

Higher Education
Georgia State University (GSU)
Arts & Sciences, Department of Modern & Classical Languages

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Languages/dialects taught: Spanish, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Japanese, Arabic, Hebrew, and Farsi as undergraduate level courses

Course sequence for heritage Spanish: Two levels of Spanish for heritage speakers: Span 2501, Intermediate Spanish for Heritage Speakers; Span 3501, Advanced Spanish for Heritage Speakers

The graduate courses lead to a Masters Degree in Spanish, but we will soon introduce a Ph.D. in Hispanic Studies, with a focus on literature, linguistics, language teaching, and culture.

Program Description

Purposes and goals of the program

1. Heritage language maintenance and appreciation of the Hispanic tradition in the U.S.
2. Expansion of the bilingual range (Valdés 1997)
3. Acquisition of a prestige variety (or general Spanish)
4. Allow continuation of heritage speakers in the regular program

Type of program: Part of a foreign language program. In Georgia, Spanish is a foreign language, and until recently the presence of a Hispanic community in the state was minimal. The heritage Spanish courses seek to help heritage speakers to become part of the Spanish language curriculum. There are two courses for heritage speakers (intermediate and advanced), and heritage speakers then take advanced courses together with non-heritage students.

Includes language for special purposes. The regular program--i.e. non-heritage courses--offers a recent and very popular track in Language and International Business, which is a joint program between our department and the School of Business. This coming semester, the department, together with the School of Economy, is introducing a double major in Spanish and Economy. The Spanish program also offers translation courses for certification in a number of areas, such as court interpretation and medical assistance.

Other activities: extracurricular club. The Spanish Club has been created recently, in the fall of 2005, and seems to be well accepted by students. Its membership is growing very quickly.

GSU also has an interdisciplinary Center for Latin American Studies, which sponsors lecturers' visits to campus on a regular basis. The Center also grants a Certificate in Hispanic studies.

Program Origins: The program for heritage Spanish was founded in the fall of 2000 as part of the regular departmental funds for courses taught by faculty. This program is currently in its review process before it is finally approved.

Faculty's and administration's expectations for the program: To disseminate the Hispanic culture in the state of Georgia, help promote it through education, and increase the number of Hispanics on campus.

The presence of Hispanics in Georgia has become prominent only recently. GSU is officially working on increasing the number of Hispanics on campus. For this, the university has additionally created a Latino and Latin American Studies Freshman Learning Community, and has funded a staff position for recruiting and maintaining Hispanic students on campus. It has also sought funds for Hispanic students who have excelled academically by establishing alliances with organizations such as The Goizueta Foundation.

Students

First-generation immigrants: 60%

Second-generation immigrants: 30%

Third generation immigrants: 10%

Children of interethnic marriages: 5%

Children of interethnic adoption: 5%

Non-ethnic background: 5%

Countries of origin: Primarily Colombia, Mexico, Perú, Puerto Rico

Total student enrollment: 15-30 per semester

Age of students: 18-24

Identification of Heritage Speakers: The program identifies heritage Spanish speakers by means of a Spanish proficiency exam, which is offered university wide through our Web site but taken in person in our department. The score on this exam fairly accurately indicates who is a heritage (bilingual) speaker and who is a native (monolingual) speaker of the language. We assume that proficiency in Spanish correlates with the learners' experience.

Methods of Determining Language Background/Proficiency: The introduction of the Spanish proficiency exam--designed by ourselves--has made it unnecessary to

use a home language survey. Once students declare an interest in studying Spanish, they are asked to take the Spanish proficiency exam for both course placement and possible credit for courses and levels that they test out of.

Our Spanish proficiency exam serves the purpose of a language placement exam at intermediate-advanced levels. Heritage speakers frequently go undetected when they take commercially available placement exams (usually available), unless they are third-generation students. These are usually placed in an elementary-intermediate Spanish course. We will share this exam and its rationale with others, as a work in progress. It places students pretty accurately.

Percentage of students who complete the program: 90%

Percentage of students who continue to study the heritage language after completing the program: 60-70%. Continuing students take upper-level courses with foreign language students or professional/workplace courses. Possible reasons for their withdrawal: Inability, and sometimes unwillingness, to comply with course requirements, such as homework completion, acceptable grades, studying.

Students' attitudes toward the language varieties they speak: More than attitudes, there is mainly confusion. They usually do not have much of an idea about how language varieties are configured and where U.S. Spanish stands among the varieties of the language. Also, the attitudes—if observable—generally vary according to generational patterns. U.S. Hispanics beyond first-generation usually think they can do a lot more than they really can in Spanish. Newcomers—recent, first-generation immigrants—commonly criticize U.S. Spanish.

Faculty

Number of faculty teaching in the program: 2 to 4 rotate in the first level (intermediate), but one usually teaches the advanced level.

Number of Full-time instructors: 1

Number of Part-time instructors: 2

Languages in which faculty members are proficient: Spanish, English, and several others. They are highly proficient, with native mastery, in the language they teach.

Credentials: Teacher certification: Up to K-12 in Spanish and for the state of Georgia. BA in literature, teacher education, language and international business, and Spanish and the economy (opening in the Spring 2006 semester). MA in Spanish with specialization in literature or language studies. Doctorate, Ph.D in Hispanic Studies. This program is currently in its review process before it is finally approved. Spanish-English translation.

Professional development opportunities for faculty: Funds for trips to professional conferences, traditionally for both attendance and paper presentation. There are also summer grants for the junior faculty. It is also possible to opt for external grants.

Instruction

Student Grouping: Students are grouped according to level

- Face-to-face course title: Intermediate Spanish for Heritage Speakers, Span 2501, Intermediate, 3 hours per week, 17-week semester
- Online course title: Advanced Spanish for Heritage Speakers, 3 hours per week, 14-week semester

Language Skills

Heritage Skills

- Reading
- Writing

Skills and levels of language proficiency students reach by the end of the program: At the end of Span 2501, first course for heritage speakers, students are expected to have mastery of writing conventions (such as spelling rules, rules for accent writing, etc.), have increased vocabulary in several areas of knowledge, and have become aware of formal, public Spanish. The course attempts to provide access to monolingual Spanish (from Latin America and Spain) so that students can increase their repertoire of linguistic registers (prestigious or General Spanish included). The course also focuses on the heritage and experience of Hispanics in the U.S. and in Latin America and Spain.

Culture

Culture taught

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

Kind of student identity the program fosters: The program is trying to develop individuals of Hispanic ancestry who are aware of their traditions and experience in the U.S., are proud of their bilingualism, and regard their families, home, and friends' Spanish as a valuable asset not only culturally but also as a tool for job promotion. Regard themselves as people who can integrate themselves into their own and the global community. For a more global integration this person should seek access to formal, public Spanish.

Special content courses offered for heritage speakers: The several courses offered by the department in specific areas, such as business, economy, translation, etc. are open to Hispanic and non-Hispanic students.

Methodologies

The first course for heritage speakers addresses the particular needs of U.S. Hispanics, basically addressing literacy in the heritage language and promoting awareness of formal, general Spanish by exposing students to Spanish from Latin America and Spain in a monolingual environment. These language-specific skills are combined with topics that relate to the students' capacities as bilinguals and Hispanics in the U.S. The methodology is largely traditional, as found in commercially available textbooks for heritage speakers.

The second course--advanced Spanish for heritage speakers--focuses primarily on mastery of the formal registers of Spanish by providing advanced grammatical training and access to monolingual sources from Latin America and Spain. Students are asked to read these sources regularly and write papers after the readings. Students choose the topics about which they want to write. The program, in general, seeks to promote Hispanic students' mastery of the Spanish language curriculum.

Materials

Textbook

Ana Roca's *Nuevos Mundos* (Wiley, 2004) for Span 2501 has worked very nicely. For the advanced course, students use an advanced grammar manual written by one of our faculty members. This, used as textbook, has been used for several semesters now because it has also worked for the advanced course.

Other materials: Sources of monolingual Spanish, primarily Web sites from Latin America and Spain, and novels. The first brief novel or story is mandatory ("La historia de la gaviota y del gato que le enseñó a volar" by Luis Sepulveda), and students freely choose their reading thereafter.

Technology used in the program: There is some technology implemented so far for these courses, but mainly access to Latin American and Peninsular sources through the Internet. However, after some years of experience, it has been realized

that technology can help students work on spelling rules, accents, and a few other mechanical aspects of the language. One Interactive tool used is email.

Assessment

- Weekly quizzes
- Chapter tests
- Final exams
- Papers that students write as research reports after they have read several sources in monolingual Spanish about a topic of their interest.
- University developed test
- Program exit test
- The department has been developing exit tests that are taken by Spanish degree-seeking students. These tests can be taken by Hispanics or non-Hispanics.

Articulation

Connections with local high schools: Some of our graduates are teaching in several school districts in Georgia. They usually keep in touch. Our Latino FLC also visits schools with Latino and non-Latino population as part of their community service learning. These students help tutor and mentor students from those schools. Georgia State University receives students from several high schools and community colleges in Georgia.

Students continue their study after graduating at Georgia State University. Some transfer to the University of Georgia or Emory.

Opportunities heritage students have outside the college to use their heritage language or develop their cultural knowledge: Atlanta and several other cities in Georgia have seen their Hispanic population multiply in recent years. This has caused an important demand for speakers of the language mainly around major cities. Many of our students take our heritage courses after realizing that their home Spanish is not enough to keep a well paying job.

What the Program had in Place

The university promotes involvement by supporting, and at times providing some funding, for Hispanic student events and by promoting faculty involvement in these events. Our Latino FLC, though technically not part of the departmental program for heritage speakers, is constantly looking for opportunities to reach out to the local Hispanic community.

Financial support: The courses are part of the institutional/regular credit program.

Other sources: Some students have been granted generous scholarships funded by The Goizueta Foundation.

Kind of assistance the program needs: Logistics basically in the area of publicity for our program and student recruitment

Research on heritage language issues or heritage program evaluations: One area of concern is course sequencing (skills, methodology, local vs. global focus) and student placement. Nothing has been published yet.

Special Challenges and Comments:

Funding and student recruitment

Orientation for the Program: There are two possible orientations for a heritage language program. One is locally oriented and seeks to serve the local community (culturally and linguistically). The other is non-locally oriented and seeks to prepare heritage speakers for the job market and the global village. Because the arrival of Hispanics in Georgia is still perceived as recent, our program focuses more significantly on the second orientation, and it seems that students have adopted it well. Our program seeks to help heritage speakers to compete in an environment in which Spanish can allow them to promote themselves professionally and beyond their local community. A large majority of the Hispanics who conduct their lives in Spanish in Georgia are first-generation Hispanics. Practice and experience show that second- and older-generation Hispanics find it hard to communicate with first-generation speakers, can be highly critical of U.S. Spanish. Globally, formal focus Spanish is undoubtedly required, and this is our primary, though not exclusive.