

## **University of Houston: Spanish for Spanish Speakers Higher Education Program**

### **Background Information**

**Institution:** University of Houston

**College:** College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences

**Department:** Modern and Classical Languages

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### **Contact Person:**

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**Type of institution:** Research University

**Languages/dialects taught:** Spanish

### **Courses:**

- Parallel sequence of beginning, intermediate and advanced courses for heritage learners
- Graduate seminars
  - Teaching Spanish to Spanish speakers
  - Research in Heritage Language Education

## Program Description

**Purposes and goals of the program:** The goal of the heritage language track is to build upon the language base that students bring to the classroom and to develop students' knowledge of academic Spanish.

**Type of program:** A heritage language track within a foreign language program

**Program origin:** The program was founded twelve years ago in response to the large number of heritage learners enrolling in Spanish language courses.

**Faculty's and administration's expectations for the program:** Faculty have high expectations for the students in the heritage track.

## Students

**Students:**

**Countries of origin:** 50% of students are from Mexico. The others are from the United States, Central and South America.

**Total student enrollment:** 200 per semester

**Age of students:** The majority of students are between 18 and 30 years old.

**How the program identifies heritage speakers:** Self identification

**How the program determines the language background and language proficiency of students:**

- Background questionnaire
- Placement Test
- Oral Interview

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

**Students' attitudes toward the language varieties they speak:** Many U.S. born students have negative feelings about their Spanish proficiency.

## Faculty

**Number of faculty in the program:** 5

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

**Proficiency level:** Superior level in Spanish is required

**Credentials:** M.A. and Ph.D.

**Professional development opportunities for faculty members:** The director of the heritage language program offers training and guidance to the faculty.

**Professional development opportunities faculty members need:**

- Training in teaching methods,
- information on sociolinguistics
- information on U.S. Spanish

## **Instruction**

**Total contact hours per week:** 3

**Times per week:** 3

**Student grouping:** Students are grouped into beginning, intermediate, and advanced courses.

## **Language skills**

**Skills developed by the program:**

- Listening
- Speaking
- Reading
- Writing

**Levels of language proficiency reached by the end of the program:** Most students reach the advanced level.

## **Culture**

**Aspects of culture taught:**

- History
- Customs
- Songs
- Literature

**Content courses offered for heritage speakers:** Business and translation

**Kind of student identity fostered by program:** Bicultural identity

## **Methodologies**

**Methodologies and instructional strategies used in the program:**

- Contrastive analysis between Standard Spanish and various dialects
- Translation

**Materials**

**Textbooks:**

- Mosaicos (Prentice Hall)
- Conozcamonos (Heinle)
- Palabra Abierta (Houghton Mifflin)

**Technology used for instruction:**

- Language Lab
- Internet

**Assessment**

**Assessments used to evaluate students' progress:**

- Weekly quizzes
- Chapter tests
- Mid-term tests
- Final exams
- University developed tests

**Opportunities for using the heritage language and developing cultural knowledge outside the program:** Students are able to use their language skills and cultural knowledge in the community.

**What the program has in place**

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

**Desired assistance or collaboration for program from other entities:** Outside grants

**System for graduating students and granting credit:** Course credits are awarded

**Faculty research on heritage language issues:** Both faculty and graduate students conduct research on Spanish as a heritage language.

**Special challenges**

**Challenges the program has experienced:** Placement is the biggest challenge.