General Education Annual Course Assessment Form

Course Number/Title _______ SPAN 25B  GE Area ___________ C2

Results reported for AY: Spring 2013  # of sections: 1  # of instructors: 1

Course Coordinator: Juan Sempere  E-mail: jsempere@email.sjsu.edu

Department Chair: Damian Bacich  College: Humanities and Arts

Instructions: Each year, the department will prepare a brief (two page maximum) report that documents the assessment of the course during the year. This report will be electronically submitted, by the department chair, to the Office of Undergraduate Studies, with an electronic copy to the home college by September 1 of the following academic year.

Part 1

To be completed by the course coordinator:

(1)  What SLO(s) were assessed for the course during the AY?

SLO 3: Letters courses will enable students to write clearly and effectively. Writing shall be assessed for correctness, clarity, and conciseness.

(2)  What were the results of the assessment of this course? What were the lessons learned from the assessment?

There was a diagnostic test that included a dictation, a composition and a multiple choice online test. The formative assessment is an ongoing process with daily compositions and peer editing. For the summative assessment the main instrument has been the extended term paper.

The extended composition for the term paper (a research project including a bibliography) constitutes an excellent tool to teach correctness, conciseness and clarity. The students write a draft first and turn it over to the instructor who corrects the draft with key words on the margins, including observations on spelling, stress, grammar, stylistics and other aspects such as citation or quoting. At this point the students receive a grade for the composition. After the students have addressed all the corrections, they turn in the second and definitive version and they receive a second grade. The final grade is the average of the two grades obtained.

These students are learning a foreign language and their prose is riddled with lexical and syntactic interference from English, their language of education. Sometimes their mistakes originate from a faulty preparation in the elementary Spanish courses they took previously. Therefore, clarity and correctness is a lofty objective not always achieved due to the special circumstances implied when writing in a foreign language. The assessment activities demonstrate that students have special difficulties in the area of grammar. This is most conspicuous in the errors regarding the subjunctive-indicative mood, the use of the imperfect versus the preterit aspect, the stress system and the conjugational morphology in Spanish.

For SLO 3, the level of correctness will probably continue to be commensurate with the level of the course. The intermediate mid level of competency on the ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) rating scale expects “Discrete sentences and strings of sentences”. Our challenge will be to move this to the advanced level of “Paragraph discourse”. Both daily short compositions and the extended
composition should help in our goal to achieve correctness in writing. Out of 18 students tested, only one could not achieve the threshold for writing at the Intermediate Spanish level.

The lessons learned from the assessment are that as long as we acknowledge for “correctness” in writing the difference that exists between writing in English and writing in a foreign language with the formal preparation of only three semesters, we will be able to assess realistically the outcomes of this course. Therefore, the reservations about achieving correctness in writing in this course can be allayed as long as we accept the aforementioned expectations contained in ACTFL for intermediate writing in foreign languages.

(3) What modifications to the course, or its assessment activities or schedule, are planned for the upcoming year? (If no modifications are planned, the course coordinator should indicate this.)

I plan to emphasize the peer editing aspect of the course next year in order to involve students more actively in their own perception of what constitutes correctness, clarity and conciseness at the Intermediate Spanish level. Thus students will take an active part in self-evaluation as well as in the evaluation of their peers’ writing.

Part 2

To be completed by the department chair (with input from course coordinator as appropriate):

(4) Are all sections of the course still aligned with the area Goals, Student Learning Objectives (SLOs), Content, Support, and Assessment? If they are not, what actions are planned?

Yes, the sections of the course are aligned with the area Goals, the SLOs, Content, Support and Assessment.

Damian Bacich, Chair, Department of World Languages and Literatures