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Teaching Philosophy Statement

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As an Associate Instructor in the Basic Language Program at Indiana University (IU), I teach undergraduate Spanish courses to adult second language (L2) learners of Spanish. I create an effective learning environment for L2 acquisition with my adaptable teaching style that addresses the diversity in both my students' populations and in their motivations for enrolling in these introductory Spanish courses. Whether they need to satisfy degree requirements, hope to connect with family heritage, or want to fulfill an intrinsic interest, I incorporate varied learning opportunities to meet these needs. In my classroom, I engage in inclusive teaching practices by respecting my students' individualities while setting the expectation that, as a class, we collectively uphold community standards for collaborative learning. I model much of my teaching after my own previous language and music instructors whose classes had high rates of participation and engagement due to mutual respect of everyone's unique perspectives and strengths. Additionally, much of my instruction is informed by my prior experience as a peer educator and mentor. From this viewpoint, I strive to be the mediator and the facilitator of learning—not the sole focus of class. I pose open-ended questions and I allow students sufficient time to think and respond. Whether this involves a healthy silence before someone is ready to answer, or a think-pair-share activity, my students interact with the material before I take over to lecture. In my classes, I underscore most activities with the communicative approach, in which students negotiate for meaning in the L2 and collaboratively solve communication-based problems. By acting more as a facilitator than a center point, I empower my students to communicate freely even with an elementary command of L2 Spanish. When I was formally observed teaching one of my HISP-S 105 courses in Fall 2022, my faculty observer mentioned, "*Caroline maintained the use of Spanish during the whole lesson and her students talked to her and among themselves in Spanish as well. She has developed a good rapport with her students and has created a positive learning environment in which students feel comfortable to participate and ask questions.*" From my background as a group mediator, I take care to notice the makeup of each class so that I can provide a range of activities that cater to varying dynamics and to individual learning styles. This may involve kinesthetic tasks such as charades, or cognitive exercises such as discussing linguistic structures. Finally, an important element of my methodology comes from my experience as a music instructor. Similar to teaching new musical techniques, I present new language material by first providing a model, then by performing the skill in structured collaboration with my students, next by allowing them to attempt the feature independently, and finally by regrouping the class to discuss successes and areas that need improvement.

During these interaction-based activities, I provide explicit feedback and corrections while students work individually and in groups, and later through class discussion on how to solve gaps in knowledge. One of my students positively commented, "*What I like most about this course and instructor is simply her method of teaching. We have lots of 'quick checks,' if you will, where we work in pairs or groups to determine answer [sic], and then cover the responses as a class, what should be improved and *why,* all while she walks around the room seeing if anyone needs help. I myself have experienced her jumping in to [sic] a conversation between me and partner when we were both confused, and she quickly was able to rectify our problem*" (HISP-S 105, Fall 2022). By presenting material in this continuum from simple to more complex, and from structured to more autonomous, I provide my students with the chance to rely on their own resources to problem solve, which promotes their sense of agency so that they can build their confidence when communicating in the L2. I aim to grow students' self-efficacy, which ultimately sets them up to fulfill degree requirements, and to progress to more advanced, content-based courses in the

future. My students' growing engagement and comfort levels have been evident, as I've had several students ask me which classes I will teach in future semesters as well as if I would be willing to serve as their ongoing mentor during their undergraduate careers.

I design and deliver lessons relying on my capabilities and strengths as an individual to better serve my students and to maintain a sense of personal connection to my teaching. I combine both my deeply rooted curiosity and my lifelong commitment to learning to create an energetic and structured environment. As one student shared, "*I like how enthusiastic she is and how clearly she explains things. She makes it easy to understand and learn*" (HISP-S 105, Fall 2022). By playing to my personal strengths, I foster my own sense of creativity, engagement, and fulfillment while teaching. Similarly, I encourage the individual strengths and successes of my students to uphold a positive, growth-oriented atmosphere. Another student commented, "*I liked how the teacher respects their students and makes the class a good environment for learning*" (HISP-S 105, Fall 2022). In turn, I hope this positively affects not only my classroom environment, but also my students' well-being beyond our courses together. Moving forward, I plan to continue to monitor and incorporate student feedback when designing lessons as I believe the uniqueness of each group of students is an important factor in the learning experience.

In consideration for my future as a researcher and educator, I am involved in several efforts to continue strengthening and expanding my pedagogical skills. My commitment to professional development is evident through my participation in workshops led by IU's Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning and by my enrollment in *Methods for Teaching College Spanish*. In this course, I have learned research-based practices to apply to my instruction in the language classroom and I have gained hands-on experience creating and workshopping educational tools to enhance my students' learning experience. For example, as part of this course, I have proposed action research to evaluate the impact of my inclusive teaching practices on my students' engagement and sense of community belonging. Feelings of inclusion have been empirically shown to have wide-reaching effects throughout a student's academic career and beyond. While some of my students have already expressed that they feel they are part of a community in my classroom, in this project, I aim to systematically measure why and how to maintain this atmosphere. Through engaging in such research-based projects and developmental opportunities, I will continue to improve my language teaching pedagogy in my current role as an Associate Instructor and in future academic positions.