ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: Teaching Foreign Languages Online: A Grounded Theory Study On
Teaching Spanish At A Distance

Loreto Sánchez-Serrano, Doctor of Philosophy, 2005

Dissertation directed by: Dr. Kendra Wallace, Associate Professor
Language, Literacy and Culture Doctoral Program

This research analyzes the pedagogical processes of online foreign language instructors, as well as the components of online FL instruction and their contributions to students, teachers and institutions. This qualitative research project involved a series of interviews with distance Spanish teachers (n=9) from six higher education institutions located in the United States and in England. These interviews investigate the characteristics of the online FL participants, elements of FL course design, and the particular distinctions between face-to-face and online FL teaching methods. The research examines network-based foreign language teaching to uncover how professors teach in this field and how they deal with contextual challenges. Furthermore, the study addresses the foreign language teacher's role in the online environment, and considers the interplay between school policies, programs, curricula and other context-related factors that teachers encounter. The intent of the study is to help both novice and experienced professors understand the field and facilitate institutions recognizing key features for designing and implementing a successful network-based foreign language course. This research contributes to the enhancement of the teachers' professional development and the student's learning experience, encourages greater opportunities for institutional support of foreign language instruction at a distance, and provides new theoretical lenses for viewing these phenomena.