As PhD students who plan to survive in the academic world, we all understand the importance of teaching. We wonder how to make our class lively and interesting and how to keep our students engaged. During the winter break, I was lucky and honored to interview Julio Villa-García, who was recognized for excellence in teaching and recently received the Arthur Abramson Award for Extraordinary Achievement in Teaching. He is going to share with us some of his teaching experience and philosophy.

Q: You were recently recognized for good teaching. Do you believe that good teaching can be taught or is the old adage true, teachers are born?

A: At least effective instruction can be learned. Teaching training, reflecting on teaching while you are a student and a teacher, and teaching experience definitely help, but crucial traits such as interpersonal skills and sensitivity to people are difficult—if not impossible—to acquire through formal instruction. I think that being personable is something that either you develop when you are very young or you are born with it. Teaching has often been likened to acting—I guess actors have some special “genetic” endowment in some way or another.

Q: What did it feel like to stand in front of a classroom the first time? How did you mentally prepare for that?

A: I had been waiting for over 25 years to teach a class, so I could not have been more excited! I must admit that it’s an awkward feeling at the beginning, though, in that you fully realize the challenge and responsibility you’ve taken on. Since you have different energy levels as you go along, it’s somehow difficult to predict how you are going to feel during a class. I guess that it would be very challenging for me to teach if I didn’t love it. As a graduate teacher, you are lucky that you don’t have to teach 24/7, but you definitely have to be up there at the right times—you can’t just re-schedule a class because you are going to feel more energized at 4.30 than at 12.30… As Harry van der Hulst once said to me, “teaching is energizing.” I couldn’t agree more, so even when I don’t feel in high spirits before going to class, after 1 or 2 minutes in the classroom, I “take off” and could continue teaching until I pass out. I think teaching is a nice complement to the challenging and likewise stimulating domain of research.

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thinking helps students anticipate and solve problems as well as think logically, even outside of linguistics and outside of college. One advantage of teaching linguistics is that language is arguably the most human characteristic, and much of the evidence adduced in linguistics is available in the real world—thus, using examples to which the students can relate is easy (for instance, using the fashionable word Facebook® to illustrate the morphological process of zero-derivation or conversion). This enables you to incorporate real-life examples and humor into the classroom, which is key to making the class enjoyable and stimulating interest, as well as building rapport. Besides, given that language can be explored from different vantage points, linguistics also allows the instructor to help students look at language with an eye on improving their speaking and writing skills. In sum, in addition to helping students “think linguistically,” teachers should keep in mind that the ultimate objective should be to help students acquire and develop lifelong skills.
COME ONE, COME ALL - TO YOUR LOCAL COLLOQUIUM IN LINGUISTICS

By Lyn Tieu (on behalf of the Colloquium Committee)

Dear linguists,

The colloquium committee are all geared up for another semester of exciting talks, and we hope you are too! We'd like to thank you for making the last semester of talks a success. We might handle all the logistical details that go into planning the events, but without your attendance, your support, and your enthusiasm, they simply wouldn't be half of what they are. We were very pleased to see some great attendance at the last three talks, which featured Norvin Richards, Satoshi Tomioka, and Danny Fox. It was wonderful to see students coming out to lunch with us and the speakers, signing up for individual meetings with the speakers, attending the talks, and finally, sticking around for dinner! Last semester, we also started what we hope will become a good habit (yes, there is such a thing!) - a reading group that meets the week of each colloquium, to discuss relevant papers in preparation for the talk. A group of about 12 of us met over tea and cookies to discuss Danny Fox's work a few days before his colloquium, and we found the discussion both helpful and relaxing (the latter more likely due to the herbal tea than to any heated debates about presupposition projection!). We would like to continue these reading group gatherings this semester, and invite more of you to join us!

This semester, we are incredibly excited to feature the following speakers:

Martin Hackl (Feb. 4)
Rolf Noyer (Feb. 25)
Norbert Hornstein (Mar. 25)
David Embick (Apr. 8)
Nina Hyams (Apr. 22)

Stay tuned for more information, and we'll see you at the colloquia!

-The Colloquium Committee

OUR VERY OWN LSA FELLOW - DIANE LILLO-MARTIN

By Lyn Tieu

Congratulations to our very own Diane Lillo-Martin, who was inducted as a Linguistic Society of America Fellow at the recent annual meeting of the LSA. Diane was among eight members of the Society who were recognized for their distinguished contributions to the discipline of Linguistics. This is a truly remarkable accomplishment, and we are very proud of Diane and her extraordinary achievements.
STUDENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS (SEP-DEC, 2010)

PUBLICATIONS


CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS


DEPARTMENTAL PRESENTATIONS


SERVICE

Despić, Miloje. Co-organizer of the "Dissertation Fellowship Workshop" at the University of Connecticut Humanities Institute (UCHI), November 3, 2010 (with Professor Sharon M. Harris and Michael E. Neagle). The purpose of this workshop was to help students apply for the next year's fellowship, to prepare their proposals.

Despić, Miloje. Reviewer for the journal The Linguistic Review.