

Demystifying Blackboard: The case of the Intensive Spanish Program

C. Sanz, M. Morrison, M. Mascaró Llabrés, H. W. Bowden, & E. Francomano

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Abstract

Like most multi-section language programs, the Intensive Spanish Program has incorporated more and newer materials into its syllabi every year: feature films, video series, e-mail distribution lists, listening tapes, textbooks, workbooks, literary anthologies--and, of course, lots of xeroxed hand-outs, too. Blackboard has helped administrators, instructors, and students in this program optimize the use of this wide variety of materials while facilitating communication among all parties involved. This presentation will detail some of the solutions to technical and pedagogical problems encountered by users of Blackboard, and will provide examples of different uses and applications of Blackboard to the teaching of languages in multisection programs.

Introduction: Why and how was Blackboard implemented in the Intensive Spanish Program.

Goals

Enhance convenience: build a one-stop source of information for students and instructors that integrates all course documents

Promote information sharing: facilitate communication among students and instructors

Promote student autonomy

Optimize use of time

Classroom time: ~~administrative matters, mechanical practice, classroom management issues~~

Student's time: ~~lab hours, lab lines,~~ available everywhere 24/7

Teacher prep time & grading reduced

Administrators' time reduced: information is added rather than reorganized, typed, and copied every semester.

Reduce printing budget and save some trees: from \$2500+ to -\$70.

Procedure

The Technology Side

Issues

Blackboard 5 is geared towards the individual teacher rather than multiple sections of a single course
access

Bb does not facilitate *info sharing* across courses

Solutions

Intensive Basic Spanish

Basic Course organization (see h-0, p. 2 right)

Announcements

General course information: Information that students were likely to read only once (a letter from the directors, departmental policies, final grade component weighting)

Information on other course components: Example: compositions.

Assignments: Students can watch the video mini series Destinos online, anywhere, anytime, no need to go to the lab.

External links

Intensive Intermediate Spanish

Course Highlights

Online access to listening sections of the workbook

Next Fall: *Develop assessment* component

Online workbook: exercises with automatic feedback. (see h-o p. 3)

Intensive Advanced 1 & 2 (see h-o p. 4 left)

General Overview: Increased Production & Content

Course Highlights

Communication (see h-o p. 4 right)

Discussion board (Foro electrónico) (see h-o p. 5 left)

External links

Advanced 1 & 2: Specific examples

class announcements

distribution of materials

electronic forum (see h-o p. 5 right)

external links

Cuaderno de práctica (workbook) with answer key

Electronic grade sheet (see h-0 p. 6, 7 left)

The Teacher's Library (Materiales del Profesor)

What it is (see h-o, p. 7 right)

The library helps optimize use of time

Organization

Administrative stuff

Final remarks

LPD starts with needs assessment

Student evaluations have been well above mean

Students graduate from program and perform well abroad

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Instructors are comfortable teaching intensive courses
BUT delivery tools could be optimized, and Bb did the job
Very happy overall but "issues" remain to be solved

New version of Bb is coming out this summer

Transfer all MSWord docs to HTML

Group work in a big, diverse dept.: empower and integrate graduate students, instructors, & regular faculty to work towards a common goal, a tangible product

Technical support: Bettina Myers, Peter Janssens in the FLL Lab

Administrative support: Tom Walsh

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