VISUAL LANGUAGE: USING COLOR, MYTH AND IMAGE TO PRESENT GRAMMAR IN THE SPANISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

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March 2008

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Abstract

Spanish grammar can be presented in a memorable way by using a system of color-coding and storytelling. This materials development project includes three stories written or adapted by the author to present the gender of nouns, noun/adjective agreement and verb inflection. Images of the sun and the moon, and the colors purple and orange are used to illustrate masculine and feminine gender of nouns. Chameleons and the color green exemplify adjectives. Additionally, patterns of verb conjugation charts are presented using color to show how verbs inflect to agree with the subject pronoun and tense. While learning Spanish grammar, these colors and images create an underlying framework that assists students to visually notice linguistic aspects of Spanish. As a way of exploring the theoretical basis of the materials this paper investigates topics of acquisition and learning, implicit and explicit instruction, positive and negative transfer.

ERIC Descriptors

Methodology/Classroom Practices
Class Activities
Creative Teaching
Grammar
Second Language Instruction

Materials/Media/Technology
Instructional Materials
Teacher Developed Materials
Visual Aid
CHAPTER 1
Introduction

This independent professional project weaves together my personal experience with an approach I developed for teaching Spanish grammar that uses color, myth and image. During my first year teaching I questioned how much grammar to include in the curriculum and how to present concepts in a memorable way for students. I wondered how to balance the emphasis on language rules in textbooks with my desire to engage their imagination. By developing the materials presented in this paper and using them in the classroom, I successfully brought creativity to grammar instruction. I found that when a teacher feels connected to the materials she uses, students are more likely to develop their own connection to the subject matter.

Inspiration for this paper flows from my interest in visual art, coursework at School for International Training, and my professional teaching experience. The paper is organized into six chapters and three appendices. Following the introduction, the second chapter explores my formative experiences learning Spanish and recounts aspects of the journey that led me to become a Spanish teacher. The third chapter details some of the key ideas that influenced the development of the materials presented in the appendices. The fourth chapter investigates multiple views in the field of Second Language Acquisition on the topics of acquisition and learning, and implicit and explicit instruction. It presents examples of students’ positive and negative transfer and looks at how storytelling and image can be used to synthesize the approach of implicit and explicit instruction, and demonstrates how color-coding can support the act of noticing and discovery in the classroom. The fifth chapter examines three linguistic contrasts that are a challenge for some Spanish language learners: the gender of nouns, noun/adjective agreement, and the highly
inflected verb. It demonstrates how some textbooks present this information, and offers an alternative way to incorporate this material in the curriculum. The final chapter contains reflections on lessons learned and ideas for future directions.

The materials found in Appendix A, B and C are described and referenced throughout the paper. They focus on the linguistic feature known as agreement, or concordancia. I chose this grammatical aspect because it permeates the Spanish language and is often challenging for beginning students to grasp. Errors of agreement also reoccur for people who learned Spanish as a second language and have been speaking it for years. While there are no specific lesson plans presented in this paper, the ideas and approaches that support the materials are explained so that they can be understood and adapted to a variety of contexts. There are three myths: “Who will look after the night and day?” which addresses the origin of the gender of nouns, “El sol y la luna” illustrates noun/adjective agreement, and “The story of the kingdom of Aragon, prince Ernesto and his daughter Irene” presents three families of verbs. Images of the sun and moon, and the colors purple and orange are used to illustrate masculine and feminine gender of nouns. Chameleons and the color green exemplify adjectives. Storytelling connects color and image to create a framework for teaching these topics. While learning Spanish grammar, these colors and images visually assist students to notice linguistic aspects of Spanish.
CHAPTER 2  
A Journey to the Sun and the Moon

This chapter reflects on language learning as a personal experience and recounts aspects of the journey that led me to become a Spanish teacher. In addition to exploring memories from my seventh grade Spanish class and significant experiences abroad, it sets the stage for topics explored throughout the paper: acquisition and learning and implicit and explicit instruction. These topics are often viewed as occupying opposite ends of a spectrum, but in my experience they are integral parts of a whole process. The classroom materials developed for this project are informed by my beliefs about teaching and learning that originate from autobiographical events. As I developed my approach to teaching language, I became interested in how to expose students to grammatical features of Spanish in a way that is memorable but not memorized.

Talavera tile from Guanajuato, México. Photo by author.

My first formal experience learning the Spanish language was in Mr. McDonald’s class at Walnut Creek Intermediate School, a public suburban middle school in Walnut Creek, California in 1989. Since I now teach the same grade in
which I began learning Spanish, taking a trip down episodic memory lane\(^1\) to seventh grade has helped deepen my perspective on and understanding of my own language learning during those formative years. I primarily remember posters on the wall and people: what they looked like and how they treated me. I can vividly recall from Mr. McDonald’s class how his toupee blew in the wind produced by the fan on his desk. I remember liver spots on his arms and face, cigar smoke on returned homework, the sign on the wall – *No fumar*, the boys who teased me and the fact that Mr. McDonald sided with them and would send me out of the room. Which textbook did we use? I have no idea. What units did we study? *No me acuerdo*. He made us memorize the alphabet and recite it at lightning speed without stumbling or else he would send us humiliated back to our desks. Apparently, Mr. McDonald never heard of the term affective filter\(^2\).

For years after his class I could chant the past tense of the verb ‘to go’ – *fui, fuiste, fue, fuimos, fueron* – running through all the forms in my head before arriving at the one I needed. I can’t say whether this approach helped or hindered my learning – since it stuck with me and provided a structure for knowing about verb conjugations – but eventually it had to be replaced to make way for fluency. Over time, my use of verb forms grew more automatic; but I always intuitively knew there was a better way to teach than through memorization and humiliation. Perhaps I have felt the need to right the wrongs of my initial language instruction and to share my joy of learning and speaking Spanish in the world outside of the classroom. Generalizing from my experience, I would say that students often learn in spite of their teachers.

\(^1\) Episodic memory is memory based on individual autobiographical events. I was inspired by Elka Toveda’s narrative of (auto)biographical language research in the draft of “The multiple realities of multilingualism: A personal story of language learning and acquisition.”

\(^2\) The term affective filter is a hypothesis used to describe a barrier or mental block produced when a student feels anxiety, self-consciousness, boredom or other factors that prevent “input from reaching the language acquisition device” (Krashen1985).
Even if the classroom is the starting place for learning a second language, the student determines what route she will take from there. For me, from there meant to a rancho known as Palma Prieta in Guanajuato, México to work as a volunteer in a program called Amigos de las Americas. What began as a community sanitation project transformed into a profound cultural and language exchange. When the latrine materials did not arrive, I embarked on my first language teaching experience. I taught English classes to local youth, or rather my peers, since I was only sixteen years old myself. These classes were requested by the jovenes in town. Many of the young men planned to travel to the US in order to work and wanted the opportunity to learn some vocabulary and expressions, and the young women seemed to like the excuse to get out of the house and be social.

I did not think about approaches or strategies to teaching a language, but used my intuition to brainstorm lesson plans with my compañera de trabajo, Lindsey. We created visual aids to teach greetings, colors, parts of the body, and songs. Our students expected lecture style classes and brought notebooks to class to write everything down, but I was more inspired by interactive activities. I developed ways to get students to feel more comfortable and to take risks. This involved drawing pictures or acting out stories to get students to laugh and relax by lowering the affective filter. The biggest roadblock we ran into was teaching pronunciation and how it related to the spelling of English words. Eventually Lindsey and I wrote all words phonetically according to a system we devised with the help of our students, and no longer taught the written language because spelling was an extra hurdle for the students. The process of comparing sounds in Spanish and English taught me about some of the challenging contrasts between the two languages3.

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3 Additional Spanish/English contrasts regarding agreement will be examined in more depth in Chapter 5.
The most memorable part of these classes did not take place in the classroom, but rather during the outings and dances the students planned. We shared food and personal stories, made jokes and gained a better understanding of each other’s culture. That summer, I learned the significance of the phrase *convivir con la gente*, not as new vocabulary but as a lived experience. On my route to gaining a greater understanding of Spanish, this experience seemed to blur the distinction often made between language acquisition and language learning. Here, I acquired language through informal situations without a teacher to explain the *why* and *how*, but my progress was aided by my previous classroom instruction. I wondered if there was a disconnect between formal and experiential education and what the results might be if one existed without the other. For me, the two worked together: the former laid the foundation and structure while the latter breathed life and meaning into the words. I continued to return to the classroom as a student and benefit from explicit and conscious learning as well as to seek experiences that allowed me to acquire language in context.
During freshman year of my undergraduate studies at UC Santa Cruz, I had an opportunity to study Spanish 4/5 in Morelia, Michoacan, Mexico. I did not want to leave my new college friends and the electric atmosphere of dorm life. My mother reminded me to take opportunities when they presented themselves and not to make decisions out of fear of what I might miss at home. So I went, and this crucial decision resulted in a formative experience in my life as a Spanish speaker. I lived with a host family and their three grown children and the gringa girlfriend of one of the host brothers. She was from a town not too far from where I grew up. Her accent was flawless and she had all the mannerisms down; it appeared that she had almost become mexicana. Our interactions made me think about the complexity of forming a bilingual identity and what it meant to be authentic as a speaker of a language that was not my mother tongue.

During the first week in Morelia I had a serendipitous reunion with someone I had met briefly the previous summer in Guanajuato: Iván was an aspiring young musician from Morelia with green hair and a nose ring. I convinced my Santa Cruz friends to accompany me to a bonfire with him at a ranch outside of town. By taking this opportunity and trusting the kindness of this near stranger, my study abroad experience took an unanticipated path. From that day on we spent almost every day

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4 Brown talks about the Language Ego (Brown 2001, 31). Little did I know this concept was what I was slowly developing during my study abroad.
with Iván and his friends – Martín, Vicente, Jorge and a few rotating others that were a part of la banda. In Martín’s yellow jeep, they pick up their estadounidense counterparts – Jamie, Amy, Jen and me after our university classes. We skateboarded at McDonalds, listened to Red Hot Chili Peppers, made bonfires, ate tacos with cilantro, onions and piña, and communicated almost exclusively in slang and mexicanismos. ¡Qué onda buey! ¡La neta, la neta, la neta! ¡Pinche calor! ¡Qué naco! ¡Ándale pues! I felt alive and comfortable communicating and assimilating into this particular Mexican youth culture. Yet I clearly remember experiencing a clash of my prior experience in rural Mexico with this new urban culture one day when I started singing along to a ranchera song blasting in the street. The song was called “El moño colorado” and I had listened to it all the time in Palma Prieta at dances, but this was very naco according to la banda. From this experience I became aware of the multiple layers, classes and subcultures of society, and how difficult yet rewarding it was as an outsider to navigate a new culture and create a place in it.

Although studying in Morelia concluded my formal classroom language training until I began to prepare to teach eight years later, it was a catalyst for pursuing more involvement and opportunities to work, live and learn in Latin America. My subsequent collection of experiences formed what I consider to be a rich experiential education and led me to believe that I had something to offer to students interested in language and culture. Reflecting on my teaching experience in Palma Prieta, I realized that just because I knew and could speak English fluently didn’t mean I could to teach it effectively. In order to teach Spanish as a subject, I needed to break it down into parts in order to organize and present the language in a sequence, while still considering that the whole language is needed to communicate. I wanted to blend what I had gained through my experience of acquisition and
learning to address key concepts and distinctive features of Spanish, but not add to the students’ cognitive load\(^5\) with technical terms about the language.

Tile from inside the Basilica of La Virgen Guadalupe, México City. Photo by author.

From the top of the pyramids of the sun and the moon at Teotihuacán to the Basilica of La Virgen Guadalupe, the heavenly bodies of *el sol* y *la luna* abound in the visual culture of ancient and modern México. In reflecting on my journey from learning to teaching Spanish, I realize that my own education has never stopped. However, something new happened for me when I began planning for and shaping the experience of my students. I was faced with questions about what to include in the curriculum and how to present and organize the material. I knew that I wanted to make connections between visual culture and the underlying structures of the language. The sun and the moon eventually shone light on the subject. On a recent trip to Mexico, the more I looked, the more I saw depictions of the sun and moon. Once my awareness of these symbols was heightened, I found them everywhere and

\(^5\) Cognitive load is the total amount of mental activity asked of working memory at a time for a given activity. Since the working memory is limited, too much information can overwhelm students and lead to frustration and lack of retention.
viewed them as distinct and beautiful symbols of contrast – night and day - that often appeared together, creating a sense of wholeness.

In designing a framework for my classroom curriculum, I focused on what I identified as a unifying grammatical theme: agreement. I explored ways to present noun/adjective agreement of number and gender and verb conjugations that engaged the imagination beyond the textbook, creating something more artistic and colorful to use in the classroom. After several years of teaching and reflecting on the theme of agreement, I arrived at the idea of color-coding verb endings based on morphological patterns, using the sun and the moon to symbolize masculine and feminine gender of nouns and depicting adjectives as chameleons that change according to the gender and number of the noun modified. By involving storytelling, symbols, color, and patterns I aim to free students from the metalanguage or grammatization often associated with formal learning. I want to allow students to get exposure to concepts in context and get a feel for them before formally presenting any rules or explanations. The materials I have developed, found in Appendix A, B and C, allow students to draw their own connections as well as explicitly learn about the theme of agreement. In other words, they occupy a middle ground, or third space, between informal acquisition and formal learning.

Talavera tiles from Guanajuato, México. Photo by author.
CHAPTER 3
Ideas and Inspiration for Materials

Color and Art History Flash Cards

I began to use color-coding as a memory device as an undergraduate Art History student at UC Santa Cruz. Each course I took had numerous slides of visual culture that I needed to memorize. Of all the facts about each piece – the country of origin, artist, title, medium and era or year created – I struggled most with remembering the years. So, I created a system to visually represent numbers in the year by assigning each digit a color in rainbow order.

Before tests I would make a stack of illustrated flash cards and paint the colors on the flashcards that corresponded to the year. If I could not remember a date during the test, I could close my eyes and see the colors that corresponded to the year the piece was created. In a course on twentieth century art, I painted colors that corresponded to the last two digits of the year on either side of a sketch of the piece. Here are a couple of examples:

(1) Pablo Picasso Guernica 1937 (3=yellow 7=peach)
(2) Frida Kahlo Self Portrait with Thorn Necklace and Hummingbird 1940 (4=green 0=stripes)
(3) Elizabeth Catlett Negro es Bello II 1969 (6=purple 9=black)
This approach to memorization served my needs and particular learning style – it was tactile, contained images, and allowed me to be creative. This aid was not effective for every student, but for me it added a dimension beyond memorization that made the material more vivid and memorable. Each flashcard became like a little work of art itself.

**Visual Verb Wall**

My first position teaching Spanish was in the Upper School at a private K-12 school in Oakland, CA. I took over the Spanish 1 and 3 classes for a teacher who went on maternity leave during the 2003-04 school year. This teacher gave me a week-by-week guideline to follow and all the books, workbook, tests and quizzes to prepare the students for the next level. Her classroom had an entire chalkboard dedicated to colorful papers and lists of verb endings organized in columns and lined up according to tense. This collage functioned as a timeline with the indicative tenses arranged left to right and past to future. The subjunctive floated above the timeline, almost in a world of its own. Little amoeba shapes represented each pronoun. Some irregular conjugations were noted on separate pieces of paper. There were arrows and other symbols that needed explanation and I found the font difficult to read.

The Visual Verb Wall, as I later found out it was called, was designed by an educator named Pam Kaatz. It proved to be a helpful tool for me, the teacher, since all the tenses were posted and I could refer to them as needed rather than presenting verbs in the sequence determined by the textbook. As a resource for helping students be more independent with the information, it seemed underutilized or at least used as a crutch in the event they couldn’t remember a conjugation. The layout was a bit cluttered for my aesthetic taste but I liked the idea of having the
information about verbs as a complete “system.” It gave me the idea to visually represent verbs in all their forms as a resource for my own classroom.

Verb Flip Charts

The following year I began teaching and writing a Spanish curriculum at the Julia Morgan School for Girls in Oakland, California. The materials presented in this paper were developed for this particular teaching context.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching context: Julia Morgan School for Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Private all girls middle school in Oakland, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Multi-level required Spanish class meets 4x a week for 50-60 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students are in the seventh and eighth grade and range from 11 -14 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A class of 60 is split into 3 groups of 20 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No textbook; materials are created and gathered from a variety of sources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The students’ proficiency varies depending on many factors; some factors include if they studied Spanish in an elementary school program, if they are taking Spanish for the first time or if they speak Spanish at home.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Before the school year started, I created eight flip charts for the following tenses and moods: simple present, present perfect, present progressive, preterit, imperfect, future, conditional and commands. Each chart contained a cover page with a concise description of the particular tense’s uses along with three example sentences in Spanish and English. The second page showed the verb endings for AR, ER and IR lined up side-by-side in three columns and a third page gave example conjugations for HABLAR, COMER, and VIVIR. Additional pages contained lists and groupings of common irregular forms. The laminated charts were printed then pasted on different colored paper depending on which tense they presented. I wanted the color to be symbolic or at least have some relation to the tense or mood.
Red was designated for commands because of its immediacy and bold quality. The different past tenses were pasted on shades of blue to give a dreamy or cloudy feeling to something that took place before the present moment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tense</th>
<th>Color</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simple present</td>
<td>Dark pink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present progressive</td>
<td>Light pink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present perfect</td>
<td>Lavender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preterit</td>
<td>Dark blue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperfect</td>
<td>Light blue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditional</td>
<td>Lime green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commands</td>
<td>Red</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Similar to the conjugations on the Visual Verb Wall, I designated a color for each pronoun. These colors were chosen arbitrarily and called attention to the ‘who’ rather than to any morphological features of the verb.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person type</th>
<th>Pronoun</th>
<th>Color</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st person singular</td>
<td>yo</td>
<td>Red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person singular</td>
<td>tú</td>
<td>Blue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person singular</td>
<td>ella/el/Ud⁶</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st person plural</td>
<td>nosotros (as)</td>
<td>Orange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person plural</td>
<td>vosotros (as)</td>
<td>Light grey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person singular</td>
<td>ellas/ellos/Uds.</td>
<td>Purple</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conjugation</th>
<th>1st person</th>
<th>2nd person</th>
<th>3rd person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hablo</td>
<td>como</td>
<td>vivo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hablas</td>
<td>comes</td>
<td>vives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>habla</td>
<td>come</td>
<td>vive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hablamos</td>
<td>comemos</td>
<td>vivimos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>habláis</td>
<td>coméis</td>
<td>vivís</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hablan</td>
<td>comen</td>
<td>viven</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

⁶ Ud. and Uds. Both take the 3rd person verb form but are actually 2nd person.
Preparing these flip charts allowed me to distill, into one resource, numerous verb tables, diagrams and descriptions from all the grammar books I had previously collected for reference material. But other than post them on the wall and occasionally refer to the charts, I did not integrate them systematically into my teaching. However, I liked that the information was presented outside of a textbook in a way that was approachable for students. The charts allowed students who were interested in going beyond what they learned in class to consult these resources. Some students requested to come in at lunch to copy the charts into their notebooks or use them for extra practice.

Color and Parts of Speech

After teaching for a year at Julia Morgan, I realized that most of my students were not familiar with parts of speech in their first language, or any language for that matter. When I would give them feedback on their writing about agreement of nouns and adjectives, students would often ask which word was the noun and which was the adjective. I thought about how to incorporate parts of speech into the curriculum without using too much terminology. I searched the Internet and found the Montessori Grammar Symbols that used color-coded shapes to distinguish nine parts of speech (Spietz 2000):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part of Speech</th>
<th>Shape</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Article</td>
<td>Small Grey Triangle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noun</td>
<td>Black Equilateral Triangle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjective</td>
<td>Blue Equilateral Triangle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronoun</td>
<td>Pink Isosceles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb</td>
<td>Red Circle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverb</td>
<td>Smaller Orange Circle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conjunction</td>
<td>Purple Bar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preposition</td>
<td>Green Crescent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interjection</td>
<td>Sunny Yellow Skittle Shape</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I was drawn to this idea but thought it contained too much information to keep track of for the purpose of my class. Instead of being arbitrary, I wanted the symbols to have a meaningful correspondence or even some metaphorical significance to what they represented. Rather than use symbols for every part of speech, I simplified my focus to nouns and adjectives. For feminine nouns I drew a crescent shape to symbolize the moon and for masculine nouns I drew a circle to symbolize the sun. As for color, I wanted to avoid the obvious – blue for boys and pink for girls – for the same reason that I did not want to confuse noun gender with male or female attributes; so I chose colors that worked with the sun and the moon: orange and purple. For the adjectives, I initially thought of using a cloud shape since clouds change (as do adjectives in Spanish to agree with the gender and number of the noun). The idea remained incomplete and I put it aside for another year, still questioning - How could I incorporate these symbols into a larger framework for organizing and teaching Spanish grammar?

Four Corners

During my second summer at SIT, while searching for the origin of the Visual Verb Wall, I found the website of Pam Kaatz, the language teacher who had developed this and other classroom resources (http://color-connection.com/). One of the ideas, Four Corners, consisted of two blue pieces of paper that read El and LOS and two pink pieces of paper that read LA and LAS. These papers were placed in one of the four corners of the classroom to create a grammar map of gender and number. What I liked about the idea was that it created a physical and visual foundation for masculine, feminine, singular and plural that could be pointed to in the room. Kaatz’s description of Four Corners can be found at: http://color-connection.com/VVWVW/Lessons/Lesson5.htm.
I further developed this idea to include images of the sun and the moon along with the corresponding colors of purple and orange (see Appendix A.5, pp 74-93). These materials can be laminated and vertically hung in four areas of the classroom. For example, the image of the moon is posted in one corner of the classroom. Directly below it hangs the corresponding definite article – LA – and below that the indefinite article – UNA – with the option of adding – MUCHA – and – ESTAS, ESAS, AQUELLLAS – as students begin using these words. The idea is to visually establish the four categories associated with number and gender: feminine singular, feminine plural, masculine singular and masculine plural. The plural masculine image also contains a little moon in the corner; visually showing that in a group of mixed gendered items the masculine form prevails.

I found that this colorful and memorable framework changed the way I corrected student errors pertaining to number and gender. Instead of verbally correcting them, I could subtly point to a corner of the room to help students chose the correct form of singular or plural, masculine or feminine. This allowed time to students to visually make the connection and correct their own errors.

**LALP**

During my first summer at SIT I took the course Language Analysis for Lesson Planning with Patricia Pedroza. Each week we focused a different topic from the grammar book Directo Al Grano (Gac-Artigas 2000) and taught a 15-minute lesson based on a particular chapter. First we addressed articles and nouns, then adjectives. For the adjectives lesson I made a handout with chameleons and used it as a metaphor to show how the ending changed as needed to modify the noun. The
following year I purchased a book called *Quick Start Spanish* (Jullie 2005) and discovered that the chapter about the properties of adjectives described them as chameleons. This was a fun coincidence. Later as I began to color-code parts of speech, I used the green color of chameleons for adjectives (see Appendix B.1-B.4 pp. 95-98).

To present nouns and gender I created drawings and a story about the sun and the moon. I adapted the story from the Mexican folktale “Por qué la luna es libre” compiled by Mary-Joan Gerson in the beautifully illustrated children’s book *Fiesta Femenina* (see Appendix A.2 p.60). The symbols and story became more than just a fulfillment for the assignment; it was the beginning of a framework I had been searching for when I first set out to teach Spanish. I continued to reflect on the possibilities of the chameleon and the sun and the moon until they took the form of the materials presented in this Independent Professional Project.
CHAPTER 4  
Continuing the Journey: Finding a Middle Ground for Grammar

This chapter examines different points of view on the topics of acquisition and learning and implicit and explicit grammar instruction by delving more deeply into these subjects in the field of Second Language Acquisition. It also addresses my own concerns about the role of metalinguistic knowledge in the classroom and how student errors, understood in light of positive and negative transfer, can inform my approach to teaching Spanish. The classroom materials and color-coding will be discussed in regards to how they encourage student noticing by highlighting patterns and agreement.

As I continued the journey to becoming a Spanish teacher, I scoured the foreign language section of bookstores and libraries in every city I visited looking for the perfect grammar book. I had been speaking and studying Spanish for many years but was aware of holes in my understanding of certain concepts. Instead of one grammar book, I collected many, each with its own unique take on the difference between ser/estar, por/para and preterit/imperfect tenses. I poured over pages of charts, rules, exceptions and explanations looking for answers to topics left fuzzy by my formal and informal language education. This seemingly dry information about Spanish helped me see patterns and put order to topics I already had exposure to and knew something about. Although this benefited me as a student and a speaker of Spanish, I wondered how I could translate the underlying structures of the language into something beyond rules and explanations for my students. When I began my studies at the School for International Training in the summer of 2005, I was curious about to what extent I should emphasize grammar in my classes, or if I should teach it at all. The word itself carried a cloud of guilt and uncertainty reminiscent of Mr. McDonald’s class. Grammar seemed so out-of-date,
like something used to torment students rather than serving as a helpful language-
learning tool. A salient point that has helped me to see the importance of balancing
what I know about the language and what my students need to know in order to
communicate is summed up in the following quote from Teaching by Principles:

We teachers are sometimes so eager to display our hard earned
metalinguistic knowledge that we forget that our students are so busy
just learning the language itself that the added load of complex rules
and terms is too much to bear (Brown 2001, 366).

The metalinguistic knowledge that Brown refers to can be useful to analyze
grammar but tends to be cumbersome and initially may add to the cognitive load of
a novice, or principiante, student⁷, which in turn could potentially inhibit fluid
communication. Terms and phrases such as conjugate, cognate, parts of speech,
and number and gender agreement are metalinguistic in nature because they
describe functions and forms of Spanish but not the language itself. A principiante
may know that the pronoun for second person singular familiar is tú without knowing
the metalinguistic phrase used to identify it. The distinction between the ability to
use language (tú) and have familiarity with the metalanguage surrounding it (second
person singular pronoun) highlights one of the differences between acquisition and
learning. The former is defined by James Gee (1996) as “...a process of acquiring
something (usually, subconsciously) by exposure to models, a process of trial and
error, and practice within social groups, without formal teaching.... This is how most
people learn their first language (138).” People who acquire a language are
generally better at performing it and those who learn a language consciously know
more about it. Gee defines learning as:

⁷ Of the numerous terms to describe or identify novice or beginning students of a second language, I prefer
to use the Spanish word principiante. It translates as beginner.
...a process that involves conscious knowledge gained through teaching or through certain life-experiences that trigger conscious reflection. This teaching or reflection involves explanations and analysis, that is, breaking down the thing to be learned into its analytic parts. It inherently involves attaining...some degree of meta-knowledge about the matter (Gee 1996, 146).

The knowledge about language that Gee refers to carries a certain amount of analytical understanding that acquiring the language does not provide. Knowing how and why something functions can give a learner more control over making choices in their use of the language. Yet there are opposing views as to whether metalinguistic input has a place in language classrooms.

My continued search for a definitive answer about teaching grammar led me in circles around a seemingly endless debate among linguists and authors in the field of Second Language Acquisition. Blaine Ray – teacher, author and Total Physical Response (TPR) Storytelling proponent – asserts that:

Emphasizing rules early forces students to slow down their speech and edit more, meaning they may always be editing when they speak. A byproduct of learning is hesitance, which is the opposite of fluency.... The more grammar points students are taught in, say, a month, the more hesitancy there is, because they monitor their speech much more (Ray 2003, 131).

Ray and other followers of teaching methods like Total Physical Response (James Asher 1997) and the Natural Approach (Stephen Krashen and Tracy Terrell 1983) emphasize acquisition over learning. They assert that acquiring a second language (L2) follows a similar route to acquiring a first language (L1). This process of acquisition revolves around a core belief that comprehensible input, not grammar rules, is the only way to help to facilitate fluent conversation. When it comes time for students to apply what they have gained through comprehensible input and communicate in the L2 on their own, students monitor and edit what they say based on what ‘feels’ right rather than explicit knowledge of grammar rules (Krashen...
This ability to monitor relies on the learner’s memory of how comprehensible input sounds rather than an understanding of metalinguistic factors. According to this view, exposure rather than explicit instruction aids language development.

In contrast to Krashen, Merrill Swain claims that the act of producing language allows students to practice fluency and serves acquisition in three principle ways: noticing, hypothesis testing and reflection. Noticing usually happens during input and may lead a speaker to become more aware, or conscious, of a feature of language they need to work on. In the right conditions, learners notice a gap between the known and unknown and can pay attention to the correct way while listening to input from the teacher or another source. According to Swain’s functions of output, noticing leads to hypothesis testing in which the learner creates output based on what she thinks is correct. Errors in students’ output “reveal hypotheses held by them about how the target language works” (Swain 1995, 131). Going one step further, students who reflect on their own target language use and are able to talk about their choices in usage may be more likely to “internalize linguistic knowledge” (Swain 1995, 126). The teacher’s role in this approach is to guide students to notice features of the language by calling their attention to it. What a student pays attention to, or notices, is informed by her metalinguistic knowledge, an idea that confirms that awareness of linguistic features supports rather than detracts from acquisition. A similar point expressed by Rod Ellis states that although explicit grammar instruction may have a delayed effect, it can “provide ‘hooks,’ points of access for the learner” that eventually help accelerate acquisition (Ellis 1992, 98). Hence some attention to form can be beneficial and should be considered as a factor in language learning, albeit not the primary focus.

This balanced view of the role of grammar is echoed in the Brown (2001) chapter entitled “Form-focused Instruction.” He examines the evolution of teaching

8 Output is the production of oral, written or signed language.
practices and says that most current views of second language methodology agree on the importance of some form-focused instruction “within the communicative framework, ranging from explicit treatment of rules to noticing and consciousness-raising techniques for structuring input for learners” (Brown 2001, 361). As learners progress, at their own rate or accelerated by form-focused instruction, they give clues about their stage of development through their interlanguage. This continually evolving ‘third space’ is unique to each language learner and lies somewhere between their first language and the target language (Whitley 2002). Ellis (2001) however, reports contradictory outcomes of studies aimed to gauge the impact of form-focused instruction on student’s language acquisition. He concludes “instructed learners followed the same order and sequence of acquisition as non-instructed learners (suggesting that the process of acquisition was not influenced by instruction)” (4). Thus students often learn a pesar de – in spite of – their teachers. Regarding the timing for exposing students to grammatical features of the language, Ellis quotes M. Pienemann who writes “...instruction can only promote language acquisition if the interlanguage is close to the point when the structure to be taught is acquired in the natural setting” (37). If this is true, then a premature grammar explanation has no impact on learning or may actually hinder fluency because it adds another element to the cognitive load.

Learning a second language assumes that the student already has a first language (L1). A student’s L1 can cause both positive and negative transfer during the process of learning or acquisition. One example of positive transfer is when a student uses cognates to guess the meaning of a new vocabulary word like la clase for class or la computadora for computer. An example of negative transfer is when a student relies too much on cognates and invents or uses “false friends” like la sopa for soap or embarazado for embarrassed. I have found that most of my middle school students come to the second language classroom without knowledge of the
grammar of their first language (the majority of my students are L1 English
speakers). Even a high school student I tutored in Spanish 3 was unaware that
perfect tenses existed in English. This meant that she was unable to rely on
something familiar when entering new terrain in Spanish. In this case, knowing
about her L1 (what Gee defines as learning) would have aided this student with
understanding the structure and verb tenses of a second language. In a side note
called “Cracking the language code,” the high school Spanish I textbook, *En Español*,
gives students a hint about positive and negative transfer that goes beyond
individual word correspondence:

> Spanish is not translated English. Spanish has its own way of
expressing ideas. Grammar is the rules for putting words together in
order to make sense. How many expressions can you find where
Spanish and English express the same idea differently? Think about
these when you are practicing so you prepare yourself for real
communication (Gahala 2004, 40).

I found myself returning to this explanation whenever I noticed students using their
knowledge of English in a way that did not transfer directly to Spanish. One common
syntax error I observe in the classroom is when students reversed the word order of
nouns and adjectives by saying “la blanca casa” instead of “la casa blanca.” This
example highlights a key contrast between Spanish and English syntax,
demonstrating that there is not a 1:1 correspondence between “white house” and “la
casa blanca.” Poetic description is an exception to the rule that descriptive
adjectives come after the noun they modify⁹.

In exploring errors of students it is important to acknowledge that they are
trying to make sense of a new language system. In other words, “To require
perfection at once is the great imperfection of most teaching and thinking about

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⁹ The reference sheet entitled ¿Dónde va el camaleón? shows the placement of adjectives in a chart with
examples of when they should appear before and after the noun (see Appendix B.4 p. 98).
teaching” (Gattegno 1972, 31). The process that led them to an incorrect form should be acknowledged with an understanding that students may have an inner syllabus that is not in sync with the teacher’s syllabus (Pienemann 1985). Blaine Ray refers to a similar notion hypothesized by Krashen and Terrell in the *Natural Approach* (1983: 28-30) about a natural order of acquisition of grammatical components. He expands on this idea to answer the frequently asked question “When do I start teaching grammar?”:

You should delay most grammar.... No amount of worksheets, games or practice exercises can change late-acquired items into early-acquired ones. Teachers expend a great deal of effort trying to force their students to learn grammatical concepts that are late acquired (Ray 2003, 212).

Ray chooses the word “force” to describe the dynamic between teachers and students in regards to grammar instruction, which reinforces my earlier notion about it being something used to torment, rather than assist students. But grammar is always present in language; it doesn't cease to exist just because a teacher chooses not to require students to learn about it. An explicit mode of instruction, what Gee would define as learning, approaches teaching grammar deductively whereby a rule or generalization is presented and then students practice instances of language to which the rule applies. A benefit of explicit instruction is that students receive concrete explanations that may help them learn about specific features of the language function and understand contrasts between Spanish and their L1. A potential downfall can be that knowing rules may take precedent over having a feel for the correct use of the language. In contrast, implicit instruction presents grammar inductively and has students practice language forms without explicit grammar instruction. During this process learners are left to discover rules and make their own generalizations. Implicit instruction usually involves some comprehensible
input and is more a mode of acquisition than learning. A benefit of implicit instruction is that through exposure to models, students can arrive at their own conclusions, which may be more memorable than being given explanations or asked to memorize rules. Brown suggests that an inductive approach may be more appropriate. He lists one of the reasons as “...it builds more motivation by allowing students to discover rules rather than being told them” (Brown 2001, 365). A potential downfall of having students induce grammar rules occurs when they don’t know what to focus on or miss the point of the lesson.

In light of Ray’s point of view about delaying grammar, and returning to my uncertainty about its role in the second language classroom, I realize that more significant than the decision of whether to teach grammar or not, is the approach I use to present the material. The mode of presentation can be memorable and avoid emphasis on memorization of rules, thereby blending grammar with language rather than treating it as something outside of the language. I want to expose students to grammatical features of Spanish so that they become curious about how the language works and not feel forced or rushed to memorize rules. To achieve this goal, the materials I developed visually present features of agreement, inflection and syntax, so that the grammar can be addressed without added metalinguistic terms. The use of color draws students’ attention to patterns and can highlight specific grammar points. When used consistently, color creates a visual framework that can help avoid lengthy explanations.

In presenting gender, I consciously avoided using pink and blue for feminine and masculine nouns because of the associations they have in our culture relating to qualities of female and male; qualities that are not associated with the gender of all nouns in Spanish. My materials represent feminine as purple and masculine as orange. Purple corresponds to the moon and orange corresponds to the sun, further linking the gender of nouns to myths and other visuals integrated in the classroom.
Green represents adjectives and symbolizes the fact that they are like chameleons and must change or adapt to match their surroundings i.e. the noun they modify.

The following two phrases visually depict gender agreement of nouns and adjectives by using a consistent adjective to modify two different nouns. They also serve as a model of syntax, or word order, with the adjective following the noun.

**la luna redonda**

**el sol redondo**

An additional grammatical feature – singular and plural agreement – can also be depicted visually by adding the plural `-s’ or `-es’ to the article, noun and adjective.

**las lunas redondas**

**los soles redondos**

The features of syntax and gender and number agreement are woven into the story of “La luna y el sol” (see Appendix A.2 p.60). It is a love story about how the moon outsmarts the sun by telling him to make her a dress that fits perfectly. Since the moon constantly changes shape, none of the dresses fit perfectly. In the end she is free to live in the night and not in the day with him. The story is told using images that I drew to accompany the myth (see Appendix A.4 p.65). They can be used as visual aids while telling the story “La luna y el sol.” There are nine images total: la luna redonda, la luna delgada, el sol, el sol y la nube, las estrellas, las estrellas con el vestido redondo, las estrellas con el vestido delgado, las estrellas y la luna con el
vestido delgado, y las estrellas y la luna con el vestido redondo. For students who initially do not understand every word in the story, these visual aids help them get the gist of the meaning through pictures. Throughout the story, sun and the moon are described with numerous adjectives so that the students get a sense of their personalities as well as hear the different feminine and masculine forms of these adjectives. A list of these adjectives can be found in Appendix B.3 p.97.

I use the materials to draw students’ attention to the agreement of nouns and adjectives by having them compare color-coded phrases like the ones on the previous page well as other phrases found in the sample input of the story “La luna y el sol.” After they visually make a comparison, I ask students to describe what they see and hypothesize generalizations based on the observed patterns. Students brainstorm, make discoveries, induce grammar rules, then pause to reflect and make this act of noticing a conscious process. Asking them to notice certain features of the language can be done with the understanding that students will not integrate these features until ready, allowing time for students to learn through trial and error. It is not a straight path from L1 to the target language but a circular or U-shaped progression that may cause learners to take two steps forward and three steps back (Ellis 2001). This approach follows what Brown (2001) calls consciousness-raising techniques and occupies a middle ground between explicit and implicit instruction.

Once the framework of agreement is established by reading the stories about the sun and the moon and posting the images in the classroom, I found that it requires less effort on my part to have students reflect on their use of the language and begin to self correct. The materials presented in this paper can be used as reminders so that students’ attention can be drawn to visual cues posted in the classroom without interrupting their speech (see Appendix A.5 p.74). For example, if
a student begins to talk about a female friend and describes her with masculine adjectives:

**Mi amiga es alto y bonito**

instead of

**Mi amiga es alta y bonita**

I can stand in the corner of the room designated for feminine singular with the image of *la luna* and wait until she makes the connection. If she doesn't notice her error or correct her speech, I realize that she will integrate agreement when she is ready, and that other students in the class may benefit from hearing the error and seeing my subtle correction. In my experience, this approach feels more like a game than error correction.

Throughout my quest to better understand the role of grammar in the classroom, I encountered conflicting views and inconclusive results as to the efficacy of form-focused instruction. I see the importance of creating a middle ground and understanding that just because a student knows a grammar rule doesn’t mean that it will translate to correct usage in her output. I must be observant and take cues from my students as to what will help rather than hinder their learning. The amount of metalinguistic input I choose to include in my class should depend on where my students are in their interlanguage. In order to better understand the challenges that students may face, and how positive and negative transfer may affect their interlanguage, the following chapter takes a closer look at linguistic contrasts between Spanish and English.
This chapter explores the degrees of similarity and difference in terms of agreement that exist between Spanish and English and the potential challenges that these present for language learners. I focus on the specific features of noun/adjective agreement and morphological aspects of verb inflection and how these contrasts inform classroom instruction as shown in the teaching materials I have created. Additionally, I compare the approach that several Spanish textbooks use to visually introduce nouns, adjectives and verbs and what I have gleaned from reviewing these materials.

In Whitley’s *Spanish/English Contrasts: A Course in Spanish Linguistics*, the author presents a framework for the degrees of correspondence and contrast between the two languages: 1. equivalent, 2. similar but different, 3. not equivalent. Features of Spanish and English that belong to the first category can help students by contributing to positive transfer of L1 to L2, whereas features in the second two categories can result in negative transfer in the students’ continually changing interlanguage. For example, the notion of liking something or it being pleasing to someone belongs to the second category: similar but different. This may be the more challenging category because of the initial appearance of being equivalent.

¡Me gusta hablar español!
I like speaking Spanish! (translation in most textbooks)
Speaking Spanish is pleasing to me! (literal translation)

Although the concept can be expressed in both languages, it actually takes a different form: *me gusta* (it is pleasing to me) and *I like it*. This linguistic contrast illustrates the difference in assignment of roles and agency of subject and object in
the two languages. Seen in this way, a student who says “Me gusto” (I am pleasing to myself) may know that verbs for yo ends in –o, but demonstrates negative transfer from English by giving agency to herself rather than the thing that is pleasing to her. Whitley’s framework is useful because it distinguishes correspondences and contrasts in a way that sheds light on the possible origins of students’ errors and can thereby inform instruction by predicting possible problems students may encounter.

Two common errors I hear in the classroom from principiantes belong to the not equivalent category of Whitley’s framework. The first example is an error of noun/adjective agreement of number and gender.

**Las chicas son bonito.**

*Las chicas* is a plural feminine noun but *bonito* is a singular masculine adjective. In order to agree, a student must change *bonito* to *bonitas*. The multiple forms of adjectives (feminine singular, feminine plural, masculine singular and masculine plural) are a non-equivalent feature found in Spanish but not English. Descriptive adjectives do not change form in English to match the noun they modify. This often causes difficulty for principiantes because the generic Spanish adjective written in textbooks and dictionaries is often given in the singular masculine form. Without exposure to the language or some metalinguistic knowledge, it may appear that *bonito* can be used to describe any noun regardless of its gender or number.

The second example is an error in verb inflection. The following statement shows that the student is aware of the first person pronoun *yo* but not the corresponding verb conjugation *como*.

**Yo comer mucho.**
A non-equivalent feature of Spanish that often poses difficulty for L2 learners are verb inflections for each person or pronoun. Whereas English uses a final (-s) to distinguish the present tense third person singular ‘she eats,’ Spanish has six unique verb inflections for the simple present tense of the verb to eat: *comó, comes, come, comemos, comeís, comen*. Additionally, the English subject pronoun cannot be separated from the verb, whereas in Spanish it is common to drop the pronoun. The English language does not allow you to say ‘eats’ without the preceding ‘he,’ ‘she’ or ‘it.’ In Spanish, the conjugated verb contains a morpheme that indicates who the verb is attributed to, making the use of the pronoun a potential redundancy. Seen in terms of Whitley’s framework, learners’ overuse of the singular *masculine* adjective - *Las chicas son bonito* - and the infinitive verb – *Yo comer mucho* – is a part of their interlanguage that shows they have not yet noticed or internalized the non-equivalent features of verb inflections needed to agree with subject pronouns and the forms of adjectives needed to agree with nouns. The rest of this chapter is divided into sections that explore in more detail the linguistic contrasts of number, gender and verb inflection.
5.1 Number and Gender Agreement

A difference between English and Spanish is not the absence versus presence of agreement, but in its extent (Whitley 2002, 158). Agreement is a feature that is both similar but different in regards to number, and non-equivalent in regards to gender. Whereas agreement permeates the Spanish language, English only distinguishes number in singular and plural forms of nouns, indefinite articles and demonstrative adjectives. Spanish distinguishes number and gender in singular and plural forms of nouns, definite and indefinite articles and almost all adjectives. There are two forms of indefinite articles in English: a girl, some girls. There are also two forms of demonstrative adjectives: this girl, these girls. These determiners are the same whether you are talking about a girl or a boy. In Spanish there are four forms of definite (la, las, el, los) and indefinite (una, unas, un, unos) articles because they must agree in both number and gender:

\[ \text{la chica, las chicas, una chica, and unas chicas} \]

\[ \text{el chico, los chicos, un chico and unos chicos} \]

In Spanish there are six forms of feminine demonstrative adjectives and six forms of masculine demonstrative adjectives:\(^{10}\):

\[ \text{esta chica, estas chicas, esa chica, esas chicas,} \]

\[ \text{aquella chica, and aquellas chicas} \]

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\(^{10}\) Spanish has three demonstrative adjectives that differ in spatial relation to the speaker. Information about adjectives other than demonstrative adjectives is explored later in this chapter.
**este chico, estos chicos, ese chico, esos chicos, aquel**

**chico, and aquellos chicos**

These articles and adjectives are illustrated in the color-coded materials for la luna and el sol wall posters (see Appendix A.5 p.74).

Some form of agreement is usually presented in the first unit of most Spanish textbooks. Most texts use an explicit approach in their treatment of this feature of the language and give bulleted lists of rules and explanations. The high school Spanish I textbook, *En Español* (Gahala, et al. 2004), provides colorful charts for both definite and indefinite articles in addition to more explicit explanations. The use of colors and symbols highlights agreement of number and gender in a way that facilitates visual associations. I found this approach to presenting grammar helped students to make connections that would have otherwise been difficult if they had just read about the rules.

The college textbook *Vistas* (Blanco 2005) also presents nouns and articles in the first chapter and informs students about the contrasts between English and Spanish. Additionally it gives advice about how to cope with the differences:

Unlike English, all Spanish nouns, even those that refer to non-living things, have gender; that is, they are considered either masculine or feminine. Because the gender of nouns that refer to non-living things cannot be determined by foolproof rules, you should memorize the gender of each noun you learn (Blanco 2005, 10-11).

As the passage indicates, there are no foolproof rules to determining gender, but there are some common endings that indicate whether a noun is likely to be masculine or feminine. The word itself can offer clues, but not a guarantee, since there are many exceptions. The following section further explores the gender of nouns.
5.2 Nouns: Gender

A Spanish speaker may not consciously think about, nor begin to question, the gender of nouns. “But masculine and feminine seem unfathomable to English speakers, especially for things. Why is idioma masculine but its synonym lengua feminine? Is it el or la mar, el or la fin?” (Whitley 2002, 148-49). These questions are similar to ones that principiante students challenge me to answer when asked to see all nouns as having one of two genders. Where the particular gender designations came from and whether or not there is a logical basis for what vocabulary pertains to which group has been a puzzle and a source of great curiosity for my students and myself. My research led me to an understanding of how the distinctions originated historically, but not the rationale behind why certain nouns are considered feminine and others masculine.

In Proto-Indo-European languages all nouns were classified into three categories: masculine, feminine or neuter. Latin inherited these three distinctions but only passed on masculine and feminine to Spanish. English dropped gendered nouns completely except when referring to entities that have a sex such as the girl, la chica and the boy, el chico. Noun gender distinction is often confused with male/female sex distinction or as having attributes of one or the other. The arbitrary gender distinctions for nouns are usually acceptable to my students until they learn that el vestido, the dress, is actually a masculine word. Somehow it seems wrong. However, in Spanish there is no inherent quality of a dress being either feminine or masculine according to concepts about male/female sex, the word simply falls into that particular gender category. In order to address the possible logic as well as the arbitrary nature of noun gender distinction I wrote a story, modeled after creation myths, called “Who will look after the night and the day?” (see Appendix A.1 p. 57). It is written in English and aims to introduce the concept of gender to beginning students. The story describes the sun and the moon meeting to discuss how they will
share the task of looking after everything in existence. They take turns naming animals, flowers and fruits until the task becomes too daunting and they put the rest of the words in a hat. Every noun can be seen as having an identity that belongs to one of the two categories of gender. The myth helps establish the identity of words as either moon words or sun words. Because I did not find a logical basis for why some nouns were feminine and others masculine, this story helps to show that, for the most part, there is no rhyme or reason. The following paragraphs offer some insight into groupings of words according to gender but the information is by no means an exhaustive compilation of rules and exceptions.

Students can usually count on the most common endings of –a and –o to determine a noun’s gender.

- a for feminine

- o for masculine

But these generalizations may lead to confusion later when students see that the rules don’t always apply and leave them questioning:

el día and la mano

Despite the exceptions, nouns ending in the letters -l -o -n -e -r -s are usually masculine. Nouns that end in –a –d -is –ción –sión –umbre are usually feminine. Whitley lists statistics compiled by William Bull (1965) on classification according to noun ending to show the percentages that these endings will accurately determine the noun’s gender (Whitley 2002, 147).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>96.6% M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-a</td>
<td>98.9% F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>99.7% M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-d</td>
<td>97% F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>96.3% M (excluding -ción, sión)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>89.2% M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r</td>
<td>99.2% M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s</td>
<td>92.7% M (excluding -tis, sis)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the majority of words ending in –e are masculine, many high frequency examples are actually feminine. An idea to help students make a visual association of the gender of vocabulary words is to have them draw a picture or scene that contains representations of the words. One picture might contain words ending in ‘e’ that are feminine and another for words that are masculine. The following feminine nouns are some exceptions to the masculine –e:

**la clase, la noche, la llave, la calle, la muerte, la leche**

Masculine exceptions to nouns that end in –a are usually words of Greek origin and end in –ma, -pa and –ta. Beyond being an exception the rule of –a as a marker of feminine gender, this group of words offers a fascinating insight into the historical and cultural origins of some of the Spanish vocabulary.

**el problema, el planeta, el mapa, el poema, el sistema**
An additional group of nouns that initially appears to be masculine due to the *el* definite article are actually feminine. This group contains nouns that begin with a stressed *a* or *ha* and require *el* or *un* to be used instead of *la* or *una* in the singular form. The myth, “Who will look after the night and the day?,” indirectly speaks to this group of nouns and describes the sun and the moon sharing responsibility for water – *el agua* (see Appendix A.1 p.57). Although it is easier to ignore these words because they don’t fit neatly into the one of the two categories, these nouns can be symbolized by the combined image of the sun and the moon.

*el agua, el águila, el alma, el área, el hada,*

*el ave, el hambre, el arte*

In terms of gender, Whitley refers to these words as “transvestite” because the ‘*el*’ article is actually ‘*la*’ in disguise (152). This does not mark a change in gender, just a quirk, and a historical relic of earlier forms of the definite article. The feminine article reappears in the plural form. This group of nouns is always treated as feminine in order to agree with adjectives whether they are singular or plural.

*El agua pura*

*Las aguas puras*

The ways in which agreement of adjectives builds on the gender and number of nouns is discussed in the following section.
5.3 Adjectives: Number and Gender

The previous section explored how nouns and their articles are the starting place for establishing gender and number in Spanish. Adjectives follow the lead of the noun and must change accordingly to agree with singular, plural and masculine, feminine. This is a non-equivalent feature in English, except for English demonstratives adjectives that change from “this” in the singular to “these” in the plural. Beginning Spanish texts usually present descriptive adjectives early on in the context of describing family and friends, and sometimes clothes and common objects. These adjectives generally include words for appearance, nationality, personality, color and size. This section will primarily focus on the grammatical features of descriptive adjectives used to express a quality of a person, place, object or idea.

Similar to nouns, not all adjectives end in –o / –a. A vocabulary list of personality traits usually contains examples of several non–o /–a ending adjectives:

trabajador, feliz, optimista

Likewise a list of colors has at least three examples:

azul, verde, marrón

The high school Spanish I text, Realidades, uses four example adjectives to demonstrate how they change, or in some cases don’t change, to match masculine and feminine. The following table is part of a larger grammar text box that included bulleted rules for each of the example adjectives.
The first example covers –o / -a adjectives. The second shows an example of an adjective that ends in a consonant but adds an –a in the feminine form. This group of adjectives generally end in –dor, -ín, -ón or –án. Other adjectives (not shown on this table) that end in consonants generally maintain the exact same form in both masculine and feminine:

joven, mayor, menor, difícil, fácil, feliz

The fourth and fifth examples also stay the same for both masculine and feminine and end in –e and –ista respectively. Although I find it helpful to see all the examples, the information in this table could lead to cognitive overload for some principiantes. Other students may benefit from knowing the range of possibilities. But even if a student knows the rules and exceptions, she may still be prone to make errors. I think exposure to descriptive adjectives in context helps to set up a framework for seeing or noticing different patterns.

As mentioned earlier, the generic form of adjectives often appear as ending in –o, for example bonito. Some texts illustrate the possibility for masculine and feminine forms of adjectives by writing them as: bonito/a, bonito –a, or bonito (a). I can tell this confuses some students because they read the word as “bonitoa”. In
order to be inclusive of both feminine and masculine I often write adjectives with an @ sign in place of –o and –a in order to show the possibility of agreement with both masculine and feminine nouns. I have found the symbol, called la arroba in Spanish, prevalent in Mexico and Latin America due to the spread of the internet and internet cafes. Taking it a step further, the ‘a’ in the middle can be colored purple to symbolize feminine and the ‘o’ that encircles the ‘a’ could be colored orange to symbolize masculine. I have seen the use of @ in the pronouns ell@s, nosotr@s, vosotr@s in informal writing to include both masculine and feminine, but not in textbooks or materials for Spanish grammar. The Bonit@ poster shows the four forms of the adjective bonito (see Appendix B.2 p. 96). Images of the sun and the moon wall posters are included next to the form of the corresponding adjective in order to further connect color and images to the grammatical concept of agreement. Regarding groups of mixed gender, the wall poster for masculine plural contains two suns and a crescent moon to show that the masculine form overrides the feminine. Teachers and texts often refer to this as the masculine form dominating. I always look forward to an observant student asking, “Why is there a moon in the sun poster?” This image sparks class discussions that eventually lead to an exploration of gender and agreement that might otherwise originate in a text rather than a student’s curiosity. Encouraging them to explore the topic of gender in this way helps students connect to the material and feel empowered that their questions are an important part of the curriculum.

The story of “La luna y el sol” includes the following adjectives: roj@- red, bell@- beautiful, redond@- round, delgad@- thin, misterios@- mysterious, amarill@- yellow, blanc@- white, list@- smart, llen@- full, brillante- shiny, fuerte- strong, grande- big, and independiente- independent. These are used throughout the story to describe both masculine and feminine nouns. A worksheet with a list of these adjectives can be found in Appendix B.3 (see p. 97). From this list students write all
four forms of the adjectives to match the four pictures: one moon symbolizing feminine singular, two moons symbolizing feminine plural, one sun symbolizing masculine singular, and two suns with a crescent moon symbolizing masculine plural. Although it is a bit repetitive, the worksheet helps reinforce the concept of agreement for students who benefit from more concrete, explicit examples.

The *Camaleón* poster integrates the sun and the moon (nouns) with the chameleon (adjectives) (see Appendix B.1 p. 95). The same two adjectives describe both the sun and the moon in order to visually establish the color-coded framework for gender in the following example:

La luna es redonda y grande.

El sol es redondo y grande.

Without having to explicitly tell students a rule about adjectives matching the noun, they begin to make their own connections as they listen to the story and see the pictures. Follow-up questions and practice can help them check their hypotheses and experiment with the language. After completing the worksheet found in Appendix B.3, students can use these adjectives to fill in the blanks on the Madlib version of "La luna y el sol" (see Appendix A.3 pp. 62-64). One of the *principiantes* in my class began to see how she had to change the adjectives to match the noun. She exclaimed, “Oh, I have to conjugate them!” The idea of conjugating made sense to her after learning about verbs but this unexpected connection made me wonder about whether her use of the metalinguistic term ‘conjugate’ showed that she truly understood the concept. Conjugate applies specifically to the different forms a verb has according to tense, mood, person, and number. To this student, adjectives...
seemed to behave similarly to verbs. These two parts of speech are similar in that they both inflect, or change form, but adjectives only do this for gender or number whereas verbs are more complex and change for tense, mood, person, and number (but not gender). Patterns of verb conjugations are explored further in the following section.
5.4 Verb Inflection

In light of what I learned about verb morphology in the Spanish Applied Linguistics course at SIT, I want to focuses students’ attention to the patterns and constants that verbs exhibit. Although most English speakers are not taught to conjugate verbs in their first language, often a great deal of time is dedicated to memorizing conjugations in most Spanish language classrooms. My goal in creating materials that include a myth and color-coded graphic organizers is to invite learners to be observant and comment on what they notice. Visually presenting verbs in a way that calls attention to the morphological features will hopefully reduce the cognitive load by using color in place of terminology. In my classroom I have found that using color is an effective tool and can help students to notice and hypothesize about features of the language, rather than require the teacher to do all the explaining.

Morphologically, Spanish verbs can be separated into three main parts: stem, thematic vowel and ending. Most beginning texts divide verbs into two parts: verb stem and verb ending, illustrated in the “Anatomy of a Spanish Verb" from the middle school text ¡Ya Verás!. Although it may appear simpler to teach two parts rather that three, the three-part breakdown shows that there are more constants (stem and ending) than variables (thematic vowel). The stem is the morpheme that indicates the semantic meaning, the thematic vowel contains information about the tense and mood, and the ending is the marker of the person or thing the

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12 A morpheme is the smallest part of language that contains grammatical or semantic meaning.
verb corresponds to\textsuperscript{13}. These parts of the verb can be presented to students through color rather than by name.

Many middle school, high school and college textbooks present tables with two columns of verb conjugations that distinguish the different conjugations of first, second and third person singular from first, second and third person plural subject pronouns. Although this format helps distinguish singular and plural conjugations, it does not address constants and variables on a morphological level. Up until now I have also used this chart and asked students to do the same. I had not questioned this format until I began to study morphology and see a more clear and simple way to present this information by using color and emphasizing the constants. The following figure is an example from a high school Spanish I book that uses the two-column approach. It also uses color to highlight the combined thematic vowel and verb endings: \textit{–o, -as, -a, -amos, -áis, -an}. The stem, \textit{habl-}, is constant but the verb endings which are also constant for \textit{–ar, -er, and –ir} verbs, are not apparent in this example.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{chart.png}
\caption{Example of verb conjugation chart from a high school Spanish I book.}
\end{figure}


\textsuperscript{13}Spanish verbs actually have four morphemes: Hablaban = habl (stem) +a (theme) + ba (imperfect tense) +n (person/number) but I have combined the vowel theme and tense marker into one category or morpheme. (Whitley 2002)
An example from a beginning college text presents the present tense conjugations of the verb *estudiar* in a single column. It also uses color to highlight the combined thematic vowel and verb endings.

![Present tense of estudiar](image)


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular Forms</th>
<th>Plural Forms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yo / tú / Ud.</td>
<td>estudiamos / estudiamos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>estudias / estudiante</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>estudia / estudian</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I study / you (fam.) study</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you (form.) study; he/she studies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>we study / you (fam.) study</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you (form.) study; they study</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is difficult to determine which of the two examples presents the information more clearly. To me, there are benefits to organizing verb conjugations in both one and two columns. The former divides the conjugations into two parts - singular subject pronouns on one side and plural on the other. The latter makes it possible to present patterns that run through the singular and plural forms of the verbs in a way that they can be seen from top to bottom. However, in both of these examples verb
endings are presented as larger chunks combining the thematic vowel and ending. The actual endings that correspond to subject pronouns are listed in the far right column below:

1\textsuperscript{st} person singular  \hspace{1cm} yo \hspace{1cm} \varnothing

2\textsuperscript{nd} person singular familiar  \hspace{1cm} tú \hspace{1cm} -s\textsuperscript{14}

3\textsuperscript{rd} person singular \hspace{1cm} él, ella, usted (Ud. is 2\textsuperscript{nd} person formal) \hspace{1cm} \varnothing

1\textsuperscript{st} person plural \hspace{1cm} nosotr@s \hspace{1cm} -mos

2\textsuperscript{nd} person plural familiar \hspace{1cm} vosotr@s \hspace{1cm} -is

3\textsuperscript{rd} person plural \hspace{1cm} ell@s, ustedes (Uds. is 2\textsuperscript{nd} person formal) \hspace{1cm} -ron

A third example from a Spanish grammar text shows lists of the verb comprar conjugated in four tenses. In this figure, the verbs are broken down into three parts: stem, thematic vowel and ending\textsuperscript{15}. It’s possible to see that in addition to the stem remaining constant, the endings are also constant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>presente indicativo</th>
<th>presente subjuntivo</th>
<th>pretérito indicativo</th>
<th>imperfecto subjuntivo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yo</td>
<td>compr-o</td>
<td>compr-e</td>
<td>compr-é</td>
<td>compr-a-ra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tú</td>
<td>compr-a-s</td>
<td>compr-e</td>
<td>compr-a-ste</td>
<td>compr-a-ra-s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>él, etc.</td>
<td>compr-a</td>
<td>compr-e</td>
<td>compr-o</td>
<td>compr-a-ra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nosotros</td>
<td>compr-a-mos</td>
<td>compr-e-mos</td>
<td>compr-a-mos</td>
<td>compr-a-ra-mos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vosotros</td>
<td>compr-a-is</td>
<td>compr-a-is</td>
<td>compr-a-steis</td>
<td>compr-a-ra-is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ellos, etc.</td>
<td>compr-a-n</td>
<td>compr-a-rn</td>
<td>compr-a-ron</td>
<td>compr-a-ra-n</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Building from my interests in morphological patterns, I developed color-coded verb cards for three regular \textit{-ar}, \textit{-er} and \textit{-ir} verbs: \textit{hablar}, \textit{comer} and \textit{vivir}. The verb

\textsuperscript{14} *Except in the preterit tense.

\textsuperscript{15} In the case of the imperfect subjunctive, the verb is shown with four parts: stem, thematic vowel, tense and ending.
stem is **black**, the thematic vowel or tense marker is **red** (-ar verbs) **blue** (-er verbs) and **yellow** (-ir verbs), and the ending is **black** and **underlined**. The two **black** parts of the verb remain constant across tense, mood and person and the colored parts change according to tense and mood\(^{16}\). So, what semantic and morphological information is encoded in the conjugated Spanish verb **Hablamos**?

Stem: **Habl** = speak (the semantic meaning)

Thematic vowel: **a** = simple present indicative tense for –ar verbs (tense or mood)

Ending: **mos** = we (person).

When the three regular –ar, -er and –ir verbs: **hablar**, **comer** and **vivir** appear together, as in the following chart, several patterns become clear. The colors used for the thematic vowel show that –er and –ir verbs are conjugated **almost** identically in the present tense. Blue is used to show the –er conjugations that appear in both –er and –ir verbs. Yellow points out that only nosotros and vosotros vary from the –er conjugation. Students may be relieved to know that –er and –ir verbs share the same conjugations patterns in all other tenses besides the present. This feature of the language is addressed in the myth I wrote called, “The story of the kingdom of Aragón, prince Ernesto and his daughter Irene.” (see Appendix C.1 p.100). I created this myth to introduce the existence of the three classifications, or families, of verbs in Spanish: -ar, -er, and –ir. It shows that the verbs, and the characters that personify the verbs, have their own quirks but are all related. This relationship is strongest between Ernesto and his daughter Irene and is meant to illustrate how –er and –ir verbs have similar conjugations.

\(^{16}\) The stem remains constant except for stem-changing and irregular verbs. Another exception that does not remain constant is the second person singular form in the preterit. Over time this ending lost the final ‘s’ that is normally found in all other tenses for tú. I have chosen to indicate this irregularity in the materials with a faint outline of an ‘s’ with a line crossing through it.
Two other patterns visible in this chart are the stems that remain constant for each verb and the underlined endings that remain the same for all three\textsuperscript{17}.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HABLAR</th>
<th>COMER</th>
<th>VIVIR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hablo</td>
<td>como</td>
<td>vivo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hablas</td>
<td>comes</td>
<td>vives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>habla</td>
<td>come</td>
<td>vive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hablamos</td>
<td>comemos</td>
<td>vivimos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>habláis</td>
<td>coméis</td>
<td>vivís</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hablan</td>
<td>comen</td>
<td>viven</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This chart can be drawn on a white board with colored markers. One possible variation is to omit the specific verb stems of habl-, com-, and viv- in order to generalize patterns for all regular –as, -er, and –ir verbs in the present tense (see Appendix C.2 p.101). As with the act of noticing described in the previous chapter for noun and adjective agreement, after students make a visual comparison I ask them to describe what they see and hypothesize generalizations based on the observed patterns. When students begin to learn commands, I tell them the verb endings are flip-flopped. This is made clearer when the present subjunctive chart is compared with the present indicative chart (see Appendix C. 3 pp. 102-103.) The

\textsuperscript{17} All the endings are the same except the vosotros –ir which is one vowel short of –ar and –er conjugations. Vosotros is depicted in grey to acknowledge its existence but also mark its limited use in California and Latin America.
form *habla* becomes *hable* (the –ar verb takes the –er endings which is shown with the change of color from red to blue.) Raising students’ awareness to these patterns is the first step in helping to make memorable connections and discoveries rather than rely on rote memorization. My goal is to find the most effective way to use this resource to assist beginning and intermediate students to notice patterns and maneuver Spanish verb conjugations so that they can communicate more effectively.

Most high frequency verbs do not follow the same pattern as regular verbs and are referred to as *irregular* meaning that they do not follow the rules of conjugation. I like to think of these as *maverick* verbs rather than *irregular* because they have unique behavior when it comes to conjugation, but are usually not completely irregular. Whitley (2002) has an interesting treatment of categories of irregular verbs. He attempts to show that these verbs are, for the most part, rule-governed whether they display orthographic changes or stress-based alterations (diphthongization or raising) - a common feature in Spanish lexis, not just verbs. The verb charts in the materials section give examples of three stem changing verbs (e-ie, o-ue, and e-i) but do not offer an extensive treatment of irregulars (see Appendix C.4 p. 113). I won’t go into more depth here but will consider maverick verbs for further exploration as I continue to think about issue of patterns, constants and variation in conjugation.
Before writing this paper I had been determined to use my topic for the Sandanona conference (the closing activity of my second summer coursework at SIT) titled “De-mystifying Spanish verbs: Making grammar accessible,” as the basis for my IPP. The central question I had posed was “How can we help students to notice and find patterns in language?” As I wrote, I changed my focus to agreement of gender and number. I looked back through an old journal I kept while studying in Mexico and saw pages with lists of nouns divided by gender under sketches of suns and moons. Seeing these notes reminded me of initial attempts to connect language and image and how this eventually led me to create a visual framework for teaching grammar. This paper allowed me to develop and expand on my ideas and compile them into one document. Each chapter took me on a journey and allowed me to explore a different focus – from personal to theoretical. Compiling the materials was one of the most rewarding parts of the process. My goal is to share the materials I have developed in this paper with other Spanish teacher and get feedback in order to develop them further.

Based on my classroom experience at the Julia Morgan School for Girls, I have seen how stories and images can make learning language memorable. In the fall of 2006 I introduced “La luna y el sol” to my 7th grade classes. The students were touched by the plight of the sun and liked the moon’s nose ring. It was a joy to gather together for story time and to use images I had drawn to illustrate the text. The lesson also included a computer-based project in which students learned how to use the GarageBand software. They recorded their voices and came up with unique ways to retell the story. Some wrote songs and added music, and others delivered their story like a Gregorian chant. I burned CDs of their projects and we listened to
them over the course of a couple of days. This experience afforded the students an opportunity to hear their voices, use their creativity, and share their creations with an audience. Each project was unique, and because they were based on the same story the students got a lot of practice without boredom.

After spending two weeks on the project, I noticed that the framework of the moon and the sun, and feminine and masculine began to sink in. Students were more likely to self correct their errors of agreement. At the time, I had not yet made a color-coded version of the text and I am curious to explore how that version can be used for further instruction. One grammatical feature of the story that I did not focus on with my 7th grade is the difference between the verbs ser and estar. It seems worthwhile to bring the story back in 8th grade to explore this aspect. In the future I would like to have students use the Madlib version to tell original stories based on “La luna y el sol.” Instead of creating audio versions, I am interested in having the students try to animate their stories on the computer, bringing them to life with images as well as sound. I have found that students respond well to using their senses and being given creative freedom within a guiding framework.

One challenge I encountered with the materials is the cost of color reproduction. Although I would love every student to have a color-coded copy of the stories and to make colorful handouts and worksheets, it is not financially feasible. I have several ideas for getting around this issue. One thought is to make a class set and use the same laminated copies every year. Another is to use a computer and LCD projector to project the stories and images on the wall. A third idea is to use colored markers to write sections of text or verbs on the whiteboard using the system of color-coding. Another is to use black and white copies and ask the students to color-code the text. This final idea seems most in line with encouraging students to notice patterns of agreement on their own.
I look forward to incorporating the two myths “Who will look after the night and day?” and “The story of the kingdom of Aragón, prince Ernesto and his daughter Irene” into my curriculum. I wrote them because I was always curious as to why there were –ar, -er, and –ir verbs and two genders of nouns. It seemed like this great mystery that my teachers wanted me to accept as a fact and move on. Both stories are written in English and offer mythical explanations for the origin of the gender of nouns and the three families of verbs. I like the idea of using the stories to introduce these topics and asking students to write their own myths about some aspect of the Spanish language that puzzles them. I also hope to come up with ways to integrate them with other activities and projects throughout the year.

I began the task of writing this paper upon returning from traveling throughout Mexico with my mother in the summer of 2007. I had decided to take maternity leave the following school year in order to complete my Masters and stay at home with my baby. The motivation to finish the first draft during the final month of pregnancy was so great that I actually went into labor three days after I sent it to my advisor. While searching for the formatting guidelines, I came across my Sandanona conference notes and a brief bio that read “Recently married and living in Oakland, CA, April teaches 7th and 8th grade Spanish at the Julia Morgan School for Girls. She has traveled and worked in Mexico, Central and South America as well as the Caribbean and Spain. She enjoys a good cup of tea as well as conjugating and color-coding verbs in her sleep.” Some things have changed – I am now a mom to Mia Peal, living in Berkeley and taking a year off of teaching, but I continue to be compelled by the idea of how to help students notice and find patterns in language.

Communicating in Spanish has been central to my life ever since I was 15 years old and first traveled outside the United States to a small town in Ecuador. My travels, studies and volunteer work have brought me to Guatemala, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Spain, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Cuba, and more than 10 states
in Mexico. The worlds of culture and friendship that the Spanish language opened to me are ones that textbooks were unable to provide. By creating materials that connect art with grammar and storytelling with language, I hope to help students develop a connection to Spanish beyond textbooks and memorization that will assist them in making their own discoveries about language and hopefully about the world.
APPENDIX A

Gender and Number: Myths and Images of *la luna y el sol*
A.1 Myth: “Who will look after the night and day?”

Even before millions and millions of people spoke the Spanish language, the sun and the moon lived in the sky. For many months they met at nightfall – before the sun set and before the moon shone bright – to discuss how they would share the task of looking after everything in existence. They were familiar with all animals, people, places, things and ideas, and wanted to name them in order to keep track of everything from dust to dinosaurs, from shadows to shapes. This was a huge responsibility, but who better than the sun and the moon because they had a view of both earth and outer space.

Finally, one clear evening after much discussion, the moon - la luna - began. I will care for the night and call it la noche.

The sun - el sol - continued. I will care for the day and call it el día.

La luna thought for a moment – I will care for all the clouds– las nubes – and all the stars – las estrellas - in the sky.

And el sol replied – I will look after the sky itself and call it el cielo.

To distinguish what belonged to whom, la luna – would begin everything in her domain with the word la or las and el sol – with el or los.

Soon they grew tired and darkness – la oscuridad – fell across the land. La luna began her work and gathered all the stars– todas las estrellas – around her full round sphere. She blew them like dust across the darkness making sure they were all connected in beautiful constellations.
A.1 Myth: “Who will look after the night and day?”

The next evening the sun and the moon met again.

La luna looked down towards earth and began to list all the fruits she saw – I will look after las frutas – la manzana, la naranja, la papaya, la fresa, la pera, la...

El sol interrupted – leave me el mango y el limón because they are my favorites.

La luna continued – I will care for the flowers – las flores – la rosa, la margarita, la...

El sol interrupted – leave me the sunflower and marigold – el girasol y el cempazuchil – because they are my favorites. He continued – I will care for the animals – los animales – el gato, el perro, el elefante, el caballo, el zorro, el mono, el...

This time la luna interrupted – leave me la tortuga, la girafa y la mariposa – because they are my favorites.

Soon they grew tired and darkness – la oscuridad – fell across the land. El sol began his work and gathered all of the animals – todos los animales – and blew them like dust across the continents making sure they had enough space to roam and enough company so they would not get lonely.

The next evening the sun and the moon met again but this time they were both very tired. They decided to put the names of all the remaining animals, people, places, things and ideas into a giant hat and pull them out – each taking a handful at a time. This way they could finish dividing up their domains quickly and no longer be allowed to play favorites.
A.1 Myth: “Who will look after the night and day?”

La luna looked at her first handful – la historia, la casa, la camisa y la playa. She smiled at the random assortment and thought to herself– These are all exciting. I will do my best to look after history, the house, shirts and the beach.

El sol looked at his handful – el relámpago, el aire, el pelo y el vestido. He was pleased as well and thought– I know I can care for lightning, the air, hair and the dress.

This continued for several days and nights until one final thing remained in the giant hat – water – something all beings in existence seemed to depend on. The sun and the moon decided to share responsibility and named it – el agua – it began with el like all the people, places, things and ideas that the sun cared for but was actually a moon word like all the animals, people, places, things and ideas that la luna cared for. This seemed like a good compromise.

After the work of dividing the world into two domains was done, the sun and the moon thought – Every time children and adults say the name of an animal, person, place, thing or idea in Spanish, they will give us tribute by remembering who looks after la noche - the night - and el día - the day-.
Érase una vez había dos seres en el cielo: Lucia la luna y Samuel el sol.

Lucia la luna es blanca y brillante. Es lista y bella.

A veces está redonda y a veces está delgada. Pero siempre es muy independiente y misteriosa.

Samuel el sol es amarillo y rojo. También es brillante pero no es muy listo.

A veces está fuerte y a veces está escondido tras una nube grande.

Él tiene amor para Lucia la luna. Pero hay un problema. Ella vive en la noche y Samuel vive en el día.
A.2 Myth: “La luna y el sol”

Un día Lucia la luna le dice a Samuel
—Quiero un vestido blanco y bello.
Si tú me haces un vestido perfecto,
viviré en el día contigo. —

Entonces, Samuel el sol
hace un vestido
blanco, bello, y un poco redondo.
Se lo manda con las estrellas amarillas a Lucia.
Pero, en ese momento,
Lucia la luna está delgada.

—Lo siento Samuel, el vestido no es perfecto.
Es demasiado grande para mí.—

Entonces Samuel el sol
hace otro vestido blanco y bello
pero esta vez más delgado.

Se lo manda con las estrellas amarillas a Lucia.
Pero en ese momento,
Lucia la luna está llena.

Lucia le dice a Samuel
—Pobrecito, los vestidos no fueron perfectos.
Nunca vas a ganar mi amor
porque soy demasiado misteriosa para ti.—
### “La luna y el sol” Madlib Version

Write your own version of the story of ‘La luna y el sol’ by writing a noun or adjective in the form indicated.

| 1. | **noun** feminine singular | ________________ |
| 2. | **adjective** feminine singular | ________________ |
| 3. | **adjective** feminine singular | ________________ |
| 4. | **adjective** feminine singular | ________________ |
| 5. | **adjective** feminine singular | ________________ |
| 6. | **noun** masculine singular | ________________ |
| 7. | **adjective** masculine singular | ________________ |
| 8. | **adjective** masculine singular | ________________ |
| 9. | **adjective** masculine singular | ________________ |
| 10. | **noun** feminine singular | ________________ |
| 11. | same word as #1 | ________________ |
| 12. | **noun** that is a place | ________________ |
| 13. | **noun** that is a place | ________________ |
| 14. | same word as #1 | ________________ |
| 15. | **noun** masculine singular | ________________ |
| 16. | **adjective** masculine singular | ________________ |
| 17. | same word as #15 | ________________ |
| 18. | same word as #13 | ________________ |
| 19. | same word as #6 | ________________ |
| 20. | same word as #17 | ________________ |
| 21. | **adjective** masculine singular | ________________ |
| 22. | **noun** feminine plural | ________________ |
| 23. | **adjective** feminine plural | ________________ |
| 24. | **adjective** feminine singular | ________________ |
| 25. | same word as #15 | ________________ |
| 26. | same word as #15 | ________________ |
| 27. | **adjective** masculine singular | ________________ |
| 28. | same words as #22 | ________________ |
| 29. | same words as #23 | ________________ |
| 30. | **adjective** feminine singular | ________________ |
| 31. | plural of #15 | ________________ |
| 32. | **adjective** feminine singular | ________________ |

¡El fin!
Lucia la ___1___ es
_____2______ y brillante.
Es ____3_____ y bella.

A veces está _____4____
y a veces está delgada.
   Pero siempre es muy
_____5______ y misteriosa.

Samuel el _____6____ es
________7_______ y rojo.
También es brillante pero
no es muy _____8______.

A veces está _____9_______
y a veces está escondido tras
______10______ grande.

Él tiene amor para Lucia la _____11______.
   Pero hay un problema.
Ella vive en _____12______ y
Samuel vive en _____13______.
Un día Lucia ______14____ le dice a Samuel
—Quiero un ______15____ blanco y ____16____.
Si tú me haces un ______17____ perfecto,
viviré en ______18____ contigo. —

Entonces, Samuel ___19____
hace un ___20____
blanco, bello, y un poco ___21____.
Se lo manda con las ___22___ ___23___ a Lucia.
Pero, en ese momento,
Lucia está ___24____.

—Lo siento Samuel, el ___25____ no es perfecto.
Es demasiado grande para mí. —

Entonces Samuel
hace otro ___26____ blanco y bello
pero esta vez más ______27______.

Se lo manda con las ___28___ ___29___ a Lucia.
Pero en ese momento,
Lucia está ___30____.

Lucia le dice a Samuel
—Pobrecito, los ___31____ no fueron perfectos.
Nunca vas a ganar mi amor
porque soy demasiado ____32____ para ti.
A.4 Images for “La luna y el sol”
A.4 Images for “La luna y el sol”
A.4 Images for “La luna y el sol”
A.4 Images for “La luna y el sol”
A.4 Images for "La luna y el sol"
A.4 Images for “La luna y el sol”
A.4 Images for “La luna y el sol”
A.4 Images for "La luna y el sol"
A.4 Images for "La luna y el sol"
A.5 Images and Text for Wall Posters
A.5 Images and Text for Wall Posters

la

75
una
A.5 Images and Text for Wall Posters

muchacha
esta
esa
aquella
A.5 Images and Text for Wall Posters
A.5 Images and Text for Wall Posters

\[ \text{las} \]
A.5 Images and Text for Wall Posters

unas
A.5 Images and Text for Wall Posters

muchas
estas
esas
aquellas
A.5 Images and Text for Wall Posters
A.5 Images and Text for Wall Posters
A.5 Images and Text for Wall Posters

un
A.5 Images and Text for Wall Posters

mucho
A.5 Images and Text for Wall Posters

este
ese
aquel
A.5 Images and Text for Wall Posters
A.5 Images and Text for Wall Posters

los
unos
A.5 Images and Text for Wall Posters

muchos
estos
esos
aquellos
APPENDIX B
Spanish Adjectives as Chameleons
La luna es redonda y grande.

El sol es redondo y grande.
B.2  Bonit@ Poster

bonit@

bonita

bonitas

bonito

bonitos
### La luna y el sol Adjectives Worksheet

Instrucciones: Escribe la definición y las 4 formas de los adjetivos.

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ej: roj@ /</td>
<td>roja</td>
<td>rojas</td>
<td>rojo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. bell@ /</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. redond@ /</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. delgad@ /</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. misterios@ /</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. amarill@ /</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. blanc@ /</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. list@ /</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. brillante /</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. fuerte /</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. grande /</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. independiente/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### ¿Dónde va el camaleón?: Placement of Adjective

#### ¿Dónde va el camaleón?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Antes del sustantivo</th>
<th>Después del sustantivo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Una luna</strong> (numero)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bella luna</strong> (descripción poética)</td>
<td><strong>La luna bella</strong> (descripción)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mi luna</strong> (posesivo sin acentuación)</td>
<td><strong>La luna mía</strong> (posesivo acentuado)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Esta luna</strong> (demostrativo)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>¿Cuántas lunas?</strong> (cantidad)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Varias lunas</strong> (cantidad indefinida)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C
Mapping the Morphology of Verbs with Color
Once upon a time in a kingdom in the northeast of what is now called Spain lived the king and queen of Aragón. They were very active and had many interests. They were kind rulers and wanted everyone in the kingdom of Aragón to share common traditions and culture. The king and queen of Aragón made sure that everyone became skilled at how to walk – caminar, talk – hablar, listen – escuchar, work – trabajar, fish – pescar, cook – cocinar, dance – bailar, and swim – nadar. They encouraged activities such as drawing, celebrating, traveling, thinking and many more.

People were busy and content and the kingdom of Aragón grew and grew. There seemed to be no limit to the possibilities but there was still a fear of the unknown. For some reason, that will never be explained, they did not write nor read – leer, not even drink – beber or run – correr. This may appear strange, but in those days life was uncertain so everyone simply obeyed the authority. In return, the king and queen of Aragón looked after the people.

One day the king and queen of Aragón had a son, a beautiful boy with dark brown hair who they called Ernesto, prince of Aragón. Prince Ernesto grew up to be curious and brave. He wanted to be free to do whatever he chose, which in those days was unheard of. One day when he was old enough to work, Ernesto ran – corrió – towards the fields when his mother, the queen of Aragón, found him. She gave him a choice, “You will either never run again and live happily in Aragón or find a new home.”

Prince Ernesto packed his bags and headed to the sunny shores in the south. Far from Aragón he made his own life; although he still kept some connection to his roots. Before long he began to read – leer, learn – aprender, understand – comprender and drink – beber. That winter he started a family. His daughter Irene grew up to be so much like her father but even more curious and brave than he. Irene was unique and unusual. Although she had a great deal in common with her family, Irene began to explore the world in new ways by being able to feel – sentir, write – escribir, live – vivir in new places, sleep – dormir and go shopping – ir de compras.

Today all Spanish-speakers, even you have something in common with the people in the kingdom of Aragón, prince Ernesto and his daughter Irene.

What do you think it is? What were some things you noticed about this story? How might this story help you in learning and studying Spanish?
### C.2 Verb Endings Poster

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>-ar verbs</th>
<th>-er verbs</th>
<th>-ir verbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yo</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tú</td>
<td>as</td>
<td>es</td>
<td>es</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ella, él, Ud.</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nosotros@s</td>
<td>amos</td>
<td>emos</td>
<td>ímos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vosotros@s</td>
<td>áis</td>
<td>éis</td>
<td>ís</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ellas, ellos, Uds.</td>
<td>an</td>
<td>en</td>
<td>en</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### PRESENT TENSE

Use for: habitual actions as well as ideas and actions in the present. You can also use the present tense to express future actions or events.
**C.3 Color-coded Verb Charts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>hable</th>
<th>coma</th>
<th>viva</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hables</td>
<td>comas</td>
<td>vivas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hablemos</td>
<td>comamos</td>
<td>vivamos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>habléis</td>
<td>comáis</td>
<td>viváis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hablen</td>
<td>coman</td>
<td>vivan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PRESENT SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD**

Use for: to express everything except certainty and objectivity: things like doubt, uncertainty, wishes, influence, subjectivity, etc.

It usually has a main clause + que + second clause.
C.3 Color-coded Verb Charts

**PRETERIT (PAST) TENSE**

Use for: specific actions completed in the past. To talk about events and singular actions in the past rather than descriptions or ongoing actions.
## C.3  Color-coded Verb Charts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hablaba</th>
<th>Comía</th>
<th>Vivía</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hablabas</td>
<td>Comías</td>
<td>Vivías</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hablababa</td>
<td>Comía</td>
<td>Vivía</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hablábanos</td>
<td>Comíamos</td>
<td>Vivíamos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hablabais</td>
<td>Comíais</td>
<td>Vivíais</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hablaban</td>
<td>Comían</td>
<td>Vivían</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**IMPERFECT (PAST) TENSE**

Use for: description in the past (scenery, people, time). To describe ongoing action or state in the past with no specified time frame. To talk about past habitual actions.
C.3 Color-coded Verb Charts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>hablaré</th>
<th>comeré</th>
<th>viviré</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hablarás</td>
<td>comerás</td>
<td>vivirás</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hablará</td>
<td>comerá</td>
<td>vivirá</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hablaremos</td>
<td>comeremos</td>
<td>viviremos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hablaréis</td>
<td>comeréis</td>
<td>viviréis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hablarán</td>
<td>comerán</td>
<td>vivirán</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FUTURE TENSE**

Use for: events that will take place in the future.
To emphasize something you WILL do in the future.
Also to suggest probability or uncertainty.
Form: Infinitive + endings
### C.3 Color-coded Verb Charts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>hablaria</th>
<th>comeria</th>
<th>viviria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hablarías</td>
<td>comerías</td>
<td>vivirías</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hablaría</td>
<td>comería</td>
<td>viviría</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hablaríamos</td>
<td>comeríamos</td>
<td>viviríamos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hablaríais</td>
<td>comeríais</td>
<td>viviríais</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hablarían</td>
<td>comerían</td>
<td>vivirían</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### CONDITIONAL

Use for: to give advice. To make polite requests. To express a present or future hypothesis. It often translates as ‘would’. Form: Infinitive + endings
C.3  Color-coded Verb Charts

**IMPERFECT SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD**

Use for: to express everything except certainty and objectivity in the past: things like doubt, uncertainty, wishes, influence, subjectivity, etc. It usually has a main clause + que + second clause.
C.3 Color-coded Verb Charts

PRESENT PERFECT TENSE
+ add +
Past participle

Use for: a past action or event which is linked to the present with a possibility to continue in the future.
### C.3 Color-coded Verb Charts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Present Perfect</th>
<th>Subjunctive</th>
<th>Conditional Perfect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>haya</td>
<td>habla</td>
<td>había</td>
<td>habría</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hayas</td>
<td>había</td>
<td>habías</td>
<td>habrías</td>
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<tr>
<td>haya</td>
<td>habíamos</td>
<td>habíais</td>
<td>habríamos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hayamos</td>
<td></td>
<td>habíamos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hayáis</td>
<td></td>
<td>habíais</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hayan</td>
<td>habían</td>
<td></td>
<td>habrían</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Notes:
- **Present Perfect**:+
- **Subjunctive**: + add + Past participle ..that I have...
- **Conditional Perfect**: + add + Past participle I would have...
### C.3 Color-coded Verb Charts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Future Perfect</th>
<th>Pluperfect Subjunctive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FUTURE PERFECT + add + Past participle</td>
<td>PLUPERFECT SUBJUNCTIVE + add + Past participle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will have...</td>
<td>...that I had...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>habré</th>
<th>hubierea</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>habrá</td>
<td>hubiera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>habrémos</td>
<td>hubiéramos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>habréis</td>
<td>hubierais</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>habrán</td>
<td>hubieran</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
C.3 Color-coded Verb Charts

**present progressive**

- **estoy**
- **estás**
- ** está**
- **estamos**
- **estáis**
- **están**

Use for: ongoing actions that are happening RIGHT NOW while you are speaking. Used less often in Spanish than in English.

- **hablando**
- **comiendo**
- **viviendo**

**present participle** + add +

+ add +

Present participle
C.4 Stem Changing Verbs

quiero
quisieres
quiere
queremos
queréis
quieren
C.4  Stem Changing Verbs

puedo

puedes

puede

podemos

podéis

pueden
C.4 Stem Changing Verbs

digo
dices
dice
decimos
decéis
dicen
BIBLIOGRAPHY


