The goal of my teaching is to give students the skills and confidence to engage in the scientific study of language, and to instill in students an appreciation for their own linguistic heritage. At the end of the term, I expect that my students will be able to notice when their own language differs from that of another person or community, and answer the question: How could I investigate this difference scientifically? To serve this goal, I use research questions, team-based learning, and interaction with the scientific literature.

Fundamentally, becoming a social scientist involves investigating testable questions. Every course I teach involves an individual project centered on a research question. For example, in "Introduction to Linguistics," I lead students through the process of identifying a linguistic community they belong to, observing how the language of their community differs from others, and designing a research question which can be answered with survey data. With feedback, students are able to go from very broad topics to specific scientific hypotheses, as in the case of one of my students who first planned to study "whether English majors cared more about grammar", and after my feedback refined her question to ask "whether English majors report that they consider slang words to be "real" words more or less [often]than students in other majors." This project builds in my students an ability to discriminate between questions which can be answered by empirical data and questions which cannot; a skill that is useful far beyond the confines of my course.

Linguistics as a field is completely new to many students that I teach, and so my teaching in introductory courses is tailored for introducing new topics to students with little background. In order to provide repetition in different modalities and levels of difficulty, I have students read a textbook and attend lecture, but also divide students into teams in order to facilitate discussion and conduct team assessments. Team discussion and assessments encourage students to move beyond passive recognition of facts to more actively analyzing, evaluating, and defending their understanding. Teams also serve to combine complementary strengths of group members, enabling teams to answer questions that are beyond the ability of any one student alone.

In my course content, I focus on connecting students of all levels and abilities to complex scientific writing. I introduce journal articles as artifacts to be investigated, and explicitly teach how to engage with technical, complex writing. I also connect scientific writing with more mainstream sources such as TED talks with the goal of ensuring that in each term students interact with material that is familiar and connected to their own experiences, and material that is beyond their abilities to understand without help and discussion. My objective is to give students concrete reading skills they can apply to textbooks and articles in their future, and also instill in students of every major a confidence that they can and interact with cutting-edge science.

When creating course and lesson plans, I focus on accessibility. My goal is to make complex language science accessible to students of any ability, any level of academic talent, and any cultural background. I accomplish this by building in reflection and activities which encouraging students to connect course concepts to their own past experiences. For example, during a lesson on slang and politeness, students share with their team a time that they were inadvertently impolite when interacting with a different culture. To my mind, linguistics is an excellent introduction to the methods and thinking strategies of data-based science, because each student has a unique, rich source of data in the form of their own linguistic and cultural experience.

Ultimately, my goal is for students leave my class with a better understanding of the process of pursuing social science, an appreciation for their own linguistic heritage, and skills that will enable them to make contact with the scientific literature.