The Center for Teaching Excellence’s English Language Proficiency Program

November 2017 Open House

Opened August 2017
Motivation

From Texas A&M’s 2015-2020 Strategic Planning:
“GOAL 1: Provide an outstanding educational experience for all students”

From the Center for Teaching Excellence’s mission statement: “The CTE supports the University's commitment to excellence in teaching and learning.”
Sec. 51.917. FACULTY MEMBERS; USE OF ENGLISH.

(2) "Faculty member" means a person who teaches a course offered for academic credit by an institution of higher education, including teaching assistants, instructors, lab assistants, research assistants, lecturers, assistant professors, associate professors, and full professors.

(b) The governing board of each institution of higher education shall establish a program or a short course the purpose of which is to:

(1) assist faculty members whose primary language is not English to become proficient in the use of English; and

(2) ensure that ... all faculty members are proficient in the use of the English language, as determined by a satisfactory grade on the "Test of Spoken English" of the Educational Testing Service or a similar test approved by the board.

From [http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/ED/htm/ED.51.htm](http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/ED/htm/ED.51.htm)
Services

Diagnosis, Instruction, and Practice Opportunities

1. Diagnosis
   a. Listening comprehension
   b. Vocabulary
   c. Grammar
   d. Pronunciation
   e. Delivery
Services

2. **Instruction** – emphasis on
   a. Pronunciation high-impact topics (suprasegmentals)
   b. Functional vocabulary for the classroom/lab/office hours

3. **Practice opportunities**
   a. Face-to-face
      i. Practice groups for instructors
      ii. Conversation partnerships with American undergrads
   b. Referral to other linguistic resources “Additional Resources” pdf available at [http://cte.tamu.edu/Graduate-Student-Support/English-Language-Proficiency/CTE-ELP-Additional-Resources](http://cte.tamu.edu/Graduate-Student-Support/English-Language-Proficiency/CTE-ELP-Additional-Resources)
   ex. Writing Center
   a. Referral to other CTE programming on pedagogy
Services available to:

- international TAs
- faculty of all ranks
- as space permits, any international graduate student

**Required** for conditionally-appointed TAs (TAs with marginal oral English proficiency [Level 2])

**Optional** for all others

At **no additional cost** (funded by international student fees)
More about the requirement

Per OGAPS, graduate assistants having “contact” with students for a course (as teacher/recitation leader/lab assistant, holding office hours, explaining graded homework) are GATs.

International GATs must be English-language certified, not just verified.

- = Level 1 on language exam (score of 80 or higher on TAMU’s ELPE or score of 26 or higher on TOEFL speaking section*)
- Alternative certification possible
  - If earned bachelor’s after 4 or more years of study in the U.S.
  - Or if a citizen of an approved country

More about the requirement, continued

One-time, one-semester TAship allowed for Level 2 graduate students (score of 75 on ELPE or 23-25 on TOEFL speaking) as long as

1. they participate in the CTE-ELP program 5 hours/week and
2. they retest and get a Level 1 score before next TA assignment

This is our PRIORITY GROUP. TA should bring Departmental Verification form available at http://cte.tamu.edu/Graduate-Student-Support/English-Language-Proficiency/Departmental-Verification-Form-v3sm.aspx
The ELPE

- Administered by Testing Services        testing.tamu.edu
- $45; price may increase
- Oral exam only
- Allowed to test once every three months
- If a conditionally appointed TA is actively participating in our program, and if we observe progress in their oral proficiency, we can grant a waiver for an early retest.
CTE-ELP Personnel

Two instructional consultants (12-month staff)

- Advanced degrees in Linguistics/Applied Linguistics
- Experience teaching adults ESL for academic purposes
- Experience in curriculum design and language assessment
- Members of the international professional association TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) and the interest section ITA-IS (issues pertaining to International Teaching Assistants)

Brandon Cooper  Ginessa Payne
CTE ELP Personnel

Student workers

● Katherine Kiowski and Christina Roberts
● International Studies majors
● Studying foreign languages; overseas travel experiences

Supported by Center for Teaching Excellence

● Dr. Ra’Sheedah Richardson, oversees professional development for graduate teaching assistants
● Sherri MacWillie, program manager and event manager
Menu of Services

Flexible & individualized

Recommended starting point: Intake assessment

- 45-minute recorded interview
- Follow-up consultation after consultants have conferred
- Receive feedback on strengths, weaknesses, and recommendations
- Consultee selects or agrees to activities
- Formalized in an “Individual Improvement Plan”
  - Confidential
  - Voluntary for most
  - Obligatory for conditionally-appointed TAs; adherence is reported to advisor
Pronunciation Software
Pronunciation Software

- Native Accent by Carnegie Speech
  - Web-based
  - Tracks active usage
  - Confirms correct pronunciation
  - Creates unique path for each user based on diagnostic
  - For conditionally-appointed TAs and for faculty

- American Speech Sounds for Academics
  - Installed on 5 workstations in the lab (LAAH 232)
  - Listening discrimination and pronunciation exercises
  - Teaches academic vocabulary
  - For any graduate or undergraduate student
Practice Groups
Practice Groups

- 1 hour, once a week
- High-impact pronunciation topics
- Functional language for instructors
- Interaction
  - with peers for support and community
  - with experienced TAs for advice
  - with undergrads for listening practice and mutual respect
Private Consultations
Private Consultations

Work on unique challenges in a discreet setting

- articulation of difficult phonemes
- grammar instruction
- feedback on speech
- formative assessment before retesting
Conversation Partners
Conversation Partners

Conversation partners

- 30 minutes, once a week
- English-dominant domestic undergrad volunteers
- discussion topics provided weekly, encouraging cross-cultural understanding and empathy
Classroom Observation

- Consultant sits in a lesson/recitation section/lab/help session
- Notes any breakdowns in communication
- Provides confidential feedback in post-observation consultation
Numbers Served
(Contacts Aug. – Nov. 2017)

Intake assessments: 55
Pronunciation lab appointments: about 150
Practice group attendance: 131
Private consultations: 81
Conversation partner meetings: 63 (not including participation of 14 English-dominant undergrads)
Classroom observations: 0
Workshops: 161
Numbers Served (Fall 2017)

Demographics of CTE-ELP clients:
Faculty: 2
Current TAs: 15
Other grad students: 39

Language Backgrounds

Together we TEACH, Together we LEARN, Together we LEAD
Feedback from clients:

● from international faculty: “eye-opening”

● from an international TA: “Thank you so much for all your help. The interactive sessions with you have helped me become aware of how I speak, and have enabled me to notice other people's speaking patterns as well. I walked out of your office with new learnings, every single time!”

● from an American undergraduate student: “Different viewpoints and different ways to approach the same problem; each person brings a different experience”
Upcoming Programming

Interim (between semesters)

- private consultations, including intake assessments
- pronunciation lab
- intensive series of practice groups
  2 hours/day, Mon.-Fri. Dec. 11-15 before ELPE on Dec. 16

Spring 2018

- Conditionally-appointed TAs must report to CTE-ELP by Jan. 26
- Conversation partners begin Week 3
- Weekly practice groups begin Week 3
- Other services will continue
Down the road

1. Programs for international visiting professors (J-1)

2. Facilitated dialogue between domestic undergrads and international TAs to improve undergrads’ listening comprehension and tolerance of accented English

3. Workshops open to the entire TAMU community on topics of linguistic diversity, the phonology of American English, and cross-cultural communication
Our Philosophy

Everybody has an accent.

Our goal is not to eliminate accents, but for the instructors we serve to be “comfortably intelligible” (Linda Grant, author of *Pronunciation Myths* and *Well Said*).

We envision a linguistically diverse campus in which all instructors communicate effectively, fluently, clearly, and confidently. They share their expertise, participate in the TAMU community, and enrich those around them. They are respected and valued by the students they teach; those students in turn are more prepared to live, work, and interact in a global society.
Thank you for coming.

More information at http://cte.tamu.edu/Graduate-Student-Support/English-Language-Proficiency

To register for an intake assessment, swan.tamu.edu/cte
To register for a practice group, ers.tamu.edu and search for “English Language Proficiency”

Questions? Comments? Suggestions?