

Claire Darmstadter

Hey, everybody, I am so lucky to be joined today by Hope Wachholz, third-year Eau Claire student with a laundry list of degrees. So she's going into Spanish education, CS&D, Latin American Studies and a minor in TESOL. So thank you so much for taking a couple of minutes to chat with me today.

Hope Wachholz

Absolutely. Thank you for having me.

Claire Darmstadter

Yeah. So it'd be first great if you could just give us a super broad overview of kind of your educational and linguistic background and how you might want to combine all these different programs post-grad into some sort of career.

Hope Wachholz

Yeah, absolutely. So I hope to be a Spanish teacher someday. Ideally, I would love to teach Spanish for half the day and then English to ELLs the other half the day. My background in Spanish is I took it for six years before entering college. And then at the college level, I've taken a Spanish in the community course at Eau Claire, I've taken advanced grammar courses called 301 and 302. I've taken Spanish phonetics, and then I am also in a Spanish for business course right now, which is, well basically exactly what it sounds like that vocab in the business profession. And then I did, I was involved in Spanish club and Habla en la Cabra last year. And I hope to be involved in Habla en la Cabra after COVID. I also do reading partners, where I tutor a student in both, I help him with his reading in both English and Spanish, he is a native Spanish speaker. And then this month, I will start tutoring an ELL that's native speaker in Spanish as well.

Claire Darmstadter

Sounds like some great experiences. So you started learning Spanish and kind of like that middle school grade, which is pretty on par for most kids in the United States, but fairly late compared to essentially the rest of the world. So do you feel like you've had enough time to develop those really strong language skills to be at a place where you can feel kind of confident and like you have authority in a classroom as like the person who knows what's going on? Or are there still a lot of nerves associated with teaching Spanish when it's not your first language?

Hope Wachholz

That's a great question. I think that I think it kind of depends on the context of what I'm talking about, like I would feel really comfortable teaching like a food unit. But I don't feel as comfortable using that academic vocabulary yet, just because I haven't had as much background with it. And I also my study abroad experience was also postponed due to COVID-19. So I think I'll feel more comfortable after that experience. But as far as the instructional strategies, I feel really comfortable with it just because of education courses that I've taken so far.

Claire Darmstadter

For sure. And can you kind of walk me through how your program works? Because here at UW, we're kind of phasing out our secondary language education degrees. So I'm not very privy to how these operate. So are you taking your Spanish courses in tandem with education? Do they overlap? How does that kind of work?

Hope Wachholz

So at Eau Claire, basically, it's essentially kind of like getting a double major, you have all of your where you have your Spanish and then your education classes. So for education I did not apply to the program until next year, so I haven't taken student teaching or any of those block courses yet. But basically, it's, it's essentially, to, it's like you're double majoring.

Claire Darmstadter

Okay. And so Eau Claire is known for being a relatively linguistically diverse area of the state, or at least has several non English languages that are spoken with pretty high frequency. So do you think that the campus or the city in general, is pretty supportive and has a really positive attitude towards individuals who may speak additional languages or might not speak English at all? Or do you think that enthusiasm and positivity doesn't necessarily match the languages and diversity we see represented?

Hope Wachholz

So I think that given with what Eau Claire has, I think that they've definitely made some steps in the right direction. I'm in my third year, but as a transfer student, I'm in Eau Claire for obviously, I think it's my just my second year at Eau Claire. I am in the Latinx Student Association, and most of the students do feel pretty supported and welcomed and welcomed on campus. Also with the major that I have, a lot of the education students are predominantly white, so I haven't had the opportunity to meet many ELLs at the college level. But Eau Claire does seem to be a welcoming campus of those that do speak other languages. In classes that I've taken, I've had professors point out that even different forms of English like African American Vernacular English isn't grammatically incorrect because it follows systematic guidelines. So I do feel that my professors have done a great job pointing out that just because the language isn't typical American English or isn't English does not mean that it's incorrect to speak that language.

Claire Darmstadter

And you mentioned being part of the Latinx Student Union. And I know you're also involved with Aspiring Educators, and I am as well here at UW Madison. But since we don't really have an official language education program, there's not many of my peers who I know who are going into a similar degree or career path as mine. So for you in this club, do you have a lot of community that you can kind of build with other language educators? Or what's the makeup and what do you guys do together?

Hope Wachholz

I would say that Aspiring Educators has a wonderful sense of community, so I am co-president Elect, and the person that will be co-president with next year is another Spanish education major. And there is a mentorship program within aspiring educators with an upper upperclassmen student mentor who is a freshman student. And the mentor that I was matched

with also happened to be a Spanish education major. They are mostly elementary education majors in the club. But I have met quite a few language education majors.

Claire Darmstadter

For sure, and I know you mentioned unfortunately, your travel abroad plans might be a little bit postponed due to COVID. So in the meantime, before we hopefully get to do that, within a couple months, or a year or whatever, is there anything you're doing to kind of supplement or help maybe recuperate some of what you're losing online classes? I know for me, personally, it's very difficult to do language classes online, because you're missing that face to face context. So has it been hard for you? Is there anything additional you've had to do to kind of supplement or make for make up for what we're losing?

Hope Wachholz

So I found that for me, I found Duolingo to be a really helpful review, so I don't lose any vocabulary. For my class, I've tried to pick Spanish classes where even if it's online, it's at least synchronous. So I try to get at least even though it's not, you know, obviously not literally face to face, I get that contact. For me, I would say the biggest thing is just trying to set a time to practice Spanish outside of the classroom. When I'm, I love being a part of Spanish club because of that opportunity. So I would say mostly Duolingo and Spanish club.

Claire Darmstadter

And finally, in celebration of multilingualism, you can answer in English, in Spanish, in both whatever you want. Can you just give me one reason why we should view speaking more than one language as a superpower or why we should celebrate it?

Hope Wachholz

What a great question. Es importante para celebrar las idiomas porque la lengua se representa a la cultura y si las personas no pueden hablar en sus lenguas, las personas pueden perder sus culturas.

Claire Darmstadter

So in summary, for those who don't speak Spanish, basically just it's really important to have a cultural identity, because there is a connection with the language. And if people don't have that ability, then they lose some of that connection. And so it's really important to support people who want to speak and in English or in Spanish or in any other language, because that's where we have our own identities. And that's so important. So thank you so much for chatting with me today. I wish you luck with the rest of your semester, hopefully studying abroad sometime and I'm very excited for the students who will have you as their Spanish teacher.

Hope Wachholz

Thank you for interviewing me, Claire.