

Teaching Statement

Marta Ortega-Llebaria

<https://martaortegallebaria.com>

My teaching philosophy is based on the firm belief that education in diversity is crucial to building social cohesion and harmonious coexistence in a multicultural society. As a phonetician native speaker of Catalan and Spanish, my role as a teacher in the Linguistics Department and the Hispanic Linguistics program at University of Pittsburgh is to foster students' interest in diversity from a scientific exploration of speech. I provide students with scientific knowledge in acoustics and phonetics while exposing them to language diversity worldwide (with special attention to the Hispanic world and non-standard language varieties). Together the scientific tools and the exposure to language diversity enable students to think critically about situations frequently encountered in multilingual/multicultural environments (e.g., foreign accented speech, underrepresented linguistic varieties, bilingual education) allowing them to positively value diversity while discerning the challenges present in multicultural societies from linguistic prejudice. Like my colleagues in the Linguistics Department I therefore see my main pedagogical goal as providing students with the intellectual tools to appreciate diversity and to think critically about language issues present in our increasingly multicultural societies.

Courses and teaching practices

During the past years I had the pleasure of preparing 8 courses which I tailored to the specific needs of both the Hispanic Linguistics program and the Linguistics department. Concerning Hispanic Linguistics, I was the only faculty in the program from 2011 to 2014. In order to ensure the continuity of the program and the timely graduation of Hispanic Linguistic students, I created 3 new graduate courses in my first two years – namely, Phonology of Spanish (LING 2391) and two Topics' courses, i.e., L2 Phonetics, and Intonation of Spanish (both under LING 2397 Topics in Hispanic Linguistics). With regards to the department's needs, I prepared 3 new core courses -- i.e., the undergraduate Phonetics and Phonemics (LING 1578) and Phonology (LING 1579), and the graduate Phonetics course (LING 2578). I teach these 3 core courses and the Hispanic Linguistic courses regularly while I teach Introduction to Linguistics when needed (LING 1000). Currently, I am creating a new seminar in advanced Phonetics (LING 3578) to be offered next academic year. I am very excited about this new course since it will allow me to teach my research area, prosody, while reaching out not only to Hispanic Linguistics' students but graduate students in the Linguistic Department, the Communication Science and Disorders Department, and LRDC visitors. A brief content summary of each course can be found in my webpage <https://martaortegallebaria.com>

Facilitating students' learning, and consequently, their intellectual growth gives me great satisfaction and it constitutes my motto to keep improving as a teacher. I am committed to deliver high-quality content in my courses while finding a balance between high standards, fair assessments, and student satisfaction. For example, in my undergraduate phonetics' course I not only teach articulatory phonetics but also acoustic phonetics and their relation to speech perception. Since many phonetics textbooks for undergraduates focus mainly in articulation, I created my own materials to

teach acoustics and I use many visual gadgets to illustrate difficult concepts like the Fourier transform so undergraduate students can understand with detail how the inner ear decodes the acoustic signal. I motivate students to become active learners by stimulating their thinking with hands-on activities, real-life problems, open discussions, and a variety of activities that adapt to different learning styles and classroom sizes. I build a safe environment where they feel comfortable to make mistakes by treating students with respect and providing them with constructive and fair feedback. I regularly renew activities and course materials to achieve these teaching goals. For example, I encouraged students in my undergrad LING 1578 to become active reviewers of their own homework rather than passively receiving feedback by introducing 30-minute Q&A sessions before they handed in their homework. During these sessions, students were allowed to refine with handwritten comments their individual homework answers previously typed at home. This initiative was well-received as students' feedback showed: "I really enjoyed having the chance to revise my homework answers on Thursday if I was confused when doing them at home – I wish my other classes had this." "[I best liked] How the homeworks were discussed and thoroughly covered in class. Resulted in a very comprehensive understanding." "[I best liked the] opportunity to review assignments before turning in maximizes learning". A second example of a successfully implemented activity were the group discussions of lab problems in my graduate phonetics class. In two 50-minute sessions, students solved lab problems as a group by discussing possible solutions and reaching consensus of which were the most correct answers, and then at home, they individually wrote a lab report based on their personal understanding of the class discussions. I started implementing this activity in Fall 2016. In order to get feedback, I included the OMET questions "Thinking the lab questions first in group and then individually improved my learning experience", "Working in groups in the lab questions encouraged an atmosphere of collaboration in class" which obtained 5/5 scores. Given its success, I used this format again in 2018 and it continued receiving positive scores and feedback.

In addition to my core phonetics' courses, I enjoy teaching my HL courses. I regularly receive informal feedback and in the two classes I received OMET surveys, scores were very positive. In my Phonology of Spanish class (LING 2391, Fall 2012, 7 students), the 7 questions about the instructor scored from 4.25 to 4.75 out of a 5-point scale. In my Topics Seminar on Intonation of Spanish (LING 2397, Spring 2015, 5 students), I received a score of 5 in these 7 questions. It is in this Seminar on Intonation of Spanish that I have the chance to relate teaching with my research while encouraging students to discover and pursue their own research interests in this field. To that end, we studied Spanish intonation in comparison with other intonation systems (English and Catalan for stress-accent systems, Japanese for pitch-accent systems, Mandarin Chinese for tonal systems), and as a result, the 5 students' final projects reflected their own choices, namely the intonation of Tucumán Spanish (an understudied variety of Argentinian Spanish), the intonation patterns of Spanish-Catalan contact in Reus (Spain), the

¹ From Fall 2011 to Spring 2019 I taught 24 lecture courses, 2 each semester, barring the three semesters I was on leave: the established one-semester sabbatical after my third year review, and two Family Leaves due to the passing and sickness of family members. Since the Hispanic Linguistics (HL) program hosts a maximum of 5 HL majors (in average 1 or 2 new students per year) and HL courses are offered in a 2-year rotation, 5 of my HL classes had 4 students not reaching the minimum of 5 students required for OMETs surveys. In these courses, I obtained informal feedback from students by talking to them once final grades were delivered.

variation of Pittsburghese intonation over 3 decades from archived radio show recordings, tone and intonation processing in Mandarin, and the intonation patterns of Yami (an understudied Malayo-Polynesian endangered language spoken in Orchid Islands, Taiwan). Four of these projects were further developed into Comprehensive papers (three of which I directed) and have been presented at international conferences (International Conference of Phonetic Sciences, Hispanic Linguistic Symposium, CUNY Conference in Human Sentence Processing, Tone and Intonation in Europe), and three of them have been published in research journals (Journal of the Acoustical Society of America, Open Linguistics) and proceedings (ICPhS). My forthcoming Advanced Phonetics (LING 3578) course available to all the graduate students in the Linguistic Department is inspired in the success of LING 2397.

I am pro-active at looking for feedback to improve my teaching. I work with professionals from the Center for Teaching and Learning to address students' concerns while maintaining high standards. My teaching has greatly benefited from feedback by Carol Washburn, John Radzilowicz, and Tahirah Walker. For example, Tahirah Walker's workshop in group projects has been crucial for me in learning how to create many activities. With John Radzilowicz I learn to gamify the final exam for the undergraduate phonology class and re-write it as a group project. Gamifying and team based assessments seem to be a good solution to reduce students' anxiety without lowering course standards. In his most recent teaching observation, John G. Radzilowicz stated that "you are clearly a dedicated and effective instructor. Your enthusiasm for your discipline, and your genuine concern for your students was evident at all times. You are obviously committed to the success of your students and have put considerable time into your teaching in order to achieve that end [...] It was very obvious to me that you are extremely comfortable in the classroom situation. You had a great enthusiasm for the material and actively engaged all of the students. You used humor, AV support, group interaction, questioning and straight lecture – all very effectively. [...] In my opinion, you demonstrated the mastery of teaching that we hope to see in all our faculty."

Mentoring

Graduate Supervision: I am committed to creating the next generation of scholarship by helping graduate students become competent researchers. My mentoring is reflected in the guidance I offered in 25 comprehensive papers (8 as a director, 3 as co-director, and 15 as a reader), 10 dissertations (9 committee member, 1 co-director), 2 Master Thesis (director), 10 presentations at national and international conferences, and several published articles with students. As a mentor, I encouraged graduate students to develop their own research interests within the areas of prosody and Spanish as illustrated, for instance, by the titles of the 7 comprehensive papers and 2 M.A. theses I directed. I showed students how to select relevant conferences, write good abstracts, presentations and posters, and as a result, the comprehensive papers I directed and some class projects were presented at 10 prestigious national and international conferences (e.g., ASA Meeting, SLRF, ISB, GURT, HLS), and published in peer-reviewed journals (e.g., the Journal of the Acoustical Society of America and Open Linguistics, see some samples of my students' work in my web, <https://martaortegallebaria.com/teaching/>). I had a particularly active mentoring role in papers, thesis, and dissertations listed in Appendix 1 where as a committee member, director or co-director, I brought in my expertise in Hispanic Linguistics, acoustics and speech perception. For example, dissertations 10 to 14 in Appendix 1 included work on Spanish and

acoustics that these students and I had previously developed in comprehensive papers and M.A. thesis which I either directed on my own or in collaboration with colleagues from Linguistics and LRDC. My role in 15 was to help Dr. Bhide developing one experiment that involved acoustics, which is under review [ii]. This semester I started mentoring doctoral student Yina Quique from the Department of Communication Science and Disorders in creating Spanish materials for an aphasia test. Her advisors, Profs. Michael Dickey and William Evans invited me to be part of the dissertation committee. I also support graduate students during the job search process by writing letters of recommendation, providing feedback in their job-talks and offering solicited advice. In particular, I am proud of Daniel J. Olson (UT, Austin), Nausica Marcos Miguel, Zhaohong Wu, Li-Fang Li (Linguistics Department, University of Pittsburgh), and Alba Tuninetti (LRDC, University of Pittsburgh) for whom I provided continuous support together with my colleagues and who earned tenure-track positions as assistant professors at Purdue University, Denison University, Beijing Foreign Studies University, post-doctoral position at Penn State University, and ARC at Western Sidney University.

Undergraduate Supervision: I really enjoy mentoring undergraduate students and helping them to gain research experience. In my perception lab, I worked with 25 undergraduate students some of which participated in the First Experience in Research and Continued Experience in Research Programs. I showed them how to build experimental materials, edit sound with specialized software, administer perception tests to participants, and summarize research projects in posters they presented at the annual Pitt Undergraduate Poster Reception and at the Linguistics Colloquium. I find extremely rewarding mentoring high achieving undergraduate students such as the Brackenridge awardees' Charlotte Roger, Claire Chu Cisbaum, and Catherine Coates. Charlotte started creating speech materials in my lab and collaborating actively in my research [57]. She was so bright that next year under my supervision, she started her own project *From Lexical tone to sentence intonation: Training Mandarin speakers of English* which she presented at GURT12, a national conference in linguistics [54]. Charlotte was the only student that year to be accepted with a full scholarship to the graduate linguistics program at Northwestern University in Chicago. Claire turned her Brackenridge project into her Honors Thesis, which I directed. After successfully defending it last year, I keep on working with her in the intelligibility of Chinese-accented English (see work in progress 2 above in page 5). This semester, I worked with Catherine to write her Brackenridge proposal, which was recently awarded. Currently, we are refining the experimental design in order to start collecting data this summer (see work in progress 5). I am also working with Joseph Jaros in the Quechua project, which was selected to represent the University of Pittsburgh this March in the Meeting of the Minds (see work in progress 1).

Future

I am looking forward to the next academic years in the Linguistics department at Pitt. Here, I built the research network and context to further develop pedagogics and research in prosody and Hispanic Linguistics with the broader goals of understanding the role of suprasegmentals and social variables in speech perception, and applying this new knowledge into projects that foster diversity and inclusion in multicultural/multilingual societies. Students' mentoring in research, and interdepartmental collaborations are crucial to the implementation of these goals. This summer, I am exploring this research area with the help of my current graduate and undergraduate students (projects 4 and 5 above in page 5) and with Visiting Prof. Nagao. Moreover, I started a new two-year collaboration with Prof.

Fraundorf from psychology and LRDC, and Ms. Walker from the Center for Teaching and Learning in project that explores the perception by undergraduate students of the non-standard English varieties spoken in the classroom. Next semester, I will continue exploring this research area with my three incoming graduate students. Moreover, teaching prosody in the Advanced Phonetics course next year will help me to reach out to graduate students outside the Hispanic Linguistics area within and outside the department. I will continue strengthening my interdepartmental collaborations at Pitt with LRDC and Communication Sciences and Disorders, as well as my international collaborations with University of Barcelona in Spain, and University of Macau in China. These collaborations offer unique opportunities for me and my graduate students to gather data from different populations and languages in laboratories that offer facilities, such as EEG recordings, that we do not have space for at the Linguistics Department. I will continue working –as I did since my arrival at Pitt -- with the Department of Hispanic Languages and Literatures to strengthen our relationship as it is key to the success of the graduate Hispanic Linguistic program in the Linguistics Department. Last year we were very excited to recruit the linguist Dr. Vacas Matos. This year we worked together to create new courses for the undergraduate Minor in Hispanic Linguistics to be hosted in the Department of Hispanic Languages and Literatures. I am very excited to be part of the team who actively contributes to the growing interest in Hispanic Linguistics at University of Pittsburgh.

Appendix 1

Project	Student Name	Title	Status
*1 Comps	Angela Krak	<i>Learning lang. stereotypes in L2 Spanish: the effect of immersion in the perception of non-standard varieties</i>	in progress
*2 Comps	Virginia Teran	<i>Intonation of Tucuman Spanish</i>	successfully defended
*3 Comps	Zhaohong Wu	<i>The time course of tone and pitch accent processing in Mandarin</i>	successfully defended
*4 Comps	Laura Lenardon	<i>Linguistic and social factors affecting vowel lengthening in Cordobese Spanish</i>	successfully defended
*5 Comps	Andy Jeske	<i>Perception and production of L2 English vowels by L1 Spanish speakers</i>	successfully defended
*6 Comps	Maritza Nemoga	<i>L2 Perception of Spanish Intonation: Absolute Interrogatives and Broad Focus Declaratives</i>	successfully defended
*7 Comps	Katherine Martin	<i>Spanish diphthongization is productive and gradient: Evidence from second language learners and native speakers</i>	successfully defended
*8 M.A. Thesis	Andy Jeske	<i>The perception of English vowels by native Spanish speakers</i>	successfully defended
*9 M.A. Thesis	Meghan Dawkoski	<i>The Intonation of NE Brazilian Portuguese</i>	successfully defended
10 Ph. D. Dissertation	Nausica Marcos	<i>Analyzing instruction and learning of derivational morphology in the Spanish foreign language classroom</i>	successfully defended
11 Ph. D. Dissertation	Michael Kevin Olsen	<i>The Acquisition of Case in Spanish Pronominal Object Clitics in English-Speaking College-Level L2 Learners.</i>	successfully defended
12 Ph. D. Dissertation	Laura Lenardon	<i>Linguistic and social factors affecting vowel lengthening in Cordobese Spanish</i>	successfully defended
13 Ph. D. Dissertation	Andy Jeske	<i>The development of English vowels by native Spanish speakers</i>	successfully defended
14 Ph. D. Dissertation	Alba Tuninetti	<i>Nonnative Phonetic Perception in Adult L2 Learners</i>	successfully defended
15 Ph. D. Dissertation	Adeetee Bhide	<i>Instructional methods for promoting the development of orthog. & phonol. knowl. in speakers of Indic languages</i>	successfully defended

Table 1. Titles of Comprehensive Exams and Dissertations related to Spanish and Prosody