



## ***Katherine Vadella***

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If someone had told the teenage version of me that I would be teaching Spanish at the university level, I would have scoffed incredulously. As the daughter of two public school educators, I made it a point to tell others that I did not want to be a teacher, but rather a diplomat. I set off to Georgetown as an undergrad planning to pursue that path.

Midway through my undergraduate career, I discovered linguistics in my obligatory Introduction to Spanish Linguistics course (the course I currently teach), and my future as a linguist was set. In this course and other linguistics courses, I fell in love with learning about the structure of language; the history of language; and the intersections between history, culture, and language. It turns out that what interested me most about being a diplomat was the idea of learning new languages and learning about those who speak them. This led me to where I am today, a student and instructor of language and linguistics.

Along the way, I have come to realize that the job of language instructor goes beyond purveyor of linguistic knowledge. We are also a window into the lives of those who speak the languages we teach and facilitators of communication. We help students understand and engage with differences, both linguistic and cultural. If students insist on approaching Spanish with the same assumptions that they have for English, they will not be able to communicate successfully. If they approach Spanish-speaking communities with similar egocentric or ethnocentric assumptions, they will not be effective communicators. We help bridge the divide between languages, cultures, and peoples. It turns out that I am a diplomat after all.

### **BIOGRAPHY**

Katherine (Katie) Vadella is a PhD candidate in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at Georgetown University. She specializes in theoretical syntax and morphology, and is currently working on her dissertation on gender and word class in Spanish under a Distributed Morphology framework. Katie earned her BA and MS in Spanish from Georgetown University. Since beginning the PhD program at Georgetown, Katie has served in many different roles in her academic department. She first served as a Research Assistant for Professors Bárbara Mujica and Patricia Vieira, assisting them in the publication of several types of work (anthology, journal, textbook, book) and then made the transition

into teaching. Early on, Katie realized her passion for administration and management, and she took on the role of Assistant Director for Introductory Spanish. She served in this position for three semesters and was then appointed Interim Director for Spanish Language Instruction, a position that heightened her interest in program management.

Katie also contributes to the academic community at Georgetown and beyond through her work as a volunteer for several organizations. She has served on the committee for the Graduate Portuguese and Hispanic Symposium (as committee member, Communications Director, and Chair) and is an Associate Editor for the AATSP's graduate student journal, *Spanish and Portuguese Review*. Additionally, Katie is an active member of the Georgetown Women's Alliance, an organization committed to fostering an environment in which women can learn, grow, and thrive. She was appointed their first and sole Graduate Student Representative and went on to found and co-chair their Programming Committee. In her spare time, Katie enjoys cooking and spending time with family and friends.