In this paper, we describe the process in which the students of Spanish at Tuskegee University created a play by combining the usage of drama and technology. This paper can be divided in three different parts. In the first part, we talk about the theoretical foundations of our approach. In the second, we talk about the technology involved in the creation of the play, and on the third part, we talk about the implications of using drama and technology in the foreign language classroom.

According to Bruce Robbins, English teachers considered drama to be within their curricular domain, but drama is a teaching method that can be used in other disciplines. In our case, drama was very useful to raise students’ interest in Spanish as a foreign language. This is based on Francisco Matos Gomes affirmation that foreign language teachers need to promote learners’ creativity because language itself is a creative activity. He uses the terms “creasition” and “createaching,” the former refers to language learning as a creative acquisition; and the latter refers to the idea that foreign language teachers need to become more creative partners with their students, integrating new ideas with traditional ones, exploring and experimenting new ways of interaction. Marcel Danesi and Also D’Alfonso suggest a Vichian approach in second language teaching (From Giambattista Vico’s New Science, 1744) to understand how creativity works. According to this approach, the crux of verbal creativity is metaphor. For Vico, metaphor is much
more than a rhetorical frill. It is the heart and the soul of human cognition. It transforms the world of sensorial experience into an inner world of meaning.

In our case, we used to include role playing and simulations in the Spanish classes, but the topics suggested in the text books were in general superficial and lacked relevance according to the students. Students also lacked the vocabulary necessary to create conversations that were meaningful to them. Most of them were not interested in learning a second language at all. Even the cultural part of the class was not very attractive to them. In this kind of setting, we decided to try new methods to explore their creativity and to develop their interest and competence in the foreign language. The question was what kind of project we could create to raise their interest and insured their participation.

At this point is necessary to mention that Tuskegee University is a Black Historic College, and that according to our curriculum the intermediate classes of Spanish are supposed to have a forty percent of bio-ethic content. Most of the students in of Spanish from all levels were interested in exploring the history of other African descendents in the Americas. Thus, we decided to use it as a theme for our creative project. We followed an Afro centric approach.

After attending a workshop named *Quilts of Gee’s Bend in Context Curriculum Development*, we realized there were many connections between the Latin American people and the African Americans in terms of the colonialism and processes of acculturation that both groups underwent. We had finally found a topic that seemed interesting and meaningful to them, we just had to find a way to carry it through.
At this point, we decided to create a play with an Afro centric approach, but we were operating without a budget. Then, technology, gave us the solution, we would create the scenario for the play using the technology available to us. We decided to use a PowerPoint presentation as the scenario. The power point will include their pictures and pictures of things and places they considered important to present the topics.

Students used images from the internet and mixed them with their own pictures. They scanned pictures, forged sound, composed their own songs, sang, played instruments, made up dances, did research on different topics, and wrote their own narratives and characters. The students used software called Salmplitude to record the narratives and to create the soundtrack. Recording the narratives eliminated the problem of rehearsing. The narratives were written by the students after they view different videos in class and read short stories and books pertinent for each different level.

The students created paper quilts, a paper Olmec head, and designed their customs. They were able to connect the history of the Gee’s Bend Quilters to the history of the Native American and the other African descendents in the Americas. They used some extracts from the fieldtrip diaries to create some of the narratives and the images for the play. The intermediate classes wrote the narratives for the play regarding the Gee’s Bend Quilters in English and then in Spanish. The narratives represented their response to the video “Fields of Promise” showed in class. In the narratives, the students addressed an oppressive subject who does not exist but that symbolizes the injustice of slavery. The narratives were also based on the research that the students of the Spanish Business classes did on the Caribbean History. The importance of this kind of work is that our students were able to trace their history and make connections with other groups
such as the ancient Olmecs and the Cherokees in the United States. In the business
Spanish classes, students learn about the economic and historic processes in the
Caribbean, Spain, and the rest of Latin America.

The play *Unburied History: “...A Long Nigh”* was created by one hundred and ten
students of Spanish in the Spring Semester of 2005, and it became the first of our Re-
encuentros (*encounters*) series. It represented a collective effort among different
generations of students of Spanish at Tuskegee University. Since we used video clips
used by a group of three students who went to Mexico in a fieldtrip in 1999, to collect
ethnographic material of the African descendents. Students also collected pictures,
videotaped images and did bibliographical research. They wrote and recorded their
narratives, then acted them in the play. They acted, sang, and directed the play. Most
important of all, they expressed themselves about topics that had an emotional effect on
them. In our view, the play acted as a healing vehicle, through which they released the
emotions that reading that part of their history provoked them. It allowed them to use
materials from other classes, since the play encompasses disciplines such as history,
anthropology, and archeology.

The play was presented as the closing event of the Black History Month in
February 28, 2005 at the Auditorium at the Kellogg Conference center. The play follows
a new theory, according to which, the Olmec people from Mesoamerica, now Mexico,
came from Africa from the Malinke area before 1200 B.C. The Olmec people spoke
Mandingo language and crossed the Sahara desert, the Atlantic Ocean and landed in
Mexico. Our video shows an imaginary Shaman predicting the history of the Americas.
It recreates the history of the Pre Columbian people suggests that the history of the
African descendents in the Americas did not start with the arrival of Columbus. ...A Long Night refers to the history of slavery and its different forms in the Americas. Students found a strong connection between the situation of the quilters and their families with the situation of the labor workers in North America, Central America, and South America. In the scene “Working Hands” students showed how Latin Americans and African Americans struggle to become more than a pair of hands. Students from the beginning levels of Spanish explored the connections between the Native Americans and the African Americans in North America. They created a scene called Trail of Tears in which the Native Americans were forced to leave their land and the African American enslaved people had to walk all the way to Alabama from North Carolina. The rappers created a song called Free, where all of our contradictory views were presented. We recorded the play, edited in Premiere and created our first video A Long Night.

As a conclusion, we can say that the process raised their interest in the Spanish language, but it did not help them in gaining more competence in the Spanish language, since they finalize their project in English and not in Spanish. The play constituted thirty percent of their grade but after the play they considered they had made a great effort that deserved a bigger portion of their grade. Nevertheless, after the play they wrote their impressions about it, and they were all very enthusiastic about the project and ready to do it again.