

MySpanishLab educator study

A look at homework scores at Miami Dade
College

Key findings:

- There was a strong positive correlation between MySpanishLab homework and quiz scores as well as between MySpanishLab homework and the final exam score in the blended course format. The data suggest that students who complete and score higher on MySpanishLab homework also perform better on quizzes and on the final exam.
- In the face-to-face course format, there was a strong positive correlation between MySpanishLab homework and the final course grade. It should be noted that MySpanishLab homework scores made up 15 percent of the final course grade.

Setting

Miami Dade College (MDC), a state-supported college with seven campuses, is the largest institution of higher education in the United States. Nearly three-quarters of the student body is Hispanic. The fall 2014 student profile reports one-third of students between 18–20 years of age, and another third between 21–25 years of age, with nearly two-thirds of students enrolling on a part-time basis.*

The state of Florida requires that students show successful completion of two years in a foreign language at the high school level or successful completion of a post-secondary course at the elementary II level.** Most students taking Spanish at MDC are English speakers who have been exposed to Spanish through their family or friends but are not yet fluent.



School name: Miami Dade College, Miami, FL



Course name: Elementary Spanish



Course format: Face-to-face with lab
Blended/flipped



Course materials: MySpanishLab;
Mosaicos by Guzmán, Lapuerta, and
Liskin-Gasparro



Timeframe: Spring 2015



Educator: Tim Green, Professor



Results reported by: Grisselle Principe
and Mercedes Meier

About the course

Elementary Spanish I and II (four credit hours each) are taught over the course of two 16-week semesters. In the accelerated course option, students complete both Elementary Spanish I and II in one 16-week semester. Students enrolled in a face-to-face section meet for either two or three days a week and spend one hour per week in a computer lab. Students enrolled in a hybrid section meet on campus one day a week and complete half of class time online, independently. Kendall Campus is one of two campuses at Miami Dade using the Mosaicos text with MySpanishLab for Elementary Spanish I and II. The Spanish department at MDC is small, with two full-time instructors and one or two part-time instructors. Elementary Spanish I covers chapter Preliminar through chapter 4 in the textbook, and Elementary Spanish II covers chapters 5–8 and the beginning of chapter 9.

Challenges and Goals

Automatic feedback is not possible with a paper workbook, and in the past, much of class time was spent going over answers to pencil and paper homework. We chose to use MySpanishLab to solve the issue of limited class time, and also because we believe that today's students need—and want—an online component to their language course. More importantly, we are now able to offer a hybrid version of Elementary Spanish by making online work in MySpanishLab an integral part of the course.

The goal of Elementary Spanish is to help students achieve competency in:

- Using basic vocabulary and structural patterns in oral and written forms
- Reading and listening using basic written, visual, oral materials, and responding appropriately
- Applying the elementary principles of pronunciation
- Recognizing cultural aspects and customs from Spanish-speaking countries

Implementation

The bullet points below detail the features and assets assigned in MySpanishLab to help students achieve competency in these four key areas:

- Using basic vocabulary and structural patterns in oral and written forms: Amplifire Dynamic Study Modules, flash cards, Pronunciación, Student Activities Manual (SAM) activities, Extra Practice activities, eText activities, reading sections.
- Reading and listening using basic written, visual, oral materials: SAM activities, Extra Practice activities, eText activities, weekly quizzes.
- Pronunciation: Pronunciación activities located in the SAM folder (identificación, linking, repetición), flashcards, eText for studying with audio activated, instructor-created oral quizzes.
- Recognizing cultural aspects and customs from Spanish-speaking countries: Enfoque cultural, SAM activities, and eText readings.

Blended/Hybrid course (Taught by Mercedes Meier)

The 16-week hybrid course format follows the concept of the flipped classroom. Students meet in-person half the time of the face-to-face class (only one day per week), and the rest of the course content is learned and completed online, independently, within a designated time frame. Students are expected to come to class ready to practice what they have studied.

For each online class “day,” I create a virtual presentation/lecture using VoiceThread and post it to Blackboard. Students watch this presentation and must post comments or questions—I get notified

immediately when comments are made. This is how I track student participation for the virtual class day. I create my own instructor-graded quizzes (due weekly) in MySpanishLab. I give students an open window of four days to view the virtual presentation and take the quiz at least 90 minutes before our on-ground class meeting.

I assign almost everything in MySpanishLab that is computer-graded. I assign grammar and vocabulary tutorials to be due before students complete additional activities. Homework is a combination of Student Activity Manual activities, Extra Practice activities, Club cultura cultural videos, Cortos films, and games. Additionally, I assign Amplifire Dynamic Study Modules, and I recommend the Practice Pre- and Post-Test with Study Plan. For every chapter, there are approximately 31 activities due in MySpanishLab (~21 SAM + ~10 eText activities).

In the future, I plan to create more oral practice instructor-graded assignments.



Assessments (Blended/Hybrid course)

- 20% Online class content (VoiceThread postings, tutorials, Amplifire Dynamic Study Modules)
- 15-17% Final exam (cumulative; paper and pencil)
- 15% Midterm exam (paper and pencil)
- 15% Weekly quizzes (instructor-created and graded; most taken in MySpanishLab)
- 10% MySpanishLab homework
- 10% ePortfolio (includes oral presentation)
- 10% Professionalism (participation; self-

Face-to-face course (Taught by Grisselle Principe)

In the standard 16-week or eight-week accelerated course option, students are assigned mostly computer-graded SAM and Extra Practice activities in MySpanishLab, approximately 50 activities per chapter (~35 SAM + ~15 Extra Practice). I do not assign the Practice Pre- and Post-tests with Study Plan, but students may complete them if they wish. Students have unlimited attempts on their homework, which is due at midnight the day of class. Five percentage points are deducted for each day homework is submitted late, and all late work must be completed by midnight the day before the exam for that particular chapter to receive partial credit. I also assign three video activities as optional extra credit and give students a maximum of three bonus points on the exam for every video activity they complete at 90 percent or higher.

Students receive a MySpanishLab homework grade for each chapter. This provides a useful checkpoint for students to know how they are faring as the semester progresses. Grades are visible in Blackboard (our school's Learning Management System) and in MySpanishLab.

As part of class time, students spend one hour each week in a computer lab working on Extra Practice activities in MySpanishLab. Once they complete the lab activities, students may work on their regular MySpanishLab homework. Lab time gives me an opportunity to help students with particular topics they may be struggling with or to answer specific questions they may have.

It is sometimes difficult for students to distinguish between computer lab assignments and homework assignments in MySpanishLab. I just tell them to complete everything they see assigned for a particular day. The words "Extra Practice" are often taken to mean "optional," so I just have to keep reminding students they are not optional and to complete everything that has a due date.



Assessments (Face-to-face course)

- 40% Instructor-created chapter exams (four; paper and pencil)
- 20% Instructor-created final exam (cumulative; paper and pencil)
- 15% MySpanishLab homework
- 15% Computer lab activities (MySpanishLab)
- 5% Oral presentation
- 5% Class participation and attendance

Results and Data

Blended/Hybrid course: MySpanishLab homework scores in the blended course sections from fall 2015 averaged 83 percent overall. There was a strong positive correlation between MySpanishLab homework averages and the final exam score, $r=.40$, $p<.05$ (Figure 1). It should be noted that these results do not include three students who received a zero for not taking the final exam. There was also a strong positive correlation between MySpanishLab homework and quiz scores, $r=.51$, $p<.01$ (Figure 2). Low-stakes MySpanishLab homework assignments are intended to help students succeed on summative assessments; the data suggests that students who complete and score higher on MySpanishLab homework also perform better on their quizzes and on the final exam.

For each chapter, students have the option to take a practice pre-test that delivers a customized study plan. After reviewing the study plan, students may take a practice post-test to see how they score after review. Note that not all students elect to take the practice tests, and not all take both the practice pre- and the post-tests, as students who score high on the pre-test might not feel the need to complete extra review and

take a post-test. Out of 30 students taking Elementary Spanish I and II, 67 matched cases of practice pre- and post-tests were completed, an average of 2.2 per student. On average, students increased their scores by seven percentage points, from 86 percent on the pre-test ($M=86\%$, $SD=11\%$, $N=67$) to 93 percent on the post-test ($M=93\%$, $SD=11\%$, $N=67$), $t(66) = -7.53$, $p<.05$ (Figure 3). Although these practice test scores do not count for part of the grade, we find it encouraging to see that students who use the study plan to review the chapter significantly improve their score when taking the practice post-test. Anecdotally, we have heard many students say that the practice tests help a lot.

Face-to-face course: MySpanishLab homework scores in the accelerated face-to-face course sections of Elementary Spanish I and II averaged 81 percent overall. There was a strong correlation between MySpanishLab homework scores and the overall course grade earned in spring 2015, $r=.80$, $p<.001$. This is to be expected, as MySpanishLab homework scores made up 15 percent of the final course grade.

The Student Experience

The flexibility of MySpanishLab gives students the freedom to complete their homework at their own pace, from home, or wherever they choose. We believe students really appreciate this aspect.

The blended course requires a lot of independent work, and it is most successful for students who understand the amount of motivation and effort they will need to put into the virtual class day. We have found that if students choose the blended class because they think meeting once a week will entail less work, they are not likely to do well. In advance of class starting, all enrolled students are emailed to ensure they are aware of how this class differs from a typical face-to-face class.

The blended course also gives students time and flexibility to learn the material at their own pace, on

their own schedule. They can listen to the virtual class presentation as many times as they need. I recently overheard a student telling his classmates,

“I really like the fact that the platform doesn’t leave me alone until I get it and do it correctly—it’s helping me!”

—Student, Miami Dade College

Conclusion

The gradebook in MySpanishLab is an essential tool for recording all course assessments. It gives us “real-time” grades, updating scores every two hours. It makes it easy to create columns (calculated for categories, total grade, numeric, etc.), and one can customize with weights and edit along the way. We find it to be convenient, accurate, and efficient. As a platform, we find MySpanishLab to be very dependable. A previous platform used for online learning led to many technical difficulties and frustrated students. We have been very happy with the performance of the MySpanishLab platform.

*www.mdc.edu/main/about/facts_in_brief.aspx

**www.mdc.edu/main/testing/criteria/foreign_language_competence.aspx

Learn more about MySpanishLab

Learn more about how MySpanishLab could benefit your course by visiting:

<https://www.pearsonhighered.com/timetotalk/myspanishlab/index.html>