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## Podcasting in a High School Spanish Language Class to Improve the Speaking Skill: An Action Research Study

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Using action research as a method of inquiry, a high school Spanish teacher undertook this study to understand how podcasting could be used to help improve students' Spanish speaking skills. Multiple sources of data collected and analyzed by the teacher-researcher in collaboration with her students and other collaborators reveal that the frequency and variety of carefully designed weekly podcasting assignments over time helped improve student speaking skills. This paper provides a framework of reference for other K-12 teachers as to how they could use new technologies successfully and understand the effects in their classrooms.

Speaking in the target language tends to be the most challenging aspect of second language learning and teaching (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986; Pichette, 2009). Speaking produces more anxiety for most students compared to other skills such as reading, writing, and listening. Contemporary approaches to second language learning emphasize challenges associated with reducing student anxiety in the classroom (Young, 1990; Frantzen & Magnan 2005, Pichette, 2009). For most students, however, the classroom teaching environment is the only opportunity to practice speaking in the target language. This limited opportunity to practice speaking coupled with student anxiety about speaking in the target language are challenges for both students and teachers of language. Concerned with improving students' Spanish speaking skills, this study is an account of Maggie Brennan Juana's experience using podcasting to aid students with speaking Spanish at the secondary level. Maggie is a high school Spanish teacher who teaches Advanced Placement Spanish and other upper-level honors courses at a suburban high school outside of New York City. Using the action research methodology (McNiff, Lomax, & Whitehead, 2003), the study was conducted to determine if and how the use of podcasting would help improve student speaking abilities. Maggie conducted this

study and wrote the article under the supervision of Dr. Deniz Palak while taking a course in a graduate degree program from New York Institute of Technology.

The word "podcast" resulted from the joining of the terms "iPod" and "broadcasting" (Cruz & Carvalho, 2007; Lim, 2005). According to the *New Oxford American Dictionary*, a podcast is "a digital recording of a radio broadcast or similar program, made available on the Internet for downloading to a personal audio player." The generally accepted definition has expanded to include the following: A podcast is a compressed digital multimedia file (audio or video) that is made available on the Internet for download and playback using a computer or a mobile device such as an iPod. A podcast file can also be uploaded to websites, linked to a blog, sent through email, or any other way that a traditional computer file can be shared (Fontichiaro, 2007). The most advantageous aspect of podcasts is their ease of distribution. They are not restricted to the iPod technology and are easily downloadable on any MP3 device or onto a computer. Any person with a mobile device such as an iPod or any other MP3 player can listen to these files anywhere once they download a podcast file onto their mobile device.

Considering the limited opportunities for practicing the speaking skill in her traditional classroom environment, Maggie considered using podcasts as a supplement to her already existing practice. She considered podcasting technology to help improve her students' Spanish speaking skills for three specific reasons: (1) podcasting made the distribution and sharing of audio files or recorded speech files extremely easy; (2) podcasting eased student anxiety about speaking in the target language and provided convenience as well as flexibility as to when and where students could listen and practice Spanish; and (3) podcasting suited the lifestyle of the 21<sup>st</sup> century students with its ease of distribution and flexibility of listening to audio and video anywhere at any time. It provided a great alternative to the traditional method of listening and recording audio within the four walls of a typical second language classroom environment.

Emerging research of this relatively new technology also supported her assumptions that podcasting has shown to improve pronunciation and speaking skills among college students (Lord, 2008). Despite its great potential to bridge the gap between the content delivery and the lifestyle of the students of the Millennial Generation across K-16, research is not yet available to help teachers gauge the benefits of podcasting when it is used in traditional K-12 teaching environments. Published research articles on the experience of using podcasting in a language class are few. Those who have used it consistently expressed benefits of podcasting such as improving student speaking skills and emphasized its ease of use (Johnson, 2008; Lim, 2005; Lum, 2006). High school and middle school science teachers have conducted studies indicating that podcasts increased student motivation, technical skills sets, and content knowledge in science (Piecka, Studnicki, & Zuckerman-Parker, 2008; Putman & Kingsley, 2009). Other studies conducted in the area of educational podcasting within college settings have focused on its use as a tool to supplement and support content delivery in traditional college lectures and e-learning environments (Ractham, 2006; Lee, McLoughlin, & Chan, 2008; Lord, 2008; Ormond, 2008; Parson, 2009; Oliver, Osborne, & Brady, 2009).

Charged by her concern about improving students' Spanish speaking skills and encouraged by the potentials of podcasting as a tool to help students improve the speaking skill, Maggie undertook the study. She conducted this action research study, in collaboration with her students and a colleague in her school, based on the action research framework modeled by Dr. Deniz Palak while taking a course taught by this instructor. To comply with the ethics of research, Maggie filed an IRB protocol and received permission from the parents, as well as the district, before conducting the study. We believe this study will contribute to the body of literature on action research conducted by K-12 classroom teachers themselves. Also, we believe the topic of the study, the use of educational podcasting in a language classroom, will help others who are trying to integrate this technology into their day-to-day practices.

## **The Research Context**

### **The Teacher**

Maggie Brennan Juana is a high school Spanish teacher who undertook this study in an Advanced Placement Spanish Language class during the school year of 2008-2009, over the course of two semesters. Though not a native speaker of Spanish, Maggie has been immersed in the Spanish language through her trips to Europe, Central and South America and at home with her native Spanish-speaking spouse. She has been teaching Spanish for nine years.

### **The Students**

The student participants of the inquiry were 10 seniors from an Advanced Placement Spanish class. All of these students have excelled at Spanish in the past and were responsible mature adults. They had engaging and intelligent commentary during the entire process. Extensive amounts of work were expected from them and they willingly complied. They provided interesting and informative feedback on the podcasting and oral recordings done as part of this research study.

### **The School**

This research was conducted at Blind Brook High School, a small high school located in an upper

middle class community outside of New York City. For the last five years, this high school has consistently been listed as one of the top 100 high schools in the nation by *Newsweek* magazine as well as *US News and World Report*. The high school also has an outstanding percentage of students going onto college. For the past 4 years, 99% of the students attended a 4-year university, with the remaining 1% going to 2-year universities.

## Methodology

The purpose of this study was to investigate how podcasting, as a medium of oral recording, helped improve students' Spanish speaking abilities in a 12th grade traditional face-to-face high school setting. The study started in November of 2008 and continued to May of 2009.

Making oral recordings by other traditional methods was an already existing practice in this particular language class. The use of other oral recording techniques, such as recording the student voices on cassette tapes and CDs had been used in the past. Cassette tapes were abandoned long ago, and were replaced by CDs. The CDs were slightly more convenient in terms of playback methods, but this method still required the teacher to carry them from one location to another. Recording on computer software such as *Audacity* in a computer language lab was a common practice for the last few years. Recording student voices using this software in the computer lab was much more convenient and reliable, yet still had many disadvantages. Recording in a lab took valuable class time. Also, the process of recording in a lab, in the presence of other students, created distraction since students could hear each other's voices while their own was being recorded. Podcasting, on the other hand, released class time for more learning and made recording and listening far more convenient and inexpensive for both the teachers and the students.

The *gcast* ([www.gcast.com](http://www.gcast.com)) was the website that was used to facilitate the sharing of weekly podcasts among students and the teacher. Students recorded their weekly podcasts over the phone. Recordings were then uploaded to and downloaded from this online podcasting site, where the teacher-researcher had created a secure account for student use. This account ensured the safety and privacy of the

students since it only allowed access to the members of this closed group. The students completed their podcasts by calling an 800 number associated with this website, usually on their mobile phones. When given the signal, they recorded their voices by speaking over the phone and then posting the recording to *gcast* afterward.

The current study included two types of oral recordings: podcast recordings done via *gcast* and *Audacity* recordings done in a language lab at school. The concept map displayed in Figure 1 captures the image of the action research design for both types of oral recordings. Once every two weeks, students completed a traditional recording in the language lab on *Audacity* software, as done in the past. These traditional lab recordings were done in a group setting during class time. Typically, the students were given a specific assignment, such as comparing and contrasting two similar Spanish stories or completing a "simulated conversation" with another recorded voice. They were given two minutes to speak as clearly, concisely, and fluently as possible in order to complete the assignment. By contrast, the weekly podcast recordings were to be completed over the weekend by phone at any location. The type of assignments for the podcast recordings were similar to the language lab recordings; they spoke for two minutes on such topics as comparing and contrasting different pieces of literature, videos, or news topics.

The purpose of these oral recordings was to improve students' speaking skills. To assess the extent to which students improved the speaking skill, two rubrics were developed for the different types of assignments (Appendix A & B). They were both based on the following criteria:

- Task Completion – This refers to how well the students answered the question or dealt with the prompt. In other words, did they answer the question or did they veer off onto another topic?
- Topic Development – This criterion referred to how well students developed the topic of the recording. If they discussed the topic in a thorough and relevant way, they were rated highly. In order to receive consistently high marks in this category, they also needed to:
  - (a) have a well-organized, cohesive, accurate response,

(b) synthesize the information from the sources, and not just simply restate or summarize the sources, and

(c) have appropriate cultural references.

- Language Use – This criterion measured their correct use of the Spanish language. In order to receive a high grade in this category, students needed to:

(a) use advanced grammatical structures with very few errors,

(b) include rich and precise vocabulary,

(c) have a high level of oral fluency with excellent pronunciation and the appropriate use of “register,” the manner in which one addresses one’s audience.

Although both rubrics are divided into the same three criteria, they also differ slightly. The differences in the two rubrics reflect the differences in the types of speech and language that are needed to effectively complete the different types of assignments. The rubric in Appendix A displays the criteria and scales of measurement that were used to assess “Interpersonal Oral Recordings.” The format of these recordings was meant to imitate casual, friendly speech. The rubric in Appendix B was used to assess the “Presentational Oral Recordings,” which were meant to imitate much more formal types of speeches and presentations.

After Maggie assessed each of the recordings using the appropriate rubric, she returned the feedback to the students before the next week’s assignment. This formative assessment model allowed the students to use this feedback as a way to recognize what they had not done well the previous week and improve upon it for the following recording.

The types of assignments given were Formal Presentations (FP), Informal Presentations (IP) and Simulated Conversations (SC). The Formal Presentations consisted of the students preparing for their recordings by reading two written documents and listening to one oral recording. Afterward, they were given two minutes to plan their presentation. After the two-minute planning time, they were given two minutes to make an oral recording-speaking as if they were giving an oral presentation to a specific audience. For example, the audience

could be the School Board in their town, their Spanish class, a town hall meeting, etc. In this recording, they had to synthesize the three previously mentioned sources in their presentation as well as add their own information and commentary. Because this was a formal presentation, the AP Rubric for Presentational Oral Recordings (Appendix B) was used to assess this type of lab or podcast recording.

Informal Presentations (IP) were much shorter and used less formal speech. They were spontaneous speeches regarding their opinion on a current event, a pseudo-phone mail message to a friend or a story they would tell regarding their vacation. These types of recordings required a different type of language skill, which is more informal and casual, but nevertheless is important to language development. A different rubric was necessary for this type of assignment. Therefore the AP Rubric of Interpersonal Oral Recordings was used to assess these informal presentations (Appendix A).

Simulated Conversations (SC) were assignments only completed in the language lab because they required the students to listen to an external CD as well as record their voices. The Simulated Conversation tried to simulate a real conversation by having the students listen to one side of a conversation on a CD, and then respond individually for approximately 20 seconds. Although the students were notified in advance of the topic to be discussed, they are expected to respond spontaneously to each exchange. This type of assignment was also considered to be informal speech and use informal language skills. Therefore the AP Rubric of Interpersonal Oral Recordings (Appendix A) was used here also.

The triangulation matrix below (Table 1) displays the major research question in relation to the criteria for measurement and sources of data. Multiple sources of data were collected to help Maggie examine the effects of her undertakings. In addition to the two rubrics that were used to assess different types of podcast recordings, Maggie used a researcher’s diary and pre/post student surveys. She used the research diary as a way of recording observations of student performance and note

Table 1: Triangulation Matrix

| Research Question   | Criteria   | Data Sources   |
|---|--|--|
| <p>What is the effect of podcasting to help improve student speaking abilities?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Task Completion:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student fully completes the task</li> <li>• Student refers to and integrates well outside sources into the oral presentation</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Topic Development:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Treatment of topic is relevant and thorough</li> <li>• Response is very well organized and cohesive</li> <li>• All or almost all information is accurate</li> <li>• Comparison and contrast of information significantly outweighs summary or mere quotations</li> <li>• Accurate social and/or cultural references included</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Language Use                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use and control of complex structures; very few errors with no patterns</li> <li>• Rich vocabulary used with precision</li> <li>• High level of fluency</li> <li>• Excellent pronunciation</li> <li>• Register is highly appropriate</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two rubrics that assessed the speaking skill</li> <li>• Researcher’s diary</li> <li>• Pre and Post student survey</li> <li>• University collaborators</li> <li>• Student discussions</li> </ul> |

students’ comments and claims about the tools they used. She also used the diary to record questions or comments on the study to be later discussed with Deniz. The surveys were distributed both at the beginning of the research study and the end. At the beginning of the research process, the “Pre-Research Student Survey” (Appendix C) was filled out by the students in order to gauge their opinions of their abilities. The purpose of the survey was to have the students consider their strengths and weaknesses in Spanish. This survey queried the students on many aspects of their Spanish abilities, including their speaking, reading, writing and listening abilities, as well as their grammar, their ability to express their ideas and their anxiety in recording their voice. The pre-research survey gave a basis for comparison for the post-research survey (Appendix D) given at the end of the school year.

### Implementation

Podcast recording assignments were given

every Friday, and they were to be completed at home over the weekend. The format and subject matter of the podcast differed from week to week, but included formal presentations (FP) based on multiple sources, such as newspaper articles, other podcasts, short stories, and magazine articles. Informal presentations (IP) included the expression of personal opinions on current events, such as pseudo answering machine recordings. For both of these assignments, students were given a prompt on a specific topic and then were expected to record a podcast using vocabulary related to the prompt.

Occasionally, after making their recordings, the students were instructed to go back to the website and listen to the podcasts of their classmates. Afterward, there would be a class discussion on what they learned or what they heard in the podcasts of their classmates. High school students were extremely uncomfortable with this aspect of podcasting due to the sensitive nature of one student giving their

opinion of the performance of another student. To help aid the process, Maggie created guidelines as to what format the commentary should take. She required students to state two positive comments and one constructive criticism. Although the students found it very difficult to listen and comment on to other students' recordings, the process proved itself to be highly beneficial. The opportunity to reflect on another podcast affected their opinion on the quality of their own podcast. When the students listened to themselves, they self-evaluated how well they had answered the questions and how thoroughly they had completed the assignment. When they listened to others' voices, they were able to analyze how well the other student had accomplished the task and how thoroughly they had discussed the same prompt.

## Results

The purpose of this study was to assess how the use of podcasting in this high school Spanish Language class helped improve the student's speaking skills in the target language. To assess the extent to which podcasting helped improve the speaking skills of the students, Maggie evaluated student performances in the following three criteria: (1) Task Completion, (2) Topic Development, and (3) Language Use. The results of the study are reported below based on these criteria.

The Task Completion criteria received the highest ratings for all 10 students throughout the implementation of this action research study. Task Completion refers to whether the student had fully addressed the task as it was assigned, and if they had incorporated all the sources that were indicated. All 10 students scored very highly in understanding, completing, and thoroughly addressing the topics, as well as integrating the sources into their recordings. As for the other two criteria, Topic Completion and Language Use, the overall improvement from the podcasting recording assignments differed from student to student. The improvement was most visible for six out of the ten students. For example, Student #3 started the study with 30 total

points on the first assignment and finished the year with a 50 on the last assignment, reflecting a 66% improvement for that student. In addition to student #3, five other students improved by 45 – 65% range. The other four students have less dramatic improvements, reflecting their higher degree of ability at the start of the study, continuing to the end.

A closer examination of students' scores also revealed an incidental finding, which Maggie had not anticipated at the beginning of the study. The underlying assumption to use podcasting in this particular classroom was to simply increase the frequency of oral recordings. Maggie assumed that this increase would give students more opportunities to practice Spanish, and thus help them improve the speaking skill. However, the examination of results revealed that *the medium of oral recording was just as important as the frequency of recording*. When the students completed their oral recordings in the language lab via computer software, they were more nervous, uncomfortable, and received lower grades. They made comments such as "I feel like everyone is listening to me," "I can only hear Johnny talking, but I can't hear myself!" and "Hearing everyone else speak at the same time is really distracting." However, when they completed their recordings via podcasts, students produced higher quality recordings. Podcasting removed distractions from the environment and put their anxieties about speaking a second language at ease, which supported them in receiving better grades on their recordings.

Maggie shared this incidental finding with the students at the end of the study. None were surprised. They were unanimous in their opinions of how much the podcasting helped their speaking abilities in a positive way. Students described how much more comfortable they were speaking into their cell phones, in the privacy of their own homes. The improvement of the speaking skill was evident in the student commentary. One student said, "my Spanish just exploded this year." All ten who ranked their speaking ability lower than the other three skills (listening, reading, and



writing) in the pre-research study (Appendix C), rated their speaking just as good or better than the other three skills in the post-research survey (Appendix D).

The evidence in the data collectively pointed to the fact that podcasting as a medium of digital recording technology facilitated the improvement of the speaking skill. It eased student anxiety about speaking in the target language. In each of the data sources, the theme of greater confidence in students' speaking ability was repeated. In the pre-research survey conducted with the students, the students rated their abilities in four categories: grammar, accent, fluidity, and ability to express their ideas. At the end of the study, students rated themselves in the same categories. Without exception, each student indicated they had improved in each item. They commented on the fact that doing the speaking at home gave them confidence to do it in front of others. They stated that podcasting gave them the opportunity to express more complex ideas in a target language rather than simply answering classroom questions for more than just a few sentences. One student said, "Before I spoke very haltingly, now I feel like I am more fluid and can express my ideas better." Another student said, "podcasting helped me greatly with things like transition words, making my speech more connected and smooth." Overall, it was a very positive experience, which they highly recommended to be incorporated into all the classes for next year.

Maggie's journal entries taken in the midst of the research process indicated her doubts as to the effectiveness of podcast recordings aiding the student's speaking abilities. Here are some examples of those comments that reflected her doubts during the research process: "How will I be able to compare the results of these students, if the improvement I see is simply due to the increase in *frequency* of recordings, and not the act of podcasting itself?" "Is recording your voice over the phone in the privacy of a bedroom truly a realistic way of practicing speaking in Spanish?" But after the post-research study survey and extensive

conversations with the students and Deniz, the teacher-researcher confidently arrived at the conclusion that podcasting was beneficial to improving the Spanish speaking abilities. This was true because podcasting provided not only additional practice but also eased student anxiety and boosted student confidence about speaking in the target language.

The Advanced Placement (AP) Spanish Language exam, written and administered nationwide by the College Board in May of every year, provided factual support for these findings. A comparison of the AP test scores between those students who used podcasting in May of 2009 to those who did not in the previous two years revealed a 20 percent increase between the two years. The podcasting group had an average score of 4.2 (out of 5) in comparison to non-podcast group with a 3.6 (out of 5) average.

## Conclusions

According to Schwab (1973), there are four commonplaces of educating – Teaching, Learning, Curriculum and Social Matrix, which later will be referred to as Governance. Schwab believed that each commonplace was a piece of the educating puzzle, together forming the shared experience of the teacher, student, and social milieu. Like many others (Gowin, 1981; Gowin & Alvarez, 2005; Novak & Gowin, 1984; Novak, 1998; Novak, 2010), we used these commonplaces as a "check list" to explain and understand the effectiveness our intervention: use of podcasting in this second language classroom.

### Commonplace #1 - Teaching

As a language teacher, Maggie had been puzzled by the challenges involved in teaching the speaking skill. Historically, speaking was the lowest scoring section of all the standardized tests that her students took over the course of their high school years. As a result, she decided to use podcasting as a means of increasing the frequency of oral recordings and student practice of the speaking skill. Because students completed the podcasts assignments at home or elsewhere at one's own



pace, it freed class time for other valuable language work and increased the frequency of student oral practice. Also, podcasting, as a medium of oral recording, has been found to be more beneficial to the students compared to other traditional media. It suited the life style of the Millennial Generation, eased student anxiety about speaking in the target language, and facilitated self-reflection and improvement.

### **Commonplace #2 - Learning**

Through the student completion of weekly podcast assignments, receiving formative feedback about their work, and classroom discussions of the podcasting assignments, students were able to improve their speaking skills on a continuous basis. They were able to discuss techniques that aided them in speaking, and they were able to employ those techniques the following week in the next assignment. The students indicated that clarity in the assessment criteria delineated in the rubrics and classroom discussions on the podcasts assignments guided them in the areas where they needed to improve. Students were able to see that they accomplished the task, but that they still needed to incorporate one or two sub-areas associated with a criterion. The process of formative assessment guided them to know where they were and what improvement was needed for the following assignment.

The medium of oral recording, podcasting, proved also to be thoroughly enjoyable to the students. The privacy of the podcasting at home greatly improved their confidence level about speaking in the target language. By proving to themselves that they could do it at home alone, they were more confident and less nervous to speak in class. Students greatly improved their accent and pronunciation - indicated by both their self-assessments as well as the teacher assessments. Podcasting allowed the students to speak for a full two minutes comfortably about a topic, rather than what was typical done in class, which was to answer a question in only a few sentences. This extended amount of speaking time, coupled

with the comfort and ease of this medium, helped students improve fluency and their ability to express themselves.

### **Commonplace #3 - Curriculum**

The incorporation of podcasting has been so successful, convenient and inexpensive, that it has clearly changed the speaking aspect of this advanced Spanish curriculum. Through this study, Maggie is now able to move away from just hoping the students could express their ideas coherently by the end of the year, to being able to “tweak” their speaking skills to improve them in specific ways. Rather than listening for grammar errors twice monthly as done in the past, the teacher-researcher is now able to apply the appropriate, specific rubric to the weekly recording assignment. This increase in frequency as well as the addition of the detailed rubric has changed the way speaking is taught. Rather than being the most difficult second language skill, it has become the skill that is most improved. Maggie’s teaching curriculum now includes weekly podcasts.

### **Commonplace #4- Governance**

This study positively affected communication and collaboration between Maggie and her students, as well as Maggie and her colleagues at school. We shared, analyzed, and made sense of the data together. We were able to “unpack” what it is that we were trying to improve and how we progressed in improve it. The improvement of student scores on the Advanced Placement exam at the end of the year came as a by-product of our conversations and efforts.

## **Implications**

As a result of this action research project, Maggie will incorporate podcasting into every level of Spanish taught. On a more personal note, she has found success lay not only on the technology used in the classroom but also in many of the techniques incorporated in the course of this inquiry. Pre-determining and communicating the criteria for success with students was one. Sharing data obtained on student performance on these criteria and their opinions was another. For example, presenting

student progress in graphs and sharing this visual data representation with students was a very powerful motivator to show students their growth in specific areas. In the future, students will be given their own personal graph at the end of the year showing them their improvement or lack thereof.

If this study were to be repeated, Maggie would continue to integrate the different formats of oral recordings such as Formal Presentations, Informal Presentations and Simulated Conversations. Yet, in order to effectively compare the results of each format, there needs to be more consistency in the total number of assignments in each category. Additionally, all assignments could be labeled in a more clear fashion, so as to be able to refer to them more easily when analyzing the data. Finally, Maggie will be better prepared to deal with technological problems experienced from time to time due to the open-source podcasting technology used in this study. Although *gcast.com* as an open-source free podcasting technology, it was no longer available as of Feb. 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010. There are numerous other podcasting websites, such as *podbean.com*, *mypodcast.com* and *lifehacker.com*, which are available for use.

Maggie is continuing her research in how to create more effective and well-designed podcasts. As Villano (2008) stated, “while anyone can podcast, creating podcasts with true academic value can be tough.” Further concentration will be made in the future on improving the assignments to make them even more student-centered and formative in orientation. Students will listen to each other’s podcasts far more often; group podcasts will be recorded - leading to group discussions; and additional genres of podcasts will be included, such as mock radio shows, music recordings or skits. The possibilities for podcasting in a second language classroom are only limited by the creativity and willingness of the teacher.

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**Appendix A:**

**AP RUBRIC FOR INTERPERSONAL ORAL RECORDINGS\***

| SCORE | DESCRIPTION   | TASK COMPLETION  | TOPIC DEVELOPMENT  | LANGUAGE USE  |
|-------|---|--|--|---|
| 5     | <b>HIGH</b><br>A speech sample that <i>demonstrates excellence</i> in Interpersonal Speaking accomplishes the following:  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fully addresses and completes the task</li> <li>• Responds fully and appropriately to all or almost all of the parts/prompts of the conversation</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relevant, thorough treatment of all/almost all elements of the thread of the conversation</li> <li>• Very well-organized and cohesive responses</li> <li>• Accurate social and/or cultural references included</li> </ul>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use and control of complex structures, very few errors</li> <li>• Rich vocabulary used with precision</li> <li>• High level of fluency</li> <li>• Excellent pronunciation</li> <li>• Register is highly appropriate</li> </ul>   |
| 4     | <b>MID-HIGH</b><br>A speech sample that <i>demonstrates command</i> in Interpersonal Speaking accomplishes the following: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriately addresses and completes the task</li> <li>• Responds appropriately to all or almost all of the parts/prompts of the conversation</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relevant, well-developed treatment of the elements of the thread of the conversation</li> <li>• Well-organized and generally cohesive responses</li> <li>• Generally accurate social and/or cultural references included</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of complex structures, but may contain more than a few errors</li> <li>• Very good vocabulary</li> <li>• Very good fluency</li> <li>• Very good pronunciation</li> <li>• Register is appropriate</li> </ul>  |
| 3     | <b>MID</b><br>A speech sample that <i>demonstrates competence</i> in Interpersonal Speaking accomplishes the following:   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Addresses and completes the task</li> <li>• Responds adequately to most parts/prompts of the conversation</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relevant treatment of the elements of the thread of the conversation</li> <li>• Organized responses with adequate cohesiveness</li> <li>• Generally appropriate social and/or cultural references included</li> </ul>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Control of simple structures, with few errors</li> <li>• Good range of vocabulary, but may have interference from another language</li> <li>• Good fluency with occasional hesitance</li> <li>• Good pronunciation</li> <li>• Register is generally appropriate</li> </ul> |

|   |   |  |   |   |
|---|---|--|---|---|
| 2 | <p>MID-LOW<br/>A speech sample that <i>suggests lack of competence</i> in Interpersonal Speaking can be described as the following:</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Partially addressees and/or completes the task</li> <li>● Responds inappropriately to some parts/prompts of the conversation</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● May have irrelevant treatment of the elements of the thread of the conversation</li> <li>● Responses may have inadequate organization</li> <li>● Inaccurate social and/or cultural references may be included</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Limited control of simple structures, with errors</li> <li>● Narrow range of vocabulary</li> <li>● Labored expression, minimal fluency</li> <li>● Fair pronunciation which may affect comprehension</li> <li>● Register inappropriate</li> </ul> |
| 1 | <p>LOW<br/>A speech sample that <i>demonstrates lack of competence</i> in Interpersonal Speaking can be described as the following:</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Does not complete the task.</li> <li>● Responds inappropriately to most parts/prompts of the conversations</li> </ul>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Irrelevant treatment of the elements of the thread of the conversation</li> <li>● Responses may be disorganized</li> <li>● Inaccurate social and/or cultural references included</li> </ul>                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Frequent errors in use of structures</li> <li>● Few vocabulary resources</li> <li>● Little to no fluency</li> <li>● Poor pronunciation impedes comprehension</li> <li>● Minimal to no attention to register</li> </ul>                           |
| 0 | <p>A speech sample that receives this score may be blank, off-task, completely irrelevant to the topic, spoken in a language other than Spanish or a mere verbatim restatement of what the interlocutor has said.</p> |  |   |   |

\* Courtesy of the College Board, AP Spanish Language

**Appendix B:**

**AP RUBRIC FOR PRESENTATIONAL ORAL RECORDINGS**

| SCORE | DESCRIPTION   | TASK COMPLETION  | TOPIC DEVELOPMENT  | LANGUAGE USE   |
|-------|---|--|--|--|
| 5     | HIGH<br>A speech sample that <i>demonstrates excellence</i> in Presentational Speaking accomplishes the following:  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fully addresses and completes the task</li> <li>Refers to and integrates well both sources into the oral presentation.</li> </ul>                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Treatment of topic is relevant and thorough</li> <li>Response is very well organized and cohesive</li> <li>All or almost all information is accurate</li> <li>Comparison and contrast of information significantly outweighs summary or mere quotations</li> <li>Accurate social and/or cultural references included</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use and control of complex structures; very few errors with no patterns</li> <li>Rich vocabulary used with precision</li> <li>High level of fluency</li> <li>Excellent pronunciation</li> <li>Register is highly appropriate</li> </ul>   |
| 4     | MID-HIGH<br>A speech sample that <i>demonstrates command</i> in Presentational Speaking accomplishes the following: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appropriately addresses and completes the task</li> <li>Refers to and integrates both sources into the oral presentation.</li> </ul>                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Treatment of topic is relevant and well developed</li> <li>Response is well organized and generally cohesive</li> <li>Information is generally accurate</li> <li>Comparison and contrast of information outweighs summary or mere quotations</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use of complex structures; but may contain more than a few errors</li> <li>Very good vocabulary</li> <li>Very good fluency</li> <li>Very good pronunciation</li> <li>Register is appropriate</li> </ul>   |
| 3     | MID<br>A speech sample that <i>demonstrates competence</i> in Presentational Speaking accomplishes the following:   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Addresses and completes the task</li> <li>Integrates one of the sources into the oral presentation, with some or little reference to the other source.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Treatment of topic is relevant</li> <li>Response is organized with adequate cohesiveness</li> <li>Information is generally accurate, although there may be some inaccuracy or lack of precision</li> <li>Summary or mere quotations of information may outweigh comparison and contrast.</li> <li>Generally appropriate social and/or cultural references included</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Control of simple structures with few errors; may use complex structures with little or no control</li> <li>Good range of vocabulary, but may have occasional interference from another language</li> <li>Good fluency with occasional hesitance; some successful self-correction</li> <li>Good pronunciation</li> <li>Register is generally appropriate</li> </ul> |

|   |   |   |   |  |
|---|---|---|---|--|
| 2 | <p>MID-LOW<br/>A speech sample that <i>suggests lack of competence</i> in Presentational Speaking can be described as the following:</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Partially addressees and/or completes the task</li> <li>● May refer to only one of the sources into the oral presentation</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Treatment of topic may be irrelevant</li> <li>● Response may be inadequately organized</li> <li>● Information may be limited or inaccurate</li> <li>● There is little comparison and contrast of the information.</li> <li>● Inaccurate social and/or cultural references may be included</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Limited control of simple structures, with errors</li> <li>● Narrow range of vocabulary; frequent interference from another language may occur</li> <li>● Labored expression; minimal fluency</li> <li>● Fair pronunciation, may affect comprehension</li> <li>● Register may be appropriate</li> </ul> |
| 1 | <p>LOW<br/>A speech sample that <i>demonstrates lack of competence</i> in Presentational Speaking can be described as the following:</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Does not complete the task.</li> <li>● Refers poorly to only one of the sources into the oral presentation.</li> </ul>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Treatment of topic is irrelevant</li> <li>● Response is disorganized</li> <li>● Information is very limited and mainly inaccurate</li> <li>● There may be no comparison and contrast of the information.</li> <li>● Inaccurate social and/or cultural references included</li> </ul>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Frequent errors in use of structures</li> <li>● Few vocabulary resources; constant interference from another language</li> <li>● Little to no fluency</li> <li>● Poor pronunciation impedes comprehension</li> <li>● Minimal to no attention to register</li> </ul>                                     |
| 0 | <p>A speech sample that receives this score may be blank, off-task, completely irrelevant to the topic, spoken in a language other than Spanish or a mere verbatim restatement of what the interlocutor has said.</p> |   |   |  |

\* Courtesy of the College Board, AP Spanish Language



**Appendix C:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Pre-Research Study**  
**Student Survey**

Directions: Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability, evaluating yourself on a scale of 1 – 10. Please remember that your participation in this survey is entirely voluntary, and will only be used for the purposes of the Action Research Study.

On a scale of 1 – 10, with 1 being terrible, 5 being average and 10 being outstanding, how would you describe:

- 1. Your grammar in Spanish (either written or spoken) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Your accent and pronunciation in Spanish \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Your ability to comfortably express your ideas in Spanish \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. Your fluidity or rate of speech \_\_\_\_\_

On a scale of 1 – 10, with 1 being not at all nervous, 5 being averagely nervous and 10 being extremely nervous, how would you rate the following?

- 1. How do you feel about speaking out loud in Spanish? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. How do you feel about recording your voice in Spanish? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. How do you feel about listening to your voice recording? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. How nervous do you think everyone else in the class is? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. How nervous are you to listen to other student's recordings? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. How nervous are you to do any type of public speaking, in either your native language or Spanish? \_\_\_\_\_

If you had to give yourself an overall rating of your abilities, with 1 being very limited, 5 being average and 10 being extremely talented, what number would you assign the following general categories?

- 1. Speaking \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Listening \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Writing \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. Reading \_\_\_\_\_

*Please go onto next page.*

Have you had any experience speaking Spanish to a native speaker?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ \*

No \_\_\_\_\_

\* If yes, when did you have this experience and how long did it last?

Have you ever traveled to a Spanish speaking country?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ \*

No \_\_\_\_\_

\* If yes, how much time did you spend there?

Do you have any *other* foreign language experience, other than Spanish? Please explain.

Do you consider yourself a creative person in any way?

*Thank you for your participation.*

**Appendix D:**

**Post Research Study**  
**Student Self Evaluation of Spanish Speaking Skills**

Directions: Now that our research study is over, please take a few minutes to evaluate your speaking skills in Spanish. Please remember that your participation in this survey is entirely voluntary and will only be used for the purpose of our action research study.

1. Do you feel your Spanish **accent and pronunciation** has improved since Sept. of 2008?

Yes

No

If yes, please indicate on a scale of 1 – 10 how much you think they have improved, with 1 being a very slight improvement, 5 being average or customary yearly improvement and 10 being extremely improved. Circle the appropriate number.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

2. Do you feel your Spanish **grammar and vocabulary** has improved (within the speaking skill) since Sept. of 2008?

Yes

No

If yes, please indicate on a scale of 1 – 10 how much you think they have improved, with 1 being a very slight improvement, 5 being average or customary yearly improvement and 10 being extremely improved. Circle the appropriate number.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

3. Do you feel your Spanish **fluidity or rate of speech** has improved since Sept. of 2008?

Yes

No

If yes, please indicate on a scale of 1 – 10 how much you think they have improved, with 1 being a very slight improvement, 5 being average or customary yearly improvement and 10 being extremely improved. Circle the appropriate number.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

4. Do you feel your Spanish **ability to express your ideas** has improved since Sept. of 2008?

Yes

No

If yes, please indicate on a scale of 1 – 10 how much you think they have improved, with 1 being a very slight improvement, 5 being average or customary yearly improvement and 10 being extremely improved. Circle the appropriate number.

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

5. Overall, do you feel your Spanish speaking abilities have improved since September of 2008?

Yes

No

If yes, please indicate on a scale of 1 – 10 how much you think it has improved, with 1 being a very slight improvement, 5 being average or customary yearly improvement and 10 being extremely improved. Circle the appropriate number.

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

6. Do you have any other comments?