

ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT ASSESSMENT REPORT

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Please note that the assessment report submitted for the 2007-2008 academic year primarily reflects SPA courses. The decision to focus on SPA courses first is due to the fact that we have the numbers from which to draw conclusions about the efficacy of current practices and, subsequently, a baseline from which to assess implemented changes to the program. This will inform practices in FRE when Dr. Telford's term ends as Divisional Dean; at that time the Department should have sufficient data to begin adjusting the FRE classes in accordance to the SPA classes more completely.

I. Learning Objectives: *Listening Comprehension*

101

- Understand short, learned utterances, particularly where context strongly supports understanding and speech is clearly audible.
- Comprehend words and phrases from simple questions, statements, high-frequency commands, and courtesy formulae.

102

- Understand short utterances and sentence-length utterances.
- Comprehend words and phrases from simple questions, statements, high-frequency commands, and courtesy formulae.
- Show understanding and an ability to follow social conventions and carry out routine tasks, and receiving simple instructions and directions.
- Listening tasks pertain primarily to spontaneous face-to-face conversations.

105

- Understand sentence-length utterances in spoken Spanish, particularly where context strongly supports understanding and speech is clearly audible.
- Comprehend words and phrases from simple questions, statements, high-frequency commands.
- Comprehend entry-level professional discourse using learned vocabulary.

106

- Sustain understanding over longer stretches of connected discourse on a number of topics pertaining to different times and places. Understand spoken Spanish, particularly where context or previous learning supports understanding and speech is clearly audible.
- Comprehend professional discourse using learned vocabulary.

II. Assessment Measures

Direct Measure #1: Listening Comprehension on Course Exams

SPANISH

The Department of Foreign Languages first introduced the electronic exams over the 2006-2007 academic year for SPA 101, 102, 105, 106. That year the Listening Comprehension (LC) work had been integrated into the Black Board testing sites. The problems were numerous. First, the high-volume of traffic on the network resulted in problems with accessing and submitting the exams. Access/submission problems mostly affected 101 and 102, and students were directed to be sure the entire class did not attempt the LC activities at the same time. Second, the longer LC scripts in 105 and 106 were choppy and incomprehensible when administered via Black Board. As a result, the scripts were burned and the CDs were distributed to students during exam time. Thirdly, rather than listening to the scripts the entire way through, for a limited number of exposures, students would start and stop the script in search of the specific segment which would answer the text questions. Clearly, LC was not captured when the LC tasks were approached in such a manner. Finally, students complained that they did not have sufficient time to complete all components of the exam; some students did not attempt to complete the LC activities.

For the 2007-2008 academic year the exams were split and students were tested over two class periods. One period consisted of the e-Exam in the computer lab, while the other consisted of LC activities and spontaneous writing in class. The listening component consisted of 1-2 scripts, played by the professor for the entire class, with a maximum repetition of three exposures. In the fall semester (2007) the exams were adjusted to contain fewer short-answer and more multiple-choice activities to adjust for difficulty level. The exams were adjusted further for the spring (2008) semester.

FRENCH

French reports that all listening comprehension assessment was done by the teacher observing student group-work during each class period throughout the year. Student achievement was measured in the form of oral grades and participation scores.

Results Direct Measure #1: Results of the Listening Comprehension components are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Listening Comprehension¹ – Average Scores on Course Exams							
SPANISH	101	102	105	106	240	326	247 BUS SPA
Fall 2006	77% Midterm Final Missing	74%	50%	63% Exams 1,2	Not offered	Not offered	Not offered
Spring 2007	81%	88%	55%	60%	Not offered	Not offered	Not offered
Fall 2007	91% Midterm Final Missing	75 %Midterm Final Missing	65%	Data Missing & Unavailable	85% U 94 % B	Not offered	Not offered
Spring 2008	87%	84% Data Missing	71%	75%	Not offered	93%	No evidence of LCActivities
FRENCH	101	102	105	106	207	208	247
Fall 2007	77%	Not offered	88%	Not offered	2 mastered, 1 satisfied	Not offered	Not offered
Spring 2008	Not offered	86%	Not offered	88%	Not offered	2 mastered, 1 satisfied	Not offered

Discussion Direct Measure #1:

A) Data Collection. Central to assessment is data collection. Table 1 clearly demonstrates that the data collection procedures outlined at the Fall 2006 Departmental Meeting and Workshop are not being observed. Consequently, systematic analysis and review of each course, its components, and the results is hindered and action-based student-directed measures during the semester and post-semester are stymied.

Recommendation: Re-address the procedures, schedule training sessions, schedule question-and-answer sessions, and develop a routine process by which all instructors demonstrate that the procedures are taking place. Share student directed activities that are scheduled as a result of the data collection process with the Assessment Liaison, who will share the information with the Foreign Language Department faculty and log the activities for program assessment.

B) Data Analysis. This analysis will focus on the available data.

B.1) Unidirectional Listening as Comprehension in SPA 100-Level Classes

In general terms, the structural change in the administration of exams, with specific reference to LC activities, was effective; average scores increased overall from one academic year to the next (with the exception of SPA 102, and assuming that SPA 106 scores for the FALL 2007 semester adhered to the established pattern). Nonetheless, the scores demonstrate average- and below-average proficiency overall. The body of literature on Listening Comprehension research helps shed light on the low results.

¹ Results for LC in SPA 101-106 reflect uni-directional assessment measures; SPA 240 reflects both uni- and bi-directional LC; SPA 326 results reflect bi-directional assessment measures. FRE results reflect bidirectional assessment measures.

Research on listening comprehension in the language classroom has focused on: identifying strategies of weak and strong learners and strategy use (Chen; Goh 2000, 2001; Vogely), learner's perspectives on LC (Graham; Hasan; Bueno 2006), video based and computer based LC work (Jepson; Volle; Hampel and Hauck; Jones; Danan; Gruba), LC instruction and methods (Mendelsohn; Rost; Coto Ketih; Vandergrift; Hoven), prosody (the rhythmic aspect of language, from phonemes, pitch, stress) (Hagtvet; Carroll; Major et. al.), testing (In'nami) , and the like². Similarly, teaching practices have focused on top-down and bottom up processes³ (Rost (2006); Hoven (1999); Berne (2004); Jones (2002).

Thus, in accordance with the current body of research on LC activities, the Department is engaged in common practice and has standard materials at its disposal. We have video- and computer-based activities; exercises on the Spanish sound system; pedagogically sounds texts; etc. As a consequence, however, we have adopted a LC model in which listening activities are a) overwhelmingly *uni-directional* in nature, and b) comprehension (rather than acquisition) based. Thus, classroom methodology, bi-directional assessment measures, listening comprehension learning strategies, and an approach which focuses on listening as *acquisition* need to be addressed.

Recommendations:

Classroom Methodology: We must take full advantage of the resources our text book package can offer the students for listening activities.

SPA 101/102: Aventuras Text

- ***Pronunciación.*** Aventuras, has dedicated *Pronunciación* sections integrated into the text which can be assigned easily and readily *and* are accompanied by audio CDs.
- ***Quia: Lab Manual and Video Manual.*** Currently the *Pronunciación* activities available through the Quia Lab Manual are not assigned; student attention to these activities will help address sound-symbol recognition. Quia also contains video segments that are not being utilized.
- ***Information-Gap Activities.*** Information Gap activities are integrated into the Aventuras text book. IG activities assist students in listening for both comprehension and acquisition since the activities are tied to chapter vocabulary and grammar. These activities also promote bi-directional exchanges. Not only should these activities be implemented into the classroom but should also be graded for accuracy and logged as an in-class assignment.

² For thorough reviews refer to Berne and Rubin.

³ Top-down processing: predicting meaning, activating background knowledge, generating context, reading/listening for global meaning, and working with and identifying key words.
Bottom-up processing: information processing through accretion.

SPA 105/106: Sueña Text

- ***Quia: Lab Manual.*** Activities which focus on the elements of sound and pronunciation need to be assigned to students in addition to the uni-directional LC activities that are currently assigned.
- ***Sueña- CULTURA & Literature.*** These sections of the text consist of informative essays, articles, short stories and poems. Each of these sections is accompanied by a voice recorded script (complete with sound and extra-linguistic auditory-cues, where appropriate) that is housed in the Sueña Super Site. These activities not only train students in phonological recognition and prosody, but also promote global-message reading comprehension. Such activities can be integrated into classroom activities or could be assigned through the Sueña Super Site as part of the Student Choice Classroom Assignments Course Component.
- ***Sueña-SUEÑA.*** The *Sueña* sections of the course text contain a blurb of information that is expanded upon through the Super Site by Documentaries, Music, and other audio, visual, and audio-visual materials.

Introduce Bi-directional Assessment Measures:

- ***Information-Gap Activities***
- ***WIMBA***

Wimba is a leading provider of collaborative learning software applications and services to the education industry. Our collaborative software applications for the online and blended education market enable institutions to bridge technology and pedagogy by supplementing course management systems [such as Black Board] with many of the proven disciplines of in-person learning environments. Wimba's intuitive solutions enable educators and students to quickly and easily teach and learn live online, engage in live chat and instant message exchanges, benefit from oral content being added to text-based course content, and more. Instructors can also use Wimba solutions to easily convert Microsoft Word documents into online course content and to create and administer tests, quizzes, and exams. Our focus on education and collaboration with educators fuels our product development. www.wimba.com / about us

That is, Wimba allows us to integrate voice tools into Black Board, making a text-based environment voice-enabled. We can generate Threaded Voice Boards, Voice-Enabled Email and Announcements that will not only complement the text-based threads of our current Black Board platform, but will also allow us to integrate a variety of uni-directional, pseudo bi-directional, and bi-directional LC activities for which students can receive both voiced and written feedback. The possibilities are endless. What's more, graphics can be integrated into the platform to add visual interest and reinforce both spoken and written messages. What's more, Wimba will allow us to improve the content/structure of the Black Board course sites as set forth in the Fall 2006 Departmental Workshop and Meeting.

Training on Listening Comprehension Learning Strategies:

Students need to understand that listening is not a passive process. Engaging students in metacognitive analysis and pushing them to approach listening activities strategically and reflectively is imperative. (Please see the Appendix).

The text-books do set the stage for top-down and bottom-up processing; we need to be sure those activities are not being overlooked or ignored. To date, we have no data that speaks to the extent to which the processes outlined by the texts are followed/ignored.

Listening as Acquisition:

Introduce and emphasis on listening as *acquisition*, rather than as mere comprehension. There is a need to emphasize the facilitation of language learning via listening, which requires the incorporation of a variety of listening activities for which students listen for a variety of purposes, all of which result in the expanding the learners' linguistic base. Some of these activities can be introduced by Wimba, while others can be introduced through subscriptions to MP3 pod casts. We can also develop appropriate materials, with release time granted.

Listening without the Threat of Evaluation: Listening activities are stressful and if students are to maintain motivation we must not fail to introduce LC activities for enjoyment. Access to news channels, soap-operas, gossip shows and the like through digital cable or satellite subscriptions should be a long-term goal. A library of movies and music that students can access, as well as subscriptions to radio-casts and pod-casts should be considered also.

B.2) Uni- & Bi-Directional Listening as Acquisition in SPA 200/300 Level Classes

Scores in the SPA 240 LC assessments were above average, revealing that the students at this level demonstrated proficiency to mastery of uni-directional listening. They also demonstrated mastery in bi-directional listening.

A number of factors contributed to student success. First, the students in this level are majors and minors and many of the students had passed a 200 level prior to enrollment in SPA 240. Second, there were a number of Heritage Speakers and more-proficient peers who could help weaker students master the material through collaboration and sensitivity to individual ZPD⁴ levels. Third, the course was **content based**, which required students to master the subject matter and language content concurrently. Fourth, listening learning strategies were introduced, examples were explored, and strategies emphasized. Every activity introduced into the classroom emphasized bottom-up and top-down processing, and as a follow up measure students were required to submit weekly, self-reflective student journals (see appendix).

The Advanced Conversation course in Spanish, SPA 326, also a content based course, was centered upon bi-directional LC assessment on day-to-day activities and through oral exams in which students were assigned participation points in accordance with appropriate responses to in-class dialogue. All course components were evaluated on value-added contributions to bi-directional listening, with skills-focused (not grade focused) assessment.

Recommendation: Introduce listening comprehension strategies into the 100-level curriculum so that there is a balance between unidirectional and bidirectional assessment, and in order to promote listening activities for *acquisition* not just mere comprehension.

⁴ The Zone of Proximal Development: term established by Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky to explain what a learner can do with assistance and without assistance. [Definition, Mine]

Adopt the LC activities at the 100-level to be content-based. Finally, teach students how to listen.

B.3) Listening Comprehension in Specialized Courses

Due to the breach of data collection procedures the extent to which LC activities were introduced into SPA 110, 207/208, and 247 is inconclusive.

SPA 110: Karen Guitierrez does implement bi-directional LC activities into her SPA 110 course, Spanish for Health Professions, but no data on her courses has been submitted.

SPA 207/208 Distance Learning Composition & Conversation: A number of bi-directional LC activities were implemented into this course. However, data specific to LC skills in the midst of the activities was not recorded specifically.

SPA 247 – Business Spanish. There was no evidence of the integration of LC activities into this course. If LC activities were part of the course, the grades as logged into the Excel spreadsheet did not indicate as much.

Recommendation: Require that all professionals who teach for our department adhere to and carry out the data collection procedures in ***Grade Keeper*** set forth by the Department in 2006. Require that syllabi and rubrics be submitted and that the Department has access to the instructor's Black Board course sites.

Direct Measure #2: Online Listening Lab Manual [Quia] for SPA

Accompanying the 100-level SPA course books is a web-based application, Quia, which houses the texts' workbook and lab manual (101-106), and video manual (101/102). Scores on the Lab Manual are the secondary uni-directional listening comprehension assessment.

Results Direct Measure #2:

SPANISH	101	102	105	106
<i>Fall 2006</i>	?	?	X	?
<i>Spring 2007</i>	?	?	47%	81%
Fall 2007	?	?	53%	?
Spring 2008	?	?	70%	90%

Discussion Direct Measure #2:

A) Data Collection

Again, Table 2 indicates that the data collection procedures established in the fall of 2006 have not been observed. This not only impedes upon program assessment, but also hampers class reviews, tutoring sessions, Learning Center correspondence, and individual and group trouble-shooting and feedback, to name a few.

Recommendation: Same as for Direct Measure #1.

Re-address the procedures, schedule training sessions, schedule question-and-answer sessions, and develop a routine process by which all instructors demonstrate that the procedures are taking place. Share student directed activities that are scheduled as a result of the data collection process with the Assessment Liaison, who will share the information with the Foreign Language Department faculty and log the activities for program assessment.

B) Data Analysis

The available data in Table 2 reveals very low LC scores. The results are disturbing given that students have the opportunity to repeat the activities up to 10 times to improve their scores. Clearly, students are not taking advantage of such opportunities.

This observation prompted further investigation into the Quia scores as a whole. Table 3 was generated to examine the combined Lab Manual and Work Book scores in order to investigate whether or not students were taking advantage of this learning tool.

SPANISH	101	102	105	106
Fall 2006	66%	Inconclusive	Data Lost	?
Spring 2007	Inconclusive	Inconclusive	56%	81%
Fall 2007	?	?	61%	83%
Spring 2008	67%	?	76%	88%

Again, much of the data is inconclusive. First of all, the grade records were not kept in a manner which clearly reports which grades are tied to a given assignment; files and assignments were arbitrarily named making it impossible to know what was covered in the class and what was not. In some cases, only one component (one workbook assignment for one chapter) was reported, and the actual scores that the students earned were not reported. Calculating how many activities the students completed, and examining the actual scores earned was rendered impossible. This begs the following questions: Are the students even completing these assignments and are the instructors holding them accountable for the content? What are their grades based upon? Is the syllabus being covered and are the students being held accountable for the content?

Recommendations:

Quia assignments must be standardized. Not only do we need to be sure that specific LC activities are being covered, we also need to be sure that the content is covered and that all students are made responsible for covering base-line/foundational content in the Work Book and Lab Manual.

A Dedicated Lab Day. In addition to the three-day per week schedule, students need mandatory lab time. Lab time would be required as part of the class; students would sign in to complete Quia work, and to follow up on any Wimba generated assignments/ quizzes/ tests. They could sign up for a designated lab time⁵ when they sign up for their SPA course.

The primary stages of testing the value of a dedicated lab day will commence in the Fall 2008 semester.

8:00-8:55		SPA 105 A	No Lab
9:05-10:00	SPA101 A	SPA 105 B	Lab Sections
10:10-11:05	SPA 101 B		No Lab

With this structure SPA 101 and SPA 105 courses will both consist of a section which meets in the lab, and a section which does not meet in the lab so that the data for 101-lab/ 101 no lab and 105lab/105 no lab can be examined at the Introductory and Intermediate level classes.

Accountability. Gradekeeper reports on student progress must be submitted monthly.

⁵ Example: SPA 1xx: MWF with Tuesday Lab (55 minutes)

Direct Measure #2: FRENCH Dictation and Q&A Exercises

Students in FRE courses completed dictation exercises and listening comprehension exercises as part of their exams. Scores were tallied together but will be calculated separately in the future.

Recommendation: Examine the results of the dictation exercises and the Q&A activities and determine the value of introducing them into SPA courses.

III. Summary and Further Recommendations

First and foremost, the procedures established in the Fall of 2006 must be followed. Following those procedures will eliminate the data collection procedures that have hindered program assessment for the 2007-2008 assessment period. Reviewing those procedures and scheduling time to systematically meet with the Assessment Liaison will ensure smooth operating in the future. It will also allow for systematic action to be taken during the semester aimed at addressing student weaknesses as they are occurring *during* the semester.

In order to promote listening comprehension as acquisition a number of measures can be adopted. First, integrate Wimba⁶ into our Black Board course management system. Second, assign release time for the development of uni- and bi-directional assessments via Wimba. Third, train the faculty on language learning strategies and observe courses. Fourth, train the students on language learning strategies. Fifth, require lab hours in addition to class hours for all 100-level courses.

These measures will reinforce the implementation of the curriculum map from the 2006-2007 report, support our plan for proficiency development, and will complement the other measures taken (vocabulary grammar notebook) to promote the acquisition of the language. What's more, they will also set the stage for models that the ESL program are following and will follow, and will provide essential acquisition and assessment tools to that program. What's more, these measures will not only put Daemen at the forefront of sound language learning practice, but are also ripe for research and presentation opportunities that will get the college recognized.

Finally, I recommend a subscription to *Language Assessment Quarterly*, in international journal, to give us access to the most current practices in language assessment.

⁶ Wimba will require additional equipment: headsets with recording microphones for the Foreign Language Department and the Student Language Lab.

IV. Comments

The same transparency, accountability, and oversight needs to be applied to the English as a Second Language program that is in its infancy at the college. Before the program and its courses are made official by the college, they must be reviewed by the Foreign Language Department to ensure they match our standards and structure. In anticipation of it being made an official program, and in anticipation of its expansion, professors should be adhering to the standards set forth at our 2006 meeting and should be in line with current practice and should meet with the Assessment Liaison with the same frequency as the other professionals who form part of our Department.

1APPENDIX #1

SPA 240: GUIDED JOURNAL

Name: _____ Date: ____/____/2007

Short Story Title: _____

Be sure to include what you tried, what worked and did not work, how you handled the situation, the source of your frustration/success, and the like...

I.

Reflect on how you *negotiated meaning* with your peers. Please be specific.

Reflect on you clarified any *misunderstandings* with your peers. Please be specific.

Reflect on you *prepared to, and contributed to, conversations* on the material with your peers. Please be specific.

SPA 240: GUIDED JOURNAL

II. Please review this sheet on practices for improving listening comprehension and mark ones you applied in the paired/group work from today's class.

	Types of Practice for improving listening comprehension*	Perception	Parsing	Utilisation
I.	Perception Practice			
a.	Listen to how new vocabulary items are pronounced	◆		
b.	Follow along with transcript of recording	◆		
c.	Write down content words from short passages	◆		
d.	Identify the most prominent word in short utterances	◆	◆	
e.	Identify meaning groups in sentences of varying lengths	◆	◆	
f.	Identify tones and their communicative value	◆	◆	
g.	Identify common discourse markers and their functions	◆	◆	
h.	Identify common phrasal verbs and their meaning	◆	◆	
II.	Listening Strategy Practice			
	Cognitive Tactics			
a.	Infer missing or unfamiliar words using contexts, co-text and prior knowledge	◆		◆
b.	Predict general contents before listening using contexts and prior knowledge	◆		◆
c.	Predict unfinished utterances using contexts, co-text and prior knowledge	◆		◆
d.	Use prior knowledge to elaborate and complete interpretation			◆
e.	Take short notes of important content words		◆	◆
f.	Relate limited interpretation to a wider social/linguistic context			◆
g.	Relate one part of the text to another			◆
h.	Visualise scenes, objects, events. Etc. being described		◆	◆
i.	Reconstruct meaning using words heard		◆	◆
	Metacognitive Tactics	◆		
a.	Preview contents in different forms	◆		
b.	Rehearse the pronunciation of potential content words	◆		
c.	Establish purpose for listening	◆		
d.	Listen selectively according to purpose	◆	◆	◆
e.	Pay attention to discourse markers		◆	◆
f.	Pay attention to visuals and body language	◆		◆
g.	Pay attention to tones and pauses	◆	◆	
h.	Monitor comprehension using contexts and prior knowledge			◆
i.	Evaluate comprehension using contexts, prior knowledge and external resources			◆
j.	Continue to listen for clarification in spite of difficulty	◆		
k.	Assess the importance of problematic parts and decide whether to ignore them or actively seek clarification	◆		
l.	Determine the potential value of subsequent parts and vary intensity of attention accordingly	◆		
	Social-affective Tactics			
a.	Ask speaker for clarification and repetition	◆		◆
b.	Paraphrase what speakers say to check understanding			◆
c.	Learn to relax before and during listening	◆		
d.	Encourage oneself to continue listening	◆		
* The symbol (◆) indicates the comprehension phase which can be facilitated by such practice.				
Goh, C.M. "A cognitive perspective on language learners' listening comprehension problems" in <i>System</i> 28 (2000), 72.				
Key terms:				
<i>Perceptual processing</i> : segmentation of phonemes from a continuous speech stream.				
<i>Parsing</i> : mental representations of the combined meaning of a group of words according to syntactic structures and cues.				
<i>Utilisation</i> : making inferences in order to interpret information to make it personally meaningful and/or to use the mental representation generated to reply to the speaker				

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