

## **Higher Education Heritage Language Program Profile**

Florida Atlantic University--Boca Raton  
College of Arts and Letters, Department: Languages, Linguistics and  
Comparative Literature

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**Type of institution:** Research university

**Languages/dialects taught:** French, German, Greek, Hebrew, Italian, Latin, and Spanish

The university has both undergraduate and graduate level courses:

- Beginning and intermediate levels
- Two courses for heritage and advanced speakers
  - “SHS I” (Spanish for Heritage Speakers) is for students who have no formal background in Spanish.
  - “SHS II” is for students who have formal background but need to improve writing and speaking skills. Students with a formal background in Spanish and have the necessary skills are then permitted to take the “Introduction to Hispanic Literature” course.

### **Program Description**

#### **Purposes and goals of the program:**

- 1) To fulfill the language requirement in one semester
- 2) To help the heritage speaker move quickly through the lower division sequence so that they can continue and major in Spanish
- 3) To produce educated Spanish speakers who are able to write and speak in professional settings

**Type of program:** The program is part of a foreign language program, in which SPN 2342 and SPN 3343 are required courses for heritage students who want to major or minor in Spanish. These courses are also for heritage students who want to fulfill the requirements for a heritage track within a foreign language program.

At the university the heritage track stops after SPN 3343. Afterwards, all of the students are placed in the same level courses. Heritage students are required to take a Translation course.

The program tries to utilize the study of language for special purposes. To achieve this, Dr. Chavez has developed two courses that are intended to attract heritage speakers and second language students, "Spanish for Careers (Medical)" and "Applied Spanish Internships." A new course is being planned to attract more heritage and advanced second language students.

**Program Origins:** The program was founded in the early 80s.

**Faculty's and administration's expectations for the program:**

- Language faculty would like to see heritage students major in Spanish.
- Administration would like to see an increase in enrollment in upper-division courses.

### **Students**

First generation immigrants: 83%  
Second generation immigrants: 15%  
Children of interethnic marriages: 2%

Countries of origin: Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, Puerto Rico, and Venezuela

Total student enrollment: 100  
Age of students: 18-28

**Identification of Heritage Speakers:** The program identifies who is a native speaker using an oral and written exam, and based on whether or not the student speaks Spanish at home. In the oral section students are asked simple questions in Spanish using the ACTFL OPI (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language's Oral Proficiency Interview) model.

The program has just begun to monitor this group of students now that it has revamped the SHS I course. Additionally, continuing students take upper-level, professional or workplace courses with foreign language students.

**Reasons for student withdrawal:**

- Performance in other classes
- Satisfaction with current proficiency
- Lack of motivation

Unless the professor explains the benefits of continuing with the language, students do not understand why it is important to be an educated speaker of the target language.

**Attitudes of students towards the languages they speak:** Students have positive attitudes towards the language varieties they speak. They are very open to and respectful of dialect differences, and they enjoy sharing their cultures with other students and professors.

### **Faculty**

Total number of faculty teaching in the program: 2  
One visiting assistant professor (heritage speaker) and one instructor (Ecuador)

Number of full-time instructors: 1  
Faculty members are proficient in Spanish because they are native or heritage speakers of Spanish.

### **Credentials**

- Teacher certification from South Carolina, BA and MA in Spanish, Doctorate in Spanish literature
- The instructor has the equivalent of an MA degree, received in Ecuador.

**Professional development opportunities for faculty:** Faculty does not have opportunities for professional development, and the instructor has not taken advantage of the opportunities available to her.  
It would be beneficial to attend conferences and workshops targeted to faculty who teach heritage speakers.

### **Instruction**

Students are grouped in levels:

- A classroom course, SPN 2342, which spans from Novice High to Intermediate Low (on the ACTFL OPI)
- An online course, SPN 3343, which spans from Intermediate High to Advanced

Each class meets for 4 hours a week, over 15 weeks.

### **Language Skills**

- Listening
- Speaking
- Reading
- Writing

### **Culture**

- History

- Festivals
- Customs
- Traditions/beliefs
- Religion
- Folktales
- Dances
- Songs
- Rhymes
- Social and cultural norms
- Cultural appropriateness
- Literature

The two “Spanish for Heritage” courses offered foster a respect for all cultures represented on campus, and students are considered ambassadors of their countries. In SPN 2342 Dr. Chavez emphasizes the uniqueness of each student’s heritage.

The university offers several content courses that heritage speakers can take, which include topics in business, medical, translation, and writing.

### **Methodologies**

**Methodologies and instructional strategies:** in our lower division, we encourage the communicative approach with emphasis on writing. We use various multimedia (CDs, chatrooms, discussion boards, Power Point presentations, and videos) to generate conversation on topics of interest.

### **Materials**

**Textbooks:** *Nuevos Destinos: Español para hispanohablantes* (SPN 2342)  
McGraw-Hill, 1997  
*Mundo 21*, Houghtman-Mifflin. 2005

**Technology used in the program:** Yes, specifically in SPN 2342, since the textbook, *Nuevos Destinos*, has a video and CD accompaniment.

### **Assessment**

- Weekly quizzes
- Chapter tests
- Mid-term tests
- Final exams
- Student self-assessment instrument
- Performance-based tasks

- ACTFL OPI

### **Articulation**

Students have opportunities to use their target language in the Spanish club, Spanish film festivals, home, and events sponsored by the Multicultural Affairs Committee. At present, our students have not begun to take advantage of the internship possibilities. However, the program believes that once the students learn of the opportunity we will see more participation.

### **What the program has in place**

Financial support comes from the institution. However, the program would like to receive grant money for special programs.

### **Special Challenges and Comments**

Challenges that the program has experienced: The Heritage Speaker program has not grown because other language courses at the university compete for a limited amount of resources. Tenure-track or tenured faculty have not taught these two courses, which also affects growth.