Professor Brian Hsu is an assistant professor in the Department of Linguistics. He teaches classes in introduction to linguistics, syntax, and special topics in linguistics. Professor Hsu’s main objective as a teacher, in his own words, is to give his students an “understanding and lasting interest in the breadth of human linguistic knowledge, while providing them with the broader analytical and creative skills for successful inquiry in any field.” There is no doubt he does this and more.

Professor Hsu takes a skills-based learning approach, providing students with many opportunities to demonstrate mastery in understanding the structure of language. A skill-based approach helps promote more equitable learning environments because it assesses student progress over the semester, and students are not penalized for starting the course with less foundational knowledge. One student noted that if they didn’t understand something yet and knew they wouldn’t be penalized for it, it helped motivate them to wrestle with course content, clear up areas of confusion, and pursue mastery over time.

Professor Hsu goes to great lengths to bring all students into highly interactive conversations and discussions, even when instruction is delivered online. He has an impressive ability to build community in the classroom, set high expectations, and connect with students, even during the pandemic when class sessions took place over Zoom. One student recommender wrote: “Throughout the course, especially during the unit on sociolinguistics, Brian frequently opened the floor to let us share our personal language experiences. He would always actively listen to our experiences and follow up with encouraging remarks, which made students from all different language backgrounds feel welcome and accepted.”

Professor Hsu also seeks additional ways to mentor and work with students outside the classroom. Starting his first year at Carolina, he participated in a program designed to mentor underrepresented students interested in research. Professor Hsu used this opportunity to not only include students in research projects but also to support them over the summer. He even created a blog to highlight the student work.