

School Name The University of Rhode Island, Kingston, Rhode Island
 Course Name Basic Italian I
 Course Format Face-to-face

Key Results MyItalianLab averages correlate to higher final letter grades in the course.

Submitted by

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Course materials

Percorsi, Italiano and Marchegiani; MyItalianLab

About the Course

The majority of students taking Italian I and II are freshmen who are fulfilling a university requirement of two semesters of language study. The course is designed to give students a solid base in the Italian language by emphasizing the five areas of language learning: listening comprehension, speaking, reading, writing, and cultural competency.

At the successful completion of the course, students will be able to demonstrate proficiency in everyday spoken Italian, read simple essays in Italian, and write short paragraphs on familiar topics. Students also will gain specific knowledge about contemporary Italy, including daily life, student life, fashion, cuisine, shopping, and regional differences.

Challenges and Goals

Prior to the beginning of the 2011-2012 academic year, we consulted with our Italian Language Coordinator about changing the materials for our Italian language courses. The online resource we had been using was simply grammar-heavy workbook exercises transferred online. We wanted to make a change that would give students the expansive, five-skills foundation in Italian that fulfills our goals for student learning outcomes. We sought a more communicative approach, an emphasis on culture, and online access to all course materials. After a review of all available options, we chose to adopt *Percorsi* with MyItalianLab.

Implementation

Our department uses a common syllabus to insure consistency of instruction for students. Students are required to work through all of the automatically-graded exercises in MyItalianLab for the chapters covered. I encourage my students to explore the features of MyItalianLab beyond the assigned homework.

Assessment

25 percent	Final written exam
20 percent	Quizzes and tests
15 percent	Compositions (3)
10 percent	MyItalianLab (self-graded assigned exercises)
10 percent	Class preparation and participation
10 percent	Class presentation/skit
10 percent	Oral exam

Results and Data

- All of our students show improvement at the end of the semester, but the effect is greatest for those students who do their MyItalianLab assignments every day. Student success data from fall 2013 and spring 2014 show a clear correlation between average MyItalianLab scores and final course grades (Figure 1). If students don't do their MyItalianLab work diligently, they are more likely to do poorly on the Final Exam.
- The success rate (percent of students achieving a final letter grade of A, B, or C) in my sections was 97.7 percent in fall 2013 and 100 percent in spring 2014 (Figure 2).

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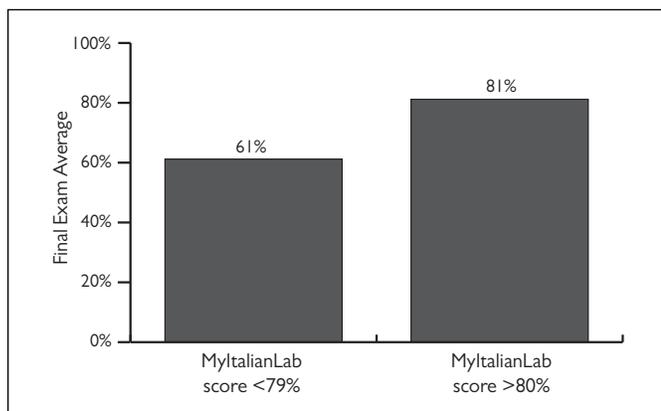


Figure 1. Final Exam Averages for Students Compared to MyItalianLab Scores

- MyItalianLab’s activities are much more varied and effective than those we used previously. With MyItalianLab, students work through grammar exercises, writing assignments, cultural content, and listening/speaking activities, all presented through a variety of media. Students must really think and process the material, which translates into much stronger communicative skills. Qualitatively, the difference in students is apparent: they ask better questions when they come to class, and their listening, comprehension, and speaking skills are much stronger.

Benefits

MyItalianLab has cut down substantially on my grading time but still permits me to keep a close eye on student progress. The variety of exercises addresses the strengths and weaknesses of a vast group of students and allows me to better pinpoint problem areas. Since I know where to focus my attention during class meeting hours, I can better utilize contact hours with students and create a more efficient learning environment.

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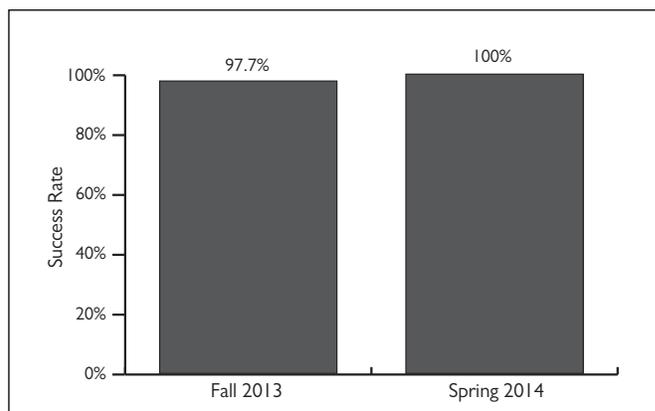


Figure 2. Student Success Rate (Final Course Grade of A/B/C) 2013 ($n = 86$) and 2014 ($n = 44$)

The Student Experience

The activities in MyItalianLab are invaluable for students. MyItalianLab provides immediate feedback so students can pinpoint their errors quickly and efficiently before they become ingrained. Students are directed to the relevant grammar explanation in the eText for clarification and then may return and try the exercise again. After completing the assigned exercises, students know whether or not they have grasped the material. If they are still struggling, they can bring examples from MyItalianLab exercises to class for us to review together.

Conclusion

Both the *Percorsi* text and MyItalianLab offer a more contemporary, communicative approach to Italian language study that is aligned with our goals for the course. We are really pleased with MyItalianLab, a clearly superior resource. Students love it—their feedback has been uniformly positive. Mastering a new language is powerfully motivating, and MyItalianLab helps students achieve that mastery more quickly and thoroughly.