

# PLACING NATIVE SPEAKERS IN LANGUAGE CLASSES

**Lower-Level Language Classes (I, II, & III) are NOT appropriate for native speakers.** Those classes are designed to teach beginning language to English novice learners. Native speakers have far different needs. Placing a native speaker in a lower-level language class is like putting a high school student in a first grade class: It is a waste of time—the student will not learn much, he will be bored and frustrated, and he will probably just get into trouble. Rather than taking a lower-level class, here are some...

## BETTER OPTIONS FOR NATIVE SPEAKERS:

- 1. Take another language.** Why not become trilingual?
- 2. Take the highest-level language class that you can handle.** Take a class, or a series of classes, like *Heritage Speakers I* or *II*, *Level IV*, or even *AP* if you are ready (See the *Specific Placement Guidelines for Native Speakers* below).
- 3. Go on independent study.** This is a year of free voluntary reading in the target language (and reading may actually be the BEST way to learn language). You will check out books in Spanish of your choice from the classroom library, the school library, the city library or from a university library. The only requirements are that: **(a)** The book is written in the target language and **(b)** The book is both *interesting* and *comprehensible* to you. You will read during class time every day and write a 3-sentence reaction to what you read each day and turn it in. Your grade will start with a 100%. Your grade will drop by 2% for each day that you do not complete and turn in the assignment by the end of class.
- 4. Enroll in a lower-level language class (level I, II or III) and just play the game.** With this option you are basically putting in seat time and trying to get some credit. This is an option ONLY if there is NO problem with your behavior. If the teacher has any trouble with your behavior, you will lose this choice; you will then have to choose one of the other options above. If you choose to take a lower-level class you will still be required to stay awake, participate and not cause any problems. "Playing the game" also includes not answering questions too quickly, which can be hard to do. You will often have to hold yourself back and not answer right away, and sometimes not even answer at all. Novice students in lower-level classes cannot speak or think as quickly as a native speaker can, and answers that are too quick will interrupt the learning process for them. A native speaker is in a lower-level class for credit only. If you choose this option, then so be it, but you must have a good attitude and you must help the class to learn the language, not hinder it.

## SPECIFIC PLACEMENT GUIDELINES FOR NATIVE SPEAKERS

- Heritage Speakers I** For students that speak the language at home, but cannot read or write well. These students have had **little to no formal education in the language (no school to 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> grade)**, but want to preserve their heritage and learn to read and write in in the language.
- Heritage Speakers II** For students that speak fluently at home and with their friends at school, AND can read and write in the target language. These students may have had **some formal schooling in the language (3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> grade)**, but not consistently. This is for students that want to preserve their heritage language skills and improve their reading and writing skills in a challenging environment.
- Level IV** For native speaking students who are **below grade level (5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading level in the target language)**, in their formal education and ability to read and write. Level IV is also for non-native speakers that have passed level III, but are not yet ready for AP classes.
- AP Classes** Advanced Placement (AP) language classes are appropriate for students who are from a native speaking background and are **at or near grade level** in their in their ability to read and write in the target language. AP classes are also for non-native speakers that have passed level IV or have passed level III and have the instructor's permission. AP language classes are equivalent to a 4<sup>th</sup> semester college-level Spanish class or higher and require a considerable time commitment and advanced study skills.