



Peer Observation of Dr. Carolina Pelaez-Morales

September 10, 2016

To whom it may concern:

It was my pleasure to visit Dr. Carolina Pelaez-Morales's English 5165: Introduction to Linguistics course from 1:30-2:45 on Thursday, September 8th. I observed Dr. Pelaez-Morales to be a highly engaging and organized teacher who is not only attuned to her students' different contributions but also to their different learning styles. She is truly an invaluable aid to CSU students of any major as they navigate the complexities of linguistic study.

The week I visited, Carolina was covering phonetics and how we make the sounds we make. When I arrived, the class was abuzz with activity. Carolina began by checking class members' journal entries and then launched into her discussion of phonetics. I like how she relied on popular culture, using phrases from the television cartoon *Family Guy* and a clip from the film *Inglorious Basterds* to get the students thinking about how we create sounds and also how we can manipulate sounds respectively. After watching Brad Pitt perform a southern accent, Carolina asked the students to discuss the clip in their groups and come to a consensus about the authenticity of his accent. I appreciate the way Carolina approached group work in this class; throughout the period, she asked students to work in groups, although there were no formal groups. By turning to the students around them, class members were able to talk with different people about different aspects of the lesson, which allowed for more fluid discussions instead of the sometimes-stale work that can arise from assigned groups.

After introducing the day's lesson via popular culture and discussion, Carolina got right into the details. I am so very impressed with her organizational techniques. She presented the class with a detailed handout that broke down the day's lesson into components. This handout not only allowed students to follow along with her but also gave them something to refer to after class—an important resource for a complicated subject like linguistics. Carolina continued the class with another handout, a "map" of the human vocal tract that she asked students to label with the help of their groups. This activity made what might have been a boring lecture about anatomy into a very engaging and fun activity for the students. As Carolina went over the correct answers with her students, she stopped to explain and practice sounds with them, so that everyone could not only see where sounds come from but also attempt to feel it for themselves. In addition, she showed a video clip that let students see inside the mouth and throat to further immerse them in an understanding of how our bodies create sounds. Throughout the lesson, she also relied on her fluency in Spanish—as well as other students' knowledge of various languages—to emphasize the differences in articulation. Carolina's approach to this component was

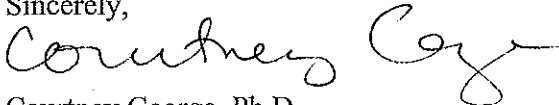
inspiring; through the use of an engaging handout, active practice, and an illustrative video, Carolina explained articulatory phonetics in ways that reached multiple types of learners.

As I observed, this attention to different ways of learning is a hallmark of Carolina's teaching style. With each component of her lesson, she utilized visuals like the handout and video clips, along with asking her students to actively participate with sounds and discuss concepts amongst themselves. Carolina, as I said before, is highly organized and also fun! While she conforms to her lesson plan, she makes time to check in verbally with students' understanding of the concepts, and she also made sure not to rush students through these complicated ideas related to phonetics and articulation. At the end of the class, as part of pre-assigned work for all students, a student presented her interpretation of phonetic articulation. I appreciated how Carolina scheduled these presentations for the end of class because this addition was yet another way to impact student learning on the day's subject.

As an outsider to the study of linguistics, I felt that Carolina communicated the lesson clearly as the instructor, and then the practice and group work helped to solidify what she was communicating. To exemplify how the students also responded in enthusiastic ways, I must comment on one student (who shall remain nameless but who has slept through two of my classes): this particular student was not only awake but also smiling, interested in the material, and engaged with other members of the class. The rest of the class reacted similarly throughout the period. As a teacher and an observer, I could just tell that all of the students were responsive to and respectful of Carolina's knowledge and her delivery of that knowledge.

Overall, I cannot make enough positive comments about Dr. Carolina Pelaez-Morales's teaching. It was a refreshing experience for me (a non-linguistics specialist), and I was happy to have attended class and learned along with her students. It is clear to me that Carolina is, of course, knowledgeable about her subject, but what seems most important is that she delivers and communicates that knowledge in an effective, engaging, and even entertaining way. She is truly an asset to her CSU students and colleagues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Courtney George". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the right of the word "Sincerely,".

Courtney George, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor, English