Teaching statement

I believe that teaching is an integral part of the job of an academic, and it is furthermore an aspect that I find both exciting and intellectually stimulating. I come from a family of teachers, worked as a tutor starting in middle school, and have continuously sought out opportunities to teach during graduate school, over and above the requirements of my program. At McGill University, I am currently a primary instructor in syntax-semantics courses targeting both undergraduate and graduate students in linguistics. In the past, I have not only worked as a TA for undergraduate introductory courses, and undergraduate and graduate semantics courses at MIT and Tel-Aviv University, I have also designed and taught introductory linguistics to middle school and high school students in the Greater Boston area. I have learned that my preferred way of introducing Linguistics in the class-room is by engaging the students with the core puzzles of our field, and (most importantly) allowing them to discover linguistic data and theories through independent investigation. I aim to integrate different modes of teaching into my classroom, including hands-on experiments and short elicitation sessions, in order to engage students from a variety of backgrounds and to ensure the lessons are entertaining as well as informative. I believe that students not only learn more, but retain more, when they are having fun.

In order to introduce linguistics to diverse student populations, I volunteered to teach for MIT HSSP (High School Studies Program), which offers enrichment classes to middle school and high school students from the Greater Boston area. This gave me the opportunity to participate in the creation of a class from its inception and design stages through the implementation of the curriculum. I developed my own materials for these classes, integrating short in-class experiments into every class session, as a way of teaching students not only what has been discovered about language, but also how. For example, I ran simple phonetic perception experiments in the discussion of acoustic phonetics; I used a priming experiment to introduce the topic of morphology and the structure of the lexicon; I conducted a production experiment that tied together the topics of attachment ambiguities and prosody; and I briefly surveyed the lexicons of my students when discussing sociolinguistics. Some experiments succeeded and others failed, but all were designed to help frame the overarching questions central to the different subfields of linguistics.

As an instructor at the graduate level, I would teach rigorous (and hopefully exciting) courses that give all students a firm grounding in the field, illuminating the boundaries of what is known, and pointing out where active research is taking place. It is important that classes teach literacy in conventional technical notation and the ability to teach one-self new techniques. This will be achieved through problem sets and readings, as well as through in-class presentations by the students and through written papers. Seminars, on the other hand, will allow for more exploration of new ideas and will aim to teach less formal material, once a topic or a set of research questions have been defined. In a seminar on questions and focus at McGill University this Fall (co-taught with Michael Yoshitaka Erlewine), we have integrated a fieldwork requirement into the class in addition to more traditional homework assignments. This allows students to develop a longstanding relationship with a speaker, in addition to obtaining data which could turn into a long-term

project. Students' findings served to inform the topics chosen for the final portion of the class, and to stimulate class discussion. In the upcoming semester I will teach an advanced undergraduate seminar on the syntax of ellipsis, combining seminal and current theoretical work on the subject with work in psycholinguistics. A syllabus and handouts for these classes can be found on my website, at: `http://hkotek.com/teaching.html`.

Mentoring is often even more important than classroom teaching, providing them with guidance in the early stages of their career and aiding them in the development of independent career goals. I hope to help students navigate their education, set short-term as well as long-term goals, and establish work habits that will ensure their success. I hope to have collaborative theoretical and experimental projects with students, perhaps also involving fieldwork on less studied languages, as speakers become available. The diverse population of ███████████ would make this goal readily attainable. I believe that supporting students in the development of skills that will allow them to identify core questions and successfully reach their own solutions is a central goal of a teacher and advisor in any science field. I feel strongly that encouraging and supporting students in early years is crucial in building their confidence and enabling them to make informed decisions about their future, whether or not it is in linguistics. I am particularly passionate about encouraging minority and first generation students to make the most of their education.

As an instructor at the ███████████ at ███████████████, I look forward to teaching beginning and advanced courses and seminars in semantics, syntax, and experimental linguistics. I would also welcome opportunities to teach or co-teach courses on quantitative approaches to the study of language in the broader perspective of the current state of linguistics and its relation to other related fields such as psychology, language and the mind, language acquisition, and computational approaches to language. I also believe quite firmly that it is crucial to teach students the basics of quantitative and experimental methodologies. This includes some statistics, and familiarity with experimental designs. As quantitative methodologies gain popularity in our field, it is vital for all linguists to be able to evaluate the merits of such work and its relevance to their own work. Perceiving a gap in MIT's current course offerings, I have recently organized and co-taught a well-attended workshop at the Experimental Syntax-Semantics Lab at MIT introducing participants to experimental approaches to linguistic research. In the next few years, I plan to turn this workshop into a semester long methods class, and alongside it to develop a seminar that discusses important experimental findings which have informed formal linguistic research.