

Deacon Profile: Tamara Castro

Morgan Schick

Born in Spain, Tamara Cabrera Castro studied translation and interpreting at the University of Granada, specializing in legal translation and interpreting as well as conference interpreting. She earned her M.A. there as well.

She is currently earning a Ph.D. at the University of Granada, Spain, and teaches a variety of Spanish courses at Wake Forest, from medical translation to graduate and post-graduate courses.

What brought you to the United States?

I moved to the States for the first time in 2007 with a grant. I was lecturing at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

I went back to Spain to get my masters and came back to the U.S. in 2012 to work at Wake Forest.

Was it hard adapting to the States?

It wasn't that difficult because I had the previous background of living in Urbana. I didn't have the previous shock that some people experience the first time.

It also helped tremendously that I already knew the language and had experienced living in different countries.

Have you lived anywhere other than the U.S. and Spain?

Before I moved the U.S., I lived in Wales and Sheffield, England. I have spent some time in France as well.

Having lived and studied in several countries yourself, what is the best advice you would give to a student planning to study abroad?

To study abroad you really have to want to meet the people and become familiar with the culture.

You have to want to become familiar with it and experience it and live less like a visitor and more like a local.

You have to see what people in that country do and try to mimic it.

It is also your disposition and the way you face it.

It's a change of mentality to visit the country not just to learn but also to experience it.

What kind of research do you conduct?

I do research on translation and interpreting studies. I explore different aspects that have to do with the practice of the profession, and also with how to improve our services and better meet our clients' demands.

It is highly specific: I am trying to explore the effect of terminology precision in the transfer of specialized knowledge and expert user quality evaluations.

What is your favorite thing to teach?



I love translating and interpreting, I have been a translator and interpreter for quite a while, so I love teaching my medical translation class or the applied research course. I really feel like I am making a strong contribution in those areas. I also really enjoy my internship course. I really enjoy spending time with them on-site, introducing them to the professional setting and helping them out throughout the process.

And I love the conversation course that I am teaching this semester. I really enjoy accompanying my students and spending time with them on-site developing their intellectual curiosity and improving their Spanish conversation skills.

What is the difference between learning how to speak a language and learning to translate?

Translation and interpreting and learning about languages are not the same. Of course, active or passive knowledge of a language is the main requirement of translating and interpreting, but that does not mean that it is the only requirement.

Translating and interpreting is a highly demanding task. You need specific training to develop the skills necessary to translate or interpret: research skills, personal skills, analytic skills, mapping, even stress tolerance. Finally, you also need inner curiosity to learn about everything in two languages.

What makes translation and interpreting a good field?

The best thing about studying translation and interpreting, in my view, is that every assignment is a different world, so you get to discover something new every now and again: current affairs, art, history, engineering, medicine, literature, philosophy. You also get to work with different languages, in a variety of topics and on different settings. After some time in the profession, you get to really appreciate the value of nuances.

And then there is the issue of the “portability” of the job.

You may get the chance to travel every now and again.

What do you think is the hardest part about learning a new language?

The hardest part is always the start because you have to get used to the sound, the way people think in that language.

I think that if you really want to learn a new language you have to get in the other’s shoes and see how they see reality so you can see how they see the world. You also need an inclination to learning. It’s all a process, and you really need to devote a lot of time. I’m pretty passionate about spending a great deal of time studying to learn a language.

What do you do in your spare time?

I enjoy spending time with my husband. I also like playing music when I arrive home and cooking.

I love to experience with food, texture and shapes.

I attend a lot of conferences, lectures and events. I love going to different places and taking photographs.