



## Marilyn Palatinus, M.A.

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### Challenges

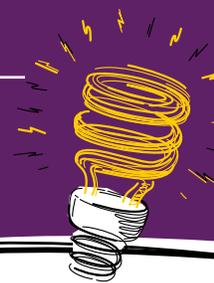
- Language students need abundant practice to learn vocabulary and grammar fundamentals.
- Instructors are always seeking creative ways to engage students.
- Some instructors are hesitant to try online resources, concerned that set-up may be complex and that the learning curve may be high.

### Solutions

- iLrn Language Learning Center
- Robert Hershberger, Susan Navey-Davis, and Guiomar Borrás A.'s *Plazas*, 4th Edition

### Results

- Varied iLrn activities and resources promote student engagement and development of communication competence.
- iLrn integrates appealing images, videos, and access to online resources such as Google Maps, facilitating the inclusion of cultural information that provides meaningful context to students' language-learning experience.



## Success Story

### iLrn™ Gives Spanish Students the Grounding They Need in Grammar, Culture, and Communication

More than 3,000 students take Spanish every year at Pellissippi State Community College, and program coordinator Marilyn Palatinus wants every one of them to be engaged — and to learn. Ensuring that instructors have the tools and support they need is also on the agenda, and Marilyn and her colleagues count on Cengage Learning. “My faculty really likes *Plazas* and iLrn™, and the customer service from Cengage Learning is excellent,” she says.

For Marilyn, teaching Spanish effectively means balancing development of communication skills with the fundamental mechanics of the language. “Many students don’t understand grammar at all,” she says. “Students need practice in grammar, and then they need to apply it in conversation. We like iLrn’s varied communicative activities, and we also appreciate the grammar. iLrn gives students an opportunity to practice what they are learning in real-life scenarios.”

### Guided Grammar Practice — Rich Cultural Material

iLrn’s structure and online layout make it easy for students to receive guidance as they learn and practice. “Students can see examples related to a grammar exercise — such as the conjugation of a verb — while they complete the exercise on the same screen. They don’t have to flip back and forth between different screens,” says Marilyn. “Students have improved their knowledge of vocabulary and pronunciation because they can click on a Spanish word in the eBook and hear it spoken by a native speaker.” When students complete an activity in iLrn, they can link to resources such as grammar tutorials and instructional videos that will help them review. They can also submit their answers and immediately see their score as well as their correct and incorrect responses.

Integrating cultural information to provide context and engage students is common in language courses, and iLrn provides an ideal environment by integrating compelling visuals and multimedia resources. “iLrn certainly helps students learn more about the culture of Spanish-speaking countries, and especially culture and diversity, which we emphasize. We also use Google Maps because many students don’t know where all the Spanish-speaking countries are located,” explains Marilyn. “We’re particularly excited that the new edition will incorporate materials from National Geographic. Students will get a broader view of Spanish-speaking cultures through National Geographic’s videos, articles, and images. We have been working hard to engage students more effectively in the classroom by implementing different creative activities, and iLrn really helps us to do that.”



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### **Marilyn Palatinus**

Pellissippi State  
Community College

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## **Easy to Set Up and Use**

Ease of use and assignment flexibility — with intuitive navigation, a student assignment calendar, an instructor dashboard, and filtering options that allow instructors to quickly select topics and skills they want to cover in assignments — are other iLrn advantages. At one point, the department used another publisher’s products, but Marilyn says “the online material wasn’t good at all. Some of the other companies’ platforms for online materials are difficult to manage, but everyone seems very satisfied with iLrn. It has good exercises and you can quickly select specific items, or you can assign everything. It is very easy to use. Instructors like the videos, and that iLrn can be used in many ways in the classroom.”

About 20% of a student’s grade is tied to iLrn. “With iLrn and *Plazas*, students get a good background that prepares them for the intermediate course, which is required by most schools for a BA degree,” says Marilyn. “Additionally, students are beginning to see the value of speaking another language. I heard a student talking the other day about a job-seeking friend who got an additional \$10,000 per year in salary because he speaks fluent Spanish.”

“We are very pleased with *Plazas*, and I am very impressed with the iLrn eBook, the exercises, and everything in it. *Plazas* and iLrn help us do more to engage our students.”



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