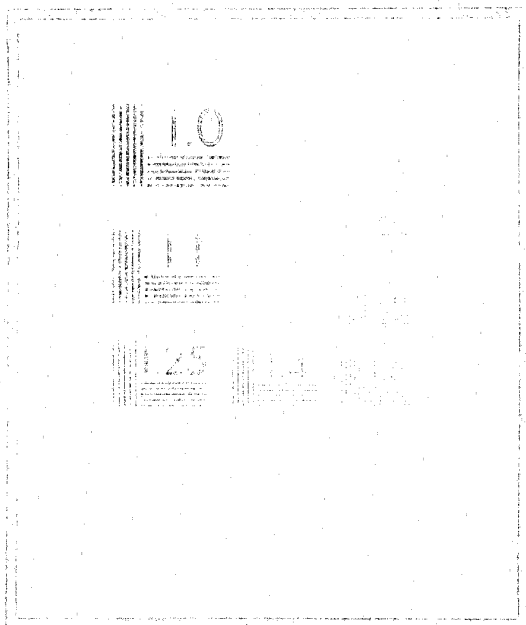


NCJRS

This information was prepared from documents received from the FBI in the NCJRS data base. Since NCJRS cannot guarantee the accuracy of original documents or the completeness of the data, the user should verify the information with the source of the information.

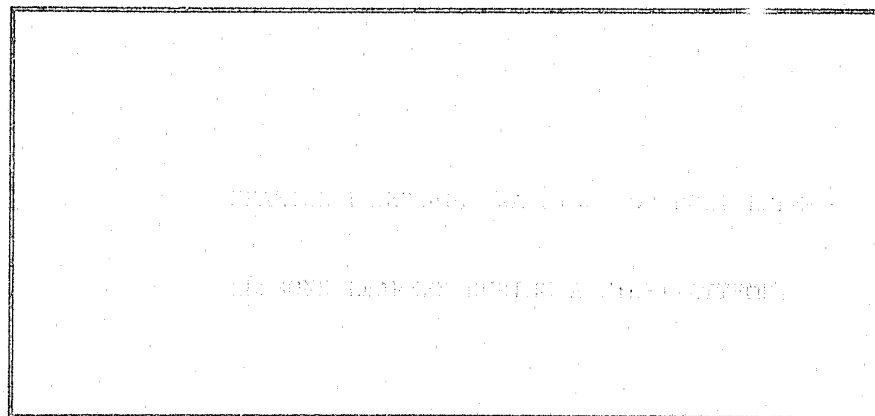
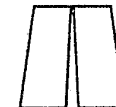


Information is provided for informational purposes only. It is not intended to be used as a legal document.

Points of view or opinions stated in this document are those of the author(s) and do not represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

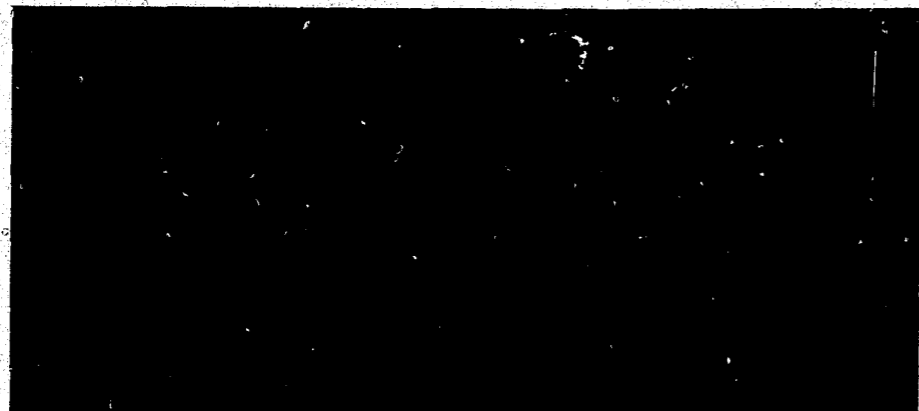
**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
LAW ENFORCEMENT ASSISTANCE ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFERENCE SERVICE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20531**

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO



A Report of
THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE PROGRAM
INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT
The University of New Mexico, Albuquerque 87131

013367



SPANISH LANGUAGE TRAINING FOR POLICEMEN--

LESSONS LEARNED DURING A FIRST ATTEMPT

Steven Gonzales
Research Associate

Criminal Justice Program
University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87131

March 4, 1974

CJP-74-02

This project was supported by Grant No. 73-NI-06-0002 (in evaluation of a project supported by Grant No. 72-DF-06-0030) awarded by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, U.S. Department of Justice, under the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968, as amended. Points of view or opinions stated in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the Spanish Language Training Project for cadets and officers in the Albuquerque Police Department was to improve communication between policemen and non-English speaking residents. Cadets were required to take an introductory class; officers volunteered for both the introductory classes and the intermediate class.

A total of 33 cadets and 65 officers enrolled. Thirteen cadets and 35 officers finished the course with a grade of C or better. In a questionnaire completed by fewer than half of those who finished the course, 13 said they had learned to converse in Spanish and ten said they had not. Twenty of those responding said the course would assist them in future relationships with Spanish speaking residents.

This report briefly describes the Spanish Language Training Project and makes recommendations for similar projects. It is published by the Criminal Justice Program at the University of New Mexico to contribute to the dissemination of knowledge gained through grant-funded projects under LEAA's Pilot Cities Program.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	<u>Page</u>
Preface	ii
Summary	iv
	vi
<u>Chapter</u>	
I INTRODUCTION	1
II THE SPANISH LANGUAGE COURSE	3
A. Materials	3
B. Personnel	3
C. Course Organization	4
D. Testing	5
III OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	7
A. Curriculum	7
B. Personnel	8
C. Course Organization	8
D. Testing	9
E. Benefits Claimed by the Contractor and the Evaluators	9
F. Hypothesis	10
G. Conclusions	11
Appendix	12

PREFACE

Language barriers between law enforcement officers and non-English speaking Spanish-American citizens in the Southwest have led to unnecessary confrontations and arrests. The Commission on Civil Rights in Washington, D.C., published in March 1970, a report entitled Mexican-Americans and the Administration of Justice, which described examples of mistreatment of non-English speaking citizens in the Southwest by police officers. The study documented cases of false arrest and incarceration that were the direct result of poor oral communication between law enforcement officers and Spanish (only) speaking citizens. The study concluded that language barriers contribute to the non-English speaking citizens' hostility toward the police and sometimes lead to miscarriages of justice.

Statistics from the 1970 census show that in Albuquerque 63,567 residents (about 26 percent of the population) indicated that Spanish was their native language. Approximately 21 percent of the officers in the Albuquerque Police Department, the major law enforcement agency in Albuquerque/Bernalillo County, speak Spanish. Figures released by the Albuquerque Police Department show that for a two-week period (November 18 through November 30) in 1973, 56.5 percent of those arrested had Spanish surnames. APD estimated that the average is closer to 65 percent for a six-month period.

In an attempt to alleviate any potential communication problems, the Albuquerque Police Department applied for a grant from the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) to teach police officers basic Spanish.

In July, 1972, a \$42,983 grant was awarded to conduct a Spanish Language Course for Albuquerque police officers. (Only \$20,983 was used.)

This report describes that course and includes an evaluation of it based on information supplied by the Albuquerque Police Department, the contractor, and the evaluators.

SUMMARY

In the 1970 census, about 26 percent of the Albuquerque residents stated that their native language was Spanish. About 21 percent of the officers in the Albuquerque Police Department are reported to be proficient in Spanish. The Department believed that a policeman during the performance of his duty may encounter a language barrier that will affect his ability to investigate a situation when it involves non-English speaking residents.

In recognition of this potential communication problem, the Department applied for and received a grant of \$42,983 for a Spanish Language Course for police officers and Police Academy cadets (\$22,000 was subsequently returned to LEAA). Course design was sub-contracted to a local research firm and evaluation to a college in a nearby state.

The Albuquerque Police Department felt that such a course would improve relations with Spanish speaking residents, lessen the likelihood of confrontations that could result from language barriers, provide "positive carry-over effects on local law enforcement," and assist officers conducting basic inquiries when non-English speaking residents are involved.

In a questionnaire distributed by the Academy following the project, 13 of the 26 responding students indicated they had learned to converse in Spanish and felt it would help them in their work. (The questionnaire and comments are included in the Appendix.)

The evaluators stated in their report that 35 policemen and 13 cadets gained proficiency in Spanish (proficiency defined as scoring C or better

in the course). Of the 98 persons enrolled, 59 completed the course. The Spanish taught was not completely geared to local Spanish dialects, but it did equip the students to communicate with Spanish speaking residents.

The evaluators measured the student proficiency in Spanish based on oral responses students gave to specific questions. In their final report, the evaluators stated that "teaching materials were poor and inappropriate, core content was too general and not specifically designed for policemen, situations and dialogue were inappropriate, and the vocabulary was insufficient for police terminology." The contractor reported that it had not been able to obtain materials that reflected local Spanish dialects. Instructors were left with the responsibility of localizing materials while the course was in progress. In monthly reports published during the project, the instructors noted the difficulty in adapting materials provided to include local Spanish and law enforcement terminology.

The introductory course for cadets totaled 96 hours of classes, for police, 108 hours. The intermediate, with officers only enrolled, totaled 72 hours.

The evaluators reported that the classes were too large. The two largest classes contained 18 students each; the others included 17, 15, 11, and 9.

After the first session ended, two of the three instructors resigned, leaving one teacher, a native of South America. He taught Latin American culture and attempted to localize the Spanish.

Among the lessons learned are a need for better preparation of such a course, improvements in the conduct of the course, and better evaluation after the course. For example, Spanish speaking police officers could be used in curriculum development and instruction, to ensure inclusion of Spanish as it is spoken in the local area and terms common in police usage.

Perhaps most important, however, is the need to develop evaluation plans prior to beginning classes, so that it is clear exactly what data will be collected, how, and how it will be used to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the project.

During the course, more flexible schedules could be offered, so that police officers could match their classes with their working schedules. Makeup classes could be offered, so that missing one regular class would not put a student behind from that point on. Recognition of some kind should be provided for police and cadets who successfully complete the course. Testing should be more comprehensive to more accurately gauge the progress of the students as time goes by, and to provide opportunities for changing emphasis if weaknesses appear.

Among the evaluation devices suggested is a survey after the course, in which competence in Spanish conversation in a police situation is compared for graduates of the course and those who did not take the course.

CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

The Albuquerque Police Department accepted a \$42,983 grant award for a Spanish Language Training Project in September 1972. After formalizing the grant award, the Albuquerque Police Department contracted with a local corporation engaged in educational program design to develop the curriculum for teaching Spanish to police officers. The contract also called for an outside evaluation by a college in a nearby state.

In its grant proposal, the Albuquerque Police Department contended that: (1) intensive Spanish language training could play an important role in improving relations between that minority group and the police; (2) increased knowledge of Spanish could result in increased justice for community residents who had limited knowledge of English; (3) improved community-police relations could have a marked positive implication for law enforcement as a whole; and (4) law enforcement terminology in Spanish could assist officers in conducting basic inquiries.

In developing the beginning language program, the contractor pursued course accreditation through the college selected as the evaluator. The grant award did not stipulate this, but the contractor indicated that accreditation might be an additional incentive for officers taking the course. It was also anticipated that the relationship with an institution of higher learning would aid in developing the course for broader applicability later.

The contractor and the Albuquerque Police Department developed three basic goals to provide the following:

1. An introductory course with emphasis on police vocabulary and local New Mexico Spanish.

2. A course of instruction that stresses conversational skills in police situations, develops basic foundations in Spanish, and serves to enhance language understanding.

3. A course of instruction that equips the student with the ability to handle basic inquiries and to offer assistance and advice in Spanish.

On October 19, 1972 the college agreed to be responsible for accrediting and evaluating the Spanish language course through correspondence and on-site visits. In the first session, classes began in late October and were completed on February 9, 1973, by cadets, and February 28, 1973, by the officers. The second session began March 12 and ended June 30.

CHAPTER II. THE SPANISH LANGUAGE COURSE

A. Materials

The contractor selected a textbook, Hablemos en Espanol, Primer Libro - A Practical Spanish Grammar for Border Patrol Officers, and several newspaper and magazine articles that were crime related. For the second session, the contractor compiled some of the better articles in looseleaf folders. The contractor also supplied 20 "tapebooks" designed by the Institute of Modern Languages. These tapebooks were coordinated with the textbook lessons and were adapted as feasible to local Spanish by the instructors. Nine portable language labs with recorders and headphones were installed for student use.

Key phrases used by police were translated into Spanish, for example: "Where is your home? Who did this? Where are you injured? What kind of car?" and "You will have to come with me." The instructors also included some terminology frequently used by police officers, such as: "subpeona, summons, driver's license, witness, attorney, testify, arrest, bail, bond," and "headquarters."

B. Personnel

Three staff instructors were hired. The senior instructor assisted in developing the curriculum, but he and one other instructor resigned after the first session, leaving only a native South American to teach the remaining classes. The college designated two project evaluators.

C. Course Organization

Cadet classes were held three days a week for two hours for 16 weeks. Police officer classes were two weeks longer. Following are details on students, classes, and times:

FIRST SESSION		
18 Cadets	Introductory Course	7:30-9:30 a.m., M-W-F
15 Cadets	Introductory Course	7:30-9:30 a.m., M-W-F
9 Officers	Introductory Course	7:30-8:30 p.m., M-W-F
18 Officers	Introductory Course	8:30-9:30 p.m., M-W-F
SECOND SESSION		
17 Officers	Introductory Course	7:00-9:00 a.m., M-W-F
11 Officers	Introductory Course	3:00-5:00 p.m., M-W-F
9 Officers	Intermediate Course	5:00-7:00 p.m., T-Th

All 33 cadets were chosen by the Police Academy to participate in the project. These men were required to attend classes, but their grades had no effect on their standing in the Academy. Sixty-five officers volunteered for the project.

The instruction used a situational-reinforcement approach, which has been used internationally since 1967, especially in teaching English to foreign businessmen. Key features are:

1. A structured conversational approach with many repetitive drills, texts, tapes, and tapebooks.
2. Course taught almost entirely in Spanish.
3. All training and exercises built around common and real situations the student is likely to experience.

4. All training in small groups with maximum speaking interaction and individual lab sessions.

The contractor attempted to adapt the course to local situations, with less emphasis on the memorization of standard language phrases. The instructors included phrases about New Mexico culture and had students describe themselves and tell time in Spanish. All items taught were oriented toward responses to be given to specific questions. The teacher's role was to conduct class in local Spanish, to act as a model, to drill students on terms, and to ensure the students' ability to communicate in Spanish.

D. Testing

Both written and oral tests were given, with a short test after every four lessons. The contractor and the evaluator agreed to use the Foreign Service language system to evaluate students. This evaluates students on the basis of oral proficiency (the student's ability to respond to questions in Spanish). The final examination was written as well as oral.

The first session started with 33 cadets and 35 officers. Of the 23 cadets who completed the course, 13 made a C or better and ten failed. (Seven of the cadets who passed the course failed the final examination.) Seventeen officers completed the course (16 finished with a C or better) and one failed. The following is a breakdown of grades:

	<u>CADETS</u>	<u>OFFICERS</u>
A	4	8
B	3	2
C	6	6
D	10	1
F	10	1

About 70 percent of the cadets and about 50 percent of the officers completed the first course. Of those completing the course, 39.3 percent of the cadets made C or better and 94 percent of the officers made C or better.

In the second session, 28 officers enrolled in the beginning course and nine (seven of whom had completed the beginning course) enrolled in the intermediate course. In the beginning course, 19 officers completed the course and nine withdrew. In the intermediate course, five completed the course and four withdrew. The following is a breakdown of grades:

	<u>BEGINNING</u>	<u>INTERMEDIATE</u>
A	11	5
B	8	0
C	0	0
D	0	0
F	0	0

During this session 68 percent of the officers in the introductory course completed it and 50 percent of the intermediate students completed that course. All five of the intermediate students had completed the introductory class in the first session.

The Albuquerque Police Department returned \$22,000 of unexpended funds at the end of the second course. The Department subsequently began its own 40-hour Spanish language training course that is required of all Police Academy cadets.

CHAPTER III. OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Curriculum

The contractor reported that, although an attempt was made to improve the curriculum, "teaching materials were poor and inappropriate." In the monthly reports for November and December, instructors said that "too much time was spent customizing the program to meet the officers' needs." As the course progressed, instructors tried to localize materials, which slowed the classes' progress. One booklet that was used, A Practical Spanish Grammar for Border Patrol, had been adopted for law enforcement officers from what had originally been a tourist guidebook.

Instructors were fully responsible for localizing the teaching materials. This appears to have been a very difficult task.

Dr. Sabine Ulibarri, chairman of the University of New Mexico's Modern and Classical Languages Department, said that he knew of no teaching materials that take into account the differences in dialects from various locales where Spanish is spoken. Such differences can exist even within a state or city. For example, northern New Mexico Spanish tends to be enunciated more clearly and is grammatically more correct than Albuquerque Spanish, which contains much urban slang. Such terms as la jura for "police" and grifa for "marijuana" are street talk, but have become standard vocabulary in Albuquerque. Dr. Ulibarri said the differences in dialects are small and of little consequence. Basic Spanish would be enough to teach the officers to communicate with Spanish residents, he said.

The evaluators, who made four on-site visits to Albuquerque, stated in their report that the core content was too general and not specifically

designed for policemen, situations and dialogues were inappropriate and there was insufficient police terminology in the vocabulary. The types of materials needed for this course could have been developed with the assistance of a Spanish speaking policeman, who would be familiar with the slang and the police terminology. (Such a course is now being taught as a part of the regular cadet requirements at the Police Academy.) Better coordination between the contractor and the evaluator in planning materials could have prevented most of the problems this project encountered.

B. Personnel

Three instructors were hired, but no records are available on the experience or qualifications of any of them. The evaluators reported that a "very sound working relationship was established between teachers and students." The instructor who taught all of the second session classes (the other two had resigned) was from South America and reflected Latin American culture in his teaching. According to the 1970 census, the Albuquerque culture is a blend of Spanish/Indian/Anglo values. Local police officers could have been used during curriculum development and during the course to provide input on the local culture.

C. Course Organization

The three major complaints about the course schedules were: (1) classes were too large, (2) class times were not flexible enough to accommodate the policemen's schedules, and (3) although cadets were required to attend classes, their grades had no effect on their standing in the Academy.

The contractor stated that the cadets performed below the college average on the tests because the courses meant extra class time and study, but had no effect on Academy grades.

The instructors and the evaluators reported that, contrary to the intended approach of emphasizing local Spanish phrases and police terminology, the traditional approach with standard introductory phrases was used. The instructors attempted to revise the materials while the course was in progress.

D. Testing

Written and oral tests were administered during the course. The contractor and the evaluators stated that the students' proficiency in conversational Spanish was measured in terms of their ability to answer questions orally. This approach may merely measure memorization and conditioned responses and may not indicate the degree of understanding of the language or the ability to initiate or conduct conversations.

E. Benefits Claimed by the Contractor and the Evaluators

In its final report, the contractor stated that over 40 officers and cadets had achieved proficiency in conversational Spanish (proficiency was measured by a final grade of C or better in the course). According to figures released by the evaluators, 48 students received a C or better. According to student comments and grades, it appears that the officers learned basic Spanish and, although local slang was not taught, policemen should be able to communicate with Spanish speaking residents.

The contractor also stated that an "increase in cultural awareness" was created, but there was no evidence offered in support of this statement.

The contractor suggested that similar courses should be offered for credit, because some institutions of higher learning are flexible enough to act upon "non-traditional models and still insure academic quality."

F. Hypothesis

One way of testing the implementation of this project would be to compare its progress with the goals listed by the Albuquerque Police Department in its original grant proposal (see p. 1). Also, a follow-up study monitoring the performance of the officers who completed the course would show whether they were able to communicate with non-English speaking residents. Such a study is not planned.

A partial measurement can be made from a questionnaire administered by the Albuquerque Police Department. Seven questions dealing specifically with the course were asked and students were requested to comment on the course. (The questionnaire and student comments are listed in the Appendix.) The questionnaire was completed by 26 of the 59 students who finished the course. Some of those did not answer every question. The questionnaire was not administered to those who failed the course.

Thirteen students indicated that they could carry on a conversation in Spanish; 17 reported that they were now talking to others in Spanish while on duty. Fifteen said the course enabled them to understand local Spanish. An Albuquerque police lieutenant reported that "the only real complaint was that the Spanish taught was not local Spanish, especially in the second session."

G. Conclusions

1. Spanish speaking officers proficient in the local dialect should have been included in the curriculum development.
2. There should have been better coordination between the contractor and the evaluators.
3. Classes should have been arranged to allow for the schedules of the officers, with make-up classes also available.
4. Planning for this program should have included a design for collecting data necessary to evaluate its success and to document its strengths and weaknesses for consideration in planning future programs.
5. A long-range follow-up study documenting the performances of the officers who completed this course as compared to officers who do not speak Spanish should have been incorporated.

APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE AND COMMENTS

A. Questionnaire (answer yes or no to all statements)

1. Did you learn to carry on a conversation in Spanish?

"Very limited"

"Native speaker improved"

"Already knew how"

"To a limited extent"

"Limited"

"I can ask questions and get simple answers"

2. Did you feel the course given to you was suited to local law enforcement?

"I do not feel it was suited to law enforcement -- not enough practice in conversation"

"The course should consist of nothing but local Spanish, which does not come from books"

"Of what there was of it"

"It was relevant. I just feel that I would need a lot more of it"

"The first course yes, second course not especially"

"Local Spanish? Not enough practice"

3. Have you used Spanish when talking to people while working?

"No opportunity to do so"

"Many times"

"I have done this for several years. Limited Spanish, of course"

"Did not learn enough"

If so, did you have any difficulty conversing with the person(s)?

"None"

4. Do you feel your new knowledge will assist you in your relationship with Spanish speaking people?

"Didn't learn anything new"

"They tend to accept you better if you speak a little bit of Spanish"

5. Do you feel you are more effective in your job because of your new skill?

"Yes, especially that I understand the language although don't speak fluently"

"Very little, too short a course to be of much benefit"

"I feel, I could learn Spanish easily. Now I have a basis for learning"

"I can communicate better"

"If upon coming on a crime scene where victim could only speak Spanish, I feel that I would be able to get general descriptions of suspects or cars involved for an immediate locate. However that would be as far as I could take it"

"The ability to converse with Spanish speaking people who speak no English promotes better relations with them"

"No better than I was"

"This question along with others is hard to answer due to the limited amount of Spanish learned. Any skill which enables the officer to communicate or gain the confidence of a segment of the Albuquerque population couldn't help but make the officer more effective in his job"

"I can understand to a point, initial inquiries made in Spanish, before seeking an officer as other person more fluent than myself. On occasion I may resolve situation without assistance"

"My ability is not great or to the extent that I can carry on a running conversation, however I can understand the basic relevant questions"

"The ability to convey a thought or render some assistance, not only to me but to the other person has been quite satisfying and useful"

"It has increased my ability to converse with Spanish speaking people"

"There is seldom a need to call for a Spanish speaking officer when one has even a limited ability to speak the language, and when even a limited ability is used properly in certain circumstances it can keep a sticky situation under control"

"I now possess a basic knowledge of Spanish which helps me to hold limited conversations and gain basic information. (This is after taking 15 hours of college plus this Spanish language course)"

"I knew some Spanish prior to taking the course. I now feel more confident in expressing myself in Spanish"

"The first course was along the proper lines of teaching but was too short to accomplish the objective"

"I can comprehend the drift of the conversation and could possibly get some help of the right kind in an emergency. Yo hablar espanol poco" [Hablo espanol un poco.]

"To better understand"

B. Comments

"I think the course should be continued to even a third level. More emphasis on the application to law enforcement, and local native conversation. The first course with . . . was much better for local application, and law enforcement."

"I need to have another course and practice using it in class."

"I'm Spanish thus, I was well aware of what was going on. I did learn alot and as the result of the course I can carry on a good conversation."

"I feel the course was a beginning. It was not enough to make a person fluent in the language. A course continuing where this one left off would be necessary for that."

"It seemed to long for as little that was taught."

"Everyone should be required to take such a course. Officers fluent in Spanish should receive incentive pay for it."

"It laid a fair foundation of Spanish that would make further learning easier. I don't feel you can really learn a foreign language well enough to converse in a class such as ours was; there just isn't enough time. I would have like to have taken the advance course but my school schedule was already filled. Advance courses would have made the first class that much better and the time spent more worthwhile."

"I already spoke Spanish prior to the course however many of the elements of grammar were learned. Better Spanish was the result."

"I felt the pace comfortable and conducive to average student understanding."

"I felt the course was more complete and knowledgeable than the 8 week idiom course. This course went beyond police terms; it gave an overall view of the Spanish language in the ability to converse in the broader sense of the language."

"I feel the instructor should have kept to the local Spanish exclusively, instead of including four or five different usages from varying areas. He was a good instructor however, this just caused some confusion and made it a little more difficult to learn."

"The first course taught by . . . was excellent. The second course was worthless and I dropped out of it. I've learned more on the street by practice than I could have learned in the second course."

"I do not believe anyone can learn to hold a conversation in Spanish after taking one Spanish language course. At best, it takes years of instruction and practice to learn to hold a sensible conversation in Spanish. . . . I suggest that Spanish-speaking persons should never be in the same Spanish class along with students who have no background at all in Spanish. The Spanish-speaking students always make straight A with no effort while the beginners make lower grades. The Spanish-speaking rapidly become bored because there is no challenge."

"I was able to participate in the beginners Spanish class taught by . . . and the advance class by I was able to learn more from as he dealt more with fundamentals of the Language with more emphasis placed on police vernacular and Spanish as it is spoken in the Southwest, which was of more value to me since these are the people I deal with. . . . made his classes interesting and informative. However, he dealt mostly with the Spanish language as it is spoken in Spain and South American countries. Which is good to know, if one is already familiar with Spanish. But if one is to speak the correct Spanish as taught by . . . , here in Albuquerque most people of Spanish descent would have difficulty in understanding. . . . is a good instructor, but his teaching method appeared best suited for someone majoring in Spanish, who may have a need to speak in intellectual Spanish conversations, as opposed to a police officer who would need to understand and speak sufficient Spanish to carry out his duties in vernacular more apt to be understood by the majority of the Spanish speaking in this area."

"The course was not sufficiently geared towards law enforcement situations. Too much wasted time, lack of organization."

"I think the method of instruction was not suitable for our needs. The emphasis should have been on learning the course or language at each officers pace and less emphasis on trickery test. In my particular class, there were several Spanish officers that knew the language and others were quite frequently belittled for their skill in speaking Spanish."

"I never completed course."

"In my opinion the course was a waste of money."

"I attended the first class. The change in instructor and the coordination between the two instructors left much to be desired. I begin the course with no knowledge what ever of Spanish and I feel that I only develop a basic foundation on which future knowledge can be built."

END