

University of Illinois at Chicago
Higher Education Research University
Liberal Arts & Sciences
Department: of Spanish, French, Italian and Portuguese

Address: 601 S. Morgan St., 1722 UH, Chicago, IL 60607

Contact **Kim Potowski**

Assistant Professor

Email: kimpotow@uic.edu

Web address: <http://www.uic.edu/depts/sfip/undergraduate/spbilingual/index.html>

Languages/dialects taught: the program is only **Spanish**. However, several other languages taught on campus are de facto heritage programs including Polish, Hindi-Urdu, and Arabic.

Undergraduate level courses:

Three sequential courses

- Beginning level
- Intermediate level
- Advanced level

Program Description

Goals and mission statement of the program are defined in the following web address:

<http://www.uic.edu/depts/sfip/undergraduate/spbilingual/index.html>

Type of program: The university provides an independent heritage language program.

Program Origins: The program was founded around 1995 by two professors, including sociolinguist Lucía Elías-Olivares, who saw the need for such courses.

Students

Second-generation immigrants 90%

Third-generation immigrants 10%

Countries of origin: Predominately Mexico. Some from Puerto Rico, Guatemala, Ecuador, El Salvador.

Total student enrollment: 120 per semester

Age of students: 18-25

Identification of heritage speakers: Students' self-identify as heritage speakers per the criteria explained in

<http://www.uic.edu/depts/sfip/undergraduate/spbilingual/placement.html>

The program also uses

- Background questionnaire
- Placement test

Percentage of students who complete the program: 100%. It fulfills the campus language requirement.

Percentage that continue to study the heritage language: 30%

They go on to 200-level Spanish courses. Continuing students take upper level courses with foreign language students.

Reasons students do not continue the program: The students who do not complete the program are the ones leaving the university.

Students' attitudes toward the language varieties they speak: varied, but generally positive

Faculty

Total number of faculty teaching in the program: Varies from 3-5

Number of tenure-track professors: 1 (very occasionally I teach a course)

Number of full-time instructors: 1

Number of teaching assistants: 4

Languages that the faculty are proficient in: Faculty members are proficient in Spanish and English. They are native or 'near native' in Spanish.

Credentials

MA in Spanish linguistics

Professional development opportunities for faculty: Dr. Potowski requires instructor candidates to read several articles and her book on Spanish for native speakers (SNS) methods; she conducts two guided observations of courses at different levels; and mock grade 10 proficiency exams.

Professional development opportunities that faculty need: Instructors should be required to take a semester-long course on SNS methods, but Dr. Potowski's schedule does not allow it. This course was offered only once.

Instruction

Courses:

The students are grouped by level

Face-to-face courses: 112, 113, and 114

4 hours per week during the length of the semester (16 weeks).

Language Skills

Heritage Skills

- Listening
- Speaking
- Reading
- Writing
- Cultural knowledge; knowledge of U.S. Spanish phenomena

The level of language proficiency students reach by the end of the program is not known because it is not measured formally.

Culture

- History
- Traditions/beliefs
- Songs
- Literature

The program fosters a student identity that is aware of U.S. Latino culture.

Methodologies

The program is interested in more communication and literacy rather than grammar focused, although Dr. Potowski would like to incorporate a greater focus on form.

Materials

Textbook: *Nuevos mundos: Lectura, cultura y comunicación: Curso de español para estudiantes bilingües*, Wiley; 2nd edition, 2004.

Other materials: Bilingual dictionaries and thesaurus

Technology used in the program: Online spell checking workshop (see <http://www.uic.edu/depts/sfip/undergraduate/spbilingual/revisor.html>)

Assessment

- Chapter tests
- University developed test

Articulation

Program Connections: Local high schools - The program receives heritage students from many local high schools, but unfortunately there is no articulation between our program and theirs. In fact, some Chicago high schools use the same book as we do. In addition, our program does not promote involvement with the heritage community.

What the program has in place

Financial support: The heritage program is part of the institution's regular course.

Kind of assistance the program would like to receive from other entities: The program would benefit from a grant to revamp the program and 'hybridize it' (make it 3 days per week instead of 4, and have that 4th hour be required online work).

System for graduating students: Students get 4 hours undergraduate credits per course.

Faculty's research on heritage language issues: Dr. Potowski is conducting a study of the efficacy of processing instruction (VanPatten 2004) with all three levels of heritage speakers in our courses.

Special Challenges and Comments

Challenges

- Some professors at the 200-level feel we should be doing more to promote critical thinking and linguistic/writing skills in our 100-level program. But only 30% of our program graduates go on to the 200-level.
- Placement tests are always a thorny issue. I think our homegrown exam is OK, but a conference panel devoted to this topic is needed.