

TESTS FOR SPANISH-FOR-NATIVE-SPEAKER CLASSES

Ricardo Otheguy

City College of New York

Jeannette Toro

City College of New York

Once you have established Spanish classes for native speakers (SNS), you will want to know which of your Latino students belong in the class. This chapter is designed to help you make that decision. We provide here a list of placement tests that are used to measure the Spanish proficiency of native speakers and tell you which ones we think you will find most useful. In addition, we give you the names and addresses of organizations from which you may obtain further information. We also give you a list of articles that discuss placement of native speakers, in case you want to read more.

SPANISH FOR NATIVE SPEAKERS

The term "native" used in the term Spanish-for-Native-Speakers (SNS) should not be interpreted to refer only to students born in Latin America or Spain. Many students who've never been outside the United States, have been raised in homes where one or both parents speak to them in Spanish most of the time, or perhaps always, and so it makes sense to regard them as native speakers. Your native students will very likely be a very mixed group. Depending where you are in the United States, many will be born in Mexico, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Ecuador, Guatemala, and other parts of Latin America. Of these, some will have been in the U.S. for a short time, others will have been here for many years, or may have been born in the U.S. Some of your native students will come from homes where a lot of Spanish is spoken, others from homes where Spanish is spoken less frequently. Some of your students may travel to Latin America often, but most will have traveled outside the U.S. much less or none at all.

The parents of your students will themselves have similarly varied personal histories. Often, your student's father will have one kind of history,

being perhaps long-settled in the U.S. or born here, while the mother may perhaps be a recent arrival, or vice versa. The parents may be both Latinos, but in some cases only one will be. When this happens, the ethnicity of your student will be a complex matter. He or she may identify as Latino or Latina because of the one parent, or may assume instead the other parent's identity. And even when both parents are Latinos, the question of identity may be quite complex, and quite different, in each one of your students. So don't expect your native speakers to be all the same; each will be native in his or her own unique way; each will have a different story to tell; and each will have a different personal and family background.

As a consequence, the linguistic profile of each of your natives will also be unique. Most will understand Spanish better than speak it, and the vast majority will speak it and understand it far better than read it or write it. Many will live in homes where they are mostly spoken to in Spanish by the adults, but they themselves are most likely to speak to the adults in English. (At least they will speak in English with those adults in the home who understand it. With those that don't (for example, visitors from Mexico or recently immigrated grandparents), they will use Spanish. Because their parents will themselves have different levels of proficiency, your students will very likely have a different type of linguistic relationship with each of the parents; the language of choice will perhaps be Spanish for one parent sometimes and perhaps sometimes English for the other. The language your students use at home will also vary with the topic discussed; some subjects will be always discussed in Spanish, some more likely in English. In short, because the sociolinguistic lives of immigrants and language minorities are extremely varied and complex, your students will not form a homogenous group where everyone can fit into a preconceived mold. The placement instruments that are listed below will help you decide which of your Latino students belong in your native speakers class. That is, the tests will help you decide which of them are "native" for the purpose of taking Spanish, irrespective of whether you would want to consider them natives for other purposes.

PLACEMENT TESTS

There are many instruments that test the Spanish proficiency of native students, but most have been designed by psychologists who are interested in language for what it can reveal about mental growth or by teachers in bilingual education or English-as-a-second-language programs. Few have been designed for your purposes, which is to decide whether the student goes into a class of Spanish for native speakers (SNS) or into a regular Spanish class. Our list is therefore divided into categories with our top recommendations listed first. Our list tells you whether the test covers oral proficiency only or includes other skills as well. In addition to a list of tests for high school students, we provide a list of tests that can be useful to elementary school teachers of SNS as well.

In some of the tests the scores are explicitly designed to separate students into native and non-native speakers of Spanish. In others, the results do not provide this decision directly but are given in terms of levels that need to be translated into placement decisions. In all cases, naturally, you will want to supplement test scores with your own intuitive, experience-based assessment of the student. Some teachers may want to use their own test as supplement (on this, teachers may want to consult Ziegler 1982). Finally, we highlight here tests that have been designed expressly for native speakers of Spanish. Our first recommendation, designed by the senior author of this chapter, is unique in having been written with middle and high school native speakers classes in mind. The *Prueba de ubicación para hispanohablantes* has been especially created for middle and high school Spanish teachers who are facing two decisions: One, does this Latino student belong in a native speaker group or in regular Spanish? Two, if the answer is that the student does belong in SNS, should he or she be placed in level 1, 2, or 3? The Prueba can be given to many students at once (and can even be administered by someone who doesn't know Spanish) and can be scored automatically. Once the score is obtained, the teacher consults a placement guide that indicates where the student should be placed.

The Prueba contains four parts, each designed to test: (a) comprehension, (b) writing, (c) vocabulary, and (d) knowledge of cultural items related to the Hispanic peoples of the United States, Latin America, and Spain. The first part requires that a simple cassette recorder be available. For teachers who have more time, the Prueba provides an expanded version, parts (e) and (f), where teachers can give each student individually administered tests of speaking and writing, but this expanded section is not needed to derive a placement decision from the Prueba generated score.

Also worth considering are the Placement Tests for the Leamos Program and the tests of the Riverside Performance Assessment Series. The Leamos Spanish developmental reading program is a sequential program of instruction especially designed for native speakers of Spanish of any age who lack literacy in Spanish. Its placement test, like the program as a whole, has the advantage of having been prepared with native speakers in mind. Its close dependence on the specific reading program of which it is a part may be a drawback.

FINDING OUT MORE

For those who want to learn more about placement instruments for native speakers of Spanish, we list several sources in the bibliography that can provide useful information. Two organizations whose publications we list and that are especially good to know about are, first, the Center for Applied Linguistics in Washington, DC, and especially its Center for Language Education and Research (CLEAR), and second, the Evaluation Assistance Center in Albuquerque, New Mexico. In our bibliography, a particularly

good source, especially for those interested in deepening their understanding of the difference between testing natives and non-natives, is Valdés (1989). Good sources for learning about tests are the *Handbook of Spanish Language Proficiency Tests* by Del Vecchio and Guerrero (1996), the *Selected Bibliography* by Rodriguez Pino (1993), and the bibliographies that we list under Iowa State University (1997, 1999). A third source that is worth reading, particularly for teachers in California, is Peale (1991). A good commercial outlet to know about is Delta Systems Company of McHenry, Illinois. On the web, the following addresses—for the Evaluation Assistance Center in New Mexico, the Center for Applied Linguistics in Washington, the ERIC system, and the National Clearinghouse on Bilingual Education—are also good to have at hand:

<http://www.cesdp.nmhu.edu/>

<http://www.cal.org/public/FLTests.htm>

<http://ericae.net/>

<http://www.ncbe.gwu.edu/links/langcult/spanish.html>

We give no information here on the speaking proficiency guidelines prepared by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), located in Yonkers, New York, nor on the Simulated Oral Proficiency Interviews (SOPI) of the Center for Applied Linguistics of Washington, DC. The ACTFL instrument has not been primarily designed for testing native speakers; the SOPIs are not especially designed for young learners. Teachers with small groups who are interested in these interviews may find it useful to contact these two organizations.

**PLACEMENT TESTS FOR MIDDLE AND
HIGH SCHOOL NATIVE SPEAKERS****RECOMMENDED***Prueba de ubicación para hispanohablantes (Prueba articulada)*

Authors: Ricardo Otheguy and Ofelia Garcia

Classifies student as: Belonging in SFL or SNS, and in level of SNS

Originally designed for: SNS classes in high school and middle school

Age group: 8th–12th grade

Skills: listening, reading, vocabulary, cultural knowledge

Contact: McDougal-Littell. Boston, MA

Prueba de ubicación para hispanohablantes (Prueba global)

Authors: Ricardo Otheguy and Ofelia Garcia

Classifies student as: Belonging in SFL or SNS, and in level of SNS

Originally designed for: SNS classes in high school and middle school

Age group: 8th–12th grade

Skills: speaking, writing

Contact: McDougal-Littell. Boston, MA

ALSO WORTH CONSIDERING*Leamos Spanish Developmental Reading Program–Placement Test*

Author: Paul S. Amidon and Associates

Classifies students as: Placing in one of 11 steps connected to reading program.

Age group: 9 years to adult

Originally designed for: Teaching Spanish literacy to native speakers

Skills: reading

Contact: Paul S. Amidon & Associates, St. Paul, MN

Riverside Performance Assessment Series

Author: Riverside Publishing Co., Chicago, IL

Originally designed for: Measuring thinking skills and strategies, reading and writing in native speakers of Spanish.

Age group: K - 12th grade

Skills: reading, writing

Contact: Riverside Publishing, Chicago, IL

MAY ALSO BE USEFUL*IDEA Language Proficiency Tests (IPT)–Spanish*

Classifies student as: Fluent, Limited, Non-speaking

Age group: K–12th grade

Originally designed for: Native speakers in SFL classes

Skills: reading, writing for all students, oral for natives

Contact: Ballard & Tighe Publishers, Brea, CA

Basic Inventory of Natural Language

Classifies student as: Proficient, Functional, Limited, Non-speaking

Author: Charles H. Herbert

Age group: K-12th grade

Originally designed for: Bilingual and ESL classes

Skills: oral

Contact: CHECpoint Systems, Inc., San Bernardino, CA

Language Assessment Scales-Oral (LAS-0)

Classifies student as: Fluent, Limited, Non-Spanish speaker

Age group: K-12th grade

Originally designed for: Bilingual and ESL classes

Skills: vocabulary, pronunciation

Contact: CTB/McGraw-Hill, New York, NY

PLACEMENT TESTS FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL NATIVE SPEAKERS

Aprenda: La prueba de logros en español Author: The Psychological Corporation

Classifies student as: Reading at grade levels 1st-8th.

Originally designed for: Testing grasp of content in several areas, including reading and vocabulary, for native speakers of Spanish in elementary school.

Skills: reading, spelling, vocabulary, listening

Contact: The Psychological Corporation, San Antonio, TX

Basic Inventory of Natural Language

Classifies student as: Proficient, Functional, Limited, Non-speaking

Age group: K-12th grade

Originally designed for: Bilingual and ESL classes

Skills: oral

Contact: CHECpoint Systems, Inc. San Bernardino, CA

Basic Elementary Skills Test

Authors: Donald Omark et al.

Age group: K-6th grade

Originally designed for: Testing in Spanish

Skills: reading, writing, math

Contact: Los Amigos Research Associates, San Diego CA and
Educational Testing Service, Princeton, NJ*Examen de español para escuelas elementales: Spanish FLES test*

Author: West Hartford Public Schools

Age group: 4th-6th grade

Originally designed for: Native speakers of Spanish in bilingual education classes

Skills: reading, oral comprehension

Contact: Educational Testing Service, Princeton, NJ

Language Assessment Scales—Oral (LAS-0)

Classifies student as: Fluent, Limited, Non-Spanish speaker

Age group: K-12th grade

Originally designed for: Bilingual and ESL classes

Skills: vocabulary, pronunciation

Contact: CTB/McGraw-Hill, New York, NY

Prueba de lectura

Author: Oscar Ozete

Age group: 3rd and 6th graders

Originally designed for: Native speakers of Spanish in bilingual education classes

Skills: reading

Contact: Wisconsin State Department of Public Instruction, Madison, WI, or Educational Testing Service, Princeton, NJ

Spanish Oral Reading Test

Authors: Cdsar Romero & Robert Miller

Classifies students as: Reading level in Spanish by grade

Age group: K-6th grade

Originally designed for: Native speakers of Spanish in bilingual education classes

Skills: reading

Contact: Paradox Press, Los Gatos, CA, and Educational Testing Service, Princeton, NJ

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