

High Intermediate Spanish

Language and Culture Track

For my Global Pathway courses, I have chosen to complete the High Intermediate Spanish pathway, since I was already pursuing Spanish studies. These courses were unlike any of my other courses that I have taken at UB, with small class sizes and a more direct form of interaction. Indeed, one of them was not even at UB, as it was an AP Spanish class I have taken in high school. However, my Spanish classes did not just grant me usage of a new language. Rather, they fostered a development of new cultures and ways of thinking. In that regard, these classes gave me a new perspective to look at my studies and into the world, through my third language of Spanish.

AP Spanish, which was used to fulfill **SPA 207: Spanish Conversation and Language Workshop**, was the culmination of my studies of high school Spanish. In that class, we were pressed into not just passively learning material, but rather into acting out what we learned. We had regular speaking (“Hablar”) and listening (“Escuchar”) assignments, and we could only speak in Spanish while in class, even to friends. This was a big change to my other classes, as it meant simply chatting was academic work in itself. However, more often than not, our teacher made sure to make the class wholesome and entertaining. We would have competitions with other classes for Spanish supremacy, and we’d learn the different Spanish cultures by dancing or singing them out. And of course, we always had our trusty book and guide, “Repaso”. Nevertheless, the class was challenging, and we could only get the most out of it if we truly put our heart into learning and using Spanish.

While learning a foreign language usually requires smaller classrooms, the class of **SPA 208: Spanish Composition and Language Workshop** was taught in the smallest room I’ve ever had at UB. It made for closer connections with my classmates, which was already made awkward by it being my first semester at UB. Still, we got to know each other, and through that we obtained a closer relation to the subject and the culture. If it were taught in a lecture hall, I would not have been able to go up onto the blackboard and scribble the answer to a question, and or to have an in-depth discussion about a Spanish story. Learning a foreign language does require a bit of intimacy, because you have to practice using it, which you have to fail. However, as in many of my other courses, in order to learn you have to fail and get better. When we misspoke or interpreted or wrote incorrectly, we could not only get corrected by the teacher, but we could also help and guide each other.

The class of **SPA 313: Advanced Grammar** was slightly larger than the class of SPA 207, but it was still not much more than 20 students total. What really struck me in this class, however, was how we could gain different perspectives on what we say or write, simply by the language of the respective medium. Aside from analyzing Spanish and Latin American history

and culture, we delved in the action and meaning of translation, and what often gets lost in it. This opened up to me the fluidity of language and the role it plays in our lives. Because of the way we say things in our common language, we carry with them a certain connotation. However, this connotation can be vastly different from the perspective of someone with a different background. From this class, I have learned that a foreign language is not just a different language, but rather it's a different way of thinking. It allowed me to consider biases and perspectives I may have never looked at before.

Spanish is only my third language that I have learned. My second language is actually English. Indeed, when I came to the US in 3rd grade, I only knew how to write my name in Hebrew. So, I am already well familiar with how a different language could be like an entirely new world opening up, because for me, it literally was. Still, learning Spanish was another tool in my arsenal, but moreover it was an experience of learning by doing. There was no other way to succeed in the courses than to show up to class and participate with all your might. Through participation, I gained connection to the class, and insight to the subject. Moreover, I earned a new set of lenses through which I can see the world, in a different light.