Outcomes Assessment for Beginning and Intermediate Spanish: One Program's Process and Results

Tony Houston
Saint Louis University

Abstract: *Outcomes assessment is a process by which an academic unit defines and articulates its program goals and assesses its attainment of those goals. This article chronicles one language division's efforts at outcomes assessment for beginning and intermediate Spanish. The evidence used for program assessment consisted of WebCAPE placement scores, student satisfaction surveys, learner portfolios, and oral proficiency interviews (OPIs). The results of the project suggest that the target goals for student progress were being met and that students were generally satisfied that the program met its stated goals. The results also suggest areas of improvement to the means by which outcomes are measured as well as areas of improvement to the curriculum.*

Key words: *intermediate Spanish, oral proficiency, outcomes assessment, portfolio assessment, written proficiency*

Language: *Spanish*

Introduction

Outcomes assessment is a multilayered process by which an academic unit defines and articulates its program goals and assesses its attainment of those goals. The articulation of program goals takes place not only among the faculty within the academic unit, but also, potentially, prepares the unit for accreditation review. In order to assess the effectiveness of a program, it must be established whether the program's stated goals are being met. If the program's goals require development, then outcomes assessment must begin with articulation of these goals. Only then may the academic unit begin to address issues of the adequacy of instruments for evaluating student performance and achievement. This article chronicles one language division's efforts to reexamine goal statements for the purpose of articulation and outcomes assessment.

The core language requirement at the Saint Louis University consists of a three-semester sequence. In Spanish, these courses consist of two semesters of beginning study (Spanish 110 and 115) and one semester of intermediate (Spanish 210). All of these courses meet three times per week with a 1-hour lab.

Early efforts at outcomes assessment focused on an analysis of Spanish Computer Adaptive Placement Exam (SCAPE) data (Brigham Young University, 2000–2001), a survey of factors influencing student decisions, and a correlation of course grades with SCAPE scores. In 1997, ACTFL proficiency levels were identified and assessment practices were established for intermediate and advanced levels. For Spanish 210, Intermediate-Mid was the target proficiency level identified for oral work and Intermediate-High was identified as the target level for written work. Assessment data consisted of learner portfolios and oral proficiency interviews (OPIs). These levels were chosen in a departmental effort to articulate target proficiency levels before the pre-

Tony Houston (PhD, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) is Assistant Professor at Saint Louis University, St. Louis, Missouri.

sent project was undertaken. Then, in fall 2000, a more comprehensive and systematic approach to outcomes assessment was initiated. This later stage of the Spanish Division's efforts is the focus of this article.

Review of the Literature

Some scholars have expressed reservations about the limitations of the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines (ACTFL, 1986). Bachman and Savignon (1986), for example, pointed out that the guidelines are based on an overly narrow view of proficiency and have questioned their applicability to the academic setting. Wherritt (1990) summarized the criticism of the OPI for the limited types of discourse it elicits.

Although the ACTFL Guidelines have several limitations, they are, as Lee and VanPatten (2003) indicated, useful for establishing rough program goals. As Clifford (2003) indicated, proficiency testing using the ACTFL Guidelines is "at best a macro-diagnostic assessment and determines only 'what' types of communication tasks can or cannot be accomplished, in what types of contexts, at a specified level of accuracy" (p. 481). Gradman and Reed (1997) also acknowledged the utility of adopted ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines:

> The view of "proficiency" offered in [ACTFL listening, reading, and writing] tests emphasizes not what an individual knows about the target language (e.g., words and grammatical structures), but rather what a person can do with or through it. (p. 206)

ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines are not only useful for establishing rough program goals, they represent the profession's most comprehensive effort to establish standards of language proficiency. As Liskin-Gasparro (2003) noted, the terms *oral proficiency, OPI,* and *ACTFL Guidelines* "are common currency in the discourse of foreign language teachers and preservice teacher candidates" (p. 483). They are also recognized by government agencies and industries in the private sector that rely on personnel with a high degree of language proficiency. The authority of the ACTFL standards is further evidenced by their inclusion in the standards for the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) (http://www.ncate.org/standard/programstds.htm).

Using the ACTFL Guidelines as rough program goals can guide instructors to consider the developmental nature of language, which should lead to reasonable expectations of learner ability. But one need not be limited to presenting only the material that learners can be expected to master at a given proficiency level. Instructors can and should continue to present material designed to push learners to the next level, with the expectation that learners may demonstrate achievement in that material, but will not become proficient in it until they are developmentally ready.

Guidelines for outcomes assessment identify basic guiding principles (Huba & Freed, 2000), components (Huba & Freed, 2000; Liskin-Gasparro, 1995), and essential steps (Huba & Freed, 2000; McManus, 1998). Huba and Freed (2000) have offered several general guidelines. They have recommended, for example, that faculty work together to design and deliver a curriculum that is coherent to students rather than working separately to design individual courses that are personally satisfying. They have also regarded improvement as essential to the notion of accountability. Huba and Freed observed that students learn more effectively when expectations for learning are high but attainable, and when these expectations are communicated clearly from the beginning. However, they have cautioned that assessment can be a barrier to learning if it is viewed as a final judgment rather than as a means to an end. Finally, they have offered guidelines for developing rubrics that provide frequent feedback for improvement.

Other guidelines for outcomes assessment provide the essential components of an assessment program. Liskin-Gasparro (1995), for example, recommended several assessment instruments, which can measure different aspects of learner ability. She proposed (a) standardized tests to assess linguistic knowledge; (b) oral proficiency assessments/writing tasks to assess linguistic skills/performance; (c) portfolios, comprehensive examinations, and senior seminars to assess content knowledge; (d) interviews, discussions, and surveys to assess student attitudes about the program for language majors; and (e) surveys and questionnaires to assess postgraduate activities.

Other sources offer essential steps for conducting an outcomes assessment program (Huba & Freed, 2000; McManus, 1998). McManus outlined the following steps:

1. *Formulate Learning Outcome Goals*
   - Articulate aims for the course or project
   - Draft learning goals that are expressed as precise and specific outcome statements and are necessary and sufficient to achieve the aims

2. *Design Teaching/Assessment Plan to Achieve Aims*
   - Determine what will be needed to create a learning context that will promote and facilitate goal achievement
   - Use the learning goals to design classroom activities that will help the students learn the requisite knowledge and skills, keeping in mind the nature of the learning process
   - Use the learning goals to craft various assignments that will be used to assess how well the goals have been fulfilled; include both formative (ongoing) and summative (concluding) assessment

3. *Implement Teaching/Assessment Plan*
   - Begin with baseline studies whenever possible
   - Develop a culture of evidence; collect all available data
   - Revise teaching/assessment plan as necessary in light of early results

4. *Analyze Data on Individual and Aggregate Bases*
   - Communicate results and discuss their implications with appropriate groups
   - Revise and improve steps 1 to 3 in light of these results

The description of present assessment project follows the "essential steps" identified by McManus (1998). To "formulate learning outcome goals," appropriate ACTFL descriptions were identified for each level and general program goals were identified based on the 5 Cs [communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, communities] from the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century* (National Standards, 1999). Following the recommendation of McManus, the learning goals for the program are "expressed as precise and specific outcome statements and are necessary and sufficient to achieve the aims." Both the proficiency (level) goals and the general (program) goal statements contain specific references to the tasks which are used to assess learner performance. The program goal statement (Appendix A) makes explicit reference to performance measures associated with each goal. Oral tasks are evaluated according to ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines for Intermediate-Mid and written tasks according to Guidelines for Intermediate-High.

The teaching/assessment plan designed to achieve the aforementioned aims consists of (a) the "learning context that will promote and facilitate goal achievement," (b) the "classroom activities that will help the students learn the requisite knowledge and skills," and (c) "assignments that will be used to assess how well the goals have been fulfilled" (McManus, 1998). The learning context is based on the principles of communicative language teaching (CLT), which emphasize language study as a means to a communicative end. The course syllabus informs learners about the reasons for (a) assigning grammar study as independent work, thus leaving more classroom time dedicated to meaningful interaction; (b) speaking exclusively in Spanish; (c) the role of the lab in preparing learners for real-world listening tasks in which visual stimuli do not provide additional support for accoustic input and/or the message cannot be negotiated (e.g., talking on the phone, listening to the radio); and (d) the inclusion of informational outcomes of classroom tasks in testing materials as a means of promoting goal-oriented information exchange.

Classroom activities, the second element of the teaching/assessment plan, are designed to promote a learner-centered classroom dynamic, thus keeping in mind the importance of interaction in the process of language acquisition. To this end, classroom participation is assessed based on learner involvement in classroom tasks and on the extent to which learners use Spanish. Exclusive use of Spanish is regarded as optimal at all levels of instruction. The use of English, while sometimes unavoidable, is considered a lost opportunity to negotiate meaning in Spanish. All instructors are encouraged to reflect on these lost opportunities in order to work toward exclusive target-language use in the classroom. A rubric for learner self-assessment of participation is found in Appendix B.

The third element of the teaching/assessment plan is the assignments and the goals they are used to assess. These assignments and corresponding goals are found in Appendix A.

Implementing the Teaching/ Assessment Plan

The previous section emphasized the teaching component of the teaching/assessment plan. In this section, the discussion will focus on the assessment of the program and then on revisions to the teaching plan that emerged from this process. The "culture of evidence" for program assessment consisted of three types of data: WebCAPE (placement) scores, student satisfaction surveys, and learner portfolios.

Placement Data Analysis

As a measure of proficiency gained as a result of study in the program, learners enrolled in all courses in the three-semester sequence took the [WebCAPE] placement exam and average gains were calculated. For the gains analysis for Spanish 110–115 (semesters 1 and 2), there were 56 scores available for analysis. Only students who had completed both semesters could be included. Because the test allows even true beginners to score higher than zero merely by chance guessing, scores of zero were excluded. Although students scoring a zero were treated as outliers for the purpose of data analysis, they were nevertheless considered true beginners for placement purposes. The average beginning student had a score of 226, which is within the range (0–295) for that course as determined by the Spanish Division's application of the placement exam. For the second-semester course, the average score was 329, which is also within the recommended range (296–355) for that course. The average gain (103) was sufficient to move learners to the next level.

For the Spanish 115–210 (semesters 2 and 3) gains analysis, only students who had taken all three semesters were included. Only 35 scores were available for this analysis. The average Spanish 115 score was 298, which is sufficient to begin this course. The average Spanish 210 score was 347, reflecting a gain of only 58 points. The average

Spanish 210 score was below the recommended range to begin this course (356–439).

The two analyses indicate a similarity between groups of students. Both groups had taken Spanish 110 at Saint Louis University and both groups began Spanish 115 with scores within the recommended range. The scores were self-reported for the sake of mechanical efficiency and then verified using the WebCAPE database. The results of this analysis are found in Table 1.

Table 1

AVERAGE WEBCAPE GAIN BY SEMESTER

Semesters /Levels	Spanish 110→115	Spanish 115→210
Fall 2000	Average 110 Score = 226	Average 115 Score = 298
Spring 2001	Average 115 Score = 329	Average 210 Score = 357
	Average Gain = 103	Average Gain = 59
	(*n* = 56)	(*n* = 34)

Survey Results

For the first part of the survey, learners were asked to identify the most important of the six stated program goals. These goals, also presented in Appendix A, are as follows:

1. The learner will demonstrate a working knowledge of the target language in real-life situations.
2. The learner will use communication skills learned in Spanish to become a lifelong learner.
3. The learner will develop an awareness of the intellectual, social, and economic benefits of foreign language study and its connection with other curricular areas.
4. The learner will display an awareness of, a sensitivity to, and an appreciation for cultural diversity.
5. The learner will demonstrate an understanding of the knowledge of language and culture through comparisons of Spanish and English.
6. The learner will interact in a secure environment.

A point was awarded to a goal each time a learner identified it as the most important. A few learners, contrary to the instructions, identified more than one goal. When this occurred, the point was divided evenly among the goals indicated. For each goal, the percentage of learners who identified that goal as most important was calculated for each instructor's classes and for the course as a whole.

The most important goal identified by learners was to "demonstrate a working knowledge of the target language in real-life situations" (56%), followed by, in descending order: "use communication skills learned in Spanish to become a lifelong learner" (17%), "develop an awareness of the intellectual, social, and economic benefits of foreign language study and its connection with other curricular areas" (9%), "display an awareness of, a sensitivity to, and an appreciation for cultural diversity" (8%), "demonstrate an understanding of the knowledge of language and culture through comparisons of Spanish and English" (7%), and to "interact in a secure environment" (4%). Although there was slight variation by group, the same rank ordering of importance emerged across all three instructors' classes.

For the second part of the survey, learners were asked how well each of these same stated program goals was met. For this part, learners used the following scale: 0 = Not at all; 1 = Very little; 2 = Don't know; 3 = Somewhat; 4 = Very much. The average score was calculated by instructor and for the course as a whole. While the overall quality of the program was the primary interest of the study, data was analyzed by instructor to determine whether the results were consistent and independent of a given instructor's approach to the material. An average score of 3, indicating the goal was met at least somewhat, was the target. The best met goal, according to learners, was to "interact in a secure environment" (3.2) followed by, in descending order: "demonstrate a working knowledge of the target language in real-life situations" (3.1), "use communication skills learned in Spanish to become a lifelong learner" (3.0), "display an awareness of, a sensitivity to, and an appreciation for cultural diversity" (2.9), "demonstrate an understanding of the knowledge of language and culture through comparisons of Spanish and English" (2.8), and "develop an awareness of the intellectual, social, and economic benefits of foreign language study and its connection with other curricular areas." (2.4).

Although there was slight variation by group, the same rank ordering of success emerged across all three instructors' classes. Of the six goals described above, three ("to interact in a secure environment," "to demonstrate a working knowledge of the target language in real-life situations," and "to use communication skills learned in Spanish to become a lifelong learner," were considered met at least somewhat by all instructors. Of the remaining three goals, two ("to display an awareness of, a sensitivity to, and an appreciation for cultural diversity" and "to demonstrate an understanding of the knowledge of language and culture through comparisons of Spanish and English") were considered met by only one instructor. The other instructor's scores were in the neutral range. One goal, ("to develop an awareness of the intellectual, social, and economic benefits of foreign language study and its connection with other curricular areas") was not considered met by any of the instructors. All instructors' scores were in the neutral range for this goal.

An examination of the rank ordering of goals by their importance to learners and by their successful attainment reveals a number of interesting similarities and contrasts.

The best-attained goal ("to interact in a secure environment") was also the goal regarded by the fewest number of learners as the most important. It would seem that while learners may take a nonthreatening classroom environment for granted, instructors make it a priority. Although this reverse ordering may appear to be a disconnect between instructor and learner values, it most likely reveals that both instructors and learners regard a secure environment as a given. Thus, instructors make sure to accomplish this goal while learners merely expect it to be realized.

Of the goals adapted from the 5 Cs, instructor and learner values appear to coincide. The most important goal identified by learners ("to demonstrate a working knowledge of the target language in real-life situations") was also the second best met goal according to these same learners. Thus, of the academic, nonaffective goals, there is a similar ordering of priorities.

Analysis of the data by instructor reveals a large degree of consistency within the program. The rank ordering of learner priorities was the same for all instructors' groups and the rank ordering of goal attainment was the same for all instructors. Three of the six goals were considered met by all instructors, while two goals were considered met by only one. One goal was not considered by students to have been met by any of the instructors.

The data also point to a priority for improving instruction. The goal to "develop an awareness of the intellectual, social, and economic benefits of foreign language study and its connection with other curricular areas" was the least well met according to learners and was ranked as most important by 9% of the learners. The results of the survey are found in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2

SPANISH 210 OUTCOMES SURVEY RESULTS

Question: How important is each of the following goals to you as a language student?

Goal	2000	2002
The learner will demonstrate a working knowledge of the target language in real-life situations.	56%	3.61
The learner will use communication skills learned in Spanish to become a lifelong learner.	17%	3.36
The learner will develop an awareness of the intellectual, social, and economic benefits of foreign language study and its connection with other curricular areas.	9%	3.12
The learner will display an awareness of, a sensitivity to, and an appreciation for cultural diversity.	8%	3.11
The learner will demonstrate an understanding of the knowledge of language and culture through comparisons of Spanish and English.	7%	3.12
The learner will interact in a secure environment.	4%	3.15

Note. Fall 2000: Goals rank ordered by students. Number indicates percentage of students who indicated that this was the most important goal.

Fall 2002: Each goal rated on a five-point scale (0 = not at all important; 4 = very important). Number indicates average rating.

Portfolio Analysis

Learner portfolios were examined with an eye toward the ability of a typical student at the indicated level. These portfolios were an established part of the curriculum before the assessment project began in earnest. Portfolio assessment criteria were developed for the outcomes project that were distinct from the grading criteria for the course. The elements of the portfolio were videotaped presentations and audiorecorded interviews with native speakers. The video task was recorded on a VHS tape and the audio task on an audiocassette. The profile of learners at the Intermediate-Mid level formed the basis of instructor evaluations of oral proficiency as evidenced by video and audio tasks. Deficient performance was indicated by an inability to carry out a task. Adequate performance was indicated by a demonstrated ability at or above the level described by ACTFL Proficiency Standards for Intermediate-Mid.

Once expectations of student performance were more clearly established, the portfolios themselves were assessed as to their adequacy for supplying the required data. It was determined that there was a need to develop tasks which would elicit more spontaneous language use. Only when goal statements and assessment instruments were refined could learner performance and program effectiveness be assessed. Portfolios were analyzed for the purpose of assessing student ability and program effectiveness. The tasks themselves were evaluated as to their adequacy for eliciting the desired data. The video project consisted of a 2- to 4-minute videorecorded presentation in which students were assigned to simulate a job interview, a scene in a travel agency, a commercial, a public service announcement, or a campaign speech. The audio task was introduced as an alternative to the video in order to elicit less scripted learner performance and to provide learners with the opportunity to ask—not merely respond to—questions. Topics for the interview tasks consisted of three options: (a) the speaker's country of origin and family, (b) foods from the speaker's country of origin, and (c) a major cultural event from the speaker's country of origin. The interviews were also evaluated based on ACTFL Standards for Intermediate-

Table 3

SPANISH 210 OUTCOMES SURVEY RESULTS

Question: To what extent do you feel this class allows you to do each of the following?

Goal	2000	2002
The learner will demonstrate a working knowledge of the target language in real-life situations.	3.06	2.76
The learner will use communication skills learned in Spanish to become a lifelong learner.	3.03	3.21
The learner will develop an awareness of the intellectual, social, and economic benefits of foreign language study and its connection with other curricular areas.	2.40	2.73
The learner will display an awareness of, a sensitivity to, and an appreciation for cultural diversity.	2.87	2.77
The learner will demonstrate an understanding of the knowledge of language and culture through comparisons of Spanish and English.	2.76	2.93
The learner will interact in a secure environment.	2.30	3.17

Note. Answers given on five-point scale (0–4).

Mid. The research assistant evaluated both the video and audio tasks. Faculty rated video projects to corroborate the research assistant's ratings. The audio task was introduced later and was evaluated by the research assistant but not by the faculty.

The target for the program was that 75% of learners would demonstrate proficiency at the Intermediate-Mid level. Although proficiency is understood in global terms, Bachman and Palmer (1983) used analytical scales for evaluating grammatical, pragmatic, and sociolinguistic competence as components of communicative competence. Proficiency, like communicative competence, is a construct that approaches language ability as something independent of a particular curriculum. Despite this similarity, proficiency is measured by a global scale while communicative competence is measured analytically by its components. There is no a priori reason why proficiency cannot also be measured componentially. The present study sought to provide an analytical, or componential, scale that instructors could apply without formal ACTFL OPI training.

Aspects of the Intermediate-Mid learner profile were divided into the following categories: (a) comprehensibility/comprehension, (b) fluency/vocabulary/pronunciation, (c) grammar, (d) information/cultural appropriateness, (e) effort to communicate/task completion. The scale for evaluating the portfolios is found in Table 4.

Over 75% of learners demonstrated target proficiency level on the "information/cultural appropriateness" (94%) and "comprehensibility/comprehension" (78%) components. Fewer than 75% of learners demonstrated target proficiency level on the "grammar" (67%) and "fluency/vocabulary/pronunciation" (61%) components. While 78% of students were rated as comprehensible by proficiency standards, only 67% demonstrated grammatical control at the target level. Scores on the video were slightly higher when evaluated by the research assistant, but the same rank ordering of abilities emerged.

The audio task was evaluated by the research assistant and scores were compared with the ratings given by the assistant on the video task. The average learner demonstrated higher proficiency levels on "information/cultural appropriateness" and "comprehensibility/comprehension" than on "grammar" and "fluency/vocabulary/pronunciation" for both tasks. The average score on the audio was at or above 2 (adequate) on all components for the audio task. For the video task, only the average grammar score was below 2 (1.86). Both the faculty and the assistant reported below adequate grammar scores on the video task, but the audio task yielded scores of adequate or above on all components, including grammar. The audio interview task appeared to provide more opportunities for learners to demonstrate their grammatical ability. Differences in task demands are likely responsible for the different results. A scripted video will almost certainly elicit qualitatively different data than a task in which the learner interviews a native speaker. Faculty ratings of the interview task are not available because only the video task was selected for sampling interrater reliability. The results of the portfolio analysis are found in Tables 5, 6, and 7.

Revisions to Teaching/Assessment Plan

The analysis of placement data indicates that the average learner's language development was sufficient to advance from one course to the next. Although placement tests and proficiency tests are not the same, both are global in nature. The data suggest that the program was successful in terms of learners' global language development.

The survey data reveal that learners perceived a deficiency with regard to Goal 4 (the "intellectual, social, and economic benefits of foreign language study and its connection with other curricular areas"). With the adoption of a different textbook, *¿Qué te parece?* (Lee, Young, Wolf, & Chandler, 2000) the curriculum shifted in the direction of a "critical thinking skills" approach and away from a language survival-skills approach. Subsequent surveys revealed an increase in perceived student satisfaction with regard to Goal 4 (the "intellectual, social, and economic benefits of foreign language study and its connection with

Table 4

ORAL EVALUATION SCALE

Category				
Comprehensibility/Comprehension	0	1	2	3
• Can initiate and respond to simple statements, and can maintain simple face-to-face conversation				
• Is generally understood by persons used to dealing with foreigners.				
Fluency/Vocabulary/Pronunciation	0	1	2	3
• Misunderstandings arise because of limited vocabulary, frequent grammatical errors, and poor pronunciation and intonation.				
• Speech is often characterized by long pauses.				
Grammar	0	1	2	3
• Some grammatical accuracy in basic constructions (e.g., subject–verb agreement, noun–adjective, and gender agreement for familiar vocabulary, present tense of regular and some irregular verbs such as *tener, poner, ser, estar, ir*).				
• Can express future time by using *ir a* plus infinitive.				
• May have a concept of past time, but can use only isolated past tense forms that have been learned as vocabulary items.				
• Syntax in most simple declarative sentences is generally correct including placement of most common adjectives.				
Information/Cultural Appropriateness	0	1	2	3
• Able to satisfy most routine travel and survival needs and some limited social demands.				
• Can ask and answer questions on very familiar topics and in areas of immediate need.				
• Can ask and answer questions and carry on a conversation on topics beyond basic survival needs or involving the exchange of basic personal information (i.e., can talk simply about autobiographical details, leisure time activities, daily schedule, and some future plans).				
Effort to Communicate/Task Completion (Role-Playing Task Only)	0	1	2	3
• Can handle simple transactions at the post office, bank, drugstore, etc.				
• In a simple situation, such as ordering a meal, making purchases, and requesting a hotel room, can deal with details, such as requesting a table for two in a quiet corner, asking for an article of clothing of a particular color, getting a hotel room with a private bath for a given length of time, or inquiring about modes of payment.				

Note. A score of 0 indicates a lack of evidence of the learner ability in a category; 1 indicates evidence of learner ability below minimum expectations; 2 indicates evidence of ability at this level according to ACTFL Standards; and 3 indicates evidence of learner ability beyond minimum expectations.

other curricular areas"). In fall 2000, students rated the course's success at 2.4. (4 = very successful). In fall 2002, the figure increased to 2.73. In fact, with the change in textbook, the satisfaction figures increased on all the goals with the exception of Goal 1 ("a working knowledge of the target language in real-life situations"). This figure fell from 3.06 in fall 2000 to 2.76 in fall 2002. Students appear to have been sensitive to the shift in approach and seemed to prefer a survival-skills approach.

The surveys were also modified to allow learners to quantify the importance of each goal, rather than merely indicate the most important one. This change provides richer data and allows for a numerical comparison using the same 5-point scale to determine the relative importance of each goal to learners and the degree of attainment of the same goal as perceived by learners. The rank ordering of goals by importance was roughly the same between semesters, but the differences between goals were diminished when learners did not have to prioritize them.

Not only were students sensitive to the shift in approach from survival skills to critical thinking, they also rated the development of language survival skills as more important than the development of academic skills. Taken together, these findings suggest that students prefer a survival-skills approach. It may be that students regard critical thinking tasks as removed from "real-life situations." The Spanish Division has since decided to adopt another book, *¿Sabías que . . .* ? (VanPatten, Lee, & Ballman, 2004), that employs a content-based approach. This book will be implemented over the three-semester beginning and inter-

Table 5

PORTFOLIO ANALYSIS

Average Score by Component on Videos evaluated by Faculty (*n* = 18)

Component	Average Score	Percent at or Above Target Proficiency
Information/Cultural Appropriateness	2.1	94%
Comprehensibility/ Comprehension	1.9	78%
Fluency/Vocabulary/ Pronunciation	1.9	61%
Grammar	1.7	67%

Table 6

PORTFOLIO ANALYSIS

Average Score on Video and Audio Tasks by Component (*n* = 14)

Component	Audio	Video
Information/Cultural Appropriateness	2.3	2.3
Comprehensibility/ Comprehension	2.1	2.3
Fluency/Vocabulary/ Pronunciation	2.0	2.0
Grammar	2.1	1.9

Table 7

PORTFOLIO ANALYSIS

Average Score on Video by Faculty Raters (*n* = 18) Versus Graduate Research Assistant (*n* = 14)

Component	Faculty	Assistant
Information/Cultural Appropriateness	2.1	2.3
Comprehensibility/ Comprehension	1.9	2.3
Fluency/Vocabulary/ Pronunciation	1.9	2.0
Grammar	1.7	1.9

Note. 0 = lack of evidence of the ability indicated; 1 = ability below minimum expectations; 2 = ability at minimum expectations; 3 = ability beyond minimum expectations

mediate sequence. Student satisfaction will continue to be monitored with an eye toward the balance between the development of survival skills and academic skills.

The book changes, first for the intermediate course and then for the full three-semester sequence, were supported by the survey data but not entirely motivated by it. As does any democratic body, the Spanish Division considers any number of factors when selecting a textbook. The changes have indicated more of a refinement of teaching philosophy rather than a radical shift in methodology.

In developing the portfolio assessment scales, it was observed that ACTFL Guidelines for survival situations did not apply to the audio and video assignments developed for the learner portfolios. Since that time, a proficiency-style exit interview has been implemented that includes a role-play. This task provides a more satisfactory picture of learners' performance in the kinds of situations described by the ACTFL Guidelines. The exit interview was modeled after the OPI and consisted of the same phases: (a) warm up, (b) probe/level check, (c) role-play, and (d) wind-down. Instructors were given a list of functions that learners should be able to perform and topics that they should be able to discuss at the Intermediate-Mid level. The portfolio analysis revealed an apparent deficiency in the attainment of grammatical ability for the video task. This deficiency, however, did not appear on the audio task. The discrepancy may be due to the richer data observed in the unscripted audio task.

Conclusion

The outcomes assessment project at Saint Louis University has provided an opportunity to articulate goals within the Spanish Division. The faculty was involved in evaluating learner performance, thus bridging the gap that often exists between full-time faculty and beginning and intermediate language instruction. Early results indicate a high degree of program success, although there are conflicting results with respect to the grammar skills that learners ultimately attain. There also appears to be a high degree of learner satisfaction with many areas of the program, although there are indications that some goals are not adequately met from the learners' perspective. These early results indicate the direction for further development of assessment instruments and procedures and for curriculum development.

Outcomes assessment is cyclical in nature. Having completed one cycle, the Spanish Division is prepared to continue engaging in the process and improving its basic and intermediate curriculum. Much work remains to be done with regard to evaluating written work and for evaluating the curriculum at the advanced level. The work presented here will provide a basis for a continuing analysis of the basic and intermediate level and for expansion of this analysis to the advanced level.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Teresa Johnson and Michael Bradley-Hoffeditz for their assistance in the collection and analysis of the pilot data for the present study.

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Appendix A

Learning Goals and Performance Measures

A number of learning goals have been identified in national and state teaching standards documents. The following are some of the goals identified and their application in this class.

Goal 1: The learner will demonstrate a working knowledge of the target language in real-life situations. You will perform a number of language functions with the support of vocabulary and grammar relevant to these functions. Tests will reflect not only what is taught but also how it is taught. To this end, on written exams you will be responsible for the outcomes of classroom tasks. You might, for example, be asked to describe a classmate's daily routine using the expressions learned in class, or you may be asked to compare or contrast your opinion on some issue with the opinions of your classmates. Classroom discussions will also provide part of the informational basis for compositions which represent a substantial portion of your final grade. Your global language development will be measured by oral participation, an interview with your instructor, and by reading comprehension and composition tasks.

Goal 2: The learner will display an awareness of, a sensitivity to, and an appreciation for cultural diversity. You will hear, read, and discuss texts on cultural topics from a Hispanic perspective. You will have the opportunity to comment on these topics in class and will be tested on this content on exams. Classroom discussions of these topics will also provide the basis for the content of your compositions.

Goal 3: The learner will use communication skills learned in Spanish to become a lifelong learner. Because our approach emphasizes language use over abstraction about language, you will spend time outside of class working in the Language Learning Center (Lab). Assignments in the Language Learning Center will expose you to a greater quantity and variety of the language not available in the classroom. Whenever you interact with others in class, for example, you have the opportunity to interpret body language, ask for clarification, and check comprehension. The language lab can help prepare you for real-world listening tasks that native speakers of any language routinely perform, such as talking on the phone or listening to the radio, in which you cannot see the speaker and/or cannot "negotiate" the message. The lab will also help you to understand speakers other than your instructor by providing native-speaking models from a variety of areas of the Spanish-speaking world. Thus, your classroom experience and outside preparation will provide a basis for your continued study of Spanish. In addition to your experience in the Language Learning Center, you will be encouraged to attend events at the Spanish House, thus further enriching your language learning experience. Furthermore, you will use and develop computer skills accessing course information and communicating with classmates and your instructor. By learning to rely on sources of information other than your instructor, you will develop independence and initiative which will prepare you for your future, whatever field of study you choose.

Goal 4: The learner will develop an awareness of the intellectual, social, and economic benefits of foreign language study and its connection with other curricular areas. You will hear, read, and discuss texts on a number of topics from other academic disciplines and read a number of short literary texts by influential Hispanic authors. This content will be tested and will provide yet another part of the informational basis for your compositions.

Goal 5: The learner will demonstrate an understanding of the knowledge of language and culture through comparisons of Spanish and English. You will make cross-cultural and cross-linguistic comparisons by exploring a number of topics. Although the approach used in this course emphasizes the development of an independent second-language system without the intervention of your native language, to the extent that linguistic comparisons are conceptually useful they will be discussed briefly. Cross-cultural comparisons will be made to the extent that they do not rely on stereotypes. Application of your cross-cultural and linguistic understanding will be reflected in your classroom performance as well in your written work.

Goal 6: The learner will interact in a secure environment. In order to use a foreign language in spontaneous communication, you must acquire and internalize the language. You can accomplish this only by exposure to the language and by engaging in meaningful interaction. In this class, you will be encouraged to speak exclusively in Spanish. Although some students may find it difficult to express themselves due to language level, personality, etc., all students will be encouraged and expected to contribute to the best of their ability. Criteria for evaluating classroom participation emphasize your active involvement in classroom discussions and maximum use of Spanish. These criteria also discourage any one individual, including your instructor, from dominating the discussion. Online interaction with classmates and your instructor through WebCT will extend the learning environment beyond the classroom and will facilitate your preparation for the class hour.

Appendix B

Participation Self-Assessment

Each class is worth 10 participation points. Your grade will be determined according to your use of Spanish and your contribution to the tasks and discussion. Each full week is worth 40 points (4 days including the lab). If you miss 1 day, or if there is a holiday or a test, the most you can earn for the week is 30 points. You may recuperate lost participation points for a maximum of four classes by attending a Spanish House event and posting a summary on your class's electronic bulletin board on WebCT.

points/day	Description
10	**Excellent**. I spoke exclusively in Spanish. I played a key role in getting tasks done and encouraged other learners to play an active role. I always listened to other learners. I offered answers voluntarily, without being called on. I always did the assigned homework in preparation for class.
9	**Good**. I spoke exclusively in Spanish. I played an active role during classroom tasks. I always listened to other learners. I was always able to answer questions when called on. I usually did the assigned homework in preparation for class.
8	**Average**. I usually spoke in Spanish. I was usually active during classroom tasks. I usually listened to other learners. I was usually able to answer questions when called on. I sometimes did the assigned homework in preparation for class.
7	**Poor**. I rarely spoke in Spanish. I was usually passive during classroom tasks. I rarely listened to other learners. I was rarely able to answer questions when called on. I rarely did the assigned homework in preparation for class.
0	**Deficient**. I never spoke in Spanish. I was disruptive during classroom tasks. I never listened to other learners. I was never able to answer questions when called on. I never did the assigned homework in preparation for class.