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Statement

I cannot remember not knowing how to speak Spanish. Which is strange since I did not grow up in a Spanish-speaking home. But Spanish has been deeply ingrained into my life, in various capacities, for so long that I cannot remember a time when it was not on the tip of my tongue, required, helpful, or just simply on my mind.

Growing up Spanish was regularly present. About a third of my high school was Spanish-speaking, and my mom also speaks Spanish (as a second language learner). So, the sounds of Spanish, and the fact that other languages and cultures existed outside the world of my small town, was consistently present in my life. I also had many Spanish-speaking friends, and although, early on I was not directly integrated into Spanish-speaking communities, at a young age I became aware of the power and the utility of speaking Spanish. As a freshman in high school, I took my first official Spanish class and continued my studies for four years. During high school and college, I worked mostly in restaurants and quickly carved out my unofficial position of communication liaison between my many monolingual team members, who either spoke only English or Spanish. The more I did this, the more I understood/witnessed how studying language and its corresponding cultures was extremely useful, not only as a linguistic resource or professional tool, but also to connect with more diverse people. I was already in the “profession”, as a student learning from professional language educators, and living it outside of school in my place of work.

One of the reasons language is so powerful is its role in facilitating communication. And, effective communication is essential in the exchange of information and ideas, building and maintaining relationships, and personal and professional growth. However, without multilingualism and multiculturalism, these ideals are imprisoned to just one community and risk dwarfing the expansion of cross-cultural connections and developing global citizens.

In the 2016 film The Arrival, the protagonist is a linguistics professor that ends up directing a team of US researchers when giant alien spaceships hover over different locations on Earth. While the other countries are about to explode in a third world war, she and her team work hard to compete against time to find a way to communicate with the extraterrestrial visitors. As soon as the nations decide to open up the lines of communication they realize that working together, communicating, will ultimately be what saves the world.
Although this movie is obviously fictitious, it makes me think deeply and reflect on the extremely important and impactful role that language has in connecting the world. Communication is absolutely vital, between both our small, large, and global communities, and when crossing borders of both land and sea.

This philosophy is what fuels me to be an active participant in the abounding and inclusive community that promotes the study and teaching of Spanish and Portuguese. I believe that the celebration of linguistic and cultural diversity begins in a language classroom. Whether this classroom is traditional or non-traditional, inside or outside, at home or in school. Then this compassion and curiosity strengthens and the knowledge about the language then develops into knowledge of culture, and hopefully, students are then not only understanding how to say words in a second (or third) language, but they are also beginning to understand why such words are communicated and the behaviors, customs, and traditions of the people that natively speak these languages. It is our role and responsibility as language educators to help foster situations which facilitate opportunities for these ideas to occur.

Of course, I cannot write about my passion, curiosity, and contributions to the promotion of the study and teaching of Spanish without mentioning the vital role that technology plays in teaching, learning, and of course communication. Not only have technological advancements contributed to practical attributes of teaching and learning, such as mobile language learning apps, machine graded drills for vocabulary and grammar, translation support, and of course bringing realia into the classroom via resources sourced from the internet, like YouTube videos and other multimodal materials. But technology has also been vital in facilitating opportunities for communication to occur across states, nations, and the globe. Digital technologies especially, have such a strong social component, which when manipulated properly, can bring people and ideas together in a more personable manner. Because of innovations like video teleconferencing software and video chat on mobile devices, the human component necessary in language learning and effective communication is not lost. More than ever there are more opportunities for learners and educators to connect, by practicing Spanish and Portuguese with native speakers and learning about their corresponding cultures.

It is these ideologies, experiences, and desires, which have guided me to find and eagerly become part of the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese (AATSP). It is a wonderfully diverse community, as much linguistically as culturally, where the ability and passion to teach, learn, and communicate in multiple languages is abundant. This community is my multilingual home away from home.

My first conference with AATSP was in 2021 in Atlanta, GA and this vibrant experience was gratifying and animating in so many ways. I look forward to Puerto Rico and más/mais! When we are not enjoying the power of technology to connect us, these in-person gatherings embody the true essence of the power of communication, like that in The Arrival. The exchange of information and ideas, and relationship building that happens at these conferences, may also contribute to saving the world.
Bio

Lillian Catherine Jones is a PhD student at the University of California, Davis, where she studies Spanish linguistics and second language acquisition. Her main research interests include computer assisted language learning, mobile assisted language learning, educational technologies, instructional design, and the pedagogical applications of text messaging.

Lillian attended the University of Washington where she earned a BA in Spanish, and had the opportunity to study abroad in Granada, Andalucía, Spain. This was a forever life-changing experience, which only propelled her excitement and enthusiasm for the teaching and learning of language and culture. While abroad she studied at the University of Granada, enrolling in Spanish language courses, as well as her second focus of studies, Interpersonal communication. She loves people, and the aspect of studying how cultures interact, speak, laugh, play, travel and simply, exist.

After graduating Lillian moved to Texas and worked in the Office of Study Abroad at Texas State University-San Marcos. As an administrative assistant, she continued to fuel her passion for international travel and education, by guiding and advising university students to embark on their own global adventure. She loved the aspect of helping students understand the essential value in and to achieve their goals of studying and traveling overseas.

Later, Lillian spent a year teaching English and American culture at a public elementary school in Cádiz, Andalucía, Spain, for yet another turn at exploring the wonders of foreign languages, and developing language, teaching, and interpersonal communication skills. Upon returning to the United States, she worked as a Study Abroad Coordinator for a Spanish language and cultural immersion program, working with students, parents, and faculty in both high school and university contexts. She worked in many aspects of the study abroad journey, including pre-departure advising, recruiting, marketing, administrative duties, and more. She loved this position because of all the different people she got to communicate with, the opportunity to use Spanish in a professional setting, and to champion other learners to go abroad.

Lillian lived in Austin for a number of years, working in various positions in the technology sector, while also leading Spanish speaking groups such as Practiquemos Español at the Austin Public Library. Being surrounded by innovative technologies, especially in the realm of edtech, fueled her interest in teaching and learning Spanish, especially with technology. She then returned to academia and earned her MA in Spanish from Saint Louis University in St. Louis, MO, which included a year on the Madrid, Spain campus.

In Fall 2019, Lillian started her doctoral studies in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at the University of California, Davis where she studies under the mentorship of her advisor, Dr. Robert Blake. She was awarded a first-year Provost Fellowship and is working towards a PhD in Spanish Linguistics and is also completing the Designated Emphasis in Second Language Acquisition.

Lillian is also very active in related extracurricular activities which promote the teaching and learning of Spanish, and languages in general. She has previously held the positions of Co-chair for the Cluster on Language Research at UC Davis and Co-Graude student advisor for the Spanish Club at UC Davis. She was also an original member/grad student advisor for the Spanish Club at Saint Louis University. She has also been a Student Ambassador for the Linguistic Society of America and was awarded Student Ambassador of the Year in 2020.

She has also worked on a computer assisted language learning (CALL) project providing curriculum and user experience support in the development of an open-source, digital vocabulary program. And, she has published works on various aspects of texting for language learning, including the impact it may have on literacy, as well as using emoji in lessons on L2 vocabulary, and digital storytelling. Additionally, one of her favorite extracurriculars is her collaboration with Academic Technology Services at UC Davis. Lillian has been a guest blogger for the Instructional Design blog The Wheel, and has acted on the Advisory Council for the Summer Institute of Teaching and Technology, where she provided feedback on event programming and live Tweeted the event.
Lillian has taught both Spanish and English in a variety of contexts and age groups for the past 10 years, both in-person and online. She embraces challenges as a teacher and a learner, with creativity, innovation, and a smile. Long term, Lillian is excited about working in education, both as a university professor and researcher, with a focus on educational technologies, as well as in the discipline of curriculum design and language science for mobile language learning applications. In Spring 2022 she will head back to Spain, having been awarded the Research Exchange Fellowship at the University of Salamanca.

Outside of school, Lillian also actively holds other relevant roles, such as Managing Editor for Communications and a peer reviewer for the *Spanish and Portuguese Review*, the graduate student journal for AATSP. She has also authored listening and comprehension lessons for Spanish podcasts for the PodcastProject.Org, and is a member of the CALICO Student Interest Group for Graduate students. Being a life-long learner and language advocate, Lillian also studies Italian and has completed the intermediate Italian series at UC Davis.

¡Gracias! & Obrigada!