

Spanish for Heritage Speakers Program
Department of Spanish and Portuguese School
of Languages and Cultures

11/13/23

This program is designed for heritage speakers of Spanish. The term heritage speaker refers to second or third generation immigrants raised in a natural environment where the minority language was spoken in addition to the majority language. Typically, heritage language learners do not receive formal instruction in the home language until later in life (high-school or college) but have good oral skills. This, however, is not always the case and there is a wide range of proficiency variability across the bilingual continuum.

The above criterion of what constitutes a heritage language learner is based entirely on previous linguistic background (exposure to the family language during early childhood or adolescence – generally before the age of 14) and not on ethnic or cultural background. Students who immigrate to the United States past the age of 14 typically have a fully developed native grammatical system and are recommended to enroll in content language courses. Given that heritage speakers have specific learning needs compared to second language learners, we have designed two courses that address these needs. These courses are SPAN 305 and SPAN 308.

All students exposed to Spanish during early childhood or adolescence, and who self-identify as heritage language learners, are required to take the placement test for Spanish Heritage Speakers in the School of Languages and Cultures. This is regardless of their level of proficiency in Spanish or language of instruction in high school. Based on the results of the test, the department will recommend placement in either SPAN 305 (Spanish for Heritage Speakers), SPAN 308 (Advanced Spanish for Heritage Speakers) or in lower levels of Spanish instruction. SPAN 305 and SPAN 308 are the equivalent courses for SPAN 301 and SPAN 302 for Spanish heritage speakers. Students placed in SPAN 305 should continue with SPAN 308 the following semester if they are interested in completing a major or minor in Spanish.

The placement test is offered fully online, and it's available on a continuous basis 24/7/365. No advance registration is necessary. More language placement information can be found here:

<https://www.cla.purdue.edu/academic/slc/placement/index.html>

Any questions or concerns regarding the Heritage Language Program should be sent to Dr. Alejandro Cuza, Director of Spanish Heritage Language Program at acuza@purdue.edu.