

CASE STUDY

University of Central Florida Orlando, FL

INSTRUCTOR Anne Prucha

COURSES SPN 1120C Elementary Spanish Language & Civilization I
SPN 1121C Elementary Spanish Language & Civilization II

LEVEL Elementary

TEXT ¡Arriba!: Comunicación y cultura, 5/e, with MySpanishLab
by Eduardo Zayas-Bazán, Susan M. Bacon, and Holly Nibert

TERM COVERED Spring 2009

CONTRIBUTION OF MYSPANISHLAB TO FINAL GRADE 20%

TYPES OF DATA REPORTED Student performance

COURSE STRUCTURE Hybrid

THE UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA'S MODERN LANGUAGES DEPARTMENT enrolls 3,000-3,500 students in elementary Spanish each year. Spanish faculty at UCF began considering incorporating online resources into their program several years ago. Eager to exploit the potential for interactive, student-directed learning that such resources offer, they had a very practical objective as well. Faculty wanted to automate the time-consuming homework grading that, with an average 120 students per instructor, diminished the time instructors could engage with students. Instructors first explored Quia. Instructor Anne Prucha was one of the faculty members who experimented with Quia's online activities. Prucha reports that she and her colleagues were disappointed, finding that Quia was not user-friendly, could not be customized, offered activities but no additional interactive features, and contained many wrong answers and technical glitches. UCF Spanish faculty began a new search for an online resource and after reviewing many publishers' offerings, adopted MySpanishLab.

Beginning in fall 2007, MySpanishLab was mandated for all elementary Spanish students and introduced at a basic level to ensure a smooth transition. Rather than completing homework with pen and paper and turning it in to be manually graded, students completed homework activities online with MySpanishLab. And, after the initial introduction of MySpanishLab was completed, a hybrid course structure was adopted. The 4-credit course is now taught with three face-to-face meetings per week rather than four; students spend the additional time online with MySpanishLab, completing activities and assignments on their own schedules. MySpanishLab comprises 20% of students' final grade.

RESULTS

Prucha reports that the most immediately apparent improvement with MySpanishLab is that students come to class prepared, having completed the MySpanishLab activities and ready to communicate. MySpanishLab's built-in help features encourage students to do the activities multiple times, deepening their understanding. Because students spend time interacting with the material before class, class time is spent in interactive communication rather than review of grammar.

Grades, Prucha reports, remained steady and even improved slightly through the transition to MySpanishLab—despite the fact that face-to-face class time decreased.

In a representative
section of Spanish II
in spring 2009, the
average final
grade among
30 students was
89.5

“Students really respond to the calendar in MySpanishLab that shows them a finite period to complete assignments and quizzes; they get the work done and, as a result, they succeed in class.”

—Anne Prucha

Prucha asserts, “We reduced our contact hours with elementary Spanish students by 25% and yet students are scoring as well or better on exams—that means that MySpanishLab is working for our students.”

In a representative section of Spanish I for which grades were recorded in spring 2009, the average final grade among 27 students was 83.1. Grade distribution was: A 16; B 1; C 4; D 4; and F 2. In a representative section of Spanish II in spring 2009, the average final grade among 30 students was 89.5. Grade distribution was: A 21; B 6; C 1; D 1; and F 1.

A GREEN, MONEY-SAVING SOLUTION

Prior to implementing MySpanishLab, the Modern Languages department spent \$20,000 on copying annually with the majority of spending on elementary Spanish. With MySpanishLab, the copying expense has been virtually eliminated; students now access the course syllabus, assignments, and exams—all previously distributed on paper to thousands of students—entirely online.

PROGRESSING WITH MYSpanishLAB

With MySpanishLab successfully introduced, Prucha and her colleagues are exploiting more features of the resource. For fall 2009, students are completing quizzes and exams online with MySpanishLab in addition to homework activities. Conducting quizzes and exams online rather than during class time frees up even more time for communication and instruction during limited contact hours. Prucha recently began showing videos from MySpanishLab in class, further stimulating conversation and communication. For fall 2009, the MySpanishLab component of students’ final grade is increased from 20% to 60% (15% for Student Activities Manual activities; 15% for quizzes; 15% for the mid-term; and 15% for the final exam.)

Prucha identifies three aspects of MySpanishLab that she appreciates most:

- MySpanishLab automates teaching chores that are non-meaningful. “Let MySpanishLab grade homework and quizzes. This gives you time to spend on meaningful pedagogical activities like engaging and interacting with your students.”
- MySpanishLab enables a paperless course, saving money and preventing waste. “I never visit the copy machine anymore!”
- MySpanishLab engages students and holds them accountable. “Students really respond to the calendar in MySpanishLab that shows them a finite period to complete assignments and quizzes; they get the work done and as a result, they succeed in class.”

FUTURE

Prucha recently advised her Italian colleagues on their transition to MyItalianLab.



For a product tour or to find out more, please visit www.myspanishlab.com

ALSO AVAILABLE: MyFrenchLab and MyItalianLab

AVAILABLE FOR FALL 2010 CLASSES: MyChineseLab

AVAILABLE FOR SPRING 2011 CLASSES: MyLatinLab

COMING SOON: MyGermanLab, MyPortugueseLab, MyRussianLab

PEARSON