

**Spanish for Heritage Speakers  
University of Maryland, Baltimore County  
Higher Education Program**

**Background Information**

**Institution:** University of Maryland, Baltimore County

**College:** College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences

**Department:** Modern Languages and Linguistics (MLL)

**Program address:** 1000 Hilltop Circle, Baltimore, MD 21250

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**Contact Person:**

**Name:** Dr. Ana Maria Schwartz / Adriana Val

**Title:** Ana Maria Schwartz: Chair of the MLL; professor of SPAN 304 (Spanish for Heritage Speakers) / Adriana Val: part-time instructor, Spanish for Heritage Speakers online

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**Type of institution:** Higher Education- University

**Languages/dialects taught:** Spanish

**Courses:** SPAN 304- Spanish for Heritage Speakers

**Program Description**

**Purposes and goals of the program:** Maintenance and revitalization of the language and culture

**Type of program:** Foreign language program, content-based. Offered only once a year during the spring semester

**Program origin:** This program was founded in 1990.

**Faculty's and administration's expectations for the program:** Instructors' expectations are primarily towards having more training for instructors who are working with heritage language learners.

## Students

### Students:

- First-generation immigrants (100%)

**Countries of origin:** Several Latin American countries: Mexico, Peru, Panama, most countries in Central America, Caribbean Islands, Argentina, and Chile.

**Total student enrollment:** 50 students. This number varies from semester to semester.

**Age of students:** undergraduate, around 18 to 22 most of the time... sometimes older.

**How the program identifies heritage speakers:** Dr. Schwartz carries out an oral interview. If heritage learners are identified in a lower-level course, instructors send them directly to Dr. Schwartz for the interview.

**How the program determines the language background and language proficiency of students:** The program gives a background questionnaire and an oral interview.

**Percentage of students who complete the program:** 90%

**Percentage of students who continue to study the heritage language after completing the program:** 50%

**Possible reasons for student withdrawal:** Students lack interest in continue learning the language.

**Students' attitudes toward the language varieties they speak:** Students are ashamed about their language proficiency in Spanish; but they are also proud of their family history, so they want to improve their language proficiency. They feel comfortable joining a class with other Latino/Hispanic students, because they all share the same language and culture.

**Students' expectations of the program:** Students want to improve their grammar and written Spanish skills.

**Comments:** The face-to-face course is always available. The online program was offered only once. The online version was offered as a pilot program during the summer semester 2004. It found that the combination of both face-to-face and online instruction is effective for students who want to advance their writing skills. This was the research that Adriana Val conducted for her MA, in which Dr. Schwartz was the adviser.

## Faculty

**Number of faculty in the program:** 2, Dr. Ana Maria Schwartz and Adriana Val

**Languages in which faculty members are proficient:** Spanish and English

**Proficiency level:** Instructors are native speakers of Spanish

**Credentials:** Dr. Ana Maria Schwartz has a PhD from the University of Maryland College Park in pedagogy and technology (video). Adriana Val has a degree as professor of History from Argentina, and MA in Intercultural Communication from UMBC and she is currently studying for a PhD at UMBC in Language Literacy and Culture. Her research is on Heritage Spanish Language Learners identity formation, race, and ethnicity.

**Professional development opportunities for faculty members:** None. Most training is done by Ana Maria Schwartz as a need.

**Professional development opportunities faculty members need:** Workshops related to teaching the language to heritage speakers

## Instruction

**Total contact hours per week:** 2

**Times per week:** twice a week

**Student grouping:** There is only one course, so students have different levels

## Language skills

**Skills developed by the program:** In general, the program develops the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing.

**Heritage language skills:** The program develops the four language skills in Spanish: listening, speaking, reading, writing. It focuses on the development of written proficiency, reading, and spelling skills.

**Levels of language proficiency reached by the end of the program:** Students are usually proficient in talking and develop several levels of proficiency in reading and writing. Adding a second course online for heritage language learners has been recommended. Only one semester is not enough for reading and writing.

## **Culture**

**Aspects of culture taught:** Traditions, beliefs, festivals, and songs

**Content courses offered for heritage speakers:** None

**Kind of student identity fostered by program:** The program fosters respect for Spanish-speaking cultures and intercultural communication skills with other cultures.

## **Methodologies**

**Methodologies and instructional strategies used in the program:** The methodology used in the program is content-based.

## **Materials**

**Textbooks:** Materials are designed by the instructor, Dr. Ana Maria Schwartz. She also uses the Workbook for Heritage Speakers written by Anna Roca. The workbook changes from semester to semester

**Other materials used for instruction:** Handouts

**Technology used for instruction:** MLL has a computer lab available. Students can access the lab anytime they need.

**Interactive tools [used in online classes]:** The online version uses Blackboard management system, discussion board, chat, and telephone conversations.

**Comments:** The online version was delivered totally online during the summer 2004.

## **Assessment**

**Assessments used to evaluate students' progress:** Students' progress is evaluated with tests designed by the instructor.

## **Articulation**

**Connections:** The program has connections with local schools and other heritage language programs.

**Credits:** 3 credits

**Home school connections/parent involvement:** Instructors invite parents to participate. Students are involved in participating in the HLSU (Hispanic and Latino Student Union) at UMBC, where they have different activities that involve them with the community.

**Opportunities for using the heritage language and developing cultural knowledge outside the program:** Students participate in the Latino Festival at UMBC and organize other activities. They also visit schools to invite Latino students to visit and apply to UMBC

**Parent connections with the program:** Some parents are willing to come to class and talk about their experiences as immigrants. During the online pilot, instructors, students and parents met for dinner and talked about the language experiences they had during the online course.

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

**Types of financial support the program receives:** Tuition

**Types of support the program receives from these or other entities:** None

**Solicitation of funding:** No

**Desired assistance or collaboration for program from other entities:** Support from the government or Hispanic business leaders

**System for graduating students and granting credit:** The program is part of the Foreign Language undergraduate at MLL. Students receive 3 credits toward their Bachelors.

**Faculty research on heritage language issues:** Dr. Ana Maria Schwartz has published several articles related to Heritage Language. Adriana Val is doing research on Heritage Spanish language learners' ethnicity, race, and identity formation for her PhD.

**Students' academic performance:** Most students perform well and advance in their language skills during the semester. They also report that the heritage class is an enjoyable experience where they can meet other heritage Spanish speakers.

**Student development in the heritage language after completion of the program:** Most students feel satisfied at the end of the semester but recognize that they need to continue studying and developing especially their writing.

## **Special challenges**

**Challenges the program has experienced:** The main challenge has been having many levels of students in one course and not having enough enrollment each semester.

**Comments:** The program would like to share materials with other programs. In addition, it is necessary to have at least 2 courses, one every semester, one face-to-face and one online, and more training for instructors.