School Name	University of South Alabama, Mobile, AL
Course Name	Introductory Spanish I and II
Course Format	Face-to-face

Key Results Redesigning our Introductory Spanish I and II sequence with MySpanishLab has enabled us to achieve measurable improvements on a number of key challenges, including high failure rates, limited lab space, and inconsistencies across numerous class sections.

Submitted by
Kristy Britt

Course materials
¡Anda!, Heining-Boynton and Cowell; MySpanishLab

About the Course

More than 1,000 students take the two-semester sequence in Introductory Spanish each semester at the University of South Alabama. The goal of this course sequence is for all students to achieve basic proficiency in understanding, speaking, reading, and writing Spanish and to acquire basic knowledge of the cultures of the Hispanic world. Our student population is diverse with traditional-age students studying alongside older or returning students; many are juggling work and family responsibilities and have limited financial resources.

Challenges and Goals

I initially asked my Pearson rep if she could help us deal with the issue of having limited lab space. When she demonstrated MySpanishLab, I saw right away that it could help us meet many of our challenges. I piloted *¡Anda!* with MySpanishLab for one year and liked how the book integrated MySpanishLab seamlessly. Encouraged by this initial pilot, we made the decision to redesign the entire course sequence with MySpanishLab to address a number of issues, including:

- Limited lab space (enrollments are increasing while resources are limited).

- High failure rates.

- The large number of sections (average of 36 per semester with approximately 30 students per section) made it difficult to provide effective, timely feedback to many students.

- The large number of instructors lead to inconsistencies across sections.

Implementation

MySpanishLab is a "one stop shop" for students. I like the dashboard which includes a calendar that makes it easy for students to see and access all assigned activities. There is no question about what is due and when.

Because of MySpanishLab's automatic grading, students don't wait until the next class meeting to see their grades or receive my feedback. Students get immediate feedback letting them know whether they've mastered the material. If not, MySpanishLab refers them back to the relevant section of the eText for review, and they can attempt the exercise again. I closely monitor my students' work in MySpanishLab, and I can see that they are frequently making multiple attempts on activities and spending quality time on specific tasks. Our students may be busy working or attending to family responsibilities during the hours that the University's language lab is open or during instructors' office hours. With MySpanishLab this is no longer a concern. Students now have 24/7 access to the full range of instructional materials and can study, read and review the eText, and complete assignments anytime, anywhere they have Internet access.

Benefits

- Improved student performance and a decrease in the number of F's

- Increased student resources available

- Increased student flexibility in doing coursework

- Cost reductions (students saved 35 percent, and they now have more learning tools to use)

- Increased continuity and uniformity across sections

- Improved instructor morale and quality of life

"We saw a 40 percent decrease in failure rates after our first semester with MySpanishLab. We are no longer on the Dean's list of top ten courses with the highest failure rates—a huge success!"

Assessments
Introductory Spanish I

50 percent	Exams (five)
20 percent	MySpanishLab
20 percent	Final exam
10 percent	Participation

Introductory Spanish II

50 percent	Exams (five)
15 percent	MySpanishLab
15 percent	Final exam
10 percent	Oral exam
10 percent	Participation

Results and Data

We saw a 40 percent decrease in failure rates after our first semester with MySpanishLab (Figure 1). We are no longer on the Dean's list of top ten courses with the highest failure rates—a huge success! In addition, since redesigning with MySpanishLab, students come to class far more prepared than before. Because they now are spending more time practicing outside of class, I am able to spend our in-class time on communicative activities— something I've always wanted to do but found impossible when students came to class less well-prepared.

Another sign of our success is that upper-level course instructors comment on how much more ready students are for advanced courses now than before we adopted MySpanishLab.

The Student Experience

During the first couple of years, we experienced some student resistance. Students were comparing what they were now doing in class with what their friends had done in class the previous semester. However, we've now cycled through enough semesters with MySpanishLab that students have never heard of the "old" way before the course redesign and, therefore, students today expect to have an online component in this course. Further, they are extremely positive about the flexibility and effectiveness of MySpanishLab.
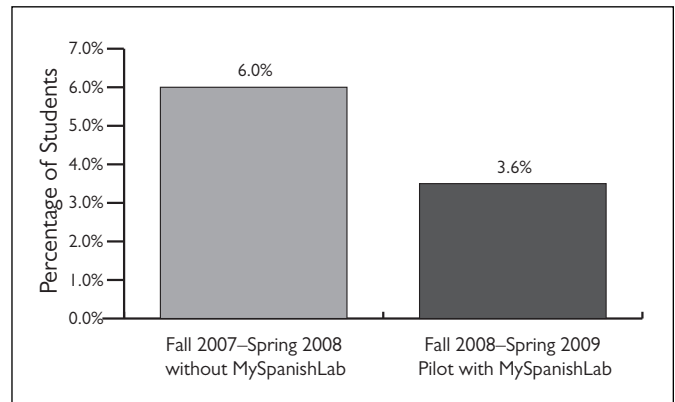

Figure 1. Failure Rates With and Without MySpanish Lab, Fall 2007–Spring 2009

Conclusion

I'm thrilled with the results we've seen with MySpanishLab. We are providing our students with a consistent, high-quality educational experience at a reduced cost. Instructors can easily monitor students' progress and offer support and assistance when needed. Beyond that, with MySpanishLab students can now be truly accountable for their own success.

One thing to keep in mind when redesigning a large-enrollment, multisection course is that it takes time and there's a learning curve. You learn and improve from one semester to the next. That said, anyone can use and benefit from technology, and the results are absolutely worth the effort. Looking back, one piece of advice I'd give is to resist the urge to assign everything in MySpanishLab right away. Start small and add on as you go. Also, effective staff training in using MySpanishLab and regular communication with all instructors are essential for success.

Looking toward the future, we are thinking about possibly implementing a modified emporium model, something often seen in math departments. We are also considering moving office hours to the lab instead of the instructors' office.

Since we implemented MySpanishLab, other language instructors have taken note of my happiness. As a result, our Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures now also uses MyItalianLab, MyFrenchLab, MyChineseLab, and MyGermanLab.

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