

# Case Study: NorthStar & MyEnglishLab

## KEY TAKEAWAY

Distance Learning in Language Education: Distance learning is possible and is most successful when there is a focus on fostering students' autonomous work and when students are supported in the use of online and print resources.



Secondary Instructor:  
**Edgar Lucero-Babativa**



Institution:  
**Universidad Santo Tomas**



Country:  
**Colombia**

## Implementation

Edgar's Speaking class is part of the university's B.Ed. Program in Teaching English as a Foreign Language program that prepares students to become English teachers. The motivation to learn English among his students is, of course, quite high but Edgar and his students face a particular challenge – the entire program is online. Students come from all parts of Colombia, urban and rural areas and in some cases, students must travel 2-3 hours to locate Internet access.

Speaking Course Structure:

- ▶ MyEnglishLab: Accounts for 40% of a student's overall grade.
- ▶ 'Virtual Room': A virtual space, provided by the university, in which Edgar uploads four key assignments that students complete during the semester, accounting for 60% of a student's grade.
- ▶ NorthStar course provides supportive instruction throughout the semester.

Edgar understands his students work in a unique learning environment and he makes concessions. He usually gives students an extra 2-3 weeks to complete their work for the semester and, while there are four 'live' campus sessions held during each semester, Edgar keeps these optional.

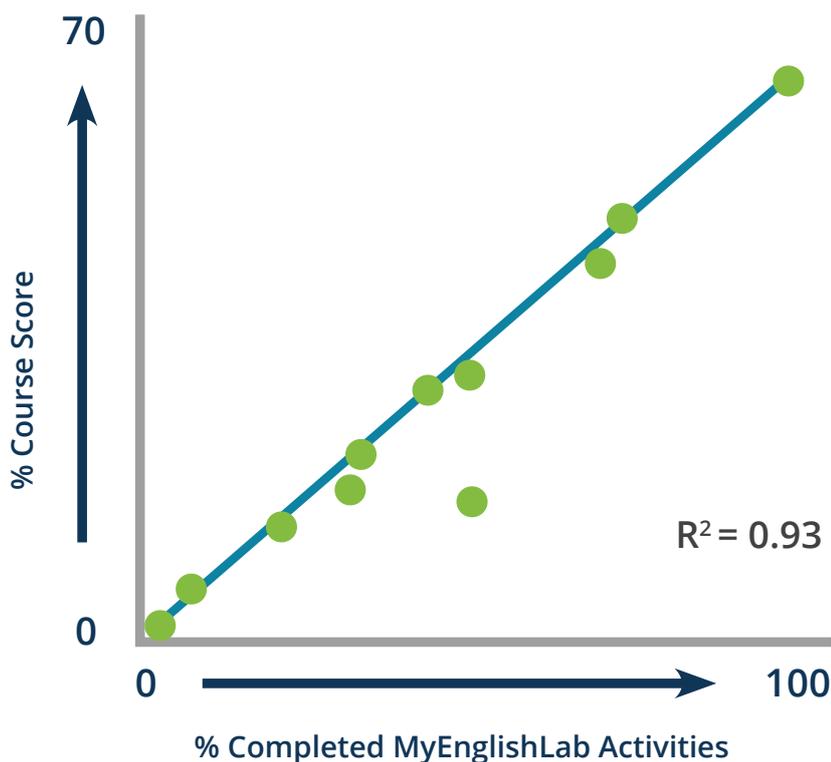
## Teacher and Student Experience

The student experience in an English Language class in a distance program is unique, but Edgar's students are benefitting from the model. One student described his distance learning experience as follows,

"You need to be 100% autonomous and disciplined. If you are interested in learning through technology, you have to assume a central role."

## Benefits / Results

Edgar is happy with his students' results and feels they benefit from working in MyEnglishLab. It should be no surprise that students who apply themselves to their study see the results. Although the sample size is small, there is a clear trend demonstrating that effort and results are linked. Here is a correlation chart comparing the completed activities in MyEnglishLab. The positive trend line indicates a correlation between successful MyEnglishLab completion and course success.



Edgar's class structure hasn't happened by accident. Beginning in 2008, Edgar and two fellow instructors from the B.Ed. Program in Teaching English as a Foreign Language distance education program decided to look at the viability of different types of resources and learning autonomy in a distance environment. In early 2013, Edgar and his two fellow researchers' work was published in a book titled *Constructing A Path: Significant Means and Mediations in Distance Education* (Lambert Academic Publishing, 2013). The research and subsequent results have helped form the structure of their current distance education program.

### Key Research Finding

According to the research Edgar and his two colleagues conducted,

"The research work we have conducted thus far in the program has also led us to conclude that distance education certainly requires the development of students' autonomous work. Hence, distance education programs should plan its components, means, and mediations in a way that they constantly foster not only student's autonomy, but student participative responsibility in using and proposing (re)new components, means, and mediations."



## Conclusion

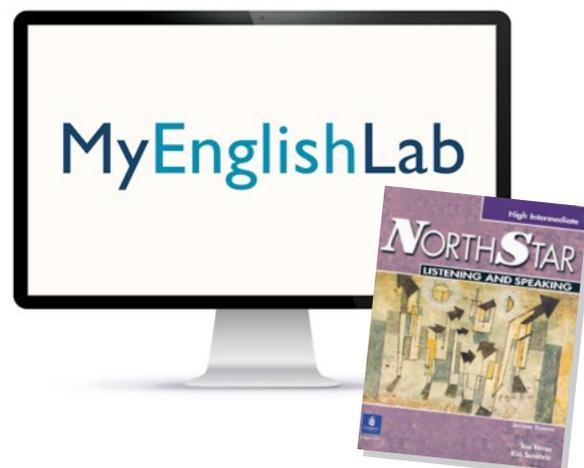
Edgar and his colleagues continue to research their distance language education program and feel it will be an on-going learning process and they will continue to make changes to their course structures based on what they learn.

## Reference

Lucero, E. Rodriguez, S., Bonilla-Mora, Martha Isabel. 2013. Constructing a Path: Significant Means and Mediations in Distance Education. LAP Lambert Academic Publishing. Germany.

## MyEnglishLab & NorthStar

**MyEnglishLab** offers structured online English practice for students, with instant marking and reporting for teachers. MyEnglishLab is proven to improve student results, and helps make teachers' lives easier.



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