

Spanish for Heritage Speakers Program
Department of Spanish and Portuguese
School of Languages and Cultures
12/18/14

1. Description

This program is designed for heritage speakers of Spanish. The term heritage speaker refers to second or third generation immigrants raised in a natural environment where the minority language was spoken in addition to the majority language. Typically, heritage language learners do not receive formal instruction in the home language until later in life (high-school or college) but have good oral skills. This, however, is not always the case and there is a wide range of proficiency variability across the bilingual continuum. For this reason, all students exposed to Spanish during early childhood or adolescence, and who self identify as heritage language learners, are required to take the Placement Test for Spanish Heritage Speakers in the School of Languages and Cultures. The placement test is offered several times each year.

http://www.cla.purdue.edu/slc/main/news/Language_Placement_Testing.html

The above criterion of what constitutes a heritage language learner is based entirely on previous linguistic background (exposure to the family language during early childhood or adolescence – generally before the age of 14) and not on ethnic or cultural background. Students who immigrate to the United States past the age of 14 typically have a fully developed native grammatical system, and are recommended to enroll in content language courses (SPAN 361, SPAN 362, SPAN 241), not in heritage language courses.

Given that heritage speakers have different learning needs (how to write effectively, difficulty with sociolinguistic and cultural aspects of the heritage language, difficulty with specific advanced grammatical topics), we have designed two courses which address these needs. These courses are SPAN 305 and SPAN 30801

2. Placement Procedure

Students exposed to Spanish in a natural setting before the age of 14 are recommended to take the placement test for Spanish heritage speakers. This is regardless of their level of proficiency in Spanish or language of instruction in high school. Based on the results of the test, the department will recommend placement in either SPAN 305 (Spanish for Heritage Speakers), SPAN 30801 (Advanced Spanish for Heritage Speakers) or in lower levels of Spanish instruction (SPAN 101, 102, 201 or 202). SPAN 305 and SPAN 30801 are the equivalent courses for SPAN 301 and SPAN 302 for Spanish heritage speakers.

Students placed in SPAN 305 should continue on SPAN 30801 the following semester if they are interested in completing a Major or Minor in Spanish. Similarly, students placed in lower-level language course should complete the regular language sequence (SPAN 101-SPAN 302) if they are interested in completing a Major or Minor in Spanish.

Heritage speakers who enroll in regular Spanish language courses (SPAN 101 to SPAN 302) without taking the placement test will be kindly recommended to contact Dr. Cuza for assessment.

3. Questions and Concerns

Any questions or concerns regarding the Heritage Language Program should be sent to Dr. Cuza, Director of Spanish Heritage Language Program at acuza@purdue.edu. For specific questions regarding placement tests (dates, testing hours and location, required documentation) please contact Jason Baumer, SLC Language Testing and Placement Coordinator at jbaumer@purdue.edu.