

Spanish Program Learning Outcomes Assessment Project 2005-2006

The CSUCI Spanish baccalaureate program, initiated in Fall 2005, provides students the opportunity to develop their Spanish-language skills while deepening their knowledge and appreciation of the peoples and cultures of the Spanish-speaking world. Spanish is the first language of approximately 400 million people in 21 countries. Hispanic cultures and peoples form an integral part of U.S. history and society, and Spanish is the most prevalent second language in California and in most regions of the country. Being bilingual is a tremendous asset and can open doors to students entering numerous occupations and careers.

The CSUCI Spanish program embraces the University Mission, particularly with regard to graduating students with multicultural and international perspectives:

Placing students at the center of the educational experience, California State University Channel Islands provides undergraduate and graduate education that facilitates learning within and across disciplines through integrative approaches, emphasizes experiential and service learning, and graduates students with multicultural and international perspectives.

Spanish Program Goals and Student Learning Outcomes

The Spanish program promotes the attainment of appropriate levels of language skills and of cultural knowledge. More specifically, the program has identified the following as its student learning outcomes:

1. Students will perform at an intermediate-high to advanced level of language proficiency in the Spanish language as defined by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) in the following skills:
 - a. speaking,
 - b. listening,
 - c. reading, and
 - d. writing.

2. Students will demonstrate appropriate cultural knowledge of the Spanish-speaking world regarding...
 - a. ways of thinking (ideas, beliefs, attitudes, values, philosophies);
 - b. behavioral practices (patterns of social interactions); and
 - c. cultural products (e.g., art, history, literature).

For the 2005-2006 academic year, the program selected the following outcomes to assess:

- Students will perform at an intermediate-high to advanced level of language proficiency in speaking and writing in the Spanish language as defined the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Guidelines. (See attached guidelines for Speaking: Intermediate, Advanced and Superior; and for Writing: Intermediate, Advanced and Superior.)

Data were collected in two courses during the Spring 2006 semester: in SPAN 302 Advanced Spanish: Part Two and in SPAN 499 Capstone in Spanish. SPAN 302 counts as a required course toward the major, and SPAN 499 is required of students completing their Spanish program in May or in December of the same year. Two populations of students were identified: heritage speakers (for whom Spanish is spoken at home by at least one adult family member), and non-heritage speakers (those who have learned Spanish as a second language). These populations were identified because they often experience different challenges. The typical heritage speaker may have difficulty with reading and writing, for example, yet may exhibit strong listening and speaking skills.

For speaking, oral proficiency interviews were conducted by a Spanish faculty member with individual students, and these interviews were digitally recorded. The students interviewed were: 6 students, 2 heritage and 4 non-heritage speakers, from SPAN 302; and 4 students, all heritage speakers, from SPAN 499. (See the attachment for sample questions used to conduct the oral proficiency interview.)

For writing, essay questions administered on a SPAN 302 in-class exam were collected, a total of 5 students, 1 heritage and 4 non-heritages speakers; and capstone research papers from SPAN 499 were collected from a total of 4 students, 3 heritage and 1 non-heritage speakers. (See the attachments of writing samples: one sample from SPAN 302, the other from the Capstone.)

Data and Analysis

In order to insure interrater reliability, three Spanish faculty independently judged the oral and written samples. Using the ACTFL Guidelines for speaking, the following ratings were assigned to the SPAN 302 and Capstone students:

SPEAKING			
SPAN 302		CAPSTONE	
Heritage Speakers	Superior	Heritage Speakers	Superior
	Intermediate High		Advanced
			Advanced Plus
Non-Heritage Speakers	Intermediate High	Non-Heritage Speakers	
	Intermediate Low		
	Intermediate Mid		
	Intermediate Mid		

The data suggest an increase in level among the heritage group. No conclusions can be drawn from the non-heritage speaker group since no data are available from the capstone project. This is due to the fact that this was the first Capstone course offered by the Spanish program, and a speaking sample from the one non-heritage speaker was not collected. Non-heritage speakers in SPAN 302 will eventually take the Capstone, at which point comparable results will be available.

The ACTFL Guidelines for writing were used to rate the writing samples. The data, presented below, suggest that there is an overall increase in both the heritage and non-heritage groups in speaking from SPAN 302 to the Capstone. However, this suggested increase is based on a small sample of students.

WRITING			
SPAN 302		CAPSTONE	
Heritage Speakers	Advanced	Heritage Speakers	Advanced Plus
			Intermediate High
			Superior
Non- Heritage Speakers	Intermediate Mid	Non- Heritage Speakers	Advanced
	Intermediate Mid		
	Intermediate Mid		
	Intermediate Mid		

Conclusions and Implications for Program Modification

No conclusions can be drawn from the existing data, as the number of students used is small, suggesting that the data are not generalizable. In order to draw conclusions and to suggest implications for program modification, the Spanish program needs to collect and analyze more data related to speaking and writing proficiency.

The Spanish program will collect more data on speaking and writing proficiency over the course of the 2006-07 academic year, as it continues to identify and develop other means to assess the program's other student learning outcomes.