

MySpanishLab educator study

A look at the transition to the flipped classroom at Arizona State University

Key findings:

- Students who scored an average of 80 percent or higher on MySpanishLab homework had higher midterm and final exam scores than students who scored lower than 80 percent on MySpanishLab homework.
- Data show a strong correlation between student performance on MySpanishLab homework and quizzes and overall course scores.
- To ensure a smooth transition for students and instructors, Beaudrie and her colleagues hold a MySpanishLab training session in a computer lab for students and a training session for teaching assistants on how to help students make the most out of MySpanishLab activities.



School name: Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ



Course name: Elementary Spanish I and II; Intermediate Spanish I and II



Course format: Flipped classroom; hybrid, and online



Course materials: Elementary Spanish I and II: MySpanishLab; [Unidos](#) by Guzmán, Lapuerta, Liskin-Gasparro
Intermediate Spanish I and II: MySpanishLab; [Identidades](#) by Guzmán, Lapuerta, Liskin-Gasparro



Timeframe: Spring 2016



Educator: Sara Beaudrie, Associate Professor of Spanish Linguistics, Spanish language program coordinator



Results reported by: Sara Owen, Pearson Customer Outcomes Analytics Manager

Setting

Arizona State University (ASU) is a public research university located on five campuses across the Phoenix metropolitan area. The 2016 university ratings by *U.S. News & World Report* rank ASU No. 1 among the Most Innovative Schools in America.

[ASU](#) is the largest public university by enrollment in the United States. Approximately [91,322](#) students enrolled in Fall 2015, including 74,139 undergraduate and 17,183 graduate students. Of these students, 78 percent enrolled full-time and 22 percent enrolled part-time. In Fall 2014, 35.6 percent of undergraduates received Pell grants. Minority students represented 39 percent of the Fall 2015 freshman class.

Students pursuing a [BA degree in Spanish](#) at ASU have the opportunity to gain oral, reading, speaking and written proficiency in the language. The Tempe campus program offers a Spanish linguistics track and a Spanish literature and culture track. A Bachelor of Arts degree in Spanish is also available for ASU Online students that combines courses from both the linguistics track and the literature and culture track. Students majoring in Spanish may also work toward a professional certificate in Spanish-to-English translation.

Currently, there are approximately 450 students minoring in Spanish at ASU. There is a language requirement for students working toward a Bachelor of Arts degree, but not one for students working toward a Bachelor of Science degree.

About the course

Elementary and Intermediate Spanish is a four-semester sequence taught by four full-time instructors, three adjunct faculty, and 20 teaching assistants (TAs). About 1500 students go through the sequence each Fall and Spring semester.

Elementary Spanish is specially designed for students who have had no previous contact with the language or less than two years of high school study.

Intermediate Spanish is designed for students who have four years of high school study or who have already taken Elementary Spanish. Students receive four credit hours each semester and may take the course in a hybrid or online format. The hybrid course meets for 75 minutes, twice a week. Three of the four credits represent face-to-face class time/work, and one credit represents time spent online. All classes adopt the communicative approach and are taught almost entirely in Spanish.

Elementary Spanish teaches the fundamentals of the language, emphasizing listening, speaking, reading, and writing, integrated across the three modes of communication outlined by [ACTFL](#) (interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational). Intermediate Spanish is a continuation of fundamentals, emphasizing the development of the skills of reading, listening comprehension, speaking, writing, and culture.

Both Elementary and Intermediate Spanish are taught as a flipped course. This means that students are expected to learn and practice Spanish on their own prior to each class meeting. Class time is devoted to communicating in Spanish and using the structures and vocabulary that have been practiced on the computer before coming to class. The course capitalizes on the use of technology so that students will learn outside of class and then apply what they have learned in the communicative environment of the in-person or virtual classroom.

Challenges and Goals

The Spanish language faculty at ASU believe that a foreign language is learned through interaction and that learning is easier when communication is authentic. Sara Beaudrie, Associate Professor and Spanish language program coordinator, and her colleagues decided to switch to the flipped classroom

model because even though a communicative classroom was in place, the proficiency levels students reached were not as high as expected. Faculty felt that the flipped classroom model provided the most benefits and value for the on-ground class time that students did have and would be more effective in helping students achieve course learning outcomes.

Beaudrie and her colleagues believe the flipped model offers the following advantages to students learning Spanish:

- Self-pacing: students can take the time they need to complete homework in MySpanishLab.
- Immediate feedback: students receive instant feedback and immediate results, which allow them to learn from their mistakes.
- Easy access: students can complete online activities from any computer that accesses the Internet.
- More interaction: the majority of each class is spent on real-world pair and small group interactions in Spanish.

Implementation

A half-day MySpanishLab training is provided for new instructors, and training is provided for all instructors once a year. Beaudrie adds, "Our Pearson Customer Digital Success Agent is also always available to help anybody who needs training." Beaudrie selects two teaching assistants to serve as online platform specialists for each course level. These TAs receive additional training from Pearson and are experienced with using MySpanishLab, as they have previously taught the courses. Their primary role is to select the activities that students will be completing each week in MySpanishLab and set up the master courses to be used consistently in all sections. Only computer-

graded activities are assigned to reduce the workload of teaching assistants.

Students attend a MySpanishLab orientation/training session in a computer lab during the first week of class. If students have questions about MySpanishLab later in the semester, they are encouraged to view the "How-to Videos."

MySpanishLab assignments are broken up into two parts: lesson preparation assignments, which help students familiarize themselves with concepts before practicing them in class; and online activities, which give students valuable practice outside of class.

Lesson preparation assignments include Vocabulary and Grammar Tutorials, Interactive Presentations, Student Activity Manual (SAM) activities, and *Club Cultura* cultural videos. Online activities include a Pre-test and Study Plan. Each week, students have about 25 computer-graded activities assigned; students have three attempts for each activity. Students are provided with a list of activities that they are expected to complete before each class session, but final homework is formally due at the end of each week. In an end-of-semester survey (15 percent response rate), more than half of students reported spending two or more hours a week on MySpanishLab homework; 19 percent reported spending more than four hours a week.

In the flipped classroom model, students are expected to take responsibility for studying the basic rules of grammar, the uses of the tenses, and vocabulary items. Students are reminded that when they have questions about grammar, there are many resources available to them, including:

- Grammar Tutorials in MySpanishLab which help students study and assess their comprehension of the rules of Spanish grammar
- Readiness Checks in MySpanishLab which help students make sure they understand the rules of grammar in English before applying their knowledge to learning Spanish grammar
- Instructor office hours (virtual or in-person)
- The Spanish Writing and Tutoring Center at ASU

Completing assigned work in MySpanishLab before class ensures that in-class time can be maximized and spent working on interactive and communicative activities. When attending a class session, students are expected to arrive on time and come prepared by completing and reviewing any materials assigned, otherwise they will not receive full participation points.

MySpanishLab provides personalized reports to help students become aware of their mistakes and thus anticipate areas of difficulty when studying. Students are asked to use these resources and treat their work in MySpanishLab as an important opportunity to practice and learn the material.

Elementary Spanish covers six textbook chapters each semester, and Intermediate Spanish covers five textbook chapters each semester. Students take an open book quiz in MySpanishLab at the end of each chapter and have two attempts at completion. The highest score is recorded in the gradebook. No makeup quizzes are allowed. Students in Intermediate Spanish have an additional course readiness quiz that tests them on syllabus content.

[MediaShare](#), a “one-stop media-sharing tool that facilitates interactive learning,” is a recently incorporated element of both Elementary and

Intermediate Spanish courses. Students create a short video presentation (worth five percent of the final grade) based on a topic of their interest, preferably related to their major or minor, and upload it to the MediaShare application. Students are asked to conduct their video presentation in a formal manner, be aware of vocabulary, grammatical forms, their dress, and their demeanor. When presenting, students are asked to look at the camera, not to use notes, and to ensure their video has a clean image and sound quality.

MediaShare is also used as part of the Community and Media Projects assessment in which students engage in real communication with a Spanish-speaking community member and later submit a written or oral report summarizing their experiences. This is worth 15 percent of the course grade. Students complete additional video projects in MediaShare to practice their oral skills about topics related to each specific book chapter. Assignments may be turned in up to two days late, but students will receive half credit if they do so. Assignments turned in more than two days after the due date will receive no grade.

“The [MediaShare] application was totally new to me. I liked the fact that students can comment on each other’s videos, and I know instructors appreciate the easiness with which they can grade the videos and provide feedback to students.”



Assessments

- 15% Writing assignments (2)
- 15% Community and MediaShare projects
- 15% MySpanishLab assignments
- Lesson preparation: Grammar and Vocabulary Tutorials, SAM activities, cultural videos
- Online activities: Pre-test, Study Plan
- 10% MySpanishLab quizzes (6)
- 10% Midterm written exam
- 10% Final written exam (cumulative)
- 10% Participation
- 10% Final oral exam
- 5% Oral presentation (submitted via MediaShare)

Results and Data

Correlations do not imply causation but instead measure the strength of a relationship between two variables, where r is the correlation coefficient. The closer the r -value is to 1.0 or -1.0, the stronger the correlation. The corresponding p -value measures the statistical significance/strength of this evidence (the correlation). When a p -value is less than .05, the correlation is deemed significant.

- The correlation between student performance on MySpanishLab homework assignments and overall course scores was strong, with r -values ranging between .71 and .87 for all four course levels; $p < .001$ in all cases. MySpanishLab homework counts as 15 percent of the final course grade, influencing this relationship.
- In Spanish 101, moderately strong positive correlations exist between MySpanishLab homework and quiz averages and midterm and final exam scores. The formative MySpanishLab homework assignments are intended to help students identify where they are in terms of performing successfully on summative exams; it appears that performance on MySpanishLab homework and quizzes could be a leading indicator of course success (additional research is needed to develop and test this concept further).
- Chapter quizzes test students on content covered in chapter homework assignments. In all four course levels, strong positive correlations exist between overall MySpanishLab chapter homework scores and overall quiz scores.

A t-test measures whether the means of two groups are statistically different. T-tests were used to compare students who scored an average of 80 percent or higher on MySpanishLab homework and students who scored an average of 80 percent or lower on MySpanishLab homework with average midterm exam grades and average final exam grades. Average midterm and final exam scores for each course level are listed below. In all cases, the higher score shown is the cohort of students with MySpanishLab homework averages of 80 percent or higher.

Spanish 101

Average Midterm Exam: 76% | 59%

Average Final Exam: 74% | 45%

Spanish 102

Average Midterm Exam: 81% | 71%

Average Final Exam: 68% | 54%

Spanish 201

Average Midterm Exam: 78% | 71%

Average Final Exam: 80% | 68%

Spanish 202

Average Midterm Exam: 76% | 63%

Average Final Exam: 71% | 61%

Results show that in all course levels, students who scored 80 percent or higher on MySpanishLab homework had higher midterm and final exam averages than students who scored less than 80 percent on MySpanishLab where $t(79) = 5.06$ and $p < 0.05$ for midterms and $t(77) = 6.57$ and $p < 0.05$ for final exams, indicating that this difference was statistically significant.

The Student Experience

Responses from a Spring 2016 end-of-semester, voluntary survey of Elementary and Intermediate Spanish students (15 percent response rate) provide a student perspective on MySpanishLab and the flipped classroom:

“I like that it gave us the opportunity to be ready and be prepared when coming to class. It made the lessons much easier to participate and do well in.”

- 80 percent of students were able to register/log in to MySpanishLab on their first try.
- 69 percent of students agree that, “MySpanishLab homework is an important part of the learning process that helped me do well in the course.”
- 65 percent of students agree that, “My understanding of the course material increased as a result of using MySpanishLab.”
- 60 percent of students agree that, “MySpanishLab provided additional resources that helped me learn more than I could with paper and pencil homework.”
- 36 percent of students agree that “English grammar Readiness Checks in MySpanishLab were helpful in the process of learning Spanish grammar.”

There is a split between students preferring a traditional classroom (46 percent) to flipped (34 percent) with 21 percent of students indicating they do not have a preference. However, more than half of students—56 percent—said they “would recommend that the instructor continue to use MySpanishLab in future offerings of the course.”

Student responses to the question, “How did using MySpanishLab help you to be successful in the course?” include:

- “It helped me review and work on material before we covered it in class.”
- “Allows me to look up vocabulary whenever I’m stuck.”
- “It was interactive and gave you lots of good tutorials.”
- “I used all of the study guides, vocab flashcards, and extra practice. I loved MySpanishLab—it helped me tremendously.”

- “The practice coursework/assignments helped me recognize where I was weak and needed to re-read the chapter.”
- “I liked how the eText was available; I did not have to carry my Spanish textbook all the time.”
- “Assignments were graded automatically so I could immediately address what I needed to further review.”
- “Multiple attempts on the assignments proves to be very helpful. I’m making sure I understand the material and do well on the homework.”
- “The calendar and to-do lists helped me keep on track.”

Positive student responses to the question, “What did you like about the flipped classroom format?” include:

“It means that the things that I really need help on—pronunciation and listening skills—are what we’re actually working on in class.”

“I liked that I had plenty of chances to get to know and interact with the material before meeting with my instructor.”

“I was prepared to ask questions that I needed to; I felt it was more productive that way.”

Not all students reacted positively to the flipped classroom; some challenges students faced are included below:

- “If you didn’t do the homework, you have no idea what the teacher is talking about.”
- “While learning the language on my own through the MySpanishLab tutorials is convenient, it is at times hard to grasp certain concepts without an instructor formally teaching it.”
- “I find I spend more time at home struggling to learn concepts that I could otherwise understand easily through a brief lecture.”
- “I wish my teacher spent more time going over lessons and chapters with us rather than expecting us to come to class fully comprehending all the assignments in MySpanishLab. Very frustrating, especially for those who do not learn well via an online platform.”

One student observed a challenge in a positive way: “I like to be lazy, and the flipped classroom format makes that not possible, which is actually a benefit of the format.”

The Instructor Experience

Instructors were also surveyed in Spring 2016 to gather their impressions/feedback on the flipped classroom (44 percent response rate).

- 75 percent of respondents agreed that they “are able to use classroom time more effectively with the flipped classroom approach.”

Instructors were asked, “With the flipped classroom approach, what are you able to do during class time that you couldn’t do before?” Most of the comments had a positive tilt, including the following responses:

- “I am able to answer more questions and practice more activities about the material.”
- “[Engage in] more activities that focus on written/spoken skills.”
- “Take less time explaining grammar.”
- “Practice more speaking [with students].”
- “More role plays.”

On an encouraging note, one instructor observed that, “Students seem to appreciate all of the opportunities for communicative practice.” Another instructor commented on the challenge of switching course formats, saying, “Time has been shifted. Students are not prepared to learn in this environment yet.” Obstacles were certainly faced with the transition to the flipped classroom model, and instructors cited the following challenges:

- “Some students never understand what’s being taught before they come to class.”
- “Student preparation is generally good, but when it isn’t, class essentially amounts to wasted time as students are not engaged or just fake it.”
- “They have expressed their desire for formal in-class lectures.”
- “Getting the students to do their grammar reading before coming to class.”
- “They constantly ask for more grammar instruction in class.”

Conclusion

Beaudrie and her colleagues originally transitioned to the flipped classroom model because student proficiency levels were not as high as expected. Since the change, Beaudrie reports that, “instructors frequently comment that students’ proficiency seems to be higher now,” and that “results so far are positive” around the flipped classroom providing the most benefits and value for on-ground class time and student learning outcomes.

Beaudrie is encouraged by the strong correlations between MySpanishLab and course/exam success. To her, the data mean that, “students absolutely have to do their [MySpanishLab] homework to get the most out of the classroom experience.”

Beaudrie admits that it was overwhelming to make the switch to the flipped method, MySpanishLab, and new textbooks for four courses at one time. To other educators thinking about a similar change, she recommends “planning ahead for unforeseen problems and devoting time and resources to make sure all glitches can be worked out appropriately.”

After two semesters of implementing MySpanishLab and the flipped classroom, Beaudrie has learned some valuable lessons. She notes, “It is very important to have student and instructor buy-in before switching to this program.” Beaudrie found that, “The new TAs were better able to adopt the new model, but TAs who were used to the old method, book, and platform had more difficulties.” She recommends communicating why this method is important, so that students and instructors will be better prepared to fully engage with it.

Looking back to their first semester (Fall 2015) using new content with the flipped classroom, Beaudrie realized they had not offered sufficient training. To ensure a smooth transition for students and instructors, Beaudrie and her colleagues now hold a MySpanishLab orientation in a computer lab for students during the first week of class and a training session for teaching assistants on how to help students make the most out of MySpanishLab activities before the semester begins.

Learn more about MySpanishLab

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

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