

As an undergraduate student, I was first drawn to linguistics on the mistaken belief that a linguist is a person who speaks many languages. Having enjoyed studying four languages in high school, I hoped that linguistics would help me to continue this pursuit. Although not what I had expected, I discovered that the field offered an opportunity to engage intellectually with language, which I had previously regarded as a skill or practical tool rather than an object of inquiry. Because few high schools offer students the opportunity to become familiar with the field, college-level teachers of linguistics, as compared to, for example, teachers of biology and literature, are faced with students who may have no knowledge about linguistics. It is likely that many students in introductory courses have, as I did, motivations that may differ widely from those of other students and of the instructor. This presents the challenge of introducing students to entirely new ways of thinking about the nature of human language.

As a researcher, one of the most critical steps in my research process is identifying the right research questions, those that, if answered, can contribute to a greater understanding of the object of inquiry. Thus, I see helping students to understand the questions that scholars in that field ask, and that thus define the field of inquiry, as an integral part of introducing students to any discipline. A primary goal in my teaching is that students, at the end of a course, are able to identify research questions appropriate to the field of linguistics and to distinguish these from questions that belong to some other field of inquiry. In an introductory course these might be more general questions that characterize different subfields within the discipline (e.g., How does language change?), while students in more advanced or specialized courses should have the knowledge and experience necessary to be able to begin to formulate and motivate investigable research questions.

Having identified these questions, a second goal is to help students assemble a methodological and theoretical toolbox, to become familiar with a set of strategies for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting linguistic data. Again, in an introductory level course these may be very general; for instance, introducing the idea that words in a sentence can be analyzed as having hierarchical structure, rather than only linear order, but emphasizing that this is an analytical approach to making sense of linguistic data and reflects a certain theoretical orientation to the study of language.

Having acquired this set of tools, the third goal is that students are then able to use them to analyze data and to engage critically, orally and in writing, with published research in linguistics. This involves being able to evaluate the relevance of a research question to the development of a theory to better understand language, assessing the appropriateness of the methods and data to the question, and evaluating the author's argument. This last goal applies to scientific inquiry in general and I hope that all students will be able to apply the knowledge and critical thinking skills to their academic work beyond my class, and more generally as active citizens who are able to contribute productively to public discourse about language and language diversity. For example, even students who have completed only an introduction to linguistics can be better-informed participants in debates about the value of multilingualism in the United States.

A large part of introducing students to the enterprise of linguistic research requires that they shift their perspective from that of expert users of language to that of an analyst, and to be able to recognize their lack of conscious awareness of what it is they actually know that allows them to use language. At the same time, I think that it is also important to recognize that all of their knowledge, conscious and otherwise, is a valuable resource in this enterprise and in the classroom. Because of this, it is important to me that students recognize that I am not the only

source of knowledge and information in the classroom. For a discussion of bilingualism and code-switching I invited several bilingual students to share their expert knowledge and their perspectives with me and with other students in the classroom. They assumed part of the role of the instructor for the class session, answering other students' questions. They provided a valuable first-hand perspective that I, as a monolingual, could not provide and all students were able to observe that I was also able, and willing, to learn from them.

The strategies that I use to achieve these goals are strongly influenced by my personal experiences as a student and as a teacher outside of the university context. For three years between completing my undergraduate degree and entering graduate school I taught in an alternative learning program serving students with learning, behavioral, or emotional disabilities. The program had a very low student-teacher ratio, allowing instructors to tailor classes very specifically to individual students' needs. Here, I had the opportunity to witness students succeeding academically who had never previously experienced that. Though I initially questioned the relevance of this experience to teaching college students, whom I viewed as being a very different population, I have found that it continues to influence my style and approach to teaching. Most importantly, it remains important to me to provide opportunities for students to interact with course material in multiple ways, not only to accommodate individual learning styles, but also to offer multiple ways for students to become excited by the material. For these reasons I try make sure that important concepts that are presented in a lecture format are also employed in small-group problem solving or guided data analysis activities. In planning undergraduate courses, I also lean toward a greater number of graded assignments so that assessment is not focused on a small number of high stakes assignments or exams that may not offer all students an opportunity to demonstrate their strengths.

My experience as a student also influences my approach to encouraging and assessing students' participation in class. In high school and as an undergraduate my shyness often made it difficult for me to participate in classes to the degree that I would have liked. With this in mind, I am committed to providing students with multiple avenues for participation. In addition to including opportunities for discussion in pairs and small groups as often as possible, I also emphasize that students can contribute to discussions and ask questions about course material in office hours, by finding and sharing relevant outside materials, and various means of computer mediated communication (online discussions, wikis, chat), while they develop the confidence to more consistently contribute orally to larger group discussions.