PRAC grant application cover sheet

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Project title: **Evaluation of Hybrid-Distance Elementary Spanish Courses**
Project dates: **August 2006 – June 2007**

Abstract:
   This project will evaluate a new hybrid version of an established televised section of Elementary Spanish I (S117) offered every Fall semester. Beginning this coming Fall semester, Spanish students will be able to choose the established distance learning course, which meets in person only for course orientation and testing, or choose a new hybrid version that will also meet face-to-face for regular class activities (albeit less frequently than traditional sections). This grant will go towards funding the collection of student outcome measures of language gain and satisfaction, comparing the results of students in both sections.

ASSESSMENT PROJECT PROPOSAL
Spanish Program
Department of World Languages and Cultures

Submitted by:
Kimmaree Murday, Assistant Professor of Spanish
Assessment project leader

➤ PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

I am requesting funding to evaluate a new hybrid version of an established distance-learning (televised) section of Elementary Spanish I (S117) offered every Fall semester. Beginning this coming Fall semester, students of Spanish will be able to choose the established televised course, which meets in person only for course orientation and testing, or choose a new hybrid version that will also meet face-to-face for regular class activities (although with a reduced class schedule compared to traditional sections). This grant will go towards funding the collection of student outcome measures of language gain and satisfaction, comparing the results of students in both sections, in order to determine if one or both types of course delivery should be expanded to help meet the increasing demand for Spanish courses at IUPUI. I have participated in the data collection and analysis of a similar project at Carnegie Mellon University, using these same data collection techniques, to provide formative and evaluative feedback that proved highly useful to the Language Online program. The nature of the two sections to be studied here at IUPUI, and of the data collection, is described in detail below.

➤ PROJECT RATIONAL AND DESCRIPTION:

Currently, students taking Elementary Spanish I or II (S117 or S118) can choose to take the course in a traditional, face-to-face section, or may choose to take a distance

learning section developed by Dr. Enrica Ardemagni of the Spanish Program. In the distance learning section, which provides room for 35 students (versus 26 in a traditional section), students are expected to keep pace with the course on their own. They are able to follow along with taped class sessions that are broadcast on cable television twice weekly, access these sessions online, or purchase a copy of the semester's classes in a multimedia format from the university bookstore. Assignments are completed and turned in via Oncourse email or otherwise mailed to the instructor. This section has provided the opportunity to take Spanish to students who otherwise may not be able to attend class twice per week. This section consistently has a long waitlist of students desiring to enroll.

Starting this fall, an additional non-traditional section will be added to the Spanish program offerings. This hybrid section will combine the distance-learning format with a reduced face-to-face schedule of 1-2 hours every **two** weeks (versus the traditional schedule of 3 class hours every week). The intent of this additional section is to accommodate students with special schedule restrictions who desire some amount of face-to-face class contact.

The students in both non-traditional sections, both distance and hybrid, will be using the same course materials (books, and recorded class lessons accessible via cable TV or online) and taking the same exams; both sections will be taught by the same instructor as well, provided staffing permits. The main difference between the two sections will be the addition of face-to-face class time, in place of certain assignments the distance students will complete on their own.

With this project, I will be comparing the language gain and satisfaction of students from both non-traditional sections, using the data collection techniques I helped develop for the Language Online project at Carnegie Mellon University, with Dr. Dick Hayes, Dr.

Ann Chenoweth, and Dr. Eiko Ushida. Students will complete both a general background survey and a pre-test at the beginning of the semester, which will establish their abilities in oral production, oral comprehension, grammar, vocabulary, reading, and writing Spanish. This pre-test is necessary because some students enter first-semester Spanish with some limited previous knowledge, others enter with extensive knowledge of related languages that may affect some Spanish language skills, while others enter as true beginners with no experience whatsoever with the language. Students will then take a post-test at the end of the semester, ideally dove-tailing with the course final exam, establishing their gains in these same areas of language by the end of the semester. In addition, data will be collected mid-semester and at the end of the semester establishing students' satisfaction with the course they have just completed, through surveys and brief interviews.

Data will be analyzed using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methodology. Background data will be utilized to establish the comparability of students enrolled in both sections, as they will be allowed to self-select into either section. Measures in language gain will be analyzed quantitatively, comparing pre- and post-test results for students in the hybrid section with gains by students in the distance-only section. Given a sufficient number of participants, a regression analysis may be performed to establish any background variables that may predict success and/or satisfaction. Qualitative data such as interviews will be used to help explain the quantitative results.

The data collected for this study will allow the Spanish program to evaluate not only student language gains in both formats, but also the necessity and advisability of continuing to offer a distance-learning Spanish course in both hybrid and true-distance formats. The evaluation of student language gains in technology-enhanced courses also

addresses the first Principle of Undergraduate Learning, Core Communication and Quantitative Skills. For example, in order to successfully complete this level, students must be able to express themselves in Spanish, communicate ideas in both written and oral formats, work with their classmates in non-traditional settings, and make use of technology for personal and professional needs. In addition to internal use of the findings, results will be shared with the field of language learning in the form of conference presentations and published articles. As has been established through my work with the hybrid online French and Spanish courses at Carnegie Mellon University, online and hybrid language courses are becoming increasingly available, and the progress of students in these two types of sections in of particular interest to the field of language acquisition. While at Carnegie Mellon University no true distance learning option existed, here at IUPUI we have an opportunity to examine the progress of students in both hybrid and true distance formats.

> PROPOSED SCHEDULE:

Data collection will begin the first week of the Fall 2006 semester, ideally during the orientation session for both sections. This will ensure that participants in both sections understand the nature of the section in which they are enrolled, and will exclude those students who plan to drop for some reason. Data collection will entail a brief background survey with basic demographic information, and the administration of the pre-test to establish participants' level of Spanish ability in reading, writing, oral comprehension, grammar and vocabulary at the beginning of the semester. Initial oral production levels will be established during the first month of class, via students' first oral assignment (included in their regular course assignment). Oral production data is not collected for

several weeks because students who are true beginners would have difficulty producing enough language to establish their abilities. Several participants will also be interviewed at mid-semester to gauge their reactions to the course up until that point.

Data collection will conclude at the end of the semester, and entail the administration of a post-test. Where possible items for the post-test will be extracted from the course final exam, which is common for all sections. Oral production will be established via use of any end-of-semester oral production assignments for the course. Items not able to be included in the course final will be administered as a separate post-test. Students will also complete an end-of-semester evaluation survey, and some will be interviewed in person to establish their satisfaction with their chosen course format. Final data collection will all take place during the month of December 2006. Data analysis will be conducted during the first two months of 2007, and the final report will be submitted by June 2007.

➢ BUDGET:

A total of $2500 is requested to compensate both participants and independent raters of the language data. Participants will be compensated for any data collection activities that are not part of the courses' regular assignments, including background surveys, the pre-test, interviews, and post-test items not included in the course final. Data will be analyzed by independent raters who will not have any familiarity with the students enrolled in the two sections; raters will be compensated for time spent training as well as time required to complete ratings. At least two independent raters will be utilized to establish reliability.