading and largely ignore the spoken language.

Historically, the goal of a liberal arts education was to educate the elite, the ruling class, in order to produce a wiser class of rulers (Elias & Merriam, 2005). The focus was not on the practical application of knowledge (these future rulers would never need vocational training, after all), but rather on knowledge that contributed to the mental and moral capacity of the student. A modern liberal arts education for adults aims to produce an individual who is literate "intellectually, morally, spiritually, and aesthetically" (p. 33). The traditional method of teaching foreign languages would support this liberal arts program goal in two ways. First, adult students would learn the mechanical process associated with language such as conjugation and declension and be familiar with language structures in general terms, thus increasing their understanding and appreciation

of language and their metalinguistic awareness. Second, by acquiring the skills necessary to read texts from other languages, ancient or modern, and translate those texts into the L1, adult students can increase the pool of knowledge from which they draw. An adult student who finds herself in a program emphasizing the liberal arts philosophy will likely find that foreign language instruction is geared at improving her appreciation of foreign languages and of texts written in those languages, with little emphasis placed on the ability to use foreign language to communicate in practical settings.

However, many adult students' motivations for taking foreign language classes do not match the assumptions of the liberal arts philosophy. For adult students, returning to school is often the solution to a problem, not the pursuit of knowledge for knowledge's sake. According to Knowles' model of andragogy (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005), adults have a life-centered orientation to learning, meaning that in their lives, adult students discovered a need and have turned to education to fill that need. A life-centered orientation to learning is consistent with what researchers know about adult student motivations for going to college (Kasworm, 2003). In order to obtain a career or advance in a career, adults may choose college. Which foreign language they choose to study is also related to their career motivations (Uber Grosse, Tuman, & Critz, 1998).

These student motivations are more closely related to the communicative approach to language learning that emphasizes authentic speech and real-world contexts. In a communicative classroom, the student learns language in order to use it in practical contexts, such as work or social settings. The progressive philosophy of adult education promotes learning for solving real-world problems. Elias and Merriam (2005) cite several principles of progressive adult education. First, progressive adult education broadens the

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view of the purpose of education, permitting and even "advocating the introduction of the practical, pragmatic, and utilitarian into the curriculum" (p. 62). This is clearly similar to the description of the communicative approach as consisting of a "pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes" (Brown, 2007, p. 241). Adult foreign language learning no longer needs to be purely for intellectual stimulation, but can exist as a practical pursuit for application in students' homes, workplaces, and social settings.

A second principle of progressive adult education (Elias & Merriam, 2005) is to break away from previous teacher-centered educational philosophies and provide a new focus of education, the student. In order to create an atmosphere where students are actively participating and using the target language, it is essential for communicative language teachers to foster a student-centered environment where students' learning styles, preferences, experiences and competencies are valued and acknowledged. In the communicative approach, lesson plans and course objectives are flexible enough to adjust in order to "keep learners meaningfully engaged," as Brown (2007, p. 241) pointed out.

Another principle of progressive adult education (Elias & Merriam, 2005) is the use of innovative methodologies that break from the liberal arts tradition. The use of innovative methodologies suggests a pragmatic application of techniques (meaning, do whatever works). Also important in progressive educational philosophy is the redefinition of the teacher-learner relationship. In the progressive classroom, the teacher becomes a facilitator instead of a gatekeeper. Both of the aforementioned principles of the progressive philosophy of adult education also describe the communicative approach to foreign language teaching.

Research on student motivations for obtaining higher education indicate that the liberal arts model with its traditional, foreign language teaching methods may not be the most relevant approach to teaching foreign languages. Knowles (Knowles et al., 2005), in his theory of andragogy, supported a progressive philosophy of education when he described adult students as interested in the practical application of knowledge. This falls in line with the communicative approach to language teaching.

Although the progressive philosophy in many ways informs the current paradigm of adult foreign language education, some institutions and faculty are reluctant to give up the old, liberal arts philosophy to foreign language education. Some foreign language faculty have lamented what they see as the end of the liberal arts philosophy in higher education, expressing dismay at the trend of making foreign language education more focused on career or life application (Corral & Patai, 2008).

Organization of course content. All of the decisions that the instructor makes in order to organize the content into manageable units, decisions about how and when to teach what to whom, are of vital importance in creating an atmosphere where critical reflection and perspective transformation are fostered. Of interest in this study are two related, but distinct models for presenting content, the synthetic syllabus and the analytic syllabus (Beglar & Hunt, 2002).

When developing a synthetic syllabus, the instructor generally divides language into discrete units, verbs, nouns, tenses, etc. Then, certain units are grouped together to form lessons on grammar, vocabulary, culture, or to teach about other categories of words. The words may be organized around a theme or grouped in some other way. The key to a synthetic syllabus is that the instructor knows in advance exactly what content

will be taught and what students should learn. A synthetic syllabus is product-oriented. The content is driven by the instructor (or perhaps by the textbook author), not by the students or by the situation. The traditional approach to language teaching uses a synthetic syllabus.

In contrast, one of the innovations of the communicative approach to foreign language teaching is the analytic syllabus. This type of syllabus is a model for planning classroom activities centered on thematic units and real-world problem-solving requiring students to use appropriate language for a situation, instead of teaching specific chunks of language with the hope that students will be able to apply it in a variety of situations. In a classroom using an analytic syllabus, the instructor will design a set of tasks or activities that require students to use the L2 and students will be responsible for discovering and acquiring the language they need to complete the tasks. An analytic syllabus requires students to make key decisions about what they need to learn in order to complete tasks.

While this model is closely linked with a classroom method known as task-based learning or a task-based instruction, there is some disagreement among scholars (Sheen, 2008) about whether the task-based approach falls under the umbrella of the communicative approach. For the purpose of this study, task-based instruction is considered a sub-category of communicative method due to its emphasis on intelligibility over accuracy in commuication.

The distinction between synthetic and analytic syllabi is also discussed in Knowles' description (Knowles et al., 2005) of the difference between the *content* and *process* models of adult program planning.

The difference is this: In traditional education the teacher (or trainer or curriculum committee or somebody) decides in advance what knowledge or skill needs to be transmitted… This is a *content* model (or design)….The difference is not that one deals with content and the other does not; the difference is that the content model is concerned with transmitting information and skills, whereas the process model is concerned with providing procedures and resources for helping learners acquire information and skills. (p. 115)

Clearly, the analytic syllabus is closely aligned with the process model. Both the analytic and process concepts focus less on *what* students learn and more on *how* they learn it by providing students with a framework that guides their learning while, ultimately, giving them autonomy over their learning experience. The analytic syllabus and the process model stand in contrast to the synthetic syllabus and the content model which both decide beforehand what specific discrete information students will learn, focusing more on the product of student learning rather than on the act of student learning.

Student and teacher roles. The traditional approach to foreign language teaching employs a rigid classroom hierarchy where the teacher makes the key decisions about what to learn, when to learn it, and the student learns what he is told. Freire (1970/2000) used the term *banking education* to refer to this process where the teacher attempts to transmit knowledge to the student. The student is simply a receptacle of the teacher's knowledge.

In a communicative classroom, the teacher's role is that of a facilitator and the student has a great deal of autonomy over what specific grammatical and lexical units to

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learn and how to interpret these units in contexts. The primary role of the instructor in a communicative classroom is to engage students in the processes of learning by guiding them and giving them feedback, allowing learners' wants and needs to guide instruction (Finney, 2002).

An adult student who desires autonomy over his or her own learning is referred to as a self-directed learner (Knowles et al., 2005). Many researchers contest this characteristic of adult learners because not all adults exhibit this characteristic in the same way or to the same degree (Ross-Gordon, 2003). One interpretation of this term is that learners should be given control over course objectives and content, as would occur in a class using a purely analytic syllabus. Rachal (2002) pointed out that this is often an impractical goal and rarely achieved. In reality, a student who desires to be self-directed is one who will thrive in a learner-centered classroom where his or her ideas, experiences, learning styles, and personal learning objectives are valued and included. In fact, Ross-Gordon's research indicated that adult students feel most comfortable in a classroom when their instructor is prepared, professional and clearly knowledgeable on the subject matter and creates a classroom environment that is respectful of diverse backgrounds and abilities. Adult students want an instructor who is clearly capable of leading a class, not one who will defer to students on all decisions. This desire for a capable, professional classroom leader does not conflict with the idea of the learner-centered classroom. The learner-centered classroom is one of the defining characteristics of the communicative approach, representing a dramatic departure from the teacher-centered classroom associated with the traditional approach.

Sources of knowledge about language. Another innovation of the communicative approach to language teaching is the number of sources from which students draw their knowledge about a language. As mentioned previously, in the traditional approach, one of the focal points is on the translation of texts, especially of the classics. Students' only exposure to authentic language is likely to be classic literary texts written by noted authors. Aside from these texts, the instructor is the student's only other source of knowledge about the language. From an adult learning perspective, this represents a serious deficiency in the approach.

Dewey (1938/1997) described teaching and learning as the reconstruction of experience. From Dewey's perspectives, a teacher's job was to provide adequate and engaging experiences from which his students could learn. Knowles' (Knowles et al., 2005) theory of andragogy explains that experience is the richest source for adult learning. Lindeman (1961) explained that adult experience is the element separating the education of children from that of adults. Because of the ability of adult students to learn from experience, classroom practices that encourage experiential learning are useful.

Kolb (1984) conceptualized experiential learning as a process that involved four distinct phases: concrete experience, personal reflection, theoretical conception, and active experimentation. This model is consistent with a technique for grammar instruction called inductive grammar that is associated with the communicative approach. The traditional method uses deductive reasoning to teach grammar, meaning that first students learn the rules and then apply to rules to a variety of sentences in different contexts. With inductive grammar techniques, students see or hear authentic examples of grammatical structures first, a phase Kolb described as concrete experience. Then, the students work,

through a variety of reflective and collaborative techniques, to explain the patterns in the examples they have seen. This is what Kolb called personal reflection. The third step in inductive grammar begins with the teacher and student creating a rule, or generalizable category, that accurately describes the examples and then students applying their understanding of the grammatical concept in new contexts. In Kolb's experiential learning cycle, these are called abstract conception and active experimentation, respectively. Clearly, the communicative, inductive technique of grammar instruction allows adult students to harness their propensity to learn from experience, while the traditional, deductive technique does not.

In addition to Kolb's model, experiential learning has also come to mean any learning that occurs as a result of actually doing an activity in a real-world setting, such as a practicum, apprenticeship, field trip, service learning, or job-shadowing (Cranton, 2006). Adults in particular are used to this type of learning from their real-world experiences as employees, family members and community members. Sometimes referred to as informal and incidental learning (Marsick & Watkins, 2001), adults in life pick up the skills and knowledge they need to succeed. How do our adult students learn what they need to know to be functional in life? They may have opportunities to learn in a classroom or training session, they may read books, and they may even have mentors. However, for the large majority of adults, they learn by doing, picking up skills as they go. This is a valuable skill in the classroom, able to be harnessed through classroom practices that promote language learning in real-world settings, such as service learning and the use of authentic texts.

These two activities in particular, service learning and the use of authentic texts, are important innovations associated with the communicative approach. Since the communicative approach requires students to "use the language, productively and receptively, in unrehearsed contexts" (Brown, 2007, p. 241), a variety of texts must be available to the student for practice, both written and aural texts, representing different real-world contexts. The term *authentic texts* refers to texts in the L2 created for purposes other than classroom instruction, such as television commercials and informational brochures for products and services. Authentic texts are highly encouraged in the communicative approach and allow adults to use experience as a source of knowledge.

Service learning, embraced by communicative language teachers and supported by communicative principles, draws on two of the pillars of andragogy. These concepts are: 1) that adults learn best from experience and 2) that adult learning should be oriented to solving real-world problems. The communicative approach attempts to be more context-based by giving students opportunities to interact, discuss, observe, and try new things in real-world, or simulated real-world contexts.

Language of instruction. In a traditional foreign language classroom, students are taught using their native language or L1. In a communicative classroom, students learn the target language by actually hearing and speaking in that language, the L2. Ideally, according to the communicative approach, the entire class should be conducted in the L2 with only limited, isolated use of the L1. Sound linguistic principles support the technique of using only the L2 as the language of instruction. It promotes language acquisition and fluency. However, from an adult learning perspective, some risks are posed for adult learners.

In general, adult students are used to feeling competent and in charge of their lives. Yet, re-entry into college can cause adult learners to feel a lack of confidence in their abilities (Ross-Gordon, 2003) and inner turmoil and disharmony (Bauer & Mott, 1990). In addition to the anxiety caused by reentry into college, the foreign language classroom specifically can be a very unsettling place for the adult learner. Learner identity can be challenged (Rossiter, 2007) and become unstable (Foster, 1997). Adults especially may experience negative feelings when they are unable to rely on their linguistic competence in their native language to engage intellectually (Lindberg, 2003; Knutson, 2006; Schumann, 1986; Shulz & Elliott, 2000). This volatile situation may lead to one of several possible outcomes. These feelings may be overwhelming for adult students, causing them to disengage from the learning process or even doubt their ability to learn. In another possible outcome, these experiences become a point of transition for adult students, called a disorienting dilemma, and usher in a process of perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1991) where the adult students begin to question their previous values, beliefs and actions, evaluating and incorporating new perspectives into their own.

In order to promote transformative learning, it is vital that instructors give their adult students the opportunity to reflect, react, and collaborate with others to move through this difficult transition period. The traditional approach gives students a space where they can interact in the L1, engaging critically and intellectually with the material. The communicative approach, with its reliance on the L2, runs the risk of alienating and marginalizing adult students who need to use the L1 to cope with the shocking experience of learning a new language and culture.

Previous Studies

At least two previous studies have looked at adult language students' experiences of perspective transformation and the classroom activities that contributed to the transformation. The first (King, 2000) was a mixed-methods study in an English as a Second Language (ESL) setting. The second (Johnson & Mullins Nelson, 2010) was a pilot study for this research, a qualitative inquiry into students' experiences of perspective transformation after two semesters of college Spanish.

ESL study. King (2000) used a mixed-methods approach, employing both interviews and a survey instrument she developed (King 1997, 2006) to examine the experiences of adult students of ESL. The study found that the majority of participants experienced perspective transformation and that class discussions were the classroom activity most often cited as contributing to students' perspective transformation. King also found that students reported experiencing perspective transformation in the area of reducing ethnocentrism and increasing intercultural awareness.

While King's (2000) study surveyed a large number of participants (n = 208), the reliability of the findings may be questioned due to the fact that the students were all English language learners and the survey, which constituted the bulk of the data collection efforts, was in academic English. Follow-up interviews were conducted with only 24 participants, therefore participants' understanding of the vocabulary and structures on the survey cannot be assumed. As has been discussed previously, adult language learners often need to use the L1 to intellectually engage, and all of the data collection in this study, both surveys and interviews, took place in English, the participants' L2.

Another critique of King's (2000) investigation is the inclusion of some kinds of experiences under the umbrella of perspective transformation. Mezirow (1997) discussed the difference between a transformation of one's meaning perspective and a change in one's point of view. The latter takes place more frequently and does not necessarily indicate that fundamental changes have taken place in the way the individual interprets reality and interacts with the world. One of the example questions King reported in her published study was, "Since you have been taking ESL classes, do you think any of your ideas or points of view have changed?" Some of the themes reported by the researcher in this study seem to represent changes in point of view rather than perspective transformation. For example, some of the participants reported that as a result of taking an ESL class, they found English to be easier and more enjoyable than they had anticipated. While this is a wonderful outcome for any language class, it does not in and of itself represent a critical evaluation of one's assumptions about reality, but simply a change in point of view or an expansion of one's existing meaning perspective.

In addition to the above critiques of the study by King (2000), other differences may set her study apart from the study undertaken here. While both studies evaluate classrooms where students are learning a second language, the settings are dissimilar. As international students, the participants in King's study represent, for the most part, recent arrivals to the United States who are inundated constantly by American language and culture, both in and out of the classroom. In contrast, for most college students in the mid-south, contact with the Spanish language and cultures is extremely limited outside of the classroom. In the study undertaken here, the participants may only experience the foreign language while in class.

Another difference is the degree to which the researchers evaluate the role of classroom practices. While King asked students about the activities that contributed to their perspective transformation on the survey and possibly during the interviews, activities were framed in broad categories such as "essays" or "group discussion". Additionally, the descriptions of activities reported by students do not appear to have been triangulated through other data sources such as interviews with the teacher or direct observation by the researcher. In my study, multiple data sources were used to observe, understand, and analyze classroom practices.

Spanish study. In the previously mentioned pilot study (Johnson & Mullins Nelson, 2010), a qualitative investigation of three students' transformative learning after two semesters of college Spanish, students reported transformative learning in three areas: 1) students identified with Hispanic cultures; 2) they increased their awareness of diversity; and 3) they became aware of ethnocentricity. Participants in that study credited three types of classroom activities with making significant contributions to their perspective transformation: 1) meeting native speakers, 2) collaborative learning, and 3) viewing and analyzing films.

As a result of the pilot study (Johnson & Mullins Nelson, 2010), I became convinced of several design improvements that needed to be made. In the previous study, I conducted in-depth interviews with three adult women who had already completed two semesters of college Spanish. By interviewing after the semesters were completed, the participants were able to look back over an entire year of language learning and guide me through the long process of perspective transformation that they underwent. However, while there were gains in the maturity of the perspective, there were losses in the

accuracy of the recollections. Many times the participants were unable to recall the exact circumstances and details of their classroom experiences.

In this study, I addressed this issue by conducting interviews with students as they were completing their first semester of college Spanish, so details were fresher in their minds. In addition, I collected ongoing data in the form of learning journals specifically intended to document student learning over the course of the semester in order to have records of what happened, when and how. Students in this study did not progress as far in their perspective transformation as students in the pilot study and did not have as mature a perspective on the experience. However, as previously discussed, Mezirow (1991) indicated that it is, in fact, in the initial stages of transformation that classroom activities emphasizing critical reflection can be the most useful. This study was designed to capture students' experiences during those crucial early stages of perspective transformation.

In the pilot study, the student descriptions of the classroom activities were not accurate or detailed enough to give me the data necessary to paint a complete picture of the instructional techniques. While students all agreed that some techniques were very helpful, I was unable to reconstruct their experiences and explore the techniques based on participant interviews alone. In the study undertaken here, multiple data collection methods were employed to provide thick, rich descriptions of the classroom conditions.

Conclusions of previous research. While this research did not replicate either of its two predecessors, King's (2000) study of ESL students or the pilot study (Johnson & Mullins Nelson, 2010), it did contain similar elements to both, and built on lessons learned from them. Based on the findings of the aforementioned two studies, I could hypothesize prior to conducting the research that students in a first semester Spanish

course may experience perspective transformation in the area of intercultural awareness and competence.

While, on the surface, the two previous studies do not agree on which activities contribute most to transformative learning, upon closer examination, the two studies do have important common findings. King's (2000) study cited group discussion as the most important activity and Johnson and Mullins Nelson (2010) cited two activities done in a group discussion format (that is, collaborative learning and viewing and analyzing films). Therefore, I could also hypothesize that group interaction may play a role in promoting transformative learning in the proposed study.

Finally, neither of the two previous studies evaluated the impact of transformative learning on the participants. However, because of the affective nature of some of the results, for example, in King's (2000) study, a change in how students feel about learning English and, in the pilot study (Johnson & Mullins Nelson, 2010), students identifying strongly with another group, I could hypothesize that students would report a change in affect as part of the impact of their transformative learning experience.

Chapter 3

Methodology

This study was based on a constructivist epistemology. Based on my understanding of Crotty's (1998/2004) definition of constructivism, I believe that students actively construct meaning in the classroom, interpreting objects and making sense of them as individuals and in social groups. I chose an interpretivist theoretical framework (Bhattacharya, 2008) to investigate this problem because my intent here was not to challenge power structures or deconstruct students' experiences, but simply to understand students' experiences of perspective transformation and their perceptions of certain teaching techniques.

Case Study Design

Mackey and Gass (2005) described case study research in second language education as focusing on cultivating a holistic view of teaching and learning and providing detailed descriptions of specific learners or classes. College terms are divided into semesters which provided me with a convenient time-table for my research. I decided that planning the time-table of my study around the existing college calendar would be prudent. Because I desired to pursue research that examined teaching and learning from multiple perspectives and because the research took place during a bounded period of time with a specific, limited group of students, in this instance one classroom during the spring 2009 semester, this study lent itself to a case study design (Creswell, 2007).

Chaudron (1988) described four distinct traditions of research methodology in second language classrooms: psychometric, interaction analysis, discourse analysis and

ethnographic. The ethnographic tradition is further explained as working to "interpret

behaviors from the perspective of the participants' different understandings rather than

from the observer's or analyst's supposedly 'objective' analysis" (pp. 14-15).

As I worked through the issues of what sort of data to collect and how to collect

that data, an ethnographic approach to this case study clearly aligned itself with my

previously established theoretical framework. In theory, an ethnographic study is one in

which the research site is thoroughly examined and described by a researcher who spends

a prolonged period of time in the research setting. In contrast, my proposed study had a

limited research focus (transformative learning) and a pre-determined time constraint

(one semester), which McKay (2006) described as hallmarks of case study L2 research.

How to combine the specific focus of second-language research with the comprehensive

nature of an ethnographic study is an issue for many L2 researchers (Chaudron, 1988). A

more accurate way to describe my research design here is to say that it is a case study

design employing various ethnographic methods.

Case Selection

I studied a first-semester Spanish class, Elementary Spanish I, at an urban,

Southern, community college. For the purposes of this study, the college will be referred

to as Urban Southern Community College or USCC. The metropolitan area in which this

community college is located consists of a county of nearly one million people, of whom

more than 450,000 residents, approximately 50.6%, are African American. Nearly

400,000 or 43.4% of the county's residents are White (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). The

community college I chose as the setting for my investigation is a large multi-campus

institution which sprawls across the urban center and has campuses in the suburban and

rural communities as well. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2011), the demographics of the college differs some from the city it serves with fall 2010 enrollments reporting 62% of the student body African American and 29% White. Clearly, the community college serves a racial cross section of the community. With 45% of students in the fall 2009 semester (the most recent time period for which age data were available) over age 25, the college serves a substantial number of adult, non-traditional students. For the purposes of this study, any student over the age of 18 is considered an adult; however, I hoped that by choosing an institution with significant numbers of adults over age 25, I would have a wider age range of potential participants for the study.

Based on my knowledge of the demographics of the city and of the community college, and based on my personal experiences and relationships in the community, I used purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002) to choose the case for my study. This approach to sampling required that I first decide what I would study, and then find an information-rich participant or group that will provide me with the data I need to answer the research questions. There were several criteria for my sample in addition to the case being information-rich. First, I specifically searched for a class I felt would provide the best setting for my inquiry based on my statement of research purpose: a section of first-semester Spanish at the community college level. Second, it was important to me to find an instructor with whom I could have a positive, collaborative relationship. I believed that my research would only be useful if the instructor saw me as a colleague and guest and allowed me full access to her classroom and students. A cold, adversarial or indifferent relationship with the classroom instructor would have been very difficult to work around.

For the pilot study to this research (Johnson & Mullins Nelson, 2010), I used a convenience sample of four sections of Elementary Spanish II from USCC. One of the reasons this convenience sample had been available to me was that, several years previous to this study, I had been an instructor at USCC. Two of the sections I surveyed were taught by one instructor and two were taught by another instructor. However, all of the participants who volunteered for the pilot study came from one particular instructor's classes. I will refer to that particular instructor with the pseudonym, Ms. Salazar. Based on the high number of students from her classes that reported transformation and based on student descriptions of the classroom environment, I came to suspect that Ms. Salazar taught her classes in a way that encouraged transformation. Therefore, I approached her about collaborating with me again. I used purposeful sampling to identify this particular instructor and then worked with her to identify one of her Elementary Spanish I classes that she would allow me to research.

Although Ms. Salazar has been an acquaintance of mine for years, prior to this research, I had never worked with Ms. Salazar. She began working at USCC after I left my position there. Furthermore, I had no contact with any of the students in her class prior to beginning this research.

For the study described here, Ms. Salazar taught a first semester Spanish class at USCC in the spring of 2009 and invited me to sit in on any and all classes, to participate in her decision-making process about the course structure, and to incorporate an additional assessment technique into the course that was useful to me as I researched her classroom. In addition, she awarded extra credit to students who agreed to participate in this study in order to encourage participation.

The course section I observed met on Tuesday and Thursday from 2:10 p.m. until 3:40 p.m. I obtained consent for the study from the host institution and from the Institutional Review Board at my home university.

Data Sources

Employing various data collection methods in order to get as many perspectives as possible on a case is an important aspect of case study design (Creswell, 2007; Nunan, 1992). By examining the same classroom events through multiple perspectives using multiple data sources, I triangulated the data (Denzin, 1970), ensuring the most accurate representation possible. Based on Chaudron's (1988) description of ethnography in second-language classroom research in which he described first recording behaviors and then interpreting them, I decided that there were two key sorts of data that I must collect. First, I needed to have some record of student learning and behaviors. Second, I needed to work through the data found in the records with the students themselves in order to interpret meaning based on the participants' own understandings, rather than on my perspective as researcher.

Of course, there are many ways to record the events in a classroom. I decided that getting first-hand perspectives of the learning taking place would be my goal. But whose perspectives? I required my own perspective, my own observations of what happened in the classroom, so that I would be more informed about how the class activities took place and better prepared to discuss activities with students. Also, I required the students themselves to report on their own learning and behaviors to get a truly first-hand account of what was taking place in the classroom. After all, it is not my own individual

interpretation of events that will answer my research questions. My research will only be successful if I can get at the heart of students' experiences.

In order to collect such data, I decided that three general categories of data sources would be necessary.

1. participant observation in the classroom

2. learning journals

3. individual interviews

My belief was that by using multiple data sources to examine the classroom from different angles, I would better be able to determine how, when and for whom transformative learning was taking place.

"Researchers try to get as close as possible to the participants being studied" (Creswell, 2007, p. 18). With this in mind, my data collection began with student learning journals and participant observation, during which time I took field notes, made audio recordings of classroom activities, and collected samples of course handouts. In addition, I attempted to build rapport with potential interview participants through my presence in the classroom and through informal conversations before class or during breaks. The data gleaned through participant observation also served to create a baseline of student behavior (Nunan, 1992) that could later be used to determine if any changes in observable behavior had taken place.

My first day of observation was at the mid-point of the semester after the final drop date for the semester. The instructor, Ms. Salazar, invited me to speak to the class, introduce myself, and describe my purpose there. Because of the high number of absences in any given day, I repeated my introduction two class periods later. Student

listened to an explanation of the study and of informed consent. I invited each of them to participate and made it clear that there would be no negative repercussions for opting out of the study. The instructor, Ms. Salazar, reiterated that participation was voluntary and that she would assign extra credit as an incentive to any student who participated in the study.

Thirty students had begun the semester in this Elementary Spanish I class. Of the 22 students still attending the class at the point I began observation, 21 consented to participate. These students signed and returned to me a statement of informed consent (see Appendix A). Learning journals were only collected for the 21 participating students and interview participants were chosen from the same group of 21. Two factors, occasional absences and students who stopped attending the course before the end of the semester, reduced the total number of students in the class on any particular day.

The three methods of data collection resulted in several types of data. First, I collected data from the participants in the form of learning journals. Second, I had my own observations, both recorded in my field notes and the audio recording of selected classroom activities. Third, I had in-depth interview audio recordings which I also transcribed.

Student learning journals. I collected data in the form of learning/reflective journals from all of the students who volunteered for the study. Rooted in the ethnographic tradition of L2 research (Chaudron, 1988), diaries or journals are well-regarded as an important tool for studying language learning (Chaudron, 1988; Nunan, 1992) and proved to be a vital component of this study. Journals were completed by students during the last 5 minutes of class meetings. Since such a short period of time

elapsed between the events in the classroom and the students' journaling, there was little room for doubt as to the accuracy of the participants' recollections.

Even in this study, where interviews were conducted during the same semester as the class, days or weeks may have passed between the critical events in the classroom and the interview. However, the learning journals provided an introspective data source which recorded students' experiences with the smallest possible gap between the event and the reporting (Nunan, 1992) because the journals were administered in the last minutes of each class period.

I collaborated with the instructor, Ms. Salazar, to implement learning journals as part of the class assessment routine. Ms. Salazar readily agreed to this and was excited about implementing this additional assessment as a means of tracking students' reactions to their learning. I had access to the learning journals for all students who volunteered for the study. The learning journals required the students to engage in a few minutes of individual, reflective writing at the end of each class period about what and how they learned that day. At the end of the class period, each student received a piece of unlined white paper with instructions for answering the questions at the top, followed by 2 to 4 questions, typed and evenly-spaced on the page.

Since the learning journals were part of the normal assessment routine of the class, I understood that I would not have the final say in what questions were asked in each class period or if the questions were always the same or different. As part of our agreement, the instructor had the authority to change, add, or remove questions to fit her assessment needs. In our discussions about this research prior to undertaking the study, I made it clear that I was interested in learning what students were learning each day, how

they were learning, and if they were having any strong reactions, positive or negative, to the course materials. The instructor assured me that she would accommodate the needs of the study and that, once data collection had begun, I would be able to participate in the development of learning journal questions that would meet both of our needs. In fact, the instructor was more than accommodating and allowed me to ask exactly the questions I saw fit in order to understand student reactions.

The instructor was not able to collect learning journals for every day of class. When time did not allow or when the activities were not conducive to taking time out for journaling, the instructor did not collect learning journals for that day. The journals consisted of three to five questions designed to discover what students were learning, how they were learning, how they felt about their learning, and how their learning was affecting other areas of their lives. Learning journals were collected for 15 class meetings on January 27 and 29, February 3. 9, 24 and 26, March 5, 19, 24, 26 and 31, April 2, 4, 7 and 9. Due to inconsistencies in student attendance, the total number of journals collected for any particular student may be fewer than 15. The journal guides for the meetings from January 27 through March 19 contained 4 questions:

1. What did you learn in class today?

2. How did you learn it?

3. Since the last class meeting, did you have any experiences outside of class that related to what we are learning in Spanish class?

4. Is there anything we learned or discussed that caused you to feel excited, shocked, or disturbed? If nothing, then leave this question blank. If so, please explain.

The journal guide for March 24 also included a fifth question, "Is there any topic or content that you wish the instructor would address more in class?" The journal for March 26 included the four questions numbered above plus the fifth question, "Has this class had any impact on your life?" The journal guide for March 31, April 7 and included the fifth question, "Other than grammar and vocabulary, what other things have you learned in class so far?" The learning journal guides for April 2 and 4 included the first two questions listed above, "What did you learn in class today?" and "How did you learn it?", and a third question, "Is there anything we learned or discussed that caused you to have any strong feelings or reactions? If nothing, then leave this question blank. If so, please explain."

Analysis of student learning journals. I collected and analyzed learning journals for students in the class who agreed to participate in the study. I made two copies of each participating student's journal for the study. The original copy of students' learning journals remained with the classroom instructor. I organized my copies of the journal pages into two groups. The first group, I filed by student name. The second group, I filed by date. This allowed me to more easily search within the journals. During the analysis, I made a third set of copies of each journal. I used this set of copies to write on during the coding process, then to cut with scissors in order to rearrange the codes emerging from the data and experiment with categories in a more concrete, spatial way.

Student responses in the learning journals were coded and categorized (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). I read and reread the journals, extracting the information relevant to the research questions. I created indexes of codes on 3x5 cards by writing on the card or by pasting pieces of copies of the learning journals themselves. These 3x5 cards proved very

useful in allowing me to manipulate the data, experimenting with categories and themes, in order to make sense of the large amount of student responses I had gathered. The process of coding and categorizing the archival data began as soon as archival data began to be collected and was ongoing, continuing throughout the research, informed by the observation and interview data. As the study progressed, I continued to review literature which added to the analysis process new theoretical considerations and ways of understanding the data.

After conducting the preliminary analysis using hard copies, I typed key portions of the learning journals into a Word document to facilitate coding, particularly the responses of the eight interview participants. I found converting the hand-written documents into an electronic format especially useful later in my analysis when I compared the interview participants' ongoing responses in the student learning journals to later revelations during the one-on-one interviews.

Participant observation data. The second source of data for this study was participant observation which consisted of observing class meetings, recording details in my field notes and occasionally audio recording activities.

Participant observation took place in March and April 2009. I collaborated with the instructor to choose approximately 10 hours of class time to observe, based on her syllabus and preferences. I was only interested in attending class when instruction was taking place. Each class lasted 90 minutes and I attended six entire class meetings and two partial meetings, leaving early when the students were engaged in silent, individual assessment work. Participant observation required collaboration and relationship-building

with the classroom instructor since the decisions she made about how and what to teach directly affected the participants in this study.

Audio recordings. My intention was to use a digital recorder to create accurate records of vital classroom activities, particularly those that were planned, orchestrated learning activities that engaged the whole class. In reality, I recorded a variety of classroom activities including some that proved difficult to hear in the audio recording because of sound quality or the distance from my recorder to individual students in the room. All in all, I recorded approximately 3.5 hours of group discussion, interactive lecture, and question and answer time.

Field notes. While class was being conducted, I jotted down field notes in order to record the atmosphere, student responses, and my own reflections and observations. I attempted to provide description of the environment and record as much detail as possible within the constraints of the situation. Early in the semester, before I began any preliminary analysis, I found it difficult to know what details were important and which were not. Later observations proved much more useful as I had come to know the students and begun reading their student learning journals. I attempted to record my observations using plain, descriptive language, avoiding jargon and the intermingling of my interpretations with the description (Spradley, 1980). In addition to observing the overall environment of the classroom and the practices employed therein, I observed the students, making note of how students interacted with the material or with their classmates.

Analysis of participant observation data. During each observation, I recorded notes in my field journal and audio recorded some instructional activities. These audio

recording were used to help me review the notes I made in my field journal during the data analysis. I played them back as I read through my field notes and annotated the original journal based on what I heard on the recording. After each class observation, I reread and annotated my dated field notes, adding my reflections, interpretations and perceptions. I then organized my notes in a binder so that pages could be removed, copied, and reorganized as needed.

Unfortunately, classroom observation did not prove to be as fertile a source of data on students' experiences as I had expected. As I observed the class, I paid close attention to student interactions both in small groups and with the instructor and the larger class. While I was able to better understand the classroom practices through my observation, I found it difficult to ascertain what the students were thinking and feeling based on the generally tame classroom environment I observed. "One of the problems confronting the language researcher is that a great deal of the hard work involved in language development and use is invisible, going on in the head of the learner" (Nunan, 1992). While students in the class occasionally had strong reactions, such as reactions to homework assignments or distress about grades, the reactions were not necessarily indicative of emotional or psychological change. I found that the controlled, dutiful students I observed in the classroom were more forthcoming in their learning journals and interviews than in the context of class. This result is consistent with what other researchers have found when conducting research using both participant observation and learning journals (Brown, 1985; Chaudron, 1988).

Another significant barrier in determining whether students were experiencing perspective transformation based on classroom observation was my lack of familiarity

with the students in the class. It took weeks for me to get to know the students well enough to know them by name and understand their ways of interacting in the classroom. In addition, as an outsider in the classroom, I believe that my very presence in the classroom had an effect of their behavior, making my observations of students' reactions less trustworthy.

Despite the lack of data gleaned about the students themselves during my observation, I monitored students' learning journals for indications that students were experiencing elements of perspective transformation. I found the learning journals to be a much richer source of information than participant observation with regards to assessing whether or not students were experiencing perspective transformation. Students seemed to be more open and expressive in writing than they were in the classroom.

The analysis of observation data occurred throughout the study, informing both subsequent observation and interviews. After a preliminary analysis of my early observations, I began to see that the observational data was a rich source of information on classroom practices, but that, in most cases, I was not able to determine what, if any, reaction individual students were having to the material.

In addition to my field notes and recordings, I collected handouts that the teacher prepared for the students. These various records of classroom practices were used as part of the observation data for triangulation. In other words, the field notes, recordings, and handouts were examined in order to develop more detailed, accurate descriptions of the classroom activities that participants describe in the interviews and learning journals.

Interview data. The third data collection method I used was individual interviews.

Participant selection. Based on data collected through participant observation and learning journals, I used purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990) to identify interview participants who seemed to have undergone the initial stages of perspective transformation during the class. As discussed earlier, these outward signs included seeking new sources of knowledge, becoming more critical of their own and others' perspectives, or reporting a disorienting dilemma. Several students showed evidence of seeking out new sources of knowledge by making conscious efforts to meet and get to know native Spanish-speakers in real-world contexts. Other students discussed cultural differences in their learning journals and expressed a desire to learn more.

The participant interviews took place in late April 2009 during the last weeks of the semester. All interviews were conducted in the college cafeteria on campus just before or just after class time, when the cafeteria was not in use.

Interviews. Based on my ongoing analysis of learning journals and, to a lesser extent on classroom observation, I invited selected students to participate in an in-depth, semi-structured, one-on-one interview (deMarrais, 2004) outside of class. The interviews lasted between 30 and 120 minutes. The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured, conversational interview technique which did not define a script of specific questions for participants, but rather gave multiple categories of information desired and acceptable variations of the questions in each category (see Appendix B).

For example, had I used a structured interview, I would have asked each participant the same question, "Was there a moment or a time during the semester when you first realized that you saw things in a new way?" However, in this less structured, conversational interview style, I attempted to allow my conversations with each

participant to be guided in large part by the participant's own interests. If at some point in the interview the participant mentioned that there was a time when they started to see things in a new way, I made note of it and followed up with more questions. If that topic did not come up on its own in the interview, then I made an effort to ask the question directly before the interview concluded.

My assessment is that a less structured approach allowed me as the interviewer to create a comfortable dialog with the participants and elicit adequate responses in the way that best fit the particular participant. An important part of this dialog was my role of researcher being as important as my role of fellow human being. I spoke with the participants as if I were speaking to my own friends, answering personal questions and giving opinions when asked. I was myself, both "me" the person and "me" the researcher, and I believe this intimacy and informality created an atmosphere in which participants could speak freely. In a less structured, more intimate interview setting, the participant is more able to open up and delve into personal experiences in her own way and at her own pace (Mackey & Gass, 2005). Dijkstra, Van der Veen, and Van der Zouwen (1985) conducted a study in which they compared a formal, structured interview style with a more informal, conversational interview style in which the interviewer maintains no emotional or social distance from the participant. The authors paraphrased Denzin (1970) with their idea that "the interview situation should approximate maximally routine, everyday social conversation, so that the respondent realizes, 'I am in a personal relationship with the interviewer.'" Referred to as a "socio-emotional style", this technique "is a prerequisite for adequate information reporting, particularly when sensitive, personal topics are involved" (p. 38). Given the deeply personal nature of the

subject matter discussed in this research, using a socio-emotional style was deemed vital to the success of the one-on-one interviews.

One of the drawbacks of using an informal, conversational, less-structured interview style is that the some of the data elicited during the interview could be biased due to the researcher's personal involvement in the interview. However, researchers (Dijkstra et al., 1985) have found that this risk is offset by the high quality of the data discovered using a more intimate, personal approach. With this drawback in mind, I was cognizant in my analysis to examine the data for evidence that my input had a clear effect on the participant's response. My intention was to create rapport and build relationship with participants, never to misrepresent the data.

Another way that my socio-emotional interview style affected the study, in particular this written report of the study, was in my decision not to include a table or chart giving participants' ages, ethnicities, and other descriptive information. During the interviews, the students and I discussed their backgrounds and identities extensively. I found out about their complex and changing ideas about race and gender. I heard them describe how their ideas about family and parenting were rooted in their own traditions and changing as they learned about another culture. In light of these deep discussions, it did not seem appropriate to reduce students' ideas to one or two word responses on a chart. Ten was of mixed ethnic background and ultimately identified himself as a Black man. Yet, we spent 20 minutes discussing his childhood experiences of developing a racial and ethnic identity. Jade had been happily married with three children. Although her husband died two years prior to our interview, she never identified herself as widowed or single. She did discuss that she had been married and was open to dating at

some point in the future. How could I reduce these two individual's experiences to "Black" and "widowed" for my chart? I believe it was the emotional depth of the interviews and the intimate rapport that we developed that allowed me to see beyond simple descriptors for these students. I wanted the written report of my research to reflect that depth and intimacy.

For students who were unable to schedule interviews during the last weeks of the semester or who required more time for follow-up questions, I offered them the option of continuing our dialog over email. Researchers have found that internet-based communication can provide rich data (Markham, 2004) as emotionally-authentic as face-to-face interviews (Suzuki, Ahluwalia, Arora, & Mattis, 2007), so I felt comfortable using email as an interview medium. I did inform each student that while I would use their electronic communication for the purposes of this research, the nature of email made it impossible for me to assure them confidentiality. In actuality, the follow-up emails did not contribute substance to the study. I suspect that the face-to-face rapport I developed during the interviews did not easily transfer. All of the required data was gleaned from the three original data sources: student learning journals, participant observation, and one-on-one student interviews.

My intention with the selection of interview participants was to interview every student in the course who seemed to be experiencing perspective transformation, whether through classroom interactions or in the learning journal. In all, I selected eight students for in-depth interviews. All eight students accepted my invitation to participate. Interviews were recorded using a digital audio recorder and then uploaded onto my computer to be stored both on my personal home computer and on an external drive.

Analysis of interview data. I expected to see students testing their own assumptions in the classroom setting or experiencing a heightened awareness of emotions, physical states, and intuition. In fact, I discovered that students who expressed strong feelings in the learning journals were not necessarily visibly moved during class activities. Therefore, participants for the interview were primarily chosen using the learning journals as a basis for identification of the early stages of perspective transformation.

I listened to the interviews multiple times and transcribed them onto Word documents for analysis. My first step in analysis was to read over my transcripts and use brackets to insert my reactions, analyses, and possible connections to theory. I also used brackets to insert information about the participant's tone of voice, inflection, or emotional state that were conveyed in the audio recording but less obvious in the written transcript.

The next step in my analysis was to sort the data through the process of extracting codes and developing categories. Wolcott (1994) described the coding process as highlighting or extracting certain pieces of the data as being important or reoccurring. Developing categories is the act of identifying patterns in the codes and organizing them according to the patterns. The categories must then be related back to the literature review in order to contextualize them within the theoretical framework of the study. The data seemed to sort itself into categories with regards to the first and third research questions; the coding process revealed clear patterns in the data. However, analyzing the data to answer the second research question "How do the participants describe the impact of their perspective transformation?" proved to be more difficult. I suspect that the highly

personal natures of the participants' responses and the striking individuality of their experiences made it more difficult for me to uncover the unifying narrative theme under their stories. However, with time, persistence and creativity, I eventually had an "aha" moment when the puzzle pieces came together and I felt I understood the data I had reshuffled dozens of times looking for the meaning behind the experiences.

Organized into codes and categories, the data supplied answers to the research questions. During the process of interview data analysis, if I discovered topics that required further probing or clarification, I returned to the literature and the other data sources for clarification. For example, if a student mentioned a particular instructional activity and more detail was needed, I returned to the participant observation to discover how the activity was carried out in class and to learning journals to discover the student's initial reaction to the activity.

While the initial interview analysis took place separately from other kinds of data analysis, the ongoing processes were inseparable. I compared and contrasted codes and categories, referred to multiple data sources in order to clarify questions, and used any and all available information to create a holistic picture of what was happening in the language classroom and in the students themselves. For example, when a student mentioned a classroom activity in the learning journal, in order to make sense of that journal entry, I referred back to my own field notes. Later, while interviewing the same student, if the same classroom activity was referenced, the new data was analyzed on its own as a portion of the interview data and collectively with other references by that student to the same activity. It was also interesting to compare different students'

descriptions of a particular classroom activity. That is to say, each of the individual data sources were kept separate for analysis in addition to being compared with one another.

Member checks. I used member checks at several points in the study to triangulate data. First, in order to confirm my observations in the classroom about classroom activities, I had regular, informal meetings with the instructor to ask questions about classroom techniques and activities. The information gleaned from these meetings was included in my field observation data and informed future observations.

Another way I employed member checks occurred following participant interviews. Follow-up interviews took place after the conclusion of the semester. However, I was unable to re-establish contact with four of the interview participants after the conclusion of the semester. With the four participants whom I was able to contact, I conducted the second meeting via email. I presented each student interviewed with a transcript from our previous meeting and a brief summary of my preliminary analysis and gave the student the opportunity to voice feedback. The need for follow up questions was minimized by triangulating the data through multiple data sources. The data collected via email, totaling only a few sentences for a three participants, was quite small in comparison to what was collected via in-depth interview, observation, and learning journals. I included any data gleaned via follow-up email correspondence with the in-person interview data for analysis.

Peer debriefing. Peer debriefing is the process of consulting fellow researchers, scholars, or other professionals to share my data and findings and seek outside perspectives on the work. I relied on my dissertation committee chair, Dr. Barbara Mullins Nelson, for peer debriefing. My chair's feedback was vital during the dissertation

process. In addition, I also have a network of language teacher friends with whom I shared my ideas about transformation and classroom practices and received feedback. Their perspective as practitioners has been valuable to me as I seek to uncover processes and analyze classroom practices.

Reporting the Data

The case study design of this investigation resulted in two noteworthy decisions regarding how to structure the reporting of the data. First, I had to decide how to present the distinct but interrelated findings from three data sources. Second, I made decisions about how to best treat student identities for study participants.

Findings from each source. The findings from the three data sources were distinct but interrelated. As I moved through the process of collecting and analyzing data, I discovered that each of the three sources (participant observation, learning journals, and interviews) provided unique insights into students' experiences while also contributing to the whole of the study. In order to understand how the students' learning experiences unfolded over the course of the semester, each data source warranted its own separate description in this paper. Therefore, chapter 4 describes the classroom setting using data primarily collected through participant observation. Chapter 5 describes student experiences as described in the learning journals and then the interviews. The findings for each data source are described individually.

Finally, in chapter 6, I will address the data as a whole and present findings related to the overarching themes present across all the data sources. I will answer the research questions and present my conclusions according to the data collected and analyzed at all points in the case study.

Treatment of student identities. During my participant observation in the classroom, I not only learned about the setting and instructional practices described in this study, but also about the participants. During the weeks I spent in the classroom, I became increasingly familiar with the students in the class. Based on my observations and what they wrote in their learning journals, I learned their names, heard their ideas, and observed their idiosyncrasies as learners. In the first few days of participant observation, however, I was unable to identify the students in the class by name or connect specific journal responses to classroom behaviors. Because familiarity was an ongoing process, I was not always able to record the names of students as they interacted in class. On several occasions, I asked the instructor for help recalling student's identities. This was not always successful either. The result of my delay in learning students' identities was that on many occasions, I recorded observations in my field journal or using my audio recorder, but did not know the identity of the student described. In this paper, I refer to unknown speakers as "Student."

By the time I began identifying students who exhibited evidence of perspective transformation, I had gotten to know many of the students, particularly the interview participants. These 8 students were assigned pseudonyms for this report in order to protect their identities. They are referred to by their pseudonyms throughout this paper.

When describing student responses in the learning journals, another dilemma arose regarding identifying students. The majority of student responses that were of interest to this study came from the learning journals of the eight interview participants. However, occasionally to contrast or corroborate other accounts, I included data collected from the learning journals of students that were not selected for interviews. It seemed to

complicate the presentation of the data to mention students by name only once in the study or when they did not exemplify the experiences in question. I made a decision to unify the presentation of the data by only naming the interview participants. Even when I knew the identity of a student through participant observation or learning journals, I did not mention any students by name other than the interview participants. I believe that this decision makes the study more readable without distracting from or altering the data.

Researcher's Role in the Study

The process of analyzing my own involvement as researcher required me to be highly self-aware and reflective. I believe that the input of my dissertation chair was invaluable to this process. My chair reviewed transcripts and interview questions, challenged my technique and my findings, and generally asked probing questions that caused me to reevaluate my role in the interview process in order to defend what was good and discard or redesign what was not. Having now completed this research, the data analyzed and written up, I find that I am still processing my own performance. A qualitative researcher must recognize herself as a source of knowledge, while also minimizing her own impact on the data. It is a fine line to walk.

Subjectivities. I believe that it is important to explore my own subjectivities before and during the study. As an experienced classroom instructor, I have a clear teaching philosophy. My philosophy promotes certain types of activities over others. In fact, in my own classroom, I tend to use communicative teaching techniques and have been skeptical of other approaches. In order to analyze the events in someone else's classroom, I found that I needed to understand the classroom environment in a new way and deal with my preconceptions about the communicative and other methods. I needed

to explore my own subjectivity (Peshkin, 1988) and be vigilant that my predisposition to using certain teaching techniques did not cloud my judgment.

My status as a former language student and teacher also gives me a certain insider status (Spradley, 1980). Yet, I will still be an outsider because of my lack of status in the classroom. I will be neither teacher nor student. I will define a new classroom role for myself that is outside of the ordinary college classroom experience. In addition, my identity categories with regards to gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, parental status and life experiences may also relegate me to multiple insider or outsider designations. Suzuki et al. (2007) discussed this problematic dichotomy of insider/outsider status and reminded researchers that identity is a complicated, overlapping phenomenon and all researchers must negotiate both their status as insider and as outsider no matter what population they study.

One of the natural consequences of being an outsider in a classroom is that students and the instructor may act differently in my presence than they would if I were not there. There is no way for me to know if my very presence caused students to act in ways they normally would not, or avoid doing things they normally would. I felt this acutely during my observations. I felt disappointed that I was unable to find external signs of perspective transformation in the students. I began to wonder if I was responsible for their reserved behavior. During one of my early observations, a student turned to me during a small group activity and asked if I could help with a difficult problem in the text. Did students see me as an insider? Just another resource in the classroom? Or as an outsider? An interloper who needed to prove her usefulness?

In my conversations with the instructor, I mentioned these concerns. She assured me that she saw no difference in their behavior between the days I observed and the days I did not. However, there is no way to know. In response to my own feelings, I was vigilant in my analysis of the observation data so as not to assign meaning to events in the classroom that clearly was not there.

An unexpected complication of insider/outsider status that was revealed during the research process was how classroom observation affected my interview style. I realized during the analysis process that during the interviews I had asked all of the questions I had determined ahead of time, yet, in examining my own feelings and perceptions, I felt little need to probe deeply into student perceptions of classroom activities during the in-depth interviews. This fact was first brought to my attention during peer debriefing with my dissertation chair. She noted several times in her review of an interview transcript that I had "insider status" in the classroom and made references to inside jokes and classroom activities in my preliminary analysis that she could not understand. This note weighed on me as I proceeded with my analysis as I grappled with the implications of being a classroom insider. I do not believe that there is one, objective reality in a classroom, but rather that each student interprets reality and negotiates meaning in ways that reflect their social and personal identity. Yet, by not probing deeply into students' perceptions of classroom activities, I was implicitly acknowledging that my perception of classroom activities was somehow objective and that students' perceptions were unlikely to vary from my authoritative perspective. This realization added a new and important dimension to my data analysis as I sought to minimize my own influence over the descriptions of the classroom and the meaning I assigned those descriptions.

Ethical considerations. I must weigh several ethical considerations in this research. First, I must consider the inherent power structure of the classroom and my place in it. Although my collaborative relationship with the instructor, Ms. Salazar, was advantageous in many ways allowing me access to class materials and meetings, it could also serve to align me in the students' perception with the power position of the teacher. I did not want students to participate in this study out of fear of my or their instructor's power position (Suzuki et al., 2007). In my field notes, I noted several times that Ms. Salazar seemed to employ a top-down, hierarchical system in her classroom. She used an instructor-centered lecture format for most instruction and was solely responsible for constructing and grading all assignments. This made the issue of power even more central.

In order to counter the risk of presenting myself as an authority figure, I took several steps. First, I did not share any of my research data or analyses with the instructor. I made sure that the students were informed of this both orally when I presented my research study to the class and in writing when students signed the informed consent paperwork. It was clear that nothing they said to me in the interviews and none of my conclusions would reach their instructor until long after the class had concluded and the work was complete, and, even then, their names would be changed to pseudonyms to protect their identities.

Second, despite our long-standing acquaintance, I maintained a professional relationship with Ms. Salazar both inside and outside of class. I made efforts not to allow our previous collegial relationship and friendship to spill over into our interactions during this study. She and I spoke about this several times during the study and maintained an

appropriate professional decorum to avoid the appearance of me being part of the class

power structure. However, I am not sure that we were successful. I suspect that I revealed

a comfort-level with Ms. Salazar through my body language and conversational style

whether or not I was aware of it at the time. I feel I must add here that, in three cases,

interview participants questioned me about my relationship with Ms. Salazar. One

student told me during an interview that, despite my clear explanation of who I was and

why I was there, she had believed that I was an outsider, maybe an administrator and

perhaps there to punish Ms. Salazar. She told me that it took her quite a while to warm up

to me and, in fact, resented my presence in the classroom for weeks. In her learning

journal from my first day of observation, as a direct response to my presence she wrote,

"Being monitored disturbs me." Apparently, she changed her mind about me when she

approached Ms. Salazar to protest my presence in the classroom and received a definitive

answer vouching for my honesty and good intentions.

> My impression, when you first came in and made your announcement about doing
>
> your research and sitting in our class, I was like, "Oh no way! Why? Why do you
>
> want to research this class" The class was very laid back at first and I thought,
>
> great, now things will be very tense because people will be trying to be on their
>
> best behavior. I thought maybe they were trying to investigate our teacher or she
>
> isn't giving us the necessary quizzes or something. I wasn't comfortable with the
>
> idea. I thought, "Did our teacher do something wrong?" Then you said you
>
> actually taught Spanish so I thought, maybe you were trying to see if she was
>
> doing her job right. So that was my impression in the beginning and I told her

[Ms. Salazar] I was not comfortable with this girl. Why is she in our class? She

was like, "No, she's fine. Don't worry." But it turned out to be great.

Later, observing my conduct with her teacher, she realized, based on our comfortable and

friendly rapport, that I must be a friend of her professor and not an adversary. This

anecdote came out during the student's one-on-one interview and caused me to rethink

the logic behind maintaining an overly professional façade with someone with whom I

felt quite at ease normally.

A third step I took to avoid ethical entanglements was to explain to students both

orally and in writing that their participation was strictly voluntary, that there was no

penalty for non-participation, and that they could withdraw at any time without penalty.

One ethical consideration related to my use of email to maintain contact with

students became important over the course of the study. Since email is not an entirely

secure form of communication, I could not ensure the privacy of our communications

(Suzuki et al., 2007). Therefore, I informed each student of this and left it up to them

whether to take the risk of using email and to their discretion how much they would

reveal during email discussions.

Chapter 4

The Classroom Setting

One of the benefits of the case study design is the ability to use multiple data sources to create a multidimensional description of the case being researched. In this study, participant observation, student learning journals, and one-on-one interviews were employed to paint a picture of what students experienced in a college-level, Elementary Spanish I and how those experiences may lead to transformative learning. In this chapter, I present findings related to overall classroom environment and the classroom practices employed by the instructor.

In order to understand how classroom practices related to students' accounts of perspective transformation, one must first understand the classroom itself and the practices used therein. I used participant observation as the primary method to gain first-hand insight into the classroom setting.

Description of the Setting

The Elementary Spanish I class met on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2:10 until 3:40 in the afternoon. In my own experience as a Spanish instructor, having taught afternoon Spanish classes at Urban Southern Community College (USCC) in the past, I have witnessed that students tend to be lethargic and laconic after lunch. Especially for adult students, who often begin their days quite early to meet family or work responsibilities, keeping their energy levels up for an early afternoon class can be challenging. I discovered during my observations that this was, in fact, an accurate description of the class in question.

The instructor had warned me before my observations began that the class was quiet and very relaxed. I noted in my field journal that the students' body language seemed quite relaxed; some were almost asleep and many of them were reclined in their seats. It was not uncommon to find students in the classroom before class started with their eyes closed and heads down on the desk or reclining in their chairs with their feet up on the desks or on other chairs. This may speak to the comfort level of the students in the classroom or to the afternoon exhaustion that many of the students were fighting through.

The physical space. The classroom was equipped with two large white boards that covered the entire front wall of the classroom and required dry erase markers. Also in the front were a long grey table and wooden lectern for instructor use and a small desk occupied by a computer. Above the white boards, a retractable projector screen was mounted. In the middle of the ceiling, a digital projector was mounted. The controls for the projector were wired into the wall next to the computer in the instructor's space up front. Facing the front of the room were 15 long grey tables. Each table fit two students. The classroom space was modern and technologically equipped, but well-worn and entirely grey in color, which gave the room a cold, drab feeling.

The instructors. The instructor of record for this class was Ms. Dina Salazar (pseudonym). Ms. Salazar, or Miss Dina as many of the students call her, is a U.S. citizen originally from Spain. At the time of the data collection, she had lived in the United States for over ten years, most of that time in the metropolitan area of USCC. Ms. Salazar, in addition to being a full-time Spanish instructor, was active in the local Hispanic/Latino community and a vocal advocate for many causes related to social

justice. Her educational background included advanced degrees in psychology and education and 18 graduate hours in Spanish.

The reader will notice that when Ms. Salazar is quoted in this study, her grammar and vocabulary are non-native. Ms. Salazar learned English as an adult, and, while she speaks English fluently, she has a thick accent. During my observations, students did not seem to have trouble understanding her for the most part. I did note a few times when students asked for clarification because of the instructor's pronunciation. In chapter 5, I will discuss how students revealed during the one-on-one interviews that Ms. Salazar's accent was an important part of the course.

When I originally approached Ms. Salazar about studying her class, she quickly agreed, but warned me that I would not find her class interesting because she does not care much for questions of pedagogy or discussions of method and does not believe herself to use any particular method. She simply teaches the content designated by the department in the most efficient way she knows. At times, in order to make the class more interesting for herself as an instructor, Ms. Salazar discusses the issues that matter most to her, like social justice or film or anthropological distinctions between the culture in her native Spain and the culture in which she now lives.

One day, there was a guest lecturer acting as a substitute. His name was Mr. Antonio Pérez (pseudonym) and he was a full-time visiting professor of Spanish at a local university. Because of his close friendship with Ms. Salazar, Mr. Pérez had offered to step in and lead a group discussion when Ms. Salazar needed to be out of town. Like Ms. Salazar, Mr. Pérez was also from Spain, had lived several years in the United States, and had a background in psychology and an interest in social justice.

Teacher/student dynamic. The dynamic in the classroom was characterized by a hierarchical power structure in which Ms. Salazar was clearly the dominant figure. To be clear, in no way do I mean to insinuate that the instructor was dictatorial or malevolent in her approach. She was often kind and funny in class, and her students generally seemed to like her. I simply mean that this classroom followed a more traditional approach to teacher and student roles as opposed to the communicative ideal described by Finney (2002). The students seemed to genuinely respect and appreciate Ms. Salazar, particularly those students who were selected for interviews. During the interviews, students had positive commentary on Ms. Salazar's humor, willingness to assist students, and overall teaching style. Ross-Gordon (2003) indicated that adult students exhibit mixed reactions to teacher and student roles, often preferring above all a teacher who seems professional and prepared. That could explain why students had such a positive reaction overall to the classroom environment.

Despite the fact that Ms. Salazar was an authoritative figure in the class and seemed to be genuinely liked, student behavior was not always ideal. In general, students sat in passive, receptive positions in class (heads down or staring at the desk or their own laps, arms crossed, leaned back in chairs or forward over desks) with varying degrees of attentiveness. This sort of behavior is to be expected from the perspective of Freire (1970/2000) who warned that "banking education", or rather students as passive receptacles, is the result of a hierarchical power structure. Often, students in the back of the room would engage in low conversation during lecture or large group work. In one case Ms. Salazar called out unresponsive students by saying, "This is voluntary. It's your choice. You can be bored to death or you can cooperate." Another time when students

were talking during a large group activity, she stopped the lecture and said, "Why are you always talking when someone else is talking? This is very embarrassing!" During a lecture, she reprimanded a student by saying, "This is not time for talking, this time for listening." These admonishments did seem to bring the class back into order. I wondered in my field journal if these reprimands were having an effect just on the distracting students, or if the entire class perhaps perceived that all talking was discouraged. In the interviews, two students mentioned that there were several distracting students in class and that they were appreciative of the instructor's efforts to discipline those students.

Retention. The class began as a full class of 30 people. Over the course of the semester, about a third of the students stopped attending. Although these students could not possibly earn a passing grade in the class, they very well may have learned something important during their limited time in the classroom. It is possible that any amount of exposure to cultural and linguistic differences could be a catalyst for a disorienting dilemma (Mezirow, 1991). Therefore, although several students dropped the course, they were not automatically disqualified from participating in the study. In fact, one of the interview participants, Alexa, did drop the course prior to the end of the term.

The textbook. In many kinds of college courses, the textbook is chosen by the instructor and supports the learning objectives described in the syllabus which is also created by the instructor. In contrast, sequenced general-education courses like Spanish are often planned by departmental committees or course supervisors. At USCC, the course objectives and the textbook are prescribed by the department meaning the individual instructor plans course activities within specific parameters. In practice, the

department's prescription dictated that certain chapters in the textbook should be covered by all instructors, although there were no specific controls in place to ensure compliance.

All Spanish students at USCC worked with the same textbook. This text, called *Dos Mundos* (Terrell, Andrade, Egasse, & Muñoz, 2005), was written using the communicative paradigm (Brown, 2007) meaning that it emphasizes using language to communicate over demonstrating grammatical accuracy. This is evident in its specific way of dealing with complex grammar concepts. Instead of sprinkling grammar instruction in and amongst the activities in the chapter, the textbook concentrated all of the direct grammar instruction and mechanical grammar practice into blue-colored pages at the end of each chapter. The blue pages contrasted with the white pages of the rest of the text, both in color and overall tone and purpose. While the chapter activities were focused on getting students to work together and explore communicative tasks, the blue pages encourage a more traditional, grammar-translation approach to language learning, gave ample grammar instruction in English, and provided fill-in-the blank, matching, and other objective practice questions to aid students in mastering the grammar.

The communicative method in its purest form may not seem to allow for such forays into grammar exercises. However, the authors of the textbook hold the position that grammar is an important touchstone for college students learning language, but class time should not necessarily be used to support grammar instruction (McGraw-Hill, 2006). In the words of Brown (2007), "Fluency and accuracy are seen as complementary principles" (p. 241). Therefore, the book is written with these blue pages at the end of every chapter so that students may do the exercises as homework. In an appendix at the end of the textbook, students can find all of the objective answers to the grammar

exercises. They received the homework assignment from their instructor, but they were responsible for reading and understanding the grammar instruction in the blue pages, completing the activities, and then checking the accuracy of their answers in the appendix in the back of the book. This system of homework assignment encourages students to be self-directed learners (Knowles et al., 2005), taking control of their own learning and responsibility for their own outcomes. By then checking the homework assignments again in class, the instructor reaffirms Ross-Gordon's notion (2003) that many adult students find their desire to be self-directed outweighed by their desire to see the instructor as a competent authority.

Another characteristic of the *Dos Mundos* textbook (Terrell et al., 2005) is its integration of cultural and historical topics in every chapter. Knutson (2006) and Chávez et al. (2003) described a student development process in which students become more aware and more accepting of people, places and ideas different from themselves. By including in each chapter several readings presenting diverse cultures and perspectives, the textbook itself could contribute to the students' experiences of perspective transformation.

As discussed in Chapter 2, a synthetic syllabus is one in which language is divided into discrete units by part of speech or by some other linguistic category. These units of language are then grouped together to form lessons. For example, one day, the instructor may present the entire present tense verb system in Spanish, or all masculine nouns ending in –ista. An analytic syllabus, in contrast, does not teach words based on linguistic category, but rather presents the words, phrases and skills that may be required in order to successfully navigate a linguistic context or a specific situation. For example,

an analytic syllabus would present words, phrases and skills needed to take a taxi or to bake a loaf of bread. *Dos Mundos* (Terrell et al., 2005) is a textbook that creates a sort of hybrid organization of each chapter. In any given chapter, students are expected to discover the content they require in order to navigate certain situations out of the vocabulary and grammar presented in that chapter. Each chapter presents an enormous amount of vocabulary and grammar organized by categories.

Instructional Characteristics

Based on my observations and the student learning journals, I analyzed the specific instructional techniques used in this classroom and identified the classroom practices that could be described as characteristic of this case. Both my own and students' descriptions of classroom practices were sorted according to recurring codes. I then extracted and organized these codes until categories emerged.

No two days in this class were entirely alike, however, certain instructional techniques stood out as being representative of the overall approach of the instructor. The participant observation data was analyzed to identify instructional characteristics. Direct grammar instruction, the use of English as the primary language of instruction, small-group oral activities, student learning journals, and the frequent inclusion of sidebars about culture and society were the most consistently used techniques. The viewing and discussion of a film, while only done once during the semester, spanned several days of class time and was mentioned by every interview participant as an important instructional technique.

These six categories are explained here to give the reader a picture of the classroom practices most important to this case.

Direct grammar instruction. The instructor taught each grammar point in class using explicit, deductive grammar instruction in English and then assigned the blue pages from the textbook as homework. Ms. Salazar used the dry-erase board to display verb charts, write and diagram examples, and to note important lecture points. After hearing the in-class lecture on a grammar point, students were expected to complete the blue homework pages on that topic. In the next class period, there were often group activities relating to the previous grammar point. These activities sometimes came from the textbook, but were often supplemented by handouts and worksheets created by Ms. Salazar.

Following my discussion of the textbook in the previous section, I conclude that the instructor in this classroom focused more on the synthetic aspects of the textbook's presentation than on the analytic. Ms. Salazar spent more time teaching specific grammar and vocabulary categories than on task-based instruction. Tasks seemed to be used primarily as practice activities to support the content taught explicitly by the instructor. Direct grammar instruction is the traditional way of transmitting knowledge from teacher to student in the methods characterized by Brown (2007) as having a "focus on grammatical rules, memorization of vocabulary and of various declensions and conjugations" (p. 16).

In one instance, the instructor was on the second day of direct instruction on the topic of "stem-changing verbs."[1] Ms. Salazar began instruction by asking, "What are stem-changers, guys?" to which she received no student response. The instructor went on to write on the board and orally explain the definitions of key terms such as "stem" and

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[1] Stem-changing verbs are a category of present-tense verbs that undergo a patterned change in the verb stem.

"pronoun" in English, draw the verb charts for several example verbs from this category, and give examples of sentences in which the verbs are used. During the 10- to 15-minute lecture, the students did not respond much. Most students were not looking at the front of the room. I wrote in my field notes at this point that I suspected the students had tuned out completely. It turned out I was wrong in my interpretation. Seconds later, Ms. Salazar cracked a joke and the class laughed. Then a student who had appeared inattentive, meaning he was not looking at the board or taking notes, raised his hand to ask a question about how these verbs contrasted with verbs they had previously studied. Suddenly there was evidence that, despite appearances, students were paying attention during this direct grammar instruction and at least one student was actively trying to make meaning.

Many of the students in the classroom took advantage of the opportunities to ask questions in English during direct grammar instruction. However, a few did not. In fact, in every class period I observed where direct grammar instruction was used, some students blatantly laid their heads on the desk or did other unrelated activities while the teacher explained the concepts. On one day when students seemed especially unresponsive, the teacher followed her instructions by walking around the room saying, "¡Ándale! ¡Ándale!"[2] while clapping her hands. The students seemed amused and perked up noticeably. The instructor often used humor to draw her students' attention.

English as primary. One reason the verb lesson described in the previous section is clearly aligned with what is known as the Grammar-Translation Method (Brown, 2007) is its use of English as the primary language of instruction. The teacher explained a grammar point in the L1, English. Because of my knowledge of the literature on teaching methods and the overwhelming support for the communicative approach and instruction

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[2] Translates more as less as Move it! Move it! or Let's Go! Let's Go!

in the L2, I was interested when students revealed through their laughter and questions that they were, in fact, listening and engaged. I wondered if students in a communicative approach class (where instruction takes place in the L2) would feel as comfortable asking complex questions about grammar or if they would pick up on humor mentioned off-hand during the lecture. Scholars (Knutson, 2006; Lindberg, 2003; Shulz & Elliott, 2000; Schumann, 1986) have noted that adults may experience negative feelings when they are unable to rely on their native language to engage intellectually with course material.

Later, as I reviewed this in my field notes, I asked myself if there is an inevitable give-and-take in course content delivery. If one teaches in the students' native language, perhaps their communicative competence does not increase. But perhaps other things do increase, such as the students' metalinguistic awareness which allows them to draw comparisons between grammar points or between grammar systems.

Because almost all of the classroom instruction took place in English, the students had ample opportunities to ask about differences that arose between their native language grammar and the grammar presented in the textbook. The ability to talk about and make sense of these differences may have allowed students to engage intellectually with the material (Lindberg, 2003) and preserve their identity (Rossiter, 2007) as competent adult students throughout the learning process.

Small-group oral production. While all of the direct instruction took place in English, English was not the only language used in the classroom. The instructor sometimes divided the class into smaller groups for Spanish language practice, usually once per class period, although not every class period. This practice is supported by several researchers (Johnson & Mullins Nelson, 2010; King, 2000; Pilling-Cormick,

1997) who have found small group collaborative learning to be an important component of perspective transformation. In these small-group practice sessions, the teacher generally assigned a textbook activity or provided a handout for the students giving them questions to ask, prompts to read, or a task to perform. The students would then be charged with using the target language, Spanish, to communicate with their classmates and complete the activity.

For example, in one handout which Ms. Salazar had photocopied from the instructor resource manual, eleven Spanish questions were listed, each question with a blank to the right of it. The questions included verbs and vocabulary from the current unit. The students' job was to ask the questions orally within their small groups and have their classmates sign their names on the blank if they were able to answer the question affirmatively. The instructional objective of the activity was to provide an opportunity for practicing oral production. However, from the students perspective, they were charged with getting as many affirmative responses, and therefore signatures, as possible.

While students never managed to use the L2 exclusively during my observations, they did exhibit behaviors indicating they were enjoying themselves and learning. I noted in my field journal during one such activity that students were using more Spanish than English and actively trying to negotiate meaning amongst themselves. The small-groups often laughed and asked each other questions during the activity.

One day at about the mid-point in the semester, the instructor gave the students a small-group oral production assignment and then left the room for several minutes. The students were productive while the teacher was gone, using the target language, working well in small groups, and continuing with the assignment. I noted in my field journal that

some students were so focused on the activity that they did not seem to notice that the teacher had left. One student had a question about the activity while the teacher was out. She figured out her problem before the teacher returned and said that she was proud to have figured it out for herself. It was remarkable to me that, given the freedom to work or not, use Spanish or not, students continued working on the assignment and used more Spanish than English to communicate.

Sidebars. One of the hallmarks of Ms. Salazar's teaching style was the practice of inserting anecdotes, personal viewpoints and critical commentary related to society and culture in nearly every lesson. Some students described these inserts as "tidbits." I have used the term *sidebars* because of their positioning as interruptions of other lessons. The sidebars were never the main point of instruction, but rather tangents explored during other kinds of instruction.

In one particular vocabulary/grammar lesson, Ms. Salazar taught reflexive verbs describing morning routine activities such as "levantarse," "maquillarse," and "afeitarse."[3] After lecturing, students formed small groups for oral practice. While monitoring student progress, Ms. Salazar called the students' attention and asked them to think about what they were saying. "Reflect on gender roles. Do all men shave? Do all women? You say men don't wear make-up? What about a drag queen who is going to work? You would be surprised. Some men wear make-up. I am for it. The world is changing very fast. Get adjusted." In reaction to the instructor's outburst, students smiled, laughed and made comments to one another. They seemed surprised and amused, a generally positive reaction to her statement.

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[3] Meaning "to get up", "to put on make-up", and "to shave" respectively.

In another lesson about prepositions and places on the college campus, Ms. Salazar took a 5-minute sidebar to describe the similarities and differences between the university systems in the United States and Spain. Students became so interested in the topic that they asked questions about their own degrees and how long it would take to finish course work in another country. During some free time later in the class period, a group of students in the back of the room continued discussing the pros and cons of the Spanish university system.

In one lesson early in the semester, Ms. Salazar taught numbers and how to ask and answer the question, "What time is it?" In the learning journals for that day, several students cited the Spanish practice of rounding off time as the most important thing they learned in that lesson. This information was not presented in the textbook. Ms. Salazar had taken a few minutes during the lecture to explain that, from her Spanish perspective, Americans have an obsession with precisely describing the time. She told the class that in Spain, no one would ever say "It is 8:59." A Spanish speaker would simply round up to 9:00. While this is an interesting cultural tidbit, it is striking to me that so many students would remark on this cultural sidebar. As I will discuss in the next chapter, in the learning journals and in the interviews, Ms. Salazar's sidebars related to culture and society were frequently mentioned by students in this study.

Student learning journals. When I first approached Ms. Salazar about participating in this research, we discussed my idea to track student learning through a daily journal that students would complete and hand in during the last five minutes of each class period. The purpose of the journal was to get an immediate and lasting description from students about what they were learning, how they were learning it, and

how that learning was affecting them. Ms. Salazar decided to implement this technique as part of her regular assessment routine and was willing to give me access to the journals for any student who volunteered to participate in the study.

Keeping a journal or diary has been recognized as an effective tool for promoting critical reflection (Cranton, 2006). In Kolb's (1984) experiential learning model, the second step is personal reflection. Journaling allows students to engage in personal reflection in a classroom.

Originally, I conceived the journals as a device to help me collect data for this study. Their structure, content and purpose were described in Chapter 3. Because the instructor had students complete the journals every day, the journals also became an important instructional technique. It is noteworthy that several students mentioned the journals in their one-on-one interviews as enhancing their learning experience in some way. Students' perceptions of the journals will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

Film. Ms. Salazar presented the film *In the Time of the Butterflies* in class. Based on the novel of the same name by Julia Álvarez and set in the Dominican Republic in the mid-20th century, the film tells the story of four sisters famous for their revolutionary acts against the corrupt government of dictator Rafael Trujillo. The film is in English, making it accessible for first-semester students linguistically. In addition, several of the lead actors have recognizable names in American pop culture, so the students may have been familiar with Salma Hayek, Marc Anthony, or Edward James Olmos prior to watching this film.

The use of film as an authentic text in the communicative foreign language classroom is an established technique. Using pop culture media such as film in adult education encourages critical reflection (Brookfield, 1990; Guy, 2007).

Before viewing the film, students were informed of the assignments they would need to complete based on the film. Specifically, students would be writing a report on the film. Ms. Salazar distributed three handouts related to this report and went over the hand-outs with the class, reading the page and giving extra information and explanation in addition to what was written. The first page had two sides. Side A was a detailed list of the requirements for the report. Questions were bullet-pointed for students as writing prompts. These questions were written in the instructor's distinctively fluent yet non-native English as follows:

- What traditions did you observe through the movie? Describe in detail one of them, what they do, why…

- How was the family and Dominican society in the movie? Comment on the structure, behaviors…

- How the main characters change? Why they change? Where events produce those changes?

- Who were the Mirabal sisters ("butterfly")?? Personal opinion of them, their ideal and legacy (provide references from books or internet that can support your opinion)

- One thing that you liked about the movie. Why?

- One thing about the movie that you did not like. Why?

Side B of the instruction sheet had a rubric explaining how student grades would be calculated. The second sheet of paper was titled "Notes Page" and contained questions for students to ask themselves while watching the movie. This page was intended to guide students' viewing and help them take useful notes on the movie.

The third handout students received was a two-sided page. Side A had an example of an essay written about a different movie that the instructor had deemed a well-written, positive example of student work. Passages were underlined or circled to draw students' attention to especially well-done items. Side B of the same page had what the instructor had deemed a poorly-written report, a negative example of student work. This essay had a handwritten note at the bottom explaining the instructor's assessment of its shortcomings.

All three of the handouts were created by the instructor and explained thoroughly in class. During the explanation of the assignment and corresponding handouts, the instructor described how watching a movie in a college classroom is different from watching a movie for pleasure. Ms. Salazar introduced anthropological and psychological research methods and encouraged students to actively look for important details instead of passively taking in the movie. In addition to introducing research methods, Ms. Salazar gave the students civics lessons. At one point she explained to students how social activists in a democracy can affect the laws of the land and how activists have fewer options in a dictatorship. She described the different branches of government, sources of political power, and defined terms such as "coup d'état."

One student asked a question about power in response to this new information. Ms. Salazar rephrased the question and repeated it louder for the class. "How does one person get to have so much power?" To which Ms. Salazar shrugged and responded,

"Coup d'état is the official way." Her matter-of-fact yet subtly critical answer to the student's question is an excellent example of how Ms. Salazar used techniques that could be described as critical language pedagogy (Pennycook, 2001). Any discussion of inherent power structures falls under the domain of critical pedagogy. The exchange between teacher and student recorded here displays additional characteristics. A coup d'état is obviously a route to power that falls outside of the law and is against the principles of a democratic or peaceful society. By positioning coup d'état as the "official" route to amassing power in government, Ms. Salazar was pushing students to question their previously held beliefs about how governments act and how power is gained.

Students responded enthusiastically during these discussions. In stark contrast to other kinds of class activities, all of the students were attentive, engaged, and actively contributing.

The viewing of the film was broken up into three class periods. During the viewing, most students made good use of the "Notes Page" given to them by their instructor and took notes at intervals throughout the film. Some students were visibly moved by the film, talking back to the screen or shedding tears at the emotional climax. When the movie was stopped so the class could engage in group discussion, the students seemed eager to participate. Some raised their hands, but most just shouted out their responses to the questions asked.

Ms. Salazar introduced the film and assignments on the first day and watched the first ten or fifteen minutes of the movie. She was also present for the viewing and discussion on the third day. However, the second day of the film, during which the class watched about 45 minutes of the film and engaged in class discussion, was led by a

substitute instructor. Ms. Salazar had to be out of class and had arranged for a substitute to conduct class. The substitute, who will be called Mr. Pérez for the purposes of this study, was a friend of Ms. Salazar and a Spanish instructor at a local university.

Using the document called "Notes Page" provided by Ms. Salazar, Mr. Pérez played the movie for approximately 45 minutes and then led a group discussion about the main characters, important plot points and some historical background. Once the class had gone over all of the questions he posed, he took questions from the students.

Student: Is this a true story?

Pérez: That's a good question. Somebody's asking here if this is based on a true
story?

(Class erupts into various responses.) Class: "Yes" "Is has to be a true story." "Of
course."

Pérez: Ah, I recommend you go to the Internet, your best friend, and look for this
last name in combination with the Dominican Republic. Look for the story
of the Mirabal sisters.

Class: "Well, then it's gotta be true." "Mirabal sisters." "Sounds real."

Pérez: I may be lying to you. How do you know I'm not lying? Because I'm a
teacher? I'm the boss? Something like that? I would not lie? I have a poker
face when I teach, so, look for the sisters Mirabal and find out! Is it real or
not?

This movie is, in fact, based on a novel which is based on a true story. The substitute has an advanced degree in Spanish Literature, so it is reasonable to assume that he knew the story of the Mirabal sisters is true. Yet, instead of just answering the

student's question, Mr. Pérez did two things. One, Mr. Pérez compelled the students to become more inquisitive and self-directed, to take more responsibility for their learning, a characteristic of adult learners and a best practice in the teaching of adults (Knowles et al., 2005). Two, Mr. Pérez used critical language pedagogy to inspire students to think about the nature of truth and authority and the reliability of their available sources of knowledge. This technique is consistent with the pedagogical techniques used by Freire (1970/2000) to open students' eyes to oppression and empower them to action. Despite being the teacher, Mr. Pérez proposed that he may be a liar and that students should verify knowledge for themselves. Instead of reproducing the existing power structures that exist in the world (Kennedy, 1990; Pennycook, 2001), Mr. Pérez was encouraging students to see authority figures as fallible and possibly even malicious or deceptive.

Seeking out additional sources of knowledge is not only an aim of critical pedagogy, but also one of Mezirow's (1991) indicators that perspective transformation may be occurring. Therefore, Mr. Pérez's instructions to students may have nudged them down the path of perspective transformation.

Immediately following this exchange, Mr. Pérez used the notes he had written on the board during the group discussion to bring students' attention to a sociological issue.

> Mr. Pérez: Another effect you will see more of as the movie advances. (Points out
>
> a particular scene described on the board involving a white blonde girl.)
>
> That has a name. It is called "Whitening" [4].
>
> Class: "Whitening?" "Wow!" "That sounds bad."

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[4] "Whitening" is the practice of lightening the overall skin tone of an entire population by eliminating dark-skinned people or by introducing more fair-skinned people into the population. This term is often used synonymously with genocide, although not necessarily. While not a major theme of the movie, it is present in the film and pertinent to a discussion of the historical context of the movie. For more background, see Metz (1990).

Mr. Pérez: Not only dictators did that, but for a long time it was an

anthropological issue in Latin America. And people would have in their

minds that being whiter or lighter would push you to be more successful in

life. People would just see that and try to change the reality [to be whiter]

and people like Trujillo would try really hard for his whole nation. He was

doing it [engaging in the practice of whitening] for the good of the nation.

We've heard *that* argument before. So you will see *that* as it goes too, but

you've seen already little hints that it goes in that direction.

In the next class period when Ms. Salazar returned, she discussed this issue again.

So he [Trujillo] was thinking that that was good for his people. The whiter the

people he have, more people would invest money to the island and they would be

more successful, have better jobs and better opportunities. So, in his mind, what

he was doing was right. That [whitening] was a great plan. Over some generations

people would become more white and they would have more opportunities.

Notice that both Mr. Pérez and Ms. Salazar presented the rationale of "whitening" with a

seemingly sympathetic nod to the dictator who believed in the concept. Both instructors

indicated that the dictator, Trujillo, believed he was doing the right thing for his country

by creating opportunity by any means available to him.

In a traditional classroom, the instructor would consciously or unconsciously seek

to reinforce existing power structures and ways of seeing the world. Therefore, one

would expect to hear in a traditional classroom that foreign dictators are bad and our own

government is good. Information about a foreign dictator's crimes against humanity

could be used to reinforce a dualistic, good-versus-evil view of the world.

Yet, in the classroom described in this study, the foreign dictator is at once exposed for racism and committing horrific acts of genocide while also being characterized as well-intentioned in seeking economic opportunity. In their lectures, both instructors made clear their horror regarding Trujillo's philosophies and government. Ms. Salazar also recognized in her lecture that the dictator Trujillo had a positive working relationship with the United States and Europe. Clearly, both Ms. Salazar and Mr. Pérez presented a complex perspective on the real people and events featured in the movie.

Learning to see a racist dictator as a complicated mix of positive and negative could be an important step towards perspective transformation for some students. Chávez et al. (2003) described the process through which students move as they learn to critically evaluate both themselves and others. This process involves learning to see ourselves and others as complex and to challenge generalizations. For a student in an early, dualistic stage of diversity development, this may require learning to see the other side as not all bad and one's own side as not all good, seeing nuance in the "other" and in oneself.

In another instance, the substitute, Mr. Pérez, called students' attention to the difference in time periods when a student mistakenly identified the setting of the film as contemporary when discussing women's roles in society.

> Mr. Pérez: Remember this is 1930's, a long time ago. Which means that things have changed, to today you cannot extract. You look at the Dominican Republic today and I will tell you one thing, it will shock you but the women are more highly educated than men. That changed. That table turned. But the movie is not going to get that far.

This brief discussion of the progress of women's status in the Dominican Republic had a profound effect on at least two of the interview participants who later mentioned this very account during the one-on-one interviews. In the next chapter, I will discuss further the impact of the examples I have described here.

Student Conduct and Perspective Transformation

Several of the students seemed focused and mature, yet many times, student conversations before, during, and after class often revealed general disinterest in the course and its content. In one instance in particular around the mid-term, the instructor gave students a take-home test. She allowed them one class meeting free, on a Tuesday, to work on the take-home test due two days later or the following Thursday. She gave students permission to work in groups and even offered to make herself available in class to help individual students. I wrote down the following conversation between two students in my field notes. I was sitting in the back, left corner of the room. The two students were sitting near me, discussing the take-home test due that day, expressing their regret for not having been more active learners.

Student A: She even asked us if we wanted to come in and regroup in here on
Tuesday.

Student B: I wish I had done it, man

Student A: Next time we have one of these tests, we need to meet up.

Student B (reading syllabus now): Did we have workbook, too? Blue pages, too?
Man, I didn't do none of that.

Student A: I wonder how that's going to affect my grade.

Student B: Ah man, I don't even want to think about it.

As it turns out, these types of exchanges between students may have been good predictors of how much of the content and skills students would learn, but not necessarily an indicator of whether transformative learning would take place. The second of the two students in the above exchange, a young man named Ten, was later selected as an interview participant and displayed evidence that he had experienced a disorienting dilemma as a result of the class.

I found this apparent contradiction fascinating. How is it possible that students could experience deep shifts in their meaning perspective despite doing poorly in a class or not finishing at all? In our private conferences before and after class meetings, Ms. Salazar expressed sadness and frustration at some of the student attitudes. It is easy to see how an instructor could become disheartened with such attitudes and work ethics in her classroom. However, based on this research, I have no reason to doubt that for students that fail or drop, even for students that appear apathetic or oppositional at times, transformative learning may still be possible.

Philosophical Orientation

Based on my findings, Ms. Salazar's classroom does not adhere to a single methodological approach. In some ways traditional and consistent with the grammar-translation approach (Brown, 2007), Ms. Salazar makes heavy use of the students' L1, using the L2 only for short periods of small-group practice. Also, student and teacher roles are clearly defined and hierarchical. Students are often in passive positions receiving knowledge from the instructor, who is the clear authority figure in the class and makes all decisions regarding what to learn and how. The textbook tends to favor a communicative approach, but Ms. Salazar does not utilize the communicative aspects of

the text to the extent that she makes use of the traditional grammar and vocabulary sections of the text.

One aspect of this classroom was related to the liberal arts philosophy of higher education (Elias & Merriam, 2005). Through methods such as direct grammar instruction in the students' native language and film analysis, Ms. Salazar encouraged her students to develop critical thinking skills by analyzing and describing the content in their own language.

On the other hand, the classroom setting did display some specific characteristics of progressive adult education (Elias & Merriam, 2005) based on the practical application of knowledge. Students were given examples of real-world issues and applications from the professor's own experience through impromptu mini-lectures that I have termed "sidebars." In addition, the teacher made use of authentic texts, particularly film, to teach content.

The small-group oral practice is a good example of the communicative approach (Brown, 2007), which is the acquisition of language for conversation in real-world contexts. However, because of the primary use of the L1, the connections to communicative instruction are limited.

Philosophically, the instructional techniques used in this class fit comfortably into the category of critical language pedagogy (Pennycook, 2001), a description that has less to do with prescriptive methods than with a consistent challenge to students to evaluate the sociocultural contexts of knowledge, to be critical and to see the world in a new way. Learning journals and real-world examples of culture encouraged students to critically

reflect on their learning. Furthermore, the discussion and analysis of a film were used to

inspire, challenge and motivate students to critical consciousness and social action.

Chapter 5

Findings

In this study, participant observation, student learning journals, and one-on-one interviews were employed to paint a picture of what students experienced in Elementary Spanish I. Student learning journals tracked data regarding what students learned each day and how they learned it. Learning journal questions were determined by the researcher, prepared on a hand-out, and given to Ms. Salazar, the classroom instructor, in advance. Ms. Salazar then asked students to answer the learning journal questions during the last five minutes of most class periods. The learning journals served as an informal assessment measure for the teacher as well as a source of data for this study.

In addition to student learning journals, one-on-one interviews were also used to collect data regarding what students were learning and how they were experiencing perspective transformation. Using participant observation and student learning journals to determine if any students seemed to be undergoing the initial stages of perspective transformation, eight students were selected to participate in one-on-one interviews. The interviews further explored student learning during the semester in order to answer the research question posed in this study.

Learning Journal Findings

The learning journals created a trail of evidence of student learning spanning the course of the semester. There were two questions that appeared in every journal and provided information about what and how students were learning on a daily basis ("What did you learn in class today?" and "How did you learn it?"). These two questions alone were insufficient to determine whether transformative learning was taking place for two

reasons. One, as Säljö (1979) also discovered, most of the learning reported by students was not transformational in nature but related to content and skills. Two, Mezirow's (1991) process of transformative learning unfolds over a long period of time and students may not be aware of their own transformative learning until they reach the end of the process. Therefore, additional questions were asked to identify if students were having experiences in or out of the classroom that were indicators of the early stages of perspective transformation.

The additional questions served to paint a picture of how students were interacting with the content on deeper levels. For example, one journal question asked, "Since the last class meeting, did you have any experiences outside of class that related to what we are learning in Spanish class?" The journals asked this question several times during the semester to discover if students were finding applications for their learning outside of class or seeking out new sources of information about language and culture. Two questions ("Is there anything we learned or discussed that caused you to feel excited, shocked, or disturbed?" and "Is there anything we learned or discussed that caused you to have any strong feelings or reactions?") were meant to find out if students experienced negative feelings or disorientation while learning. Other questions asked students for opinions of their learning ("Is there any topic or content that you wish the instructor would address more in class?" and "Other than grammar and vocabulary, what other things have you learned in class so far?") or for the impact of their learning ("Has this class had any impact on your life?"). Student responses to these questions revealed key learning experiences over the course of the semester, documenting events and ideas before students had a chance to forget details.

In an attempt to accurately portray students' responses, all of the learning journal quotes appearing in this document are transcribed as the student wrote them. Any abbreviations or deviations from standard spelling and grammar can be assumed to be faithful representations of the students' handwritten responses.

What did students learn? Since perspective transformation hinges on students coming into contact with disorienting new information about the world and then beginning a journey of critical reflection on their own meaning perspective, I was interested in how many deep, critical learning experiences participants were able to identify. Some kinds of learning may be vital to communication or to making a good grade, yet not be important to perspective transformation. With that in mind, I approached the learning journals to discover what students reported they actually learned. Seven categories emerged.

Content learning. First and foremost, students noted that they learned discrete units of vocabulary and grammar. For example, one student said, "I learned the months of the year and the seasons," which are categories of vocabulary words. Another student named a grammatical rule, "Anything ending in 'z' will become plural by dropping 'z' and adding 'ces.'" Other responses in this category included:

- "new verbs and conjugations"

- "joining words like luego[5]"

- "Numbers 40-69"

This type of learning could also be described as memorizing. In this category of learning, students are simply taking in information in order to reproduce it with no

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[5] An adverb meaning then or later.

contextualization, personalization, or critical reflection. This kind of learning fits into

Freire's (1970/2000) concept of banking education and Säljö's (1979) description of

simple acquisition.

Skills learning. A second category of answers that emerged from the learning

journals also reflects the descriptions given by Freire (1970/2000) and Säljö (1979) of

lower level learning, but instead of describing units of information, in this category

students described communication skills. Communication skills are the skills necessary to

take the discrete units of grammar and vocabulary and use them together in various

contexts to communicate with others. This type of learning requires students to apply

content knowledge in practice. Knowles' (Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2005) concept of

andragogy explains that adults prefer learning that can be applied to practical problems.

So, it is reasonable that the adult students in this study frequently identified and reported

this type of skills learning in their journals. However, like content learning, this kind of

learning requires no critical reflection on the part of the student.

Students gave examples of communication skills they learned:

- "I learned how to carefully listen to numbers and translate."

- "I learned how to ask someone's age!"

- "how to conjugate verbs"

- "I learned how to put sentences together about everyday things and
  actions."

- "To speak more easily in front of people."

Personalized learning. In a third category of learning reported by students, the

content and skills were made even more relevant to each individual's situation through

personalization. In other words, students took the grammar, vocabulary and communication skills and applied them to themselves as a specific case. For example, several students reported learning how to describe themselves using verbs and adjectives. The content and skills taught in that day's lesson could have been applicable to many instances of describing people, and, in fact, several examples of describing people were given in class. However, the students reported learning the content and skills of describing people in the context of describing themselves specifically. Another student, when describing what she learned from a lesson on dates and times, wrote, "I learned how to say my birthday," which is a clear example of personalizing the content. On a day when students used questions learned in class during small-group oral practice, several students mentioned that they learned to say what they liked to do or that they learned about their classmates' preferences.

Contextualized learning. In other instances, students gave specific examples of what they had learned that reflected specific contexts or situations which had been used in class activities. For example, in one fun class activity, students filled out a missing persons report using the grammar and vocabulary they were learning related to description. Several students mentioned in the learning journal for that day that they had learned how to fill out a missing persons report. Filling out the missing persons report was obviously not the main point of the lesson, but rather the activity was meant to give a practical application for the grammar and vocabulary being studied. It was remarkable how many times students included these kinds of contextualized activities in their reports of what they learned.

I singled out instances of contextualization and personalization as a different category than content and skills acquisitions. I believe that this type of contextualization reveals that students are engaging in several important processes. First, in order to personalize the content, students must internalize the material and begin to question their home language and culture, comparing the new information to their existing meaning perspective. This is an example of the kind of activities that Cranton (2006) described as promoting perspective transformation. Second, I believe that this contextualization of the content by students reveals that they are engaging in a process of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984). First they learn specific, concrete examples; they reflect on how it affects them personally; they move into theoretical understanding; and finally they experiment with how to apply this knowledge in familiar settings. Another way contextualization of the content may be significant is that it demonstrates that students are able to use their practical, life-oriented approach to learning (Knowles et al., 2005) in this Spanish class and maybe even in their day-to-day lives.

Learning about learning. The fifth kind of learning that students experienced represented a kind of meta-analysis of their own learning. One day, in response to the question "What did you learn in class today?" Sandy listed some communicative skills and also "That I need to pay attention." In addition to learning about Spanish, Sandy had realized some of her own weaknesses as a student. On another day, a student wrote, "Nothing really stuck in my head today. I'm in quite a bit of shock from all the things I need to learn. I just wish the speed of the class was slower as far as learning goes." Many students used the learning journal to record that they were learning about their weaknesses as students.

In a few cases, students reported that they were enjoying their learning "I have enjoyed learning, regardless of my difficulties." Students also reported that they were exceeding their own expectations. "I didn't know I knew that much!"

Learning about differences. The sixth kind of learning that students experienced was revealed when the differences between the student's home language and culture were compared and contrasted with the target language and culture. This kind of learning, learning about the differences, is the learning that seemed most likely to lead to the disorienting dilemma described by Mezirow (1991). When differences between vocabulary use and grammatical structures are explored by students, increasing metalinguistic awareness (Bialystok, 1988; Fromkin et al., 2003) is revealed. Students also reported learning about cultural differences between the home and target cultures. Discovering contrasts between cultures can be a key event which causes students to critically reflect on their own meaning perspective.

During the course of lecture, Ms. Salazar frequently used English to throw in additional information about the content. Students seemed to love these sidebars, as I have referred to them in this study, and mentioned them in the learning journals. Many learning journal entries speak to the impact these sidebars had on students. One student summed up her feelings about the sidebars writing, "Learning how some things differ positively or negatively in our culture vs. the Spanish culture was interesting."

One student was shocked to learn that descriptive adjectives had different connotations in Spanish than they do in English. The instructor, Ms. Salazar, discussed in class that while "silly" and "hard-working" are seen as positive attributes in English, in

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Spanish, the terms "tonto" and "trabajador" can have negative connotations.[6] Emily wrote in her journal for the day, "hard working is not really a good thing?!" Bella wrote that day that she was shocked "that latin americans take being called silly as a <u>bad</u> thing."

On another day when Ms. Salazar was discussing cultural differences in perceptions of time, she explained that Spanish-speakers are more likely to round up or down to the nearest quarter hour and that Americans are more likely to give the exact time. Emily wrote in her journal that day, "Time is rounded! Here, if it's 11:59, it's 11:59! Wow!"

Keisha, a mother of two, noted, "It's okay for children in Spanish culture to be aggressive – if bite each other it's normal." This sidebar discussed an aspect of culture that affected Keisha personally. Was Keisha comparing her own experiences in child-raising to the cultural differences explored in class?

Sandy went even deeper in her analysis of these frequent cultural sidebars from the instructor. After the first month of classes, she was feeling overwhelmed by her learning and wrote in her learning journal that she had been shocked to learn "that I know nothing about the Spanish culture even though my mother is of Spanish heritage." This statement reveals a potential disorienting dilemma and was explored further during a one-on-one interview. In fact, the learning journals and interviews were full of examples of contrast statements by students that could potentially have become disorienting dilemmas. The students who participated in interviews were able to describe several such shocking moments over the course of the class.

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[6] "Silly" may be synonymous with fun or light-hearted in English, but in Spanish in can also mean "irresponsible" or "stupid". "Hard-working" may be a wholly positive characteristic in the United States, but in countries where people work to live, being too hard-working, or "trabajador" may be perceived as being negative. Someone who is "trabajador" may love to work so much that he or she neglects family and friends.

Learning about connections. In a few cases, students reported learning about similarities between the course content and their own experiences or previous learning. Ten was a student of history, especially Hitler and World War II. After the first day of watching the movie, he wrote that he learned "that the Dominican Republic & Central & Latin America went through whitening!" Given his interests, Ten was well aware of whitening in other contexts, but in this class made a new connection to the Spanish-speaking world. On the last day of the movie he reiterated this connection writing that he learned, "They were putting people in work camps before Hitler's time."

Another student, Joe, wrote in the final learning journal that, other than grammar and vocabulary, he learned "that our languages are not all that different." Joe specifically wrote the word "language" here. Later during a one-on-one interview, Joe would indicate that he felt a connection not just to the language, but to Spanish-speaking people in general.

Alexa made a strong connection while watching the movie, "I sort of learned a personal lesson about standing up for what I believe in. I know now that people everywhere have suffered greatly." Alexa connected the suffering she saw in the movie with her own beliefs and also with suffering around the world.

Learning about connections was the smallest category of learning reported. Yet, I felt that it was important because of the clear connections to the language teaching standards (ACTFL, n.d.) and to transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991). In transformative learning, students must connect what they learn with their own ways of thinking and doing. In the one-on-one interviews described in a subsequent section of

this chapter, students articulated more clearly how they learned about connections between the course content and their own experiences.

Summary of what students learned. Most of the learning reported on the student learning journals fell into the first two categories, content and skills learning. Based on Mezirow's (1991) description of the stages of perspective transformation and its indicators, I determined these two categories to be the least likely to indicate transformative learning was taking place. Contextualized and personalized learning are indicative of a deeper learning of content and skills. Yet, without further information, these two categories also seemed to be commonly occurring learning experiences with little indication that they were connected to transformative learning. However, students who reported learning about differences or connections between two languages and cultures may have been experiencing that clash of meaning perspectives required to have a disorienting dilemma. In addition, students who expressed negative emotions or metalinguistic epiphanies while describing learning about learning may have been working through the self-assessment stage described by Mezirow as characterized by an examination of one's own meaning perspective accompanied by feelings of guilt or shame.

How did students learn? How students learned was a focus of data collection, although during analysis, only methods associated with transformative learning were of particular interest. The first question on every learning journal for the semester was "What did you learn in class today?" and the second question was "How did you learn it?" So, students made brief reports of instructional methods on every learning journal. Sometimes, students reported learning in answer to another question on the learning

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journal and did not specifically report <u>how</u> they learned. In all of those cases, the observation data served to fill in the gaps in the reports of instructional methods. For example, Keisha reported learning that it is okay for children in Spain to display aggressive behavior such as biting. Although Keisha did not report on the learning journal how she learned that, the lesson in which that topic was discussed was detailed in the observation data. I was able to rely on triangulation between data sets to fill in gaps in learning journal data.

Once the data was compiled for all the instructional methods reported in learning journals, methods associated with learning content and skills were removed from the analysis. For the purposes of this study, only transformative learning was of interest.

Two primary instructional methods stood out as being instrumental in students' learning about differences, about connections and about their own learning. The first method most often cited by students was the instructor's sidebars of information related to culture and society. The second method most often cited by students was by viewing and discussing the film.

Did perspective transformation occur? In addition to identifying what kinds of learning experiences students were having, the learning journals provided other kinds of evidence that students may have been in the early stages of perspective transformation. The stages of perspective transformation I expected would be most likely to occur in the short span of a one-semester class were 1) A disorienting dilemma; 2) Self-examination associated with negative emotions; and 3) Critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural, or psychic assumptions (Mezirow, 1991). Due to the nature of the course, a language course where cultural differences and historical issues were often discussed, and the

assumption that language classrooms are fertile ground for perspective transformation, I expected that at least some students would experience one of more of these stages during the semester.

Mezirow detailed some additional indicators that perspective transformation may be taking place. I was particularly vigilant for signs that students may have been exploring new sources of knowledge, becoming more self-directed, engaging in critical assessment of their own values and traditions, or experiencing strong emotions as a result of their learning.

Exploring new sources of knowledge. One of the questions that appeared in every learning journal for the first three months of the semester was, "Since the last class meeting, did you have any experiences outside of class that related to what we are learning in Spanish class?" Many students used this space to detail chance encounters they had with native Spanish speakers. Several mentioned that they were able to understand Spanish conversations they overheard, which was exciting for them. The most interesting entries for this question, however, explained how students had gone out of their way to seek out encounters with Spanish-speaking people. I extrapolated from these encounters that students were both seeking out new sources of knowledge and becoming more self-directed in their learning.

Sandy had consistently written simply, "No" in answer to this question in her learning journals. Then, about a month into the course, she responded, "Yes, I bought some pastries at the panaria.[7]" Two weeks later, she reported reaching out to her Spanish-speaking grandmother about the current content, "I spoke with my grandmother a little about cooking." After this, her entries became longer and more informative.

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[7] The term should be "panadería" meaning bakery.

Bella made frequent contact with native speakers during the semester. In nearly every learning journal, she reported taking initiative to make contact with a native speaker. "YES. I tried to have a conversation with my friend in Spanish, asking her name, where she's from, and how old she is." Notably, Bella traveled abroad during her spring break and later wrote in her learning journal, "YES, I've traveled to Costa Rica & the numbers helps with prices."

Joe mentioned opportunities that arose through his work in a restaurant. Most of these situations occurred without Joe seeking them out. For example, Joe waited on customers from Spain or dealt with kitchen staff from Mexico. However, Joe did demonstrate a desire to initiate contact with these individuals with descriptions of how he used Spanish when he could have used English. "Yes. Last Sunday I had Spanish (yes from Spain) customers. I had a small 'conversation' with them and especially with their 3 year old." Joe began conducting his normal activities in a new language of his own accord. Early in the semester, Joe reported that his next-door neighbors were Mexican. Within a few weeks, he had begun speaking to them in Spanish. "I finally spoke, still very little, with my Mexican neighbors who told me I was good but need practice."

There was an important distinction in the types of contact students reported. Many students (who may or may not have exhibited other signs of transformative learning) reported overhearing native speakers or accidentally making contact with the target culture. For example, one student wrote she "was driving down the street and saw the sign for 'Abuelos,'[8] a Mexican restaurant in the area and also a vocabulary word from the textbook. While interesting to note that the student could understand vocabulary words in new contexts, these types of chance encounters reveal nothing about whether students are

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[8] Meaning grandparents, a vocabulary word from Paso C of the textbook (Dos Mundos, 2005).

actively seeking out new sources of knowledge. However, Sandy, Bella, and Joe, in their statements above, clearly made the effort to initiate contact with the target language and culture outside of the classroom.

One student, Ten, answered simply "No" for the first month of class when asked if he had any outside contact with Spanish speakers. Then, suddenly, he began giving an example in nearly every journal entry of making meaningful contact with the target culture. During the one-on-one interview discussed in the next section, he described in more depth the importance of these contacts.

Mezirow (1991) described one of the indicators of perspective transformation as "Seeking assistance from a wider variety of sources of knowledge" (p. 193). In the context of a Spanish language class, I interpret this statement to mean that, instead of relying on professors and books, language students undergoing perspective transformation will begin to seek out opportunities to have contact with a wider network of authorities on Spanish language and culture, including the native speakers themselves. In addition, becoming more self-directed in their learning would mean a greater frequency of learning experiences outside of the classroom initiated by the student. Therefore, I conjectured that students may have been experiencing perspective transformation if they reported repeated efforts to seek contact with the target language and culture.

Becoming more self-directed. In addition to pursuing contact with native speakers, some students displayed other signs that they were becoming more self-directed learners. Alexa wrote, "I was intrigued by the movie and looked it up." This action was recommended by the substitute, Mr. Pérez, during instruction and encouraged by Ms.

Salazar in her assignments related to the movie. It is important to note that Alexa took these steps and then reported them as a response to her own desire to know more.

Critical self-assessment. This category of responses was more difficult to identify with certainty. As I read through the journals, there were occasions when I suspected that students were being critical of their own language, culture, educational system, or traditions. Generally, I felt unable to state definitively that critical assessment was taking place without further information from the student. However, I did identify examples of responses that I believe could be indicative of critical self-assessment and determined to follow-up on these responses in later interviews.

Emily wrote "I found out that cinco de mayo was the day that the U.S. was defeated. I find this odd because in <u>ALL</u> the books that I've read, I never heard that before.[9]" As I read this statement over and over, I was struck by the implied criticism of her own level of education or perhaps of the books to which she has access. I do not believe Emily questioned the validity of what was taught, since she phrased the U.S. defeat in Mexico as fact, not as her instructor's opinion or as the student's inference, but as a reality. Then, what does she find odd? Is this student saying that her education is lacking? Or is she saying that the books available to her, which apparently are many, have not provided her with all of the information? Is it a criticism of the educational system in which she has been raised? Or of her own lack of exploration? In any case, this sort of self-assessment could be an indicator of the early stages of perspective transformation.

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[9] One of the reasons Emily has never heard that before may be that it is not an entirely accurate representation of the holiday. "Cinco de mayo" means the fifth of May. It is a holiday in Puebla, Mexico celebrating Mexico's victory over the French. The victory at Puebla was a firm rejection of invaders and put an end to US and European expansionism in Mexico. For more background, see Carlson, 1998.

Bella wrote that she had learned that "a latino will have a more negative attitude + will be real honest vs an American." While the term "negative attitude" has a negative connotation, being "honest" is hard to interpret as negative. Is Bella saying that Spanish-speakers are more likely to describe things the way they really are? She is clearly implying that English-speakers are not as honest as Spanish-speakers.

Jade seemed to have an epiphany about her own language use because of what she learned in class. She realized "I always say I'm doing good even when I'm feel bad." She was evaluating how she presented herself in light of learning about how Spanish-speakers present themselves.

Strong emotional responses. One of the stages of perspective transformation according to Mezirow (1991) is a critical self-assessment accompanied by strong negative emotions. In addition, an indicator of the process may be a heightened awareness of emotions. Most students reported emotional responses to the film. However, a few students discussed emotional responses to other aspects of the class.

Sandy's mother was of Latin descent and spoke Spanish. However, Sandy had never learned the language and felt disconnected from the culture. She made several comments about her disconnect. In answer to a question about whether she felt excited, shocked, or disturbed by anything in class, Sandy wrote, "That I know nothing about the Spanish culture even though my mother is of Spanish heritage." This same journal response was used earlier to describe her reaction to the cultural sidebars she heard in class. It seems that Sandy had a negative emotional reaction to the frequent sidebars; she was disturbed by her lack of knowledge about a culture in which she had perceived

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membership. Later, during a one-on-one interview, Sandy would go into more depth about this dilemma.

Some displays of emotion in the learning journals were related to the classroom practices themselves instead of to the content. In response to the presence of a researcher in the classroom, Jade wrote, "Being monitored disturbs me." One student, who was taciturn in class activities, tended to answer every question in the learning journals by writing just one or two words or leaving the question blank altogether. One day, in response to the question, "How did you learn it?", he wrote, "by doing yet another worksheet." I interpreted this answer as a display of negative emotion, perhaps frustration. The worksheets used in class were part of the direct grammar instruction and small group oral practice employed by the instructor. It seems that this aspect of the instruction caused him to experience negative feelings.

One student expressed excitement at the beginning of the semester, "I'm excited to learn as much Spanish as I can so I can talk to my grandma + my friend in Spanish." Despite his initial enthusiasm, by the mid-term, he had stopped attending. It is possible that this student's enthusiasm waned because his learning goals and philosophical orientation were not aligned with the instructor's. As discussed in chapter four, the instructor used some key instructional techniques, including grammar instruction, rooted in the traditional method (Brown, 2007) and the liberal arts philosophy (Elias & Merriam, 2005). If an adult student's learning goals and motivations are life-oriented and practical (Kasworm, 2003; Knowles et al., 2005), the student may feel better served in a communicative classroom rooted in the progressive model of adult education.

Some student's enthusiasm for the course progressed along a different trajectory. Ten, who was openly critical of the course throughout every data collection method, by the end of the semester listed in his learning journal that in addition to vocabulary and grammar, he had learned that "Spanish ain't so bad." While this may not seem like a strong display of emotion, in comparison with his other comments it stands out as expressing a completely different sentiment than the majority of his comments.

Selecting Interview Participants

In my preliminary analysis of the data, I looked for statements from students that may have indicated that a disorienting dilemma, critical self-assessment, or critical reflection were taking place. When I was able to identify a pattern of these kinds of statements, I invited the student to participate in a one-on-one interview.

Identifying patterns of behavior was important. Most students made insightful comments about the film. Even students who exhibited few if any indicators of perspective transformation seemed affected by the movie. For example, one student who had not given any indication of perspective transformation prior to watching the film, wrote this after the first day of viewing and discussion. Learning journal questions are in bold:

1.) **What did you earn in class today?** I learned a lot about the Dominican Republic in the 1950's era. I learned about what was/wasn't acceptable in their culture. I learned how the family in the Dominican Republic differs from an American family.

2.) **How did you learn it?** By watching the movie, discussion w/students, discussion w/instructor (substitute)

3.) **Is there anything we learned or discussed that caused you to have any**

strong feelings or reactions? If nothing, then leave this question blank. If

so, please explain. Yes, I was shocked at some of their ways of living such as

women were inferior, prejudice existed, and the rules were communist.[10]

This journal is especially interesting considering that until this point, nearly three

months into the semester, the student had exhibited no evidence of strong emotion or

interest in Spanish speakers. Yet, the viewing and discussion of the film seemed to have

an effect on this student. I will note here that, despite this obvious connection with the

movie, this student was not selected to be an interview participant. Once the film was

complete and regular class activities resumed, the student's behavior returned to their

previous state. The students in the class generally seemed to connect emotionally with the

film. I evaluated my criteria for interview selection and decided that I would not consider

isolated incidents (such as a strong emotional reaction to one activity or on one day)

unless they were accompanied by some other evidence that perspective transformation

was taking place.

In addition to the students I selected for participation in interviews, there was one

student who approached me about being interviewed. I had already identified Jade as an

interview participant but had not yet extended her an invitation when she approached me

to talk about being interviewed. While she did not directly ask me to interview her, she

did ask about the interviews and express a desire to talk with me in more depth about

what she had learned. I believe this student's desire to be interviewed further validated

my suspicions that she was undergoing perspective transformation. I was also intrigued

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[10] The Dominican Republic at this time was not a communist country nor did the instructors indicate that it was. Throughout this study, as I contrasted my own observation of classroom practices with student accounts, I discovered that sometimes students make sense of material in unexpected ways.

by an apparent contradiction. Jade had written in her learning journal that she resented

being monitored, a jab at my presence as researcher in her classroom. Just a few weeks

later, Jade approached me about being interviewed. We would discuss this contradiction

in more depth during our one-on-one interview.

Eight students were invited to participate in one-on-one, semi-structured

interviews. Interviews took place in the campus cafeteria (during non-meal times when

the tables were available for use) and were audio recorded.

The Interview Participants

Although my only selection criterion was evidence of the early stages of

perspective transformation, the students selected to participate in interviews represented a

diverse cross-section of the population of the class. Table 1 gives an overview of the

participants. All of the interview participants have been given pseudonyms.

Alexa. At the time of our interview, Alexa was a 24 year old criminal justice

major. Unmarried with no children, she had previously been enrolled at a major research

university located just miles away from the community college where she was taking

classes. Because of a tragedy in her family and the strain that event caused, she had

decided to transfer to the community college.

Alexa had attempted to take Elementary Spanish I previously because it was a

required course for her major, but was left with negative feelings about the course, the

instructor, and her ability to be successful. In class, she sat in the front row, was always

attentive and focused and seemed to feel genuine affection and appreciation for the

professor. She mentioned several times in her interview how positive her experience

taking Spanish with Ms. Salazar had been, especially when compared with her previous

negative experience at the university level.

Despite her enthusiasm, Alexa withdrew from the course shortly before the end of the semester because she feared her test grades would not be good enough to earn a passing grade. I was not aware during our interview that she would drop the course; she informed me in our follow-up communication via email after the semester had ended.

Bella. An aspiring dietician who hoped to work in a private practice, Bella did not need Spanish for her degree program, but felt like she needed to take the class in order to become fluent in Spanish.

Single and 20 years old, Bella was a frequent traveler to Miami, Costa Rica, and other places all over the world. In fact, she traveled to Costa Rica during her spring break in the semester she participated in this research. She came back from her vacation in Costa Rica convinced that learning Spanish was important and that immersion was the best method for learning. She was considering a semester study abroad for the subsequent fall semester.

Emily. An 18-year-old recent high school graduate from a local high school, Emily came into class with some background in Spanish study from her high school experience. In addition, Emily had a Mexican brother-in-law.

Emily was taking Spanish in order to fulfill degree requirements, but was an eager learner. She had hopes of one day using the Spanish language in her career as a doctor and continually sought out ways to come in contact with Spanish speakers and their culture.

Jade. As a 29-year-old, widowed mother of three boys ages 15, 10, and 6, Jade was facing the challenges of returning to college. Having previously worked in an office

setting where she had contact with people from all over the world, she decided to pursue a degree in Broadcast Journalism. Jade intended to become fluent in Spanish, and, over the course of the semester, came to believe that the only way she would truly learn would be to develop relationships and interact with Spanish-speaking people.

Jade brought with her previous life experiences and knowledge of African American history that helped her interpret the material in the Spanish course through multiple lenses. Clearly, Jade had a positive relationship with the instructor and seemed to admire Ms. Salazar greatly.

Joe. Joe was a 26-year-old hospitality management major who worked as a waiter in a restaurant and intended to go into restaurant management as a career. Spanish was not a degree requirement for Joe. He enrolled in the course because he wanted to learn to communicate with the Spanish speakers both in his personal life and in his career. He felt that, in the future, it would be important to know Spanish.

Joe regretted not having more time to devote to the class. Between his fiancé, his two year old baby girl, his demanding work schedule, and some upheaval in his personal life, Joe rarely found time to keep up with the class requirements. Despite that, Joe maintained that he was committed to learning the language at some point.

Keisha. A 27-year-old mother of two, Keisha was an LPN (Licensed Practical Nurse) who had gone back to school to become an RN (Registered Nurse). When Keisha talked about her job, she displayed a genuine interest in caring for people and providing for them. On the other hand, she seemed tired, overworked, and motivated to change her circumstances.

For the five years that she was in nursing, she worked in a prison facility. One of her favorite parts of working in a prison was getting to work with Spanish-speaking females. Keisha had picked up many Spanish words and phrases working with her immigrant patients at the prison. She enjoyed this informal learning so much, in fact, that she decided to take formal Spanish classes at the college. Spanish was not a requirement for Keisha's degree. It would have been easy for her to avoid language study; however, Keisha saw an immediate application for the language.

Sandy. A 19-year-old degree-seeking student, Sandy did not need Spanish for her program of studies. Rather, Sandy took the class to get in touch with her ethnic roots. Her father was Caucasian, but her mother and grandmother were both Latina and spoke Spanish. Even though she did not live with them, Sandy was interested in connecting with her mom and grandma by learning their native language.

Sandy had taken some foreign language before in high school (French, not Spanish), but had dropped out of high school before graduating. Later, Sandy attended a technical college receiving her high school diploma and becoming a certified nurse's aide. After several months of working in her chosen profession, Sandy decided that her ultimate ambition would require a Bachelor's degree in zoology, so she went back to college. Single with no children, Sandy was a full-time student with her eye on transferring to a four-year school.

Ten. Describing himself as "not the most disciplined" student, Ten was highly intelligent and passionate. He gave the appearance of being fiercely individualistic both in his appearance and speech. Ten had fascinating contrasts in his background and interests. He was a pacifist who loved studying military history. He was of mixed Jewish,

Caribbean, and African American ethnic heritage, ultimately identifying himself as a Black man, and yet was overcome with anger when immigrants could not speak English. Finally, he was a proficient Spanish student who was in danger of failing first-semester Spanish because he refused to do out-of-class assignments or attend class regularly or punctually.

Ten intended to become a history teacher and needed to take Spanish at the community college before transferring to the local university to continue his studies. Single, 29 years old, and employed part-time, Ten expressed a genuine appreciation and affection for Ms. Salazar while also being sharply critical of her methods, class structure, and even her accent.

Interview Findings

During the one-on-one interviews, participants largely reiterated categories and methods of learning that had previous been reported in the learning journals or observed in participant observation. However, there were some important new revelations.

Just as in the learning journals, students reported learning in the same seven categories (content, skills, personalized, contextualized, learning about differences, about connections, and about learning) with particular emphasis on transformative learning occurring through learning about differences, learning about connections, and learning about learning. Similarly, the two instructional methods students deemed most important for transformative learning in the journals were also found to be important in the interview data. The interviews contributed additional depth and context to the previously identified categories and also held some new revelations about students' experiences.

What did students learn? In the analysis of the learning journals, only three

categories of learning were considered relevant to perspective transformation: learning

about differences, learning about connections and learning about their own learning.

These three categories were also evident in the interviews.

Learning about differences. Emily gave an enthusiastic account of some of the

differences she learned about in class.

> Some of the cultural things I found. Like when she told me that they wake up at
>
> eight o'clock! Miss Dina [Salazar], in class, she said in Spain they get up at eight
>
> o'clock. Because, you know, we're already awake and we rush out and go, "Hey,
>
> get off the road you crazy maniac!" Yeah, we're already working and they're just
>
> getting up. How great is that! They round off their money. They round off their
>
> money! They don't do what we do, like 1.99. They just round it to two dollars.
>
> It's so much easier. You don't need change. Why don't we do that? Let me see,
>
> what was my other favorite thing… oh yeah, the thing she told us about the biting.
>
> The kids and the biting. About how it's normal. They bite back! I loved them.

One of the most interesting things about Emily's description of her learning is not

just that she reported learning about specific differences between the two cultures.

Rather, Emily learned about differences and then critically assessed her own culture in

light of the new information. When she discussed how money is rounded to the nearest

dollar in Spain, she added that the Spanish method is easier and "Why don't we do that?"

This could be described as a critical assessment of sociocultural assumptions, one of the

stages of perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1991).

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Bella was also struck by some of the differences Ms. Salazar explained out of her personal experience. Bella laughed as she recalled a particular example the instructor gave.

When you ask someone [a Spanish-speaker] how they're doing, they say, "Oh, I'm not doing too good. I have this and that to do." And she [Ms. Salazar] said, "And then I came to America, and everyone's like, 'Oh, I'm doing great!'" She was like, "I thought everyone was taking pills or something!" That's what she said! She said, "Everyone was so happy!" I feel like, just little things like that [are important]. It's true, though, because it's really like that. But I never learned that in any other classes. I mean, nobody else took the time to know the differences and stuff.

Jade gave the same example to explain how she learned about cultural differences by listening to Ms. Salazar's examples from her own life.

Sometimes while she was teaching she would just say, "It's just in our culture!" You know like, she was so right about this, she pinpointed that in the US, when you pass by someone and say, "Hi! How are you today?" We always say "Great!" or "Fine!" or "Things are great!" Even when things are horrible! We say we're doing good. And she was like, in their culture, they don't say things are great when they're not. So if you say, "Hola! How is your day?" They would turn around and be blatantly honest! I thought that was so, I thought, "We DO do that!" And I'm silly. I found myself when I was walking, going to the library, and I spoke to the guy and he said, "Fine." And I thought, that's the point she made! I'll bet he's not just fine! That's just how we do.

In this passage, Jade not only demonstrates that she is learning about differences, but by applying what she learned in class to real situations in her life, she also shows evidence of learning from the next category: learning about connections.

Learning about connections. Like Jade, Bella connected what she learned in class to other experiences in her life.

> In the movie, you saw how they always ate together and the women cleaned and the man provided. And I learned, in Costa Rica, the woman who helped us out, she had a problem the first day because she had to make her husband breakfast, lunch and dinner because the men do not cook. The women cook for the men. The men do not cook. Like, they won't even eat if they don't cook. That's the extent of the no cooking! And that's totally different because in my family, my dad's the one who cooks.

Here, Bella actually makes two connections. First, she connects what she saw of Dominican culture in the movie to what she saw of Costa Rican culture during her travel. Then, she contrasts both experiences with her own life.

Keisha connected the film with herself by comparing her impression of the Mirabal sisters' circumstances to her own.

> The determination, hard will of them [the Mirabal sisters], I didn't know about how back then in the dictatorship you had to do what he says. What he says or you die, you know? Pretty much. Not being able, from a woman's point of view, not being able to do anything I want. Because if I had been alive back then, I would have been dead as soon as I was born. Coming out of my mama's womb,

they say don't cry? Waaah, I'm going to cry. You know, that's just the type of person I am.

For many students, the film was an opportunity to connect the examples they saw on the screen with events and people from their own lives.

Previously, I discussed how Jade made connections between the instructor's cultural sidebars and her own life experiences. Jade also made significant connections out of what she viewed and discussed from the film.

To my surprise, I really enjoyed the film and recommended it to some of my friends, that you guys have to see this. And it was kind of like a cultural shock. I was amazed that there are some things in Latino history that coincide with some of the things that African Americans have faced. It made me look at it like we really have some things in common. I wasn't expecting to get that out of the course, but I am glad that it was introduced.

In one instance, Jade described a scene in the movie when the dictator took an inappropriate liking to a young girl.

When I first watched the film and I was observing General Trujillo, and then, he kind of reminded me. The emotional part was how he had a liking for the young girl at the play when they were performing. And he took her, you know. And that kind of reminded me of personal experiences growing up when you are under the care of an older man, when they take advantage. You know, you're a young girl or whatever. I didn't like that. I mean that was a personal experience for myself and then seeing that in the film, I was like, wow! They were subject to stuff like that too!

Later, Jade described more connections she made between her previous knowledge and what she saw in the film.

I guess everybody didn't feel the way I felt about the film. But because I have studied my own history and because I have played a lot of characters [in amateur theater] that were significant in the struggle. I got a chance with my church to be over the entire month of black history and I did some things with my kids. And I was able to put just different things that have happened throughout generations together and to see that we are doing great regardless of what some people still feel or realize. To get an idea of their [Latinos'] struggle, where they came from and how they came to where they are, it brought an appreciation. It made me look at my teacher in a different way. Like, wow. It was amazing. It brought a level of respect for the culture.

When Jade made this connection between her African-American history and Dominican history, she became aware of their shared experiences of struggle. This awareness inspired respect for all Spanish-speakers and their culture.

Learning about learning. In the interviews, students continued to express their feelings and discoveries about learning. Keisha powerfully expressed her frustrations.

I can't handle it. I can't handle it. I mean, I'm taking this class because I want to learn something new. I should have known that, okay, Keisha, it's not going to happen overnight. It's a learning process. But I want to know this stuff now. I need to communicate. I need to communicate. I need to communicate. Right now.

Keisha became so distraught with her difficulties in learning language that she considered dropping the course. The difficulties in learning were especially troubling for Keisha

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because of her intense desire to communicate with her patients. In fact, she was only taking the course in order to better serve her Spanish-speaking patients.

> We get a lot of immigrant people [at the prison where she works as a nurse], immigration. And they probably won't be there long because they're coming over to wait to get back to Mexico or wherever they come from… And they're the funnest people to work with. ... I love when I have new ones come in, especially females, we get a lot of Mexican females, Hispanic females. And we have to deal, you know, it's hard to translate, talk to them. Especially if you don't know Spanish, just a lot of broken words that I've learned just to be able to talk to them. So I took up Spanish [as a college course].

> Alexa also came to the realization that learning language was a painful process.

> I wanted to drop it. I did. Because I was doing bad, not good on tests at all. All through the semester, I've wanted to drop. But I was like, no! I can keep going. I can keep going. I can keep going. I think I might be able to make it. Because it's easier to learn, I mean, I know it when I read it! But I guess [my difficulty] it's just because I'm just starting out. I mean I know it [Spanish] when I'm reading it and when I'm writing it and when I'm in class. But when I'm outside trying to talk, I'm like, I don't know what I'm saying!

Keisha and Alexa came to the conclusion that they may have to drop the course because of their difficulties learning to communicate. Other students experienced similar frustrations, but arrived at different conclusions.

> Jade: I kind of feel like, for some reason, I feel like I really won't grasp it [Spanish] the way I expect to get it just from taking the class. I think it would

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have to come from interacting in a relationship with someone that speaks Spanish more than what you get out of a class… I thought that I would just learn it from taking the class… I just thought that after that first semester I would know how to hold a small conversation … Interaction and speaking. If I was talking to someone and they said things in Spanish and then they turned around and told me what it was, I think I would retain that a whole lot more than just writing it out…

Jade identified the same problem with her learning that Keisha and Alexa identified: a lack of communicative ability. However, instead of considering dropping the class, Jade formulated a plan of action. She planned to form a relationship with a Spanish-speaker so she can experience the interaction that she is convinced she needs. Keisha and Alexa were still in the very first stage of perspective transformation, the disorienting dilemma, and were dealing with all of the negative emotions inherent in that stage. Jade, however, was further along in her transformation and had already moved into developing a plan to acquire new knowledge and skills.

Jade continued explaining how the class itself helped her learn how to learn:

My teacher came in with a CD, and she played a hispanic CD for us. And to this day, it is still in my head. I cannot get the tune out of my head. It's like, "dadadada, me gustas tú[11]." We listened to it so long, it was over and over and over. By the time I left out of class, the tune was stuck in my head. When I laid down at night, I was still saying, "Me gustas tú." I think that it was those things that helped me come to the realization that it's going to take the interaction to really get this down pat. The films, the music, all those things stick more than what's wrote on the board or the exercises. It's those things. So there's got to be

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[11] The song is "Me gustas tú" by the Spanish singer Manu Chao. "Me gustas tú" means I like you.

more interaction than just reading the material, doing the work. It doesn't stick

like that. It's about songs and films and conversations.

Jade also explained how she was seeking out some real-world language contexts

directly tied to her future career plans. Since Jade was a broadcast journalism major, she

watched the news in Spanish.

They film the news broadcast in Spanish. So I'll watch it and pay attention to see

if I can understand. Of course you have the pictures there to help you understand

the story, but I'll listen to see if I can understand what exactly are they saying

about. Maybe one or two words will jump out that I'll be familiar with that will

help me put it together. So, that also makes me feel this is more of an interaction

type thing than just writing it out.

Bella agrees that interaction is the key to solving her learning difficulties. "That's

how you learn. That's what I wrote on the little sheet [learning journal] yesterday about

what could improve this [class]; it's interaction."

Sandy came to a conclusion about her own weaknesses as a student while enrolled

in Elementary Spanish I. Towards the end of our one-on-one interview, I asked Sandy

what she had learned besides the grammar and vocabulary she had already described.

Sandy: That if you want to learn a foreign language, you have to study.

Researcher: You didn't know that before you took this class?

Sandy: Well, I knew you had to study, but I think I like learning in class better

than taking it home and learning, way more.

Researcher: What is it about the classroom that you find helpful?

Sandy: It's more disciplined. Definitely. There's a schedule. No distractions.

Sandy discovered that her own study skills were getting in the way of her learning outside of class while the structure of the classroom promoted learning inside the classroom.

Emily also felt she had experienced difficulty with learning how to learn Spanish. But she was becoming more optimistic toward the end of the semester. "It's like the best feeling ever when you can actually kind of understand something. I'm starting to get to that point when you feel like you are starting to see the light. I'm right there."

New developments in what students learned. Much of the data gleaned from interviews further explored existing categories. However, in Bella's interview, another category of learning, personalized learning, was described as significant.

> I think whenever we had a sheet asking what we did on Friday night or what we
> like to do, I think that was great because with that I had to actually put my life
> into it. I had to think about my life and how to convert that into Spanish. I think
> that was good. Turn my own experiences into Spanish.

Bella's experience with personalized learning was clearly important for her. However, none of the other interview participants seemed to have the same experience. As I tried to make sense of this aberration, I wondered if Bella's travel to Costa Rica during the semester had anything to do with her specific interest in personalized learning. Having traveled over spring break, Bella was aware of the sink-or-swim nature of immersion learning and the need to instantly put one's ideas and needs into Spanish words.

> The little papers that she has us interact with everyone and ask how much is this
> and that? That helped me because when I went to Costa Rica, I knew how to ask

"How much is this?" Or "How much are they?" And I knew how to listen to what they were saying, numbers-wise, just from the interaction [in class].

I began to realize that Bella had identified personalized learning as significant to her, not because it led to transformation, but as a result of her transformation. During our interview, Bella told me that she had realized during the semester that she did not want to just get by on her previous knowledge.

> I'll be honest, the first two tests I didn't study and I passed fine. I can make it through the class without studying and without actually grasping the knowledge. But I learned that I want to retain it and be able to remember it. The first three Spanishes I took, I got an A or B in all of them, but I don't really remember much from them.

I then asked Bella when she came to the realization that she wanted to actually learn, retain, and be able to apply the course content.

> I think it was the Costa Rica thing. When I was there and trying so hard, we [Bella and her brother, the only two members of her family with language training] did hit a couple of hard points when we were just stuck, you know? Neither one of us knew what we were trying to say, and we were just like, ugh, getting out books to find pictures to point at. And I was like, if only I actually knew what I was supposed to learn! That's what I was thinking! I could know what I am supposed to say. And that made me want to learn. I should've been paying attention better! I should've studied my vocabulary!

In conclusion, while personalized learning was clearly important for Bella, I concluded that this category of learning was not, in fact, a precursor of her perspective

transformation, but part of the impact of her transformative learning. Bella's perspective transformation began with her foreign travel experience. The impact of that transformation was a heightened interest in content immediately applicable in real-world contexts.

What students did not know they learned. In the learning journals, when I ask students what they learned, their answers were almost exclusively related to content and skills required for communication. On a few occasions, the content and skills were personalized or contextualized, but usually not. On the days when the film was shown in class, the answers conformed to the topics brought up in the film.

In the interviews, I wanted to find out what students were learning on deeper levels than just the content and skills of the course. Unfortunately, whenever I mentioned "learning" in my questions, students answered with content and skills almost exclusively.

Researcher: Think back over the semester and tell me what you've learned.

Joe: Well, more than anything, I've really learned how to read. I can pretty much say hello and what my name is. Other than that, whenever I talk to someone who speaks Spanish, I kind of draw a blank. Like, uh, uh, yeah I did take Spanish, but I can't think of anything.

Researcher: Okay, you've learned to read, a hello and what my name is, anything else?

Joe: No, not really. Not stuff you just go up to a stranger and say. Like, "Hey, I put on my clothes this morning."

Joe is saying here that he had learned how to say in Spanish, "I put on my clothes this morning." Yet, he rejected qualifying this as learning because it was not useful for

engaging in conversation with Spanish speakers. I was intrigued by Joe's assessment that he did not really learn because he cannot go up to a stranger and speak in the target language. Keisha expressed the same sentiment about how much she learned. "It may not be a lot, I may not know how to say a lot, but later I go and I'm like, oh! I could have said this word!" She believed that because she had not learned how to speak spontaneously in context, she had not learned a lot.

As I sorted through the data from the interviews, I became convinced that there was a fundamental disconnect between my understanding of *learning* Spanish and the students'. I was sifting through the answers in search of categories of learning that might indicate that students were grappling with social issues, confronting their own biases or assumptions, or making sense of the world in new ways. Meanwhile, the students in this study were stubbornly consistent in their conceptualization of *learning* Spanish as synonymous with *speaking* Spanish.

Another disconnect between my definition of learning and the students' was the expected time frame for learning. I have learned more than one language as an adult and have taught Spanish for most of my career. I understand the incredible investment of time fluency entails. I discovered that the students did not understand the time it would take. Recall Keisha whose primary frustration with Spanish was that she was not able to use it immediately. "But I want to know this stuff now. I need to communicate. I need to communicate. I need to communicate. Right now."

Jade also expressed a desire to communicate immediately in Spanish. "I thought that I would just learn it from taking the class. I just thought that after that first semester I

would know how to hold a small conversation, but…oh no, oh no." Language learning is a slow process, painfully slow for Jade and Keisha.

Like several other students, Bella experienced transformative learning so powerful that she could not resist comparing all of her new learning experiences to the learning she had experienced in Costa Rica. Yet, when I asked Bella what she had learned in her Spanish class, she described her progress learning to speak. I have poured over her learning journals and interview transcripts and I know that Bella was also learning about cultural and linguistic differences, about connections between her own life and the target culture, and about what it takes to learn a language. Yet, Bella herself did not recognize these experiences as learning. Several times during my interview with her I asked her what she had learned from specific classroom activities and she answered me with some variation of the question, "Do you mean did I learn how to speak?"

Of course, Knowles' model of andragogy (Knowles et al., 2005) describes adults' life-centered orientation to learning. Adult students who have discovered a need in their lives will turn to education to fill that need. A life-centered orientation to learning is consistent with what researchers know about adult student motivations for going to college (Kasworm, 2003). Bella was in college, motivated by future career aspirations, but she was in an Elementary Spanish I class because she had a real-life need to communicate with a group of people. Bella was counting on this class to help her fill that need. The only learning that registered for her was learning that helped her fill her communication need.

How did students learn? The one-on-one interviews not only explored the categories of student learning that led to perspective transformation, but also the

instructional methods that students identified as contributing to their learning. Just as in the learning journals, the instructor's sidebars and the film were identified as key instructional methods in the learning categories associated with perspective transformation. Students also discussed some instructional methods that had not been highlighted in the learning journals: small-group oral production and the learning journals themselves.

Sidebars. In previous sections, I have described some of the important learning that students experienced as a result of Ms. Salazar's frequent interjections of cultural notes and personal opinions. During the interviews, the sidebars produced some interesting descriptions of the teacher's role as a linguistic and cultural insider. In order to explain students' perceptions of their instructor and her frequent, often personal interjections, I found it useful to describe the teacher as a cultural object (Knutson, 2006). By using herself, her own experiences and her own points of reference to explain linguistic and cultural differences, Ms. Salazar turned herself into more than just an ambassador of a language and culture or a conduit of a language and culture, she became the language and culture themselves for her students. Learning about their instructor became inextricable from learning about the target language and culture.

While I have detailed many times in chapters 4 and 5 how the sidebars converted Ms. Salazar into an example of the target culture for students to learn, in this section, I will explore how the sidebars allowed Ms. Salazar to become a linguistic object as well. In other words, she became a living example of the target language for students to examine and learn.

Ten experienced something profound as a result of learning about his teacher through her frequent sidebars.

Not to hate on Spanish, but I used to get really mad when I'd be driving and I'd see a billboard in Spanish. You know, I worked at the zoo for a while, selling little strollers to the kids, and we would have a day, we called it Mexican Day, and when the kids came in, I'd be talking to the kids, because the parents don't fucking speak English. And I used to get really annoyed, like when I'd see a commercial in Spanish. You know, last time I checked, this was the United States of America… I used to get really annoyed and think, you are over here. You learn mother-fucking English. I don't want to have to learn shit unless I want to. And honestly, just her [Ms. Salazar] being as cool as she is has just toned some of that down. I don't have the random anger that I had before… Now, as opposed to getting mad when I hear it [Spanish], I try to, more than anything, pay more attention to it because I kind of want to figure out what they're saying. It's kind of flipped. I don't shun it like I did before. And a lot has to do with her presentation of who she is and how it's being presented to me in a way I'm seeing as a positive thing.

Because Ten was biased against the Spanish language, he had a difficult time keeping his cool with English language learners or with people who spoke with an accent. Ms. Salazar had a thick accent and distinctly non-native speech patterns. Somehow, after a semester of learning from her, Ten's attitudes about accent softened. In this excerpt from our interview, Ten discussed his previously held beliefs about his instructor's accent and admits that his attitude has changed.

This sounds really bad, but I thought that somebody who is teaching in an American school should have English as their first language. I know that sounds ignorant, but with the accent, it's like I have to do a little more work to understand what she says sometimes, when I shouldn't have to. Other than Spanish, which I have to figure out, I also have to play with her English. I've gotten used to it and it's easier than it used to be. And I do like her, so I don't want to hate on her.

While Ten had by far the strongest reaction to Ms. Salazar's non-native English, he was not the only student to mention her accent. Keisha also had a negative reaction to her instructor's way of pronouncing English. "Listening to [the instructor], I was like, oh my goodness, and I didn't expect that, you have to pay attention to everything she is saying."

Alexa, Sandy and Emily saw Ms. Salazar's accent and pronunciation as a positive quality and a major method of instruction. Alexa learned best by "listening to her talk. I learned better how to pronounce the words because she has such an accent that when I leave the class, it's easier to talk. I like to listen to her talk, I love her accent."

Similarly, Sandy and Emily gave the instructor's accent credit as an instructional method.

Sandy: Just through when she would say it aloud how it's supposed to be said. I think that helps. Like, I loved that she had an accent, even though the first couple of days everyone was like, oh my gosh! I can't even understand her! I love that part of the class because it kind of says that, this is how you're going to hear it [Spanish] somewhere else, you know?

Emily: Especially her, she has really helped. Because all of the other teachers I've

had have been American and spoke Spanish with a very American accent. So that

didn't help me at all. When I first saw her and she started speaking. I mean, my

other teachers were good and they taught me the grammatical stuff, but with

pronunciation, she made a big difference. She did because she actually knew first-

hand what she was talking about.

Emily not only learned pronunciation by listening to her instructor's accent, she

also made connections between her Mexican brother-in-law's accent and her instructor's

accent. She drew some conclusions about differences between regions.

The accents can be different. I know my brother-in-law's accent is quite different

from hers [Ms. Salazar's]. He comes from Mexico City and she comes from, I

think, Spain, and their accents, the way they pronounce things, is very different. I

just thought Spanish was all the same.

Bella also noticed differences between her instructor's Spanish accent and the

Costa Rican accent she heard during her travels. "When I was actually in Costa Rica and

they were speaking to me, they are so fast and with their accents, you know what I mean?

It doesn't even sound like the same thing I'm learning."

Small-group oral activities. In a previous section, I detailed Bella's interest in

personalized learning. In addition to explaining what she learned, I also described how

she learned it. Bella highlighted the instructional method I call *small-group oral*

production. These activities usually followed grammar instruction in class and were

accompanied by a handout the students were to use as a guide in their group work.

According to Bella, this instructional method was the medium for her personalized learning.

Other students also reported the small-group activities were important. Alexa discussed the impact that the small-group oral production activities had on her personally.

> I'm a really in-my-shell kind of person and I think I've come out a little bit more… I'm not really a people person. I mean, I am. I like people. I'm not anti-social. I'm just introverted. And I think the more she points you out and wants you to come on and mingle with the class, then we will ask each other questions in Spanish, it helps you to talk to people because I'm usually the one sitting in the same spot, up front, by the pencil sharpener.

When I followed up by asking what instructional method was the most important in Alexa's learning, she repeated the same idea, "She makes us talk to each other."

Clearly, Alexa's discomfort in social situations had to be overcome in order to meet the requirements of the course. In the end, Alexa identified the very activities that made her most uncomfortable as the most important to her learning. While there is no way to be sure until the long process of transformative learning is complete, I suspect that this tension between comfortable introversion and successful communication may have set the stage for a disorienting dilemma for Alexa.

Keisha also described the value of the small-group oral production activities. As a working mom, Keisha found the demands of the class overwhelming and found that when she got to class, usually after working an eight-hour shift, the small-group work was welcome.

Nine times out of ten I'm just getting off work, so I'm so tired. [My shift is] eight

hours and then I have to go sit in class. You know, some participation, getting up

and going around talking to each student. She [the instructor] hasn't been doing it

as much. When I have to communicate with them, I learn. Even me, sitting in

class with these people. Okay, I know their face, they're in class with me, but who

are they? So that was kind of fun. But she hasn't been doing it [small-group oral

activities] a lot towards the end. You know, interacting and seeing what the other

person knows, that kind of helped since I didn't get a chance to talk to that many

people or have a study group. I didn't want to sit out. I wanted to learn it.

Keisha described in this passage how the small-group oral activities helped keep her

attention after a long work day, increased learning, improved her sense of community

with her classmates, and helped make up for not having a community of learners to study

with outside of class -- an impressive list of positive attributes. According to Keisha, Ms.

Salazar was using this instructional method less often as the semester came to an end, and

Keisha felt its absence.

Jade explained the mutual support that came from the group activities.

In class, what was helpful for me was the group activities. We were assigned

activities in the book. When I worked by myself, I always got hung up. But when

I worked with someone else, the thing that my classmate was hung up on, was the

thing that I got very clearly, and vice versa. So, it would always help me to get

with someone.

One of the interview participants, Joe, who seemed to exhibit signs of perspective

transformation in the learning journals, expressed during the interviews that the class was

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not a priority for him and had little impact on his life. The one instructional method he did praise was the small-group oral production. Joe said that through these activities, he formed new friendships with classmates, particularly with Jade and Ten.

Student learning journals. I had originally conceived of the student learning journals as a data collection method for this study. Ms. Salazar was open to the idea of using new assessment tools in class and included them in the course as a daily, informal evaluation of student learning. I was taken aback when an interview participant mentioned the learning journals as a key instructional method. Of course, I should not have been surprised since, in addition to being a widely used method of studying foreign language learning (Chaudron, 1988; Nunan, 1992), their usefulness in promoting critical reflection is well demonstrated (Cranton, 2006).

In several cases during interviews, students referred to things they had written in their learning journals. In my interview with Keisha, I asked her if she had learned anything unexpected in class. Her response was, "Let me think. There was one. I can't even remember, but I made it a point in my journal." I had all of her learning journals with me, so I asked if she wanted to look it up. After looking for a moment and being unable to find the point in her journals, she declined to continue looking, repeating again, "I made it a point to write it at the end in my journal." Later in the interview when I returned to the question, she again referred me to the journals. I felt as if she valued her written responses above her oral responses. After all, if she had already written about that issue, why bother talking about it during the interview?

I began to get the sense that some students saw the learning journals as the authoritative record of their classroom experiences. Students sometimes referred to items

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written in the journals. Maybe referring to the written record gave credence to their commentary. Or maybe students were helping me make the connections between their statements. For example, Alexa, while trying to explain to me the importance of seeing different ways of life through film said, "You don't realize what goes on in other places until you see it. When you actually see it, I wrote on one of my journals that we did, when you actually see what goes on, you have more respect for mankind as a whole." I made a note in my preliminary analysis of the interview data that it seemed as if she were citing having written it down in the journal as proof that her statement was accurate.

Bella also cited herself while talking excitedly about the benefits of learning through experience. "That's how you learn. That's what I wrote on the little sheet [the journal] yesterday about what could improve this [class]: it's interaction."

Ten also referred to the learning journals in a way that caused me to think about how recording an idea in the learning journal validated it. "It's definitely opened my eyes. I wrote that on my last journal we turned in." Once again, a student validated their interview by citing the journal.

I wondered how writing down what they learned had changed things for the interview participants. Would they have been as clear about what they learned if they had not been tracking it all semester? Would there have been space during the course for students to engage in critical reflection and thoughtfully describe their experiences if Ms. Salazar had not included journals as part of the daily routine? Of course, there is no way to know for sure, but based on some off-hand student remarks, I have my suspicions.

In addition to referring to the journal as an authoritative account, Ten interacted with the journal in an unexpected way. For much of the semester, the learning journals

included the question, "Since the last class meeting, did you have any experiences outside of class that related to what we are learning in Spanish class?" Ten was able to clearly articulate the question's impact on him.

> I am trying to integrate the things she's teaching. I like how she presents the class and I like those things that we fill out every day that say, "has anything happened outside of class?" I really like that and just that question. Just being asked that, it makes me want to have an answer. Just the fact that you care or you want to know is any of this shit affecting my life other than just for school and grades. It makes me want to have a good answer for that.

In designing this study, I knew I wanted to get as close as possible to the class and to the students, but without unduly changing the trajectory of the instructional methods or of student learning. On one hand, Ten's response to the learning journals and to one question in particular caused me to focus inward on myself as researcher and on the study I designed. This revelation was an event in the study that caused me to revisit assumptions I had taken for granted. As a qualitative researcher, that type of introspection and reassessment is a positive thing.

On the other hand, I recognize in Ten's statement that it was not necessarily the journaling that was transformative for him, most important were a) the perceived interest on the part of his professor, and b) being held accountable each day for a new answer. From Ten's perspective, Ms. Salazar had used the journal to ask him a direct question about how he was interacting with the content, and Ten rose to the occasion.

Did perspective transformation occur? During their conversations with me, seven out of the eight interview participants described learning experiences best

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explained through the lens of transformative learning. No apparent contradictions were uncovered between the previous data collected and the interview responses except for one case, Joe.

While Joe's learning journals did demonstrate a pattern of learning about differences, initiating outside contact with native speakers, and having emotional reactions to course content, the content of his one-on-one interview told a much different story. Joe had previously lived in Spanish-speaking communities and currently worked with several Spanish-speakers. Therefore, cultural differences and outside contact with native speakers came rather easily to him. Joe was going through a difficult time in his personal life. Between a recent move, a young family, and an unrelenting work schedule, Joe was at the end of his rope. Many of his assignments had been turned in late or incomplete and the instructor had made accommodations for him on more than one occasion. During the interview, it became clear that Joe had not connected on a personal level with the course material nor did he feel he had the luxury to do so. His other responsibilities took priority.

During the interview, Joe was hard pressed to think of anything at all that he had learned in class. I tried to press the issue. I asked if there were any important moments that stood out. Joe responded, "Nothing I can think of, unfortunately. Nothing stands out." When I asked if the class had affected his life in any way, Joe answered, "Not really." Most of my questions about his experience in class were met with similar responses.

Upon further reflection, it is clear to me that Joe's experience was fundamentally different from the other seven interview participants. I rarely quote him in my analysis on

account of his story being incongruent with the narrative themes present in other students' descriptions of their learning.

In contrast, several students described life experiences that could be explained under Mezirow' (1991) stages of transformative learning. Some students, like Ten, seemed to undergo a disorienting dilemma as a result of the class itself. During the interview, Ten explained how his perception of Spanish and the people who speak it had been transformed as a result of the class, and how Ms. Salazar was responsible for the change. "It's kind of flipped. I don't shun it [Spanish language and culture] like I did before. And a lot has to do with her presentation of who she is and how it's being presented to me in a way I'm seeing it's a positive thing."

Some students, like Bella and Jade, had already experienced a disorienting dilemma outside of class and were learning Spanish as a way of gaining the knowledge and experiences required to take on new roles in their lives. For both Bella and Jade, the class presented them with new opportunities for transformative learning in addition to their outside experiences.

Bella described her disorienting dilemma during her trip to Costa Rica. Despite her good grades and years of Spanish, she was unable to communicate effectively. Upon her return to the United States, she decided "I want to know how to do it fluently, to be able to have a conversation and know what to do." She began to take note of the cultural explanations in her professor's explanations.

> I like the way she [Ms. Salazar], for example, when we are going over vocabulary she'll be like, "Tonto[12], you don't say that to them. They don't like it." Just cultural differences that she explained. In my past Spanish classes, they never

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[12] Meaning "silly" or "stupid".

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explained that to me, that it's not proper, or it's offensive if you do this or say that.

Upon returning from Costa Rica, Bella also reviewed past material, regretting not having paid more attention the first time. "I found myself, even with stuff that we've already taken the test over and I know I'm not going to see it again, just going back and looking over it. Just because if I don't know those small words, how am I going to know anything else?"

Resituated in the class with a drastically different perspective on the usefulness of the material, Bella experienced another disorienting dilemma while watching the film. During the movie, she compared the values and actions of the protagonists with her own family. She expressed a critical stance toward her own family's values ("I didn't have the immediate family the way they are, so tight.") and towards the actions she believed her family would have taken faced with the events in the movie ("I was thinking, if it was my family, they might have left her out on her own. I don't know if they would have helped her out.")

Finally, Bella was able to evaluate how her transformative learning had affected how she viewed Spanish and the people that speak it. She described how Spanish speakers with limited English proficiency are treated with disdain by many people.

I feel like that is very ignorant. They are from a different country, they don't speak our language. I see what it is to go through to learn Spanish and I can't imagine what it would be like to learn English. I would have been freaking out! But they [Costa Ricans] were very helpful and I don't feel like that's returned when people come here.

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Jade's husband had passed away two years before she took this class, leaving her with three sons to raise. The loss of her husband and new life as a single parent was likely a disorienting dilemma for Jade. In addition, she discussed in her interview that her previous work at a bank put her in contact with international students who were her clients. She described how this professional contact presented her with a disorienting dilemma prior to enrolling in college.

> They would sit down at my desk and they would give me more history about what they were studying on America and African American history and I was like, "I don't even know that and here I am a Black woman!" It was interesting. So I would sit there and they would share their experiences about what they thought about being here as opposed to where they came from.

These cultural exchanges were such a powerful event for her, that she was taking this Spanish class as a result of the experience.

Once enrolled in the course, the instructor's frequent cultural sidebars and the film presented her with more opportunities for disorienting dilemma and transformative learning. When I asked Jade if there was a moment in the semester when she realized that she saw things in a new way, she replied, "Oh yeah. It was a lot. It was the entire semester. It really was the history. It caught me wide open."

Emily and Sandy had both taken the class because they had people in their lives that they wanted to communicate with. The class presented them with opportunities to critically reflect on differences and connections they were experiencing in their real-world relationship and vicariously through the instructor's sidebars and the film. Sandy answered a question about what she had learned in class by citing her two cultural

backgrounds and saying, "They just have a different point of view. Like, where you're from can affect how you feel about certain things." Emily and Sandy were both young and frequently compared the content of the course to previous language courses they had taken. While it is difficult to say for certain, both ladies seemed to have begun a process of perspective transformation during the semester by experiencing a disorienting dilemma and then engaging in critical reflection to understand the differences between their new experiences and their existing perspectives.

Finally, Alexa and Keisha were both enthusiastic learners who struggled to keep up with the course. Alexa ended up dropping before the end of the semester, while Keisha only threatened to drop. They were both struck by the film and seemed to have experienced a disorienting dilemma as a result. Alexa explained. "Well, you really, if you don't know what goes on in other cultures, you're really egocentric. You're really more focused on your own life. You don't realize what goes on in other places until you see it."

However, the real similarity between the two is in the realizations they had about the nature and difficulty of language learning. Keisha described her journey.

> It's hard. It is really hard. This has been a tough journey for me, just from January to now. But I mean, it's just hard because everybody [patients] needs care. So when you want to provide the care that they need, accurately, everything they need, I want to be able to communicate with them. So that was my main reason for taking Spanish.

Her motivation to be a great nurse for her patients has carried her through the intensely difficult experience of learning Spanish.

Chapter 6

Conclusions

In this final chapter, I will analyze the research questions according to the findings and scholarly literature presented in the previous chapters. Then, I will discuss implications for adult foreign language teaching, language teacher training and transformative learning theory. I will also make recommendations for future research and give my final thoughts.

Analysis of the Research Questions

This study presented several questions that guided inquiry and framed analysis. First, in what ways did the participants experience perspective transformation? Second, what classroom practices and activities do the participants perceive as contributing to this transformation? Third, how do the participants describe the impact of their perspective transformation? The data gleaned from the various data sources was analyzed to answer these questions.

In what ways did participants transform? Perspective transformation is a complex process that may take a long time, months or even years, to complete. As unlikely as it is that a researcher could capture the entire process of perspective transformation during a one-semester case study, I did expect to identify the steps that students took towards perspective transformation. Transformative learning theory describes a 10-step process of perspective transformation. The steps Mezirow (1991) identified are:

1. A disorienting dilemma

2. Self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame

3. A critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural, or psychic assumptions

4. Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared
   and that others have negotiated a similar change

5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions

6. Planning a course of action

7. Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans

8. Provisional trying of new roles

9. Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships; and

10. A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new
    perspective. (pp. 168-169)

Discovering and sorting through what students learned was a major focus of the

data collection. In my analysis of student learning, I worked to explain how different

learning experiences fit into the framework of perspective transformation. Seven of the

interview participants reported, as a direct result of this class, an experience fitting the

description of a disorienting dilemma. These disorienting dilemmas were experienced

because of the following categories of learning: learning about differences, learning about

connections, and learning about learning. For example, Emily learned about differences

between cultures and compared her new knowledge to her own culture. "They round off

their money! They don't do what we do, like $1.99. They just round it to $2. It's so much

easier... Why don't we do that?"

Jade experienced a profound dilemma when she learned about connections

between her own African American history and the history of the Dominican Republic. In

her words, "It was kind of like a cultural shock. I was amazed that there are some things

in Latino history that coincide with some of the things that African Americans have faced. It made me look at it like we really have some things in common."

Keisha experienced a disorienting dilemma as she learned about her own learning. Before taking the class, Keisha thought her understanding and using isolated vocabulary words was enough to get by. Now that she has learned grammatical systems, she realizes how hard she will have to work to become fluent.

> I didn't think it would be as hard, because I was feeling okay, I could pretty much just pick [out words]… from what I already knew. But it [class] was just a whole different thing. I didn't know it was so much, this has to be with this, this has to be spelled like this, can't use this with this… I'm just saying a word [at work with patients]… but it's not correct, the whole sentence in general. I didn't think it would be as tough, but it is.

A disorienting dilemma may come as a result of classroom practices or from other sources (King, 2000; Mezirow, 1991). Three categories of dilemmas include self-induced, induced by life circumstances, and induced by other people like a teacher or friend. In this study, the focus was on the third category of experiences directly tied to instruction. However, in several cases, students had a mix of experiences inside and outside of the classroom that either prepared them for or contributed to the disorienting dilemma they experienced inside of class.

Transformative learning occurred against two backgrounds for participants in this study. First, some students came in to the class never having experienced transformation in this subject area. For Alexa, Sandy, and Ten, their lives had not presented them with opportunities to critically reflect on the clash of language and culture that language study

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represents. All three seemed to experience two kinds of disorienting dilemmas. First they all experienced a dilemma regarding their own learning, and then go on to critically reflect on their learning experiences. Then the three students seemed to experience a disorienting dilemma regarding the language and culture they were learning.

Another group of students, including Jade, Bella, Emily, Keisha, and Joe, had experienced some kind of transformative learning prior to enrolling in the class. This previous learning did not seem to inhibit their transformative learning in Elementary Spanish I. In fact, their previous learning seemed to set the stage for new, transformative learning experiences. Jade, Emily and Bella had disorienting contact with language and culture differences outside of class, yet all three experienced a disorienting dilemma as a result of new revelations in class. Keisha had learned to see Spanish-speakers as different but equally valid through her work, yet experienced a disorienting dilemma in class in regards to her own expectations for language learning.

Joe had clearly experienced transformative learning in his past as a result of contact with Spanish speakers. In fact, when I evaluated his learning journals, I had mistakenly believed that his transformative learning was occurring as a result of this course. Upon further investigation, I realized that the extreme demands of Joe's time and attention precluded him from experiencing much of anything in the class. He was behind and disconnected from the content. It may have been his previous transformative experience I was reading in his learning journals.

Once students experienced the disorienting dilemma, they began a process of making sense of the dilemma through critical reflection both outside of class and through class activities. Some students also began to experiment with new roles, relationships and

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beliefs based on their disorienting dilemmas. Ten discovered a new relationship with the Spanish language and its speakers as a result of his disorienting dilemma, "I am trying to integrate the things she's teaching." Jade began to explore relationships with people of another ethnicity, "I have not experienced a lot of relationships or friendships with people of the Hispanic community or Latinos, nothing like that. So, it has me open."

I had expected to discover that students were in the first few stages of perspective transformation. However, because of previous or concurrent life experiences, some students were able to progress quickly through Mezirow's stages, while others demonstrated that they were still making sense of their disorienting dilemma. How each student experienced perspective transformation was dependent on a complex system of the student's background, social and psychological factors. The classroom provided opportunities for a disorienting dilemma and critical reflection, and the individual students made their way from there.

What classroom practices did participants report? Because of the nature of this inquiry, I can make no claims as to whether the classroom practices reported in this study definitively caused the transformative learning students experienced. However, based on the data collected from the students themselves, I can describe the activities students reported as integral to their learning.

Two instructional techniques in particular were closely tied to students' realization of cultural differences and connections: sidebars and the film. The instructor's frequent discussions of linguistic and cultural topics related to other instruction caused many students to question how the instructor was different from themselves, how the instructor's language and culture were different from their own, and how language and

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culture affect the way people see and interact with the world. The film, an emotional

portrayal of four sisters who rebelled against a corrupt dictator in the Dominican

Republic, enabled students to connect emotionally with events that took place far from

their own experiences to people different from themselves. These two classroom

practices were linked to students' disorienting dilemmas and to the critical reflection and

self-assessment that followed.

Small-group oral activities were used to create opportunities for Spanish language

practice in the classroom. Several students discussed the multiple positive effects of this

method. First, the small-group activities provided opportunities for interaction in the

target language and improved communicative skills. If a goal of language study is

communicative competence (Brown, 2007), then this was the classroom activity students

believed best supported than goal. However, as important as communicative competence

is, transformative learning can take place even without the student learning to

communicate in the target language. The true benefit of small-group activities for

transformative learning is that they provided opportunities for students to get to know

each other, feel supported, and build supportive relationships. This group dynamic was

linked to students' examination of their own meaning perspectives and realization that

other students were negotiating a similar experience, a stage in Mezirow's (1991)

description of transformative learning.

Finally, students discussed the learning journals as an important instructional

technique. The journals helped students make sense of what they were learning and focus

on the impact of their learning creating daily opportunities for critical reflection.

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Although students did not mention the use of English in instruction, as a researcher, it was clear during my observations that conducting the class in English allowed students to be fully intellectually engaged in the lecture and activities. Had the majority of instruction been in the L2, I suspect students would not have been able to comprehend, question, or explore the content in the same way.

How did participants describe the impact? I wanted to know how students' lives and meaning perspectives were changed as a result of their learning. The two themes that stood out in students' descriptions of how transformative language learning impacted their lives were 1) new openness to language/culture, and 2) new real-world contact with language/culture.

Openness. The interview participants tended to report that as a result of this class, they experienced an increased openness to the Spanish language, Spanish speakers, or cultural differences. Descriptions of their newfound openness to language and culture indicated an increase in intercultural competence or, as Chávez et al. (2003) described it, individual diversity development. This model emphasizes critical reflection in order to progress from one level to the next. Students begin unaware of foreign perspectives, knowing only their own, in a stage called "Unawareness/Lack of Exposure to the Other." As the student progresses through individual diversity development, he goes through a dualistic phase in which the known is seen as reasonable or natural and the other is seen as bad or unnatural. The authors call this phase, which is inherently ethnocentric, "Dualistic Awareness." Progressing as they increase their understanding of the relative nature of difference requires students to experience "Questioning/Self-Exploration" which has substantial parallels to the concept of critical reflection described in chapter 2.

An individual then begins to explore the other through "Risk-taking/Exploration of Otherness" and, finally, is able to see both the familiar and the other as equally valid in the stage called "Integration/Validation."

The individual diversity development model (Chávez et al., 2003) is particularly useful in this study since all of the interview participants began at different points in their development and experienced different kinds of progress through the scale. This framework describes fundamental changes in how participants make meaning of experience making it especially useful to this research. "We advocate a meaningful change, not just in sensitivity and awareness, but change in an individual's way of being, the development of a way of seeing and interpreting the world" (pp. 457-458).

According to the individual diversity development framework, Ten moved out of the "Dualistic Awareness" stage, through "Questioning/Self-Exploration" and began to show evidence of "Risk-Taking/Exploration of Otherness." Ten had exhibited hostility toward the Spanish language prior to taking this class. Yet, he also experienced a newfound and unexpected openness as a result of his transformative language learning experience.

> So I think, it's definitely opened my eyes... Now, as opposed to getting mad when I hear it [Spanish], I try to, more than anything, pay more attention to it because I kind of want to figure out what they're saying. It's kind of flipped. I don't shun it like I did before.

Ten had even begun to enjoy contact with native Spanish-speakers. While he had not reached the final stage of "integration/validation" by the time of his interview, he was clearly moving toward that.

Jade described her newfound openness.

It was amazing. It brought a level of respect for the culture. It's like a whole 'nother level of respect. Where before I could pass by, and you know, if you don't speak the language, you are not always as courteous or open for conversation. Like we would do when you sit next to someone of the same ethnic group, you know, you can just go chatty-patty. I have not experienced a lot of relationships or friendships with people of the Hispanic community or Latinos, nothing like that. So, it has me open. That was like a "Wow!"

Expanding on the possibility of developing new relationships, Jade continued.

My husband passed two years ago, but it made me think, I'm not dating. But I'm like, okay, I could now see myself now dating… It has me open. I'm open, you see. I'm open! That's another thing that shocked me. I could see myself dating outside my race.

Jade had already become aware of cultural and linguistic differences through her life experiences and enrolled in the class in order to explore this new culture. She had enrolled in the course already in the stage of development described as "Risk-taking/Exploration of Otherness." As a result of the course, she came to see the connection between her own culture and this other culture leading to her identifying strongly with Hispanic people and validating their language and culture.

Alexa described her new openness as change in focus. Instead of looking inward at herself, she was looking at the world. "If you don't know what goes on in other cultures, you're really egocentric. You're really more focused on your own life." Later in our conversation, Alexa summed up the result of her learning, "One thing I've learned,

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the world is really big." Alexa moved from an early stage of unawareness to a place of "Questioning/Self-exploration." Bella had a similar reaction while watching the film Alexa, "It opened up my eyes to what other people go through." While Bella had been unaware, her eyes and her meaning perspective had been opened.

Other scholars (Byram, 2008, 2010; Clément, 1986; Citron, 2001, Knutson, 2006; Kramsch, 1993; Mikayla Ortuño, 1991; Taylor, 1994) in foreign language education describe intercultural competence in different ways, many of which could be applied to what the students in this study experienced. However one describes it, becoming more open to language and culture was a profound impact of these students' transformative learning.

Real-world contact. Lindeman (1961) described one of the fundamental differences between teaching children and teaching adults. "In teaching children, it may be necessary to anticipate objective experience by uses of imagination, but adult experience is already there waiting to be appropriated. Experience is the adult learner's living textbook" (p. 7). In addition to the experiences students had prior to enrolling in this course, the participants selected for interviews in this study demonstrated an effort to communicate in real-world settings above and beyond the requirements of the course, or in Lindeman's words, to appropriate that living textbook always available to them. In fact, real-world contexts became so important to these students that a major impact of their transformative learning was the effort to explore new sources of knowledge about language and culture by accessing native speakers, authentic texts created by and for native speakers, and learning contexts where authentic language and culture may be more accessible to the students.

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Emily and Bella both indicated that they would like to extend their Spanish study through travel. Emily believed her family connections will provide her with a good opportunity for travel. "I want to go to Mexico with my sister. She goes to Mexico because he [Emily's brother-in-law] has family there. And maybe I could tag along. I have my passport." Bella had already started investigating opportunities for formal study abroad. "I was looking online the other day at a USCC program to Mexico and it's strictly you go there to learn Spanish. So, I was thinking about doing something like that maybe in the fall. I would do the full semester. I really would because you know, I enjoy it."

Other students had found opportunities to practice what they were learning in their real lives. Ten had contact with a shopper in the supermarket where he worked. In the past, Ten avoided these kinds of interactions, but as a result of being in Ms. Salazar's Spanish class, he looked for ways to use his Spanish skills in real-life contexts.

> Outside of class, I work in the produce department. And I was able to have a conversation and give directions. I could tell the dude where to find the Swiss chard. Like in Spanish. And I was really fucking proud of that. You know what I mean? I was really excited! That was a really cool experience. When he asked me, my reaction was like, "Here, I've got a chance! The time is now!" So that was a good experienced. My initial reaction wasn't annoyance, it was, let's see how I do here. I am trying to integrate the things she's teaching.

Jade had a real-world intercultural experience when she did her income taxes.

> Where I went to do my income tax, which really makes me want to learn this thing fluently, there was a Hispanic man who came in, but it was like one family

member that could speak very little English. So she was there representing her family members who were there to file their taxes. And they had a little girl with them and I spoke to her in Spanish and she spoke back to me in Spanish! And then after that the mom assumed that I could talk, so I was like "No! No! No!" I can just say "hello!" I can speak with the baby! So that was fun.

These students' experiences indicate that they were beginning a new phase in their learning characterized by being a) self-directed, and b) experiential. Both self-directed (Knowles et al., 2005; Mezirow, 1991) and experiential (Dewey, 1938/1997; Kolb, 1984; Lindeman, 1961) learning are fundamental to adult learning. It is notable that taking this Elementary Spanish class encouraged students to seek out this type of learning outside of the course requirements.

Jade was also making plans to engage in social activities that would put her in direct contact with Spanish-speaking people.

So this Saturday, I have a friend that I've been invited out to the [name of dance club deleted]. I like salsa [dancing]! It is so funny because I got to go have free salsa lessons with the salsa dancers. So I learned how to do the dance... So I was excited to have a place to go now.

Several students reported watching TV or movies in Spanish in order to come into closer contact with the language and culture. Emily said, "I'm watching TV shows. We have this channel. It's channel 15 and it's a Mexico station, actually from Mexico City, I think. They have shows, they have news, and I can understand what's going on." Jade also watched Spanish-language television. Because Jade was a broadcast journalism student, she regularly watched Spanish-language local news.

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So, that particular time I was watching the news in Spanish and they were talking about a house fire and because I knew "casa," I knew that they were talking about the fire and then "trabajo" which means work, they were talking about how the firemen worked to put it out. Little things just jumped out to help me make sense of what I was seeing.

Alexa watched movies from Spain and television with Spanish subtitles turned on. I've watched a lot of Spanish movies! I've watched Pan's Labyrinth and I've watched it over and over and over and after a while, just because you've watched the movie, you're like, I've learned some Spanish now… I saw the Orphanage… I do that with my CSI [the television show], turn it [subtitles] on Spanish.

All of these examples of real-world contact with Spanish language and culture point to students' changing or deepening motivations for language study. Alexa verbalized how her motivations had changed.

Not only after the movie, but way before that, I just thought I'd get credits in Spanish. But then, I actually thought, if I actually learn this, I can communicate with other people! I don't remember when it actually dawned on me, but it just did. Then she makes it seem so easy the way she just talks Spanish and she's so fun and I'm like, okay, this'll be easy and I will talk to people!

Bella in particular described a moment when she realized she saw things in a new way. By traveling to Costa Rica, she realized that her language skills were insufficient to meet her communication needs.

When I was actually in Costa Rica and they were speaking to me, they are so fast and with their accents, you know what I mean? It doesn't even sound like the

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same thing I'm learning. So after hearing them, I would have to tell them to slow

down because I wasn't used to that.

After this moment, Bella's motivation for language study changed. "I'll be honest, the

first two tests I didn't study and I passed fine. I can make it through the class without

studying and without actually grasping the knowledge. But I learned that I want to retain

it and be able to remember it."

Ten, Jade, Bella, Emily, and Alexa all indicated that they had experienced a

change or increase in their motivations for language learning as a result of taking this

course. I returned to the data to determine if any other students had revealed their

language-learning motivations during the interview. Sandy's mother and grandmother

were Latinas. She described her motivation for taking Spanish even though it is not a

requirement, "I want to know what they're saying. I want to catch them. But I also want

to communicate with them like that because it seems personal."

Keisha, a nurse, also took Spanish although it was not required and had specific

people in mind with whom she wants to communicate. "So when you want to provide the

care that they [Spanish-speakers] need, accurately, everything they need, I want to be

able to communicate with them. So that was my main reason for taking Spanish." Joe

indicated that as a result of living in and identifying with the Hispanic community, he

took the class in order to learn to speak with people he knew. Sandy, Keisha and Joe

came into the class with an integrative motivation.

As I evaluated the findings, it became clear that by the time of the interview, all of

the interview participants had integrative (Gardner, 2001) motivations for pursuing

language study, even the five participants who had begun the course with instrumental

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motivations. An instrumental motivation for learning means that the students see learning as a required step in order to achieve a goal. An integrative motivation (Gardner, 2001) for language study means they identify personally with the target culture, feel affection for the target culture, or desire to communicate with people from the target culture.

An integrative motivation for language study has been found to improve student learning outcomes (Gardner, 2001). The data from my research here complicates that assertion. Bella began the course with an instrumental motivation and got very good grades on assessment measures. Because of experiences related to course content itself, her motivation became integrative. Students' motivations are changeable. It seems their motivations to begin language study are not as important to transformational learning as the motivations they report as they conclude language study. However, there is no indication that students understood the content or got better grades as a result of integrative motivation. Keisha and Alexa are examples of students who struggled with the course content despite their integrative motivation.

Implications

The findings of this research bring to light several important issues that could improve the way we teach foreign language to adults and our understanding of transformative learning theory.

Implications for adult foreign language education. One of the premises of this research is that college-level foreign language study rarely results in communicative competence. However, most research in foreign language education assumes communicative competence as the primary if not exclusive goal of language instruction. My study supports the assertion that additional learning goals are realistic for a first-

semester language student. According to this research, it seems that transformative learning is possible for many kinds of students, regardless of whether they continue their language study, or whether they earn a good grade in the course, or even whether they finish the course. In fact, transformative learning seems to produce students who are more open to language and culture and who seek out more real-world contact with language and culture.

A disorienting dilemma is an equal-opportunity phenomenon; you do not have to be an A student to be thrown off-balance. In contrast, it is possible for students to master all the grammar and vocabulary and be technically proficient, without ever engaging in critical reflection on the course content, on their own meaning perspectives, or on how their new found knowledge should impact their lives.

While research demonstrates that the communicative approach to language teaching often results in improved language outcomes, there is room to question whether a rigidly communicative approach to language teaching leaves room for students to do the reflection and exploration necessary to experience transformative learning. For example, in the classroom described in this study, the instructor frequently, in fact almost exclusively, used English to talk about cultural differences, resolve questions, and discuss the course content. This English discussion allowed students to dig deeper into cultural differences and understand the deep values behind superficial incongruencies. Is this type of discourse possible in a rigidly communicative classroom?

Discussion in English also turned a moving Hollywood movie into a memorable lesson on culture, history, and the struggle for social equality in Latin America. Alexa, who eventually dropped the course, told me in a follow-up email more than a year after

data had been collected that the class made a profound impression on her, and she "never forgot that movie." The movie is in English as was all the related discussion.

All language classes have the potential to become sites of cultural collision, safe places for an instructor to guide students through the process of discovery, questioning, and exploration that is required for transformative learning. If students are never able to use their native language to navigate that process, then how likely are they to experience a shift in their meaning perspective? How can adult students be expected to make sense of the new world they are discovering as adults when they only have the Spanish vocabulary of a two year old?

Clearly, learning the content (the forms, the vocabulary and the communication skills) is an important part of the college-level, foreign language syllabus. The body of scholarly literature supports the notion that certain teaching methods contribute to the goal of content acquisition. I wish to make it clear that I am in no way protesting the use of communicative methods or denigrating language content and skills as important goals in the language classroom. As an instructor, I am committed to promoting communicative outcomes and using communicative instructional methods. Rather, this research demonstrates that transformative learning can and does occur in a foreign language classroom, but that students do not necessarily credit communicative techniques for their transformative learning.

In Brown's (2009) research on instructional method preferences of students and teachers, students generally preferred more traditional, grammar-focused methods while teachers preferred methods that were more communicative and real-world oriented. The study presented here does not contradict Brown's findings. Twelve of the 20 study

participants showed few if any signs of perspective transformation and primarily reported learning through traditional, grammar-focused methods. However, this research certainly adds nuance to Brown's work by exposing the impact of transformative learning on students' instructional preferences. This study reveals that participants sought out further real-world language and culture as a result of their transformation. Therefore, while most students prefer traditional, grammar-focused methods, once a student experiences transformation, she is more likely to prefer classroom activities that are rooted in real-world interaction. The findings of my research could be used as a framework to further analyze differences in instructional preferences between students like the ones Brown described.

Byram and Kramsch (2008) asked the important question of how to teach languages for critical consciousness. I submit, based on the research I have described here, that it is possible for foreign language teachers to teach in a way that promotes critical consciousness. It is possible to teach foreign language in a way that encourages students who experience a disorienting dilemma to critically reflect on the contradictions exposed by that dilemma, and then to explore those issues in the safe space of the classroom using the home language, which in this case was English. The tools for promoting perspective transformation in the classroom have been explored by many researchers (see Cranton, 2006). In this study, the distinct methods used by the instructor were unified by an overarching theme of critical inquiry and cross-cultural discovery. Critical reflection and the exploration of differences and connections were clearly highly valued by the instructor, and that value was evident in her classroom.

Furthermore, by clearly articulating perspective transformation as a goal of foreign language study, a language teacher can create classroom experiences that not only result in achievement by students who make good grades in the course, but that also reach students who make poor grades and even those who do not complete the course.

Implications for assessment. Students in this study seemed to believe that learning primarily consists of memorizing content in order to reproduce that knowledge on a test. The interviews allowed me to go beyond students' preconceptions of learning and dig into the other kinds of learning that students experienced. Although students were quite focused on simple acquisition rather than on deep understanding (Säljö, 1979), in interviews and learning journals they revealed that they had learned, sometimes incidentally (Marsick & Watkins, 2001), of cultural differences, historical consciousness (Byram & Kramsch, 2008) and other deeper concepts. Students were not tested on this deeper knowledge as part of their grade and, even at the end of the semester in interviews, tended not to perceive it as learning. As Byram (2008) said, "What is not tested, is not taught." I believe that this research emphasizes the need for more comprehensive and responsive assessment methods in foreign language education. Students are learning much more than linguistic content, and that learning should be evaluated formally.

Teacher evaluation and assessment is also called into question as a result of the research described here. While Ms. Salazar's students seemed to experience profound, life-changing learning as a result of her instructional methods, many of the same students complained and were sharply critical of her teaching and assessment methods, even of her personality and speech patterns. Had an administrator or researcher observed the

classroom setting without conducting in-depth interviews with students, the methodology

may not have seemed aligned with current approaches in foreign language teaching.

Clearly, student evaluations and brief, isolated observations are not enough to capture the

good that this instructor is doing in her classroom. My research here has implications for

how departments assess college instructor performance.

Implications for language teacher training. Transformative learning is an adult

phenomenon. During formal training for their future profession, adult foreign language

educators should learn to identify the indicators of perspective transformation and the

classroom practices associated with perspective transformation. An instructor who is

familiar with the processes of adult learning can better create an environment where the

early stages of the transformation, namely the disorienting dilemma and critical

reflection, are supported, validated and encouraged.

Implications transformative learning theory. Taylor (1997) in his critique of

transformative learning theory gave several examples of how future research could help

to strengthen the body of literature. This study responds directly to three of his critiques.

First, Taylor asserted that scholars should describe how to foster transformative learning

in the classroom. While no direct causal relationship has been established, the students

themselves have spoken in this study and communicated the methods they felt

contributed to their transformative learning. Second, Taylor indicated that research

designs should incorporate other data collection methods in addition to interviews. Taylor

specifically mentioned observation and content analysis as possible approaches. This

study takes multiple approaches to data collection including those mentioned by Taylor in

order to create a comprehensive picture of the classroom practices involved in perspective transformation.

Finally, Taylor (2000) noted the tendency of research on perspective transformation to look back on learning from a mature perspective. This study collected data as the students were learning and just beginning to make sense of their experiences. Unlike many empirical studies on transformative learning, this research attempted to catch students in the act of transforming.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research on classroom practices and perspective transformation in college-level foreign language classes could build on the research presented here in several ways. First, while this research took a snapshot of what occurred within the confines of one semester, a mature, retrospective perspective would be useful in analyzing the long-term effects of learning. The students in this study demonstrated the early stages of perspective transformation, but there is no way to know whether those early stages ever grew to maturity, whether their perspectives were finally transformed. In addition to a case study that captures a comprehensive view of what happened in the classroom, the body of literature would benefit from follow-up with the individual participants to obtain a mature perspective on their experiences after some months or even years had passed.

In this research, the instructor was not interviewed as a participant, but simply observed. When I spoke with her about the study, it was to understand her methods, not her motivations, cultural perspective, or ideas about language teaching and learning. My findings indicate that the philosophical framework of the class, and therefore of the teacher who designed the class, had a tremendous impact on the ways students explored

content in the classroom. In future research, more attention could be paid to investigating the social, psychological, and epistemological perspective of the instructor in order to make sense of instructional choices.

As I reflect on this study, I feel regret at interviewing only the eight participants that seemed to be undergoing perspective transformation. Because of the time constraints of a one-semester study, I felt the need to limit the scope of my data collection to only students whose experiences seemed relevant to my research questions. When one of my eight interview participants turned out to not have undergone any kind of disorienting dilemma as a result of this class, it caused me to question my research design. I believe that interviewing all of the students in the class would have provided a more definitive answer regarding how students experienced perspective transformation by providing clear points of contrast. Future research could fill that gap in this study.

Finally, the findings of this study describe only one particular instructor's way to deliver instruction. It would be useful to conduct similar research in a variety of classrooms to compare and contrast findings across methodological approaches, philosophical frameworks, and individual differences.

Conclusion

"Good scholarship is usually autobiographical in some way: It tells the story of the writer's interests, refracted through the work of others" (Cassuto, 2010). What a comforting thought for me, as I study the topic of perspective transformation and classroom practices! As a foreign language student, I experienced transformative learning more than once, in fact. As a foreign language instructor, I have watched students move through their own personal journeys of transformation and attempted to play a role in

their learning. Now, as a researcher, I am particularly interested in asking questions about what students learn during foreign language study, and how they learn it.

This research brings to light new findings related to how students learn important lessons about the nature of difference, of connectedness, and of learning itself. Several students in this study overcame bias and social division to connect with people who seemed very different from them. Through my investigation into their experiences, I connected deeply with the teacher, with the students, and with the ideas discussed in this research. I also came to admire the students I studied. In our interviews, the participants bared their souls to me, confided in and trusted me. I could not have imagined the depth of their experiences had they not been so candid and generous.

Many instructors, myself included, wonder how to teach language in such a way as to improve the world around them, effect social change and inspire students to action. If, as Pennycook (2001) wrote, the classroom is "a microcosm of the larger social and cultural world" (p. 138), then by changing students perceptions of and interactions with that world, as Ms. Salazar did with her students, a language teacher can change the world itself.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent

Dear Class,

Thank you for participating in this study. As you know, this study is completely voluntary and there is no penalty for not participating. In addition, if at any time you change your mind and decide not to participate, you can withdraw with no penalty.

The research investigates the experiences of adults learning a foreign language. I believe that important things happen when adults learn a new language and culture. Only with your help can I learn more about your experiences. I will be coming to class meetings and observing the classroom activities. I am asking for your consent to access two things: your learning journals and your specific classroom contribution (meaning questions you ask, comments you make, etc.). In addition, I may invite you to participate in one-on-one interviews later in the semester. All information I collect from you as a part of this study will remain confidential.

Thank you in advance for being part of this project; your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Forms to Fill Out: There are two copies of the consent form. One copy is stapled to this letter, the other is separate. The copy attached to this letter is for you, the student, to keep, and the other copy should to be turned in to me.

If you do not wish to participate in this study, you may write your name at the bottom of the separate consent form where it says "Name of Participant" but do not sign or date the form. Then turn the forms in to me. By putting your name on the otherwise blank form, I will be able to easily see who does not wish to participate and I can be sure to exclude your information in the study data.

Thank you so much!

Stacey Margarita Johnson

Smjhnsn2@memphis.edu

CONSENT FORM

I, _____, agree to participate in a study as part of the class titled Spanish 1010 at Urban Southern Community College. I understand that my participation is voluntary. I can stop taking part at any time without penalty.

The purpose of this research project is to determine what kinds of learning experiences students have and how classroom activities contribute to their learning as they begin studying a new language and culture. As a participant in this study, I agree to allow the researcher to access the learning journals that I complete as part of class. I also agree to allow the researcher to record my contributions to class (questions I ask, comments I make, etc.). Some students will also be invited to do a follow-up interview.   The data collected through the researcher's observations or through the interviews will not be shared with my instructor. My personal information will be kept confidential. Pseudonyms will be used to refer to study participants in any reports or publications resulting from this study. All tapes, transcripts and field notes will be given codes and stored separately from names or other direct identifying information. After the study is complete, all data will be stored for one year, then destroyed.

Students who participate in this study are entitled to the benefit of receiving extra credit from the class instructor.

No risk to the student is expected, but if I experience some discomfort at any point, then I can choose to discontinue my participation in the study without any penalty.

The researcher will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project.

I understand that I am agreeing by my signature on this form to take part in this research project and I understand that I will receive a signed copy of this form for my records.

_____   _____ _____

Name of Participant   Signature   Date

What is the best way for me to contact you?   Phone: _____

Email: _____

Please sign two copies. Keep one and return one to the researcher.

Participation in this study is strictly voluntary. Refusal to participate will not involve any penalty or loss of benefits to which the student is otherwise entitled. A student may discontinue participation at any time with no penalty. If you require further explanation of research subjects' rights, please contact the researcher, Stacey Margarita Johnson, at smjhnsn2@memphis.edu or the Chair of the Institutional Review Board at 678-2533.

Appendix B

Interview Guide

1.) Background Info: How old are you? Are you a degree-seeking student? If so, what degree? Why are you taking this Spanish class? Have you ever taken Spanish before?

2.) Coming into this class, what ideas did you have about what you were going to learn? Did your learning match up with your expectations?

3.) Have you been surprised, excited, shocked or disturbed by anything you have learned?

4.) What have you learned in Spanish 1010? I would especially like for you to tell me about things you have learned that are not about grammar and vocabulary. Have you learned anything about yourself? About the world? About something else?

5.) How did you come to learn about those things? What happened in class to contribute to you learning that? What happened in your life outside of class? Did any relationships or activities or events contribute to that learning?

6.) Was there a moment or a time during the semester when you first realized that you saw things in a new way? Was there a big, culminating moment when things came together for you? Tell me about that. What did you do once you realized that you saw things in a new way? How did you act on or explore that?

7.) Looking back over the course of the semester, tell me about how your learning has affected other areas of your life. Has your learning affected your relationships? Your family? Your habits? Your ideas? Please explain. How are you different today than when you began the class? How are your ideas or beliefs different?

8.) I see in your learning journals that you mentioned _____. Could you go into more depth on that? What did you mean by that? How did you experience that?