

María Clelia (Makela/Maquela) Brizuela

ACTFL¹ OPI² and OPIc Tester/Rater in Spanish with Full Certification 2023-2027

EDUCATION

- Ph.D. University of Southern California
Linguistics.
Definiteness Types in Spanish: A Study of Natural Discourse
- M.A. University of Southern California
Spanish Linguistics.
- B.A. University of Buenos Aires, Argentina
Licenciada and Profesora en Letras.
- B.A. Instituto Nacional Superior del Profesorado de Danzas - Maria Ruanova
Ballet and Modern Dance Teacher.

FIELDS OF INTEREST

Current

Language Teaching Pedagogy and Methodology. Second Language Acquisition and Learning.
Argentine Tango, Dance and Movement in Learning a Second Language. The Silenced Voices of Argentine Tango

Past

Heritage Learners Pedagogy. Discourse Markers and Registers. Accessibility of Demonstrative Expressions.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

SPANISH LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTICS

- **Full Time Visiting Lecturer** Modern Languages, Literatures and Cultures. Pitzer College.
2021-present

Courses: Intermediate Spanish (Span 33)
Advanced Spanish (Span 44)
The Silenced Voices of Tango (Upper division course Span 132)
Spanish Conversation and the movies (Span 55a)
Spanish Conversation. Tango Practicum (Span 55b)
Pedagogy for Foreign Languages (MLLC150)

Curriculum development: Designed the syllabi and assignments for The Silenced Voices of Tango, Pedagogy for Foreign Languages and Spanish Conversation: Tango Practicum.

- **Part Time Visiting Assisting Professor** Modern Languages, Literatures and Cultures. Claremont McKenna College. 2025- present

Courses: Intermediate Spanish (Span 33)
Curriculum development: Designed the syllabi and assignments.

Lecturer. Rossier School of Education – MAT Program. Univ. of Southern California - Fall 21-22-23-24

Course: Applied Linguistics for English Language Educators. Graduate course.

¹ *American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages*

² *Oral Proficiency Interview*

- **Full Time Lecturer.** Dept of Spanish and Portuguese, U. of California, Los Angeles. (UCLA) 2004-2008.

Courses: Elementary, Intermediate, and Advanced Spanish.
Advanced Composition for Heritage Speakers.

Curriculum development: Designed the syllabus for Advanced Composition for Heritage Speakers.

Lecturer. California State University Long Beach. 2002-2004.

Courses Essay Writing in English for 2nd Language Learners.
Introduction to Linguistics.
Applied Linguistics.
Linguistic for Cross Cultural Academic Development.

Curriculum development: Designed the syllabi and tests for all the classes above.

Lecturer. Dept. of Spanish and Portuguese. University of Southern California. Los Angeles. 1999-2004.

Courses Elementary, Intermediate, and Advanced Spanish.
Advanced Composition.
Phonetics and Phonology.

Instructor. Harbor College.

Courses Beginning and Intermediate Spanish

Curriculum development: Designed the syllabi and tests for all the classes above.

Lecturer. Long Beach City Community College 2001-2003

Course College Writing for Non-Native Speakers (ESL)

Curriculum development: Designed the syllabi and tests for the class above.

Lecturer. Modern Languages Department. Mount St Mary's College. Los Angeles.

Online Faculty Development class: "Moving toward a Deeper Understanding of the Latinx Student Experience."

Courses: Spanish Phonology.
Introduction to Spanish Linguistics.
Spanish for Medical Personnel.
Applied Linguistics.

Curriculum development: Designed the syllabi and tests for all the classes above.

Lecturer. California State University Los Angeles.

Courses Spanish Morphology.
Spanish Syntax.
Modern Languages.
Spanish Phonetics and Phonology.

Curriculum development: Designed the syllabi and tests for all the classes above.

Assistant Lecturer. Department of Spanish and Portuguese. University of Southern California.

Courses Elementary, Intermediate, and Advanced Spanish.

Choreographer/Trainer Theater Department, Santa Monica College, Santa Monica. 2008.

Show: Camila. The musical. Director: Perviz Sawoski

Lower Division Coordinator. Dept. of Spanish and Portuguese. USC.

Courses Spanish 150 (Second level)

Curriculum development: Coordinating Assistant Lecturers, creating exams and activities.

Teaching Assistant. Department of Linguistics. University of Southern California.

Courses Introduction to Linguistics.

Teaching Assistant. Facultad de Filosofía y Letras. Universidad de Buenos Aires.

Courses Phonology & Morphology (Professor: Erica García)

General Linguistics (Professor: Beatriz Lavandera)

ARGENTINE TANGO

Created Makela Tango School from the ground up. Hired dance teachers, and taught tango classes.

Tango Teacher. Makela Tango School. 2008-2021

Courses Social and Stage Tango at all levels.

Tango Orchestras, Tango Poets, Tango Musicians.

The History of Tango.

Tango and the Culture of the Embrace.

Tango Musicality.

Curriculum development: Design the syllabi for all the classes above. During 2020-2021 practical and theoretical classes were conducted completely on-line using Zoom.

TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

CERTIFICATIONS

- ACTFL OPI Tester/Rater in Spanish with Full Certification - Spanish 2023-2027
- ACTFL OPIc Tester/Rater in Spanish with Full Certification - Spanish 2024-2026
- UCLA National Heritage Language Resource Center and the STARTALK Program. Certification of completion on “Teaching Heritage Languages” online course.
- Certified Practitioner of Radical Aliveness. 574 hours training program. 2014-2018.

Trained on: 1) Navigating complexity on the personal, interpersonal and systemic levels. 2) Working with conflict and emotions to enable individual and relational healing. 3) Understanding multiple perspectives. 4) Facilitating a group process where all people are seen, heard and validated.

TEACHING AWARDS

- Academic Advancement Program (AAP) Faculty Appreciation Award. University of California, Los Angeles. January 2008.
- Appointed as a Judge for the Argentine Tango USA Official Championship. San Francisco, 2013-2014-2015-2017.

ACADEMIC AWARDS

- Research Fellowship in Spain. University of Southern California. Del Amo Foundation. 1995.
- Assistant Lectureship. Department of Spanish and Portuguese. University of Southern California. Los Angeles. California. 1991-1999.
- Centro de Investigación, Experimentación y Estudio de la Danza. Scholarship. 1990.
- Doctoral Scholarship: National Council for Scientific and Technical Research (CONICET) Advisors: Beatriz Lavandera, Ph. D and José Alvarez Ps. Topic: Empirical Restrictions to a Computational Linguistic Model of Discourse. 1989-1991.
- Scholarship for Cursos Internacionales Salamanca

GRANTS

Intercollegiate Project: Intercultural Competence in Language Classes (\$1,900) | 2024-2025

- Designed and led a year-long **professional development program** (PDN) for faculty across the 5 Claremont Colleges.
- Organized **workshops on inclusive pedagogy**, including gender-inclusive and non-binary language teaching.
- Facilitated discussions on **curriculum integration of Indigenous languages, rights, and histories**.
- Led **collaborative curriculum development**, establishing intercultural competence objectives across Spanish, Portuguese, and French programs.
- Coordinated a **student-led forum on gender inclusivity** and an intercollegiate faculty discussion group to enhance intercultural teaching practices.

PUBLISHED WORKS

- La accesibilidad y el costo de procesamiento en la selección de expresiones definidas. *Revista española de lingüística aplicada* vol Extra 1 pp. 297-308. 2000.
- Discourse Markers as Indicators of Register. With Elaine Andersen and Lynne Stallings. *Hispania*. vol 82 no 1 pp 128-141. 1999.
- [The Selection of Definite Expressions in Spanish](#). In *Discourse Studies in Cognitive Linguistics*. Edited by Karen van Hoek, Andrej A Kibrik and Leo Noordman. 1999.
- Cross-linguistic evidence for the early acquisition of discourse markers as register variables. Second author. Elaine Andersen, Maquela Brizuela, Beatriz Dupuy, Laura Gonnerman. *Journal of Pragmatics* vol 31, no 10 pp. 1339-51. 1999.
- The Acquisition of Discourse Markers as Sociolinguistic Variables: A Cross-linguistic Comparison. Second author. Elaine Andersen, Makela Brizuela, Beatriz Dupuy, and Laura Gonnerman. *The Proceedings of the Twenty-seventh Annual Child Language Research Forum*. Edited by Eve V. Clark. 1995.
- [Marcadores discursivos en narrativas de niños bilingües](#). *Bilingüismo y adquisición del español. Estudios en España y EE UU*. Edited by Hernán Urrutia Cárdenas and Carmen Silva Corvalán. 1992.

SELECTED CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- Competencia intercultural a través de la enseñanza del tango en clases de español. American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese of Southern California (AATSP So Cal) Abril 2024. Pomona, California.
- The Silenced Voices of Tango. Presentation at Franklin & Marshall College, Department of Spanish and Linguistics. Lancaster, Pennsylvania. March 2024.
- Teaching Language through Dance: A Case Study on Argentine Tango. MLAL Seminar. University of Limerick. Ireland. November 2023
- Tango as an approach to the River Plate culture in the teaching of Spanish in Claremont, California. American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese (AATSP) June 2023. Salamanca, Spain.
- The Silenced Voices of Tango. Presentation at USC, Department of Latin American and Iberian Cultures. Los Angeles, California. March 2022.
- Tango: Passion and Culture. Presentation at Western International Center. Western Connecticut State University. October 2021.
- El Tango en la cultura popular de Argentina. Presentation at the class of Ethel Jorge. Pitzer College. Claremont. California. September 2018.
- History of Tango. A multimedia presentation. Museum of Latin American Art. Long Beach. California. 2002, 2003 and 2007.
- From the Buenos Aires Suburbs to Broadway: Argentine Tango. Presentation at the Instituto Superior de Formación de Profesorado. Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia de España. Los Angeles. California. 2004.
- La estructura discursiva y la selección de demostrativos en español. I Coloquio Latinoamericano de Analistas de Discurso. Universidad Central de Venezuela. Caracas. Venezuela. 1995.
- The Role of Accessibility in the Selection of Demonstrative Expressions in Spanish. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Linguistic Society of America (LSA). New Orleans. Louisiana. 1995.

ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS

- Organized cultural trips to Buenos Aires with students of the USA. The students learned Tango, were immersed in Argentine culture, and acquired the basics of the Spanish Language. 7 trips during 2009-2019
- Created and successfully led a Tango School (Makela Tango) from 2008-2020.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

- Research Assistant. International Myelodysplasia Study Group (IMSG) from the University of Washington School of Medicine. Seattle and the Pediatric Hospital "Prof. Dr. Juan P Garrahan". Advisor: Gregorio M Arendar. MD FACS. In charge of the PDMS software. Buenos Aires. Argentina. 1990-1991.
- Research Assistant. Project: Sociolinguistics Analysis of Texts Produced during the Exchange between Government and the People. Directed by Beatriz Lavandera. Facultad de Filosofía y Letras. University of Buenos Aires. 1988.

CONSULTING WORK

- Argentine Tango dance and choreography. Santa Monica College. Theater Department. 2022

SEMINARS ATTENDED

- NHLRC *Virtual Heritage Language Teacher Workshop*. Completed a 32-hour intensive professional development program (16 hours synchronous, 16 hours asynchronous) focused on effective pedagogical strategies for teaching heritage language (HL) learners in K–16 settings. Topics included differentiated instruction, project-based learning, critical language awareness, proficiency-oriented teaching, and the integration of identity and affective needs in HL curriculum design. Presented a portfolio of pedagogical materials at the final two-day virtual summit. June–July 2025
- *Spanish as a Foreign Language Teacher Training Course*. Completed a 20-hour theoretical-practical training focused on exercise design, practical grammar, active classroom strategies, and effective learning environments for Spanish language instruction. June 2025
- UCLA National Heritage Language Resource Center. Completed all the modules of the Teaching Heritage Languages online course. June 2024
 - *Module I: Key Concepts and Pedagogical Approaches in Heritage Language Teaching*
 - *Module II: Meeting the Needs of Heritage Language Learners*
 - *Module III: Differentiated Instruction - Responding to the Needs of Individual Learners*
 - *Module IV: Strategies for Teaching Mixed Classes*
 - *Module V: Tying it all together - Principles of Project-Based Learning*
- ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview Certification (OPI) Workshop. (30 contact hours). Pitzer College. May 2022.
- Virtual Learning Course Guiding Learners to Intercultural Citizenship: Designing Interdisciplinary Units to Link Language+Culture+Content (24 contact hours, 2.4 CEUs). ACTFL 2021
- Creative Writing. Method Writing with Jack Grapes. Los Angeles. Jan-March 2019.
- Creative Writing. Brooklin Writers Collective with Molly Rosen. Online. June-Nov 2020.
- Tango: Political Genealogy and History. By Gustavo Varela. Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO). Online. 2014.
- The Summer Institute for Intercultural Communication. Professional Development Program. Portland. Oregon.
- Seminar: Relevance in the quantitative relationships in the grammatical use/change. By Erica García of University of Leiden. Holland. Facultad de Filosofía y Letras. University of Buenos Aires.
- Course: Social Discourse Theory. By Marc Angenot. Universidad de Buenos Aires. Facultad de Filosofía y Letras.

- Course: Discourse, Power, Racism and Social Cognition. By Teun A. Van Dijk. University of Buenos Aires. Facultad de Filosofía y Letras.
- Course: Textual Grammar by Beatriz Lavandera Facultad de Filosofía y Letras. University of Buenos Aires.
- Intensive Seminar: Discourse Analysis. A communication model. Taught by Patrick Charaudeau of the University Paris XIII. Facultad de Filosofía y Letras. University of Buenos Aires Argentina.
- Course: Language Acquisition. José Alvarez. Instituto Nacional Superior del Profesorado en Lenguas Vivas. Buenos Aires. Argentina.
- Course: State and Evolution of Generative Semantics. José Alvarez. Instituto Nacional Superior del Profesorado en Lenguas Vivas. Buenos Aires. Argentina.

VOLUNTEER WORK

- Joint Educational Project (JEP). University of Southern California. Los Angeles. The Power of Language Project. Worked with low income neighborhood schools to create awareness of the power of language. 1995-1997.
- Tango Classes and Performances. Orphanage Hollygrove. Hollywood. California. 2003
- Tango Choreography for the presentation of Finding Mabel. A Documentary by Eileen Mabel. A personal journey to find one of Argentina's 30,000 Disappeared. Venice. California. 2014
- Secretary of the Board for the non-profit **Absolute Time Productions** that creates theater and film projects that are by or about under-represented communities. 2022-Present.
- Writing and Marketing Consultant for the Argentinean Project: *Towards the sustainability of the mesquite tree for the food sovereignty and circular economy of rural communities of La Rioja, Argentina*. Funded by the Innovation Projects of the Federal Council of Science and Technology in Buenos Aires, Argentina. 2021-2022.
- **Cultural Exchange Facilitator – Women of Clare (July 2025) WCI_CLARE Nonprofit organization (Commitment to eliminate all discrimination against women in society.)**
Organized and led a cultural exchange event celebrating Argentine heritage through yerba mate tea and tango. Facilitated a dynamic, inclusive session that engaged participants in traditional practices, dance, and intercultural dialogue. Promoted community building, confidence, and joy through movement and shared experience.