

Higher Education Heritage Language Profile Portland State University, Portland, OR

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Languages/dialects taught: Arabic, Hindi, Persian, Russian, Spanish, Taglog, Urdu, and Vietnamese (not all are taught every quarter)

All courses are taught on the undergraduate level.

Course sequence: The class is just one course, however, one course may be 1, 2, or 3 quarters long. Students may take as many as they wish. The quarters are not sequenced. Each is different in context, but can accommodate all ability levels.

Program Description

Purpose and goals of the program: Connecting people with their languages.

Program type: A heritage track within a foreign language program, but not formally. There is no heritage language major or minor at the university.

Program mission statement:

1. To meet the needs of speakers of languages other than English in our communities.
2. To build on strengths that come out of bilingualism.

Program origin: The program was founded in the fall of 2004. Dr. Patricia Wetzel, a professor of Japanese, initiated Spanish and Vietnamese heritage classes. Others were added based on demand.

Faculty's and administration's expectations for the program: It is a vehicle for piloting new languages. The hope is that the administration will put more real money into language instruction.

Students

First generation immigrants
Second generation immigrants
Third generation immigrants
Young adults, children of interethnic marriages
Non-ethnic background
We are collecting data on student background, but it is not yet coded and analyzed.

Total student enrollment: The class sizes vary by quarter and by language. The total for all languages is about 50 students.

Age of students: 18-60 or so

Identification of a heritage speaker: The students are self-identified. However, our definition is “someone who has a cultural connection to a heritage language.” A background questionnaire is also used.

Percentage of students that complete the program: The students decide when they are finished. Unfortunately, we do not keep any retention data.

Percentage of students that continue to study heritage language after completion of the program: Do not know. However, after completion of a heritage program, those following a Russian or Spanish track, are allowed to take upper level courses with other foreign language students.

Reasons for student withdrawal: The lack of a formal program

Students’ attitudes towards the language varieties they speak: Most of the students are eager to improve their command of their first language and its culture.

Students’ expectations for the program: Many students expect to become fluent in one quarter and are disappointed as a result of unmet expectations.

Faculty

Total number of faculty in the program
Part time instructors: 4
Teaching assistants: (Fullbright scholars) 5

Languages in which faculty members are proficient: Arabic, Hindi, Persian, Russian, Spanish, Taglog, Urdu, and Vietnamese

Credentials (percentages of faculty with stated degrees)
BA- 12% in English
MA- 55% in TESOL and Linguistics

Doctorate-33% in Education and Psychology

Professional development opportunities available to the faculty: Fall orientation and the occasional seminars

Professional development opportunities that the faculty need: Contact with heritage language teachers at other schools and attendance at conferences

Instruction

Language (level 100 and 200) – A class in any one of our offered languages for four hours a week, for ten weeks (a quarter)

Language Skills

Heritage Skills:

- Listening
- Speaking
- Reading
- Writing
- Other: Cultural awareness

Skills and levels of language proficiency that students reach by the end of the program: Varies by individual; instruction is tailored to each student's needs

Culture

- Geography
- History
- Festivals
- Customs
- Traditions/Beliefs
- Folktales
- Dances
- Songs
- Rhymes
- Social and cultural norms
- Cultural appropriateness
- Literature
- Other culture-related topics

Topics vary depending on the language and are taught according to the discretion of each instructor.

Methodologies

Methodologies and instructional strategies used in program: This varies by the instructor. However, general communicative competence is usually emphasized.

Materials

Textbooks: We use very few textbooks, except for Olga Kagan's *Russian for Russians* (Slavica Pub, 2002).

Other materials: Each instructor develops some personal materials and uses videos, newspapers, the Internet, comic books, etc.

Technology in the program: It is not used often.

Assessment

- Weekly quizzes
- Mid-term tests
- Final exams
- Performance-based tasks

Articulation

Other connections: We are working on attracting high school juniors and seniors from the Portland Public School System.

Opportunities open to heritage speakers outside the college to use their heritage language and develop their cultural knowledge: The Spanish course offers volunteer opportunities in local high schools and community organizations. The program also promotes involvement with the local heritage language community through the promotion and advertising of events.

What the program has in place

Fund Solicitation: Everyone involved in the program helps with this task.

Desired assistance or collaboration for program from other entities: Scholarships, grants, and donations

System for graduating students and granting credit: Credit is offered by each course taken (four credits for a four-hour course in one quarter).

Faculty research on heritage language issues: We do an annual language capacity survey of the entire campus. We also collect student background and attitude data with individual surveys in each classroom.

Special Challenges and Comments

Special Challenges: Cuts to the Oregon state support for higher education; or finding qualified instructors

Comments: The outside community is very interested in the program. It has drawn positive attention to the university. Additionally, the Dean loves to brag about the program.