

School Name **Stony Brook University, Stony Brook, NY**

Course Name **Elementary Spanish I and II**

Course Format **Flipped classroom, hybrid**

**Key Results** Tracking data from seven components in our final exams allows us to make data-driven decisions about what skills need to be given more emphasis as we hone our course model. When surveyed, 90 percent of our instructors would choose to continue teaching with the flipped model.

#### Submitted by

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#### Course materials

*Unidos*, Guzmán, Lapuerta, and Liskin-Gasparro; MySpanishLab

Stony Brook University is a suburban, public research university with an annual enrollment of 24,000 (2013). About 100 students major in Hispanic languages and literature each year.

#### About the Course

Our Elementary Spanish sequence offers an introduction to spoken and written Spanish, stressing pronunciation, speaking, comprehension, reading, writing, and a panoramic view of culture in context. A language laboratory supplements class work. Elementary Spanish I covers chapter preliminary to chapter five in *Unidos*, and Elementary Spanish II covers chapters six through 12. In order to register for any Spanish language course, all entering students are required to take a placement test in order to evaluate their proficiency level. Enrollment for Elementary Spanish I and II in 2013–14 was 527 students. On average, we run 13–15 sections per semester with 25–30 students per section.

#### Challenges and Goals

Our department comes together every six years to review new options for Spanish texts and technologies. In spring 2013, we invited four different publishers to present their textbooks under the format of the grammatical structure of the verb *Gustar*. After all instructors gave their input, we selected *Unidos* and MySpanishLab because we felt it best fit our course needs. First, MySpanishLab is an interactive platform; our previous course materials did not offer this important functionality. Second, MySpanishLab centralizes all educational resources. We had already created many instructional materials, but they were not accessible in one convenient location. Finally, we

believed that *Unidos* and MySpanishLab best met our course goals, which are:

- to motivate students to actively participate during class time;
- to maximize the effectiveness of a short class period;
- to engage students in a communicative-centered approach;
- to enable students to comprehend and respond to a set of situations and topics through language learning and acquisition.

In short, using *Unidos* and MySpanishLab would provide us an opportunity to flip the teaching model so that students study and prepare before coming to class. We committed to measuring student performance on final exams as a way of informing our instructional focus with *Unidos* and MySpanishLab.

#### Implementation

We first piloted *Unidos* in the summer of 2013, focusing on the new content and methodology. We trained our instructors by giving them detailed information about the new course materials, and we explained how the sequencing of content in MySpanishLab goes from simple to complex applications. I set up MySpanishLab in advance so instructors would have their courses ready to go, with assignments and calendar items in place, and I explained the methodology to my instructors—why we are using the platform, and why it is so important to tell the students to do their homework in MySpanishLab before coming to class. Because the material builds on itself, students cannot just skip an assignment in MySpanishLab and assume that they can catch-up in the classroom.

*“I believe in Unidos and MySpanishLab. I think the way that it gives students the opportunity to develop their language abilities is superb.”*

*“It was intense, but ultimately I think that longer class periods were beneficial. Having assignments due before class began again on Monday helped act as both a review and a preview of what was to come.”*

—Student

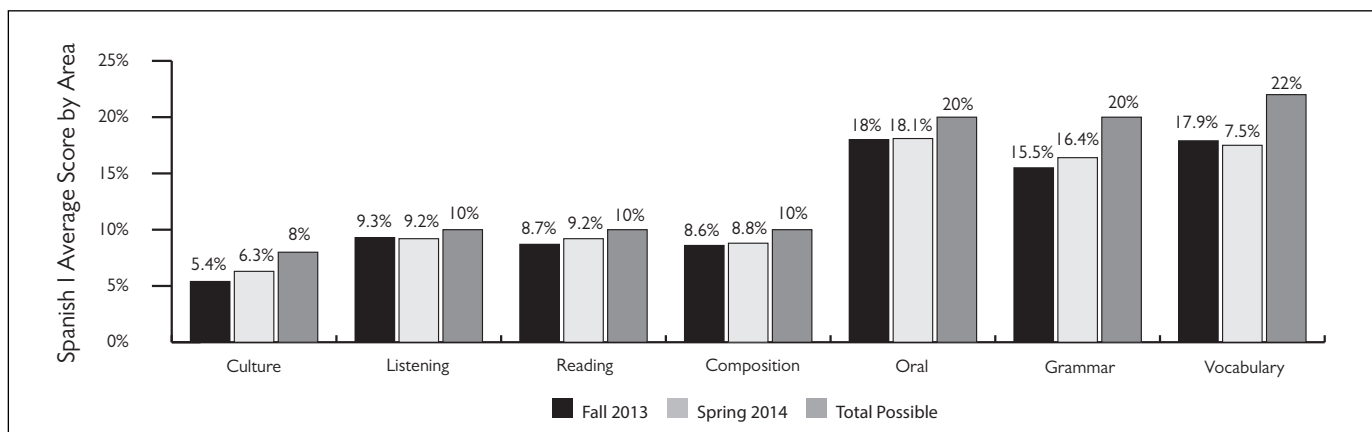


Figure 1. Elementary Spanish I Final Exam Area Scores: Fall 2013 (n = 170) and Spring 2014 (n = 112)

Students meet a total of three times a week for one hour; one day a week they meet for two hours. We had already been working in a communicative way before *Unidos*—we never focused on grammar in class—so, the main change has been in how we work with students. At the beginning of class, instructors stress the importance of doing homework before class in order to fully participate during class time and to succeed in the course. In the flipped classroom format, students sit in a circle. We don't allow laptops or cell phones. Students work in pairs and in small groups more often, which is why their preparation is crucial. I believe if students do their work before class, they will feel more confident and will actually enjoy the time they are in class.

Instructors are required to assign all of the Apply activities in MySpanishLab as part of the final grade. Students have three attempts on each activity. Students must also complete the grammar or vocabulary tutorials in MySpanishLab before coming to class, but they do not receive credit for doing so. One day per week, we watch a *Cultura en línea* video from MySpanishLab. Students then present three PowerPoint slides and, in Spanish, give specific information on the particular country or culture from the video. This is another opportunity for students to express themselves and practice speaking Spanish using the vocabulary and grammar they learned in MySpanishLab.

#### The instructor experience

In order to gather feedback from instructors on the flipped classroom model, an anonymous survey was distributed in October 2014. All 20 of our instructors took the survey. Seven instructors have taught with *Unidos* for one semester, 11 instructors for two semesters, and two instructors have taught with *Unidos* for three semesters. Five instructors have been teaching Spanish for one year or less, six instructors for two to three years, three instructors have taught for four to five years, and six instructors have taught for more than five years.

The following data represents instructor survey responses to the implementation of the flipped model:

- 90 percent of instructors would choose to continue teaching with the flipped classroom model.
- 75 percent of instructors have noticed an increase in student engagement and communication during class time.
- 75 percent of instructors agree that the flipped classroom allows them to more effectively use classroom time.
- 60 percent of instructors perceive that students exhibit more confidence speaking in the classroom with *Unidos*.
- 55 percent of instructors perceive students' reactions to the flipped classroom format as positive. (Thirty-five percent of instructors reported “no change.”)
- 75 percent of instructors perceive an improvement in students' speaking abilities.

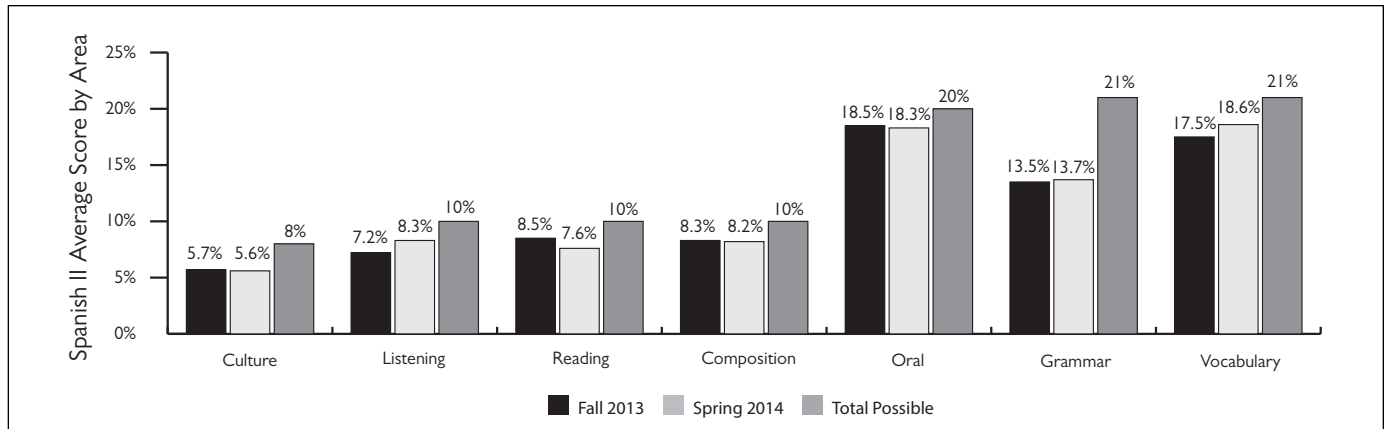


Figure 2. Elementary Spanish II Final Exam Area Scores: Fall 2013 ( $n = 68$ ) and Spring 2014 ( $n = 177$ )

- 65 percent of instructors perceive an improvement in students' listening abilities.
- 55 percent of instructors perceive an improvement in students' reading abilities.
- 50 percent of instructors perceive an improvement in students' writing abilities.

#### Benefits

The survey also revealed additional observations that instructors have made while teaching the flipped classroom model with *Unidos* and MySpanishLab:

- "My role as a teacher became more as a facilitator."
- "The value of the student's preparation at home cannot be stressed enough. Having MySpanishLab not only provides explanations to the students, but also allows them to begin using the concepts immediately. As such, they have already engaged with the content at home before coming to class and are more disposed to communicative activities that ask guided questions. Other methods do not allow for such extensive at-home preparation."
- "There is more time for the exploration of items already presented in MySpanishLab, resulting in a richer understanding of the work at hand. Class time is now also available for the incorporation of cultural activities and in-class presentations."
- "We are able to spend more time with conversational activities during class time, instead of spending that time in teaching grammar."

#### Assessments

- 27 percent Final exam (80 percent written, 20 percent oral)
- 24 percent Midterm exam (80 percent written, 20 percent oral)
- 25 percent MySpanishLab homework (including a cultural presentation)
- 18 percent Quizzes (3) (20 percent of all quizzes based on an interview/oral presentation to test Spanish-speaking proficiency)
- 6 percent Active class participation (taken at midterm and final)

#### Results and Data

The final exam is an important data point for our program because we want to see the skills gained from the new methodology. We use final exam data to inform our instruction for the following semester. Figures 1 and 2 show a breakdown of student performance on seven different areas of the final exam. For example, because students did not score well on culture last year, we have added more cultural instruction this semester. This cyclical process of data collection, analysis, and action will continue to inform our instruction. We will continue to track final exam scores (Figures 3 and 4) as well as pay close attention to student performance on final exam content areas.

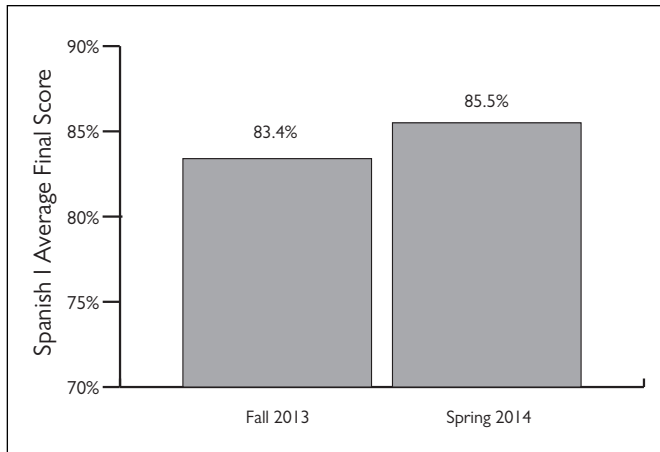


Figure 3. Average Final Exam Scores for Elementary Spanish I: Fall 2013 (n = 170) and Spring 2014 (n = 112)

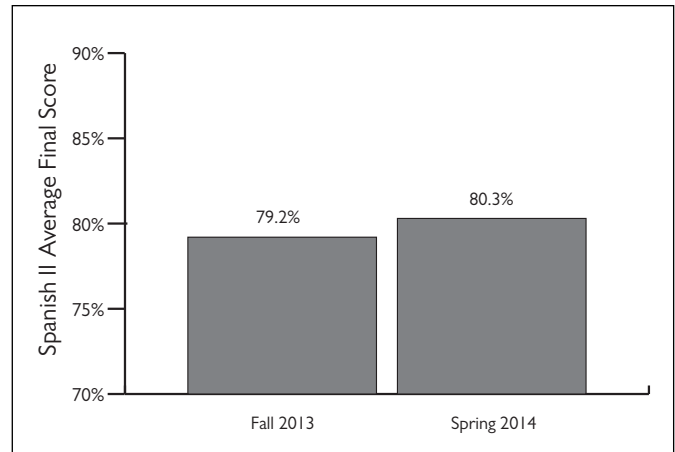


Figure 4. Average Final Exam Scores for Elementary Spanish II: Fall 2013 (n = 68) and Spring 2014 (n = 177)

## The Student Experience

When students study before coming to class, they have more confidence participating and speaking Spanish with their classmates. Doing work in advance of class allows them up to absorb more knowledge and information during class time. Feedback from students and instructors' observations about the student experience, have been positive:

- “I particularly enjoyed the flipped classroom format because it allowed the class period to be used for communicating, which made learning Spanish a lot easier.”

—Student
- “It was intense, but ultimately I think that longer class periods were beneficial. Having assignments due before class began again on Monday helped act as both a review and a preview of what was to come.”

—Student
- “I think that a positive thing for students is that they are more active during class time. From day one they can feel that they are using the language.”

—Instructor
- “With this methodology, [students] came to class more informed and oriented with the material that will be covered.”

—Instructor

In a student survey deployed to 30 students in summer 2014, 50 percent said that they preferred the flipped model to the traditional lecture format. Thirteen percent had no previous language class with which to compare.

## Conclusion

The Pearson team has demonstrated great training support as we have transitioned to *Unidos*, and this has made all the difference. The instructor survey validates the progress we've made in choosing *Unidos*, with 90 percent of instructors saying that they would choose to continue teaching with the flipped classroom model. Having MySpanishLab as a centralized resource has simplified our course for students, instructors, and especially our Teaching Assistants. Students are doing more in the classroom than they ever did before. I believe in *Unidos* and MySpanishLab. I think the way that it gives students the opportunity to develop their language abilities is superb.