

Improving Oral Reading Skills Through Topic Engagement

Students Spanish 04 Fall 2013
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Spanish 04

- Spanish 04 is the final Spanish course for the general education program, and is a gateway course to the minor/major Spanish programs.
- The main goal for Spanish 04 is:
 - to help students develop listening comprehension, speaking, reading and writing skills in Spanish.

Project Main Goals

- Because of suggestions from my students, we developed a project to improve their oral reading skills in Spanish.
- This project looked for a more expressive oral reading as a result of giving the students the ownership of the project and engaging them with the topic.
- This project concentrated in reading aloud. In addition, it broadened its benefits for other skills, such as understanding, speaking, analyzing and writing.
- The instructor's role was guiding and supporting the students' activity.

Project Activities

- 1- The students were required to suggest a topic of research for this project: Death penalty in the USA.
- 2- The students were required to suggest an opinion article (in Spanish) about this topic: “Death penalty, worthless penalty” by journalist Jorge Ramos.
- 3- Students and instructor practiced in class to read the article aloud, and corrected some problems with the diction.
- 4- Students and instructor designed a rubric to evaluate the students’ oral reading skills (**see rubric**).

Appendix 2

University of California Merced Rubric to evaluate oral reading skills

	Excellent 25 Points	Good 20 Points	Basic 15 Points	Poor 10 Points
Volume	It can be heard by all in the audience	Volume gets lower with difficult to pronounce words	Speaks softly, it's difficult to be heard	It is completed hard to understand what is being read.
Fluidity	Reads without hesitation	Hesitates in no more than four difficult to pronounce or unknown words	Omission of more than four syllables or words.	Lacks expression and fluency. Constant Stuttering
Intonation	Voice tone to emphasize important content.	Follow text punctuation fairly well, but lacks intonation.	Speaks in a monotone way.	Do no change tone where appropriate
Vocalization	Articulates words clearly. Exceeds pronunciation. Makes distinction between vowels, consonants and syllables.	Articulates most words clearly. Makes distinction between most vowels, consonants and syllables. 1 to 5 wrong	Makes mistakes in pronunciation of vowels, consonants and syllables 6 to 10 wrong	Mumbles words. It is difficult to understand More than 10 wrong.

Project Activities

- 5- Students recorded an audio file of a previously selected paragraph of the article, and uploaded it in an online resource folder, assigned for this purpose.
- 6- The instructor listened to the recordings and use the rubric to appraise vocalization, intonation, fluidity and volume.
- 7- The instructor wrote reports to provide general and individual feedback to the students, answered questions, made suggestions and adjustments.

Project Activities – Second Part

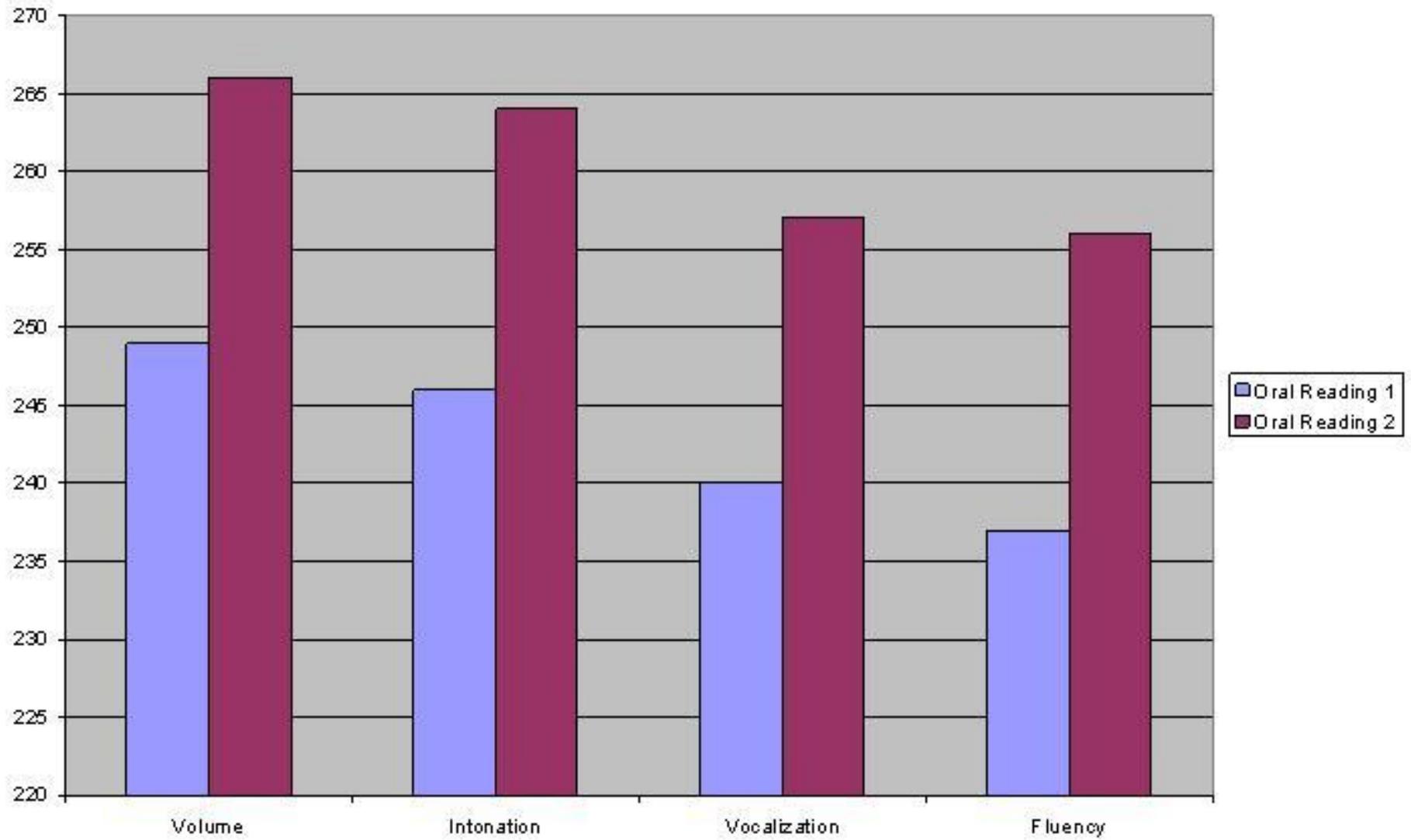
- 8- Students and instructor designed a guideline to analyze the selected article.**
- 9- Students wrote comments about the selected article and shared them with the class to get feedback.**
- 10- Students wrote the final analysis of the article, and recorded an audio file with their conclusions. Then uploaded it in an online resource folder, assigned for this purpose.**

Assessing the results

- 1- The instructor listened to the recordings and use the rubric to appraise vocalization, intonation, fluidity and volume.
- 2- The instructor wrote reports to provide general and individual feedback to the students, answered questions, made suggestions and adjustments.
- 3- At the end of the activity, the instructor assessed the change between the two oral reading activities (**see chart**).

Appendix 7

Two Oral Reading Activities



Assessing the results

4- The students listened to both recordings, and wrote a paragraph in which they reflected on their progress in pronunciation, comprehension, writing and analysis.

Results

“Recording my own oral reading helps me because I can listen to myself”

“Using a rubric helps me to focus in the aspects I need to work with”

“Even though I don’t find difficult to read a paragraph from a professional text, I really enjoyed recording my own opinions”

“This project not only helped me to grow in oral skills but also engaged me with relevant topics for our society”

Conclusions

- Allowing the students to record their oral reading in private, as many times as they want, until they feel comfortable with the final results, reduce their level of anxiety.
- Comparing the two recordings and writing a reflection about the changes between them help the students recognize their own progress, if any.
- Engaging students to be part of the decision making and giving them the ownership of the activity, encourages a participatory classroom environment and creates a Student Centered Classroom environment.

Conclusions

As a result of this context, the students achieve a refinement of vocalization, intonation, pronunciation, fluidity and volume.

Thus, we can perceive that it is possible to improve oral reading skills through the learner's engagement with the topic; and that the students create knowledge in an active way, through their own experiences and practice (MacLellan 254).