

## **ALI 252**

### **Advanced Pronunciation**

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Office hours: Posted weekly on Blackboard

**PREREQUISITES:** Students are placed into ALI 252 based on the results of a previous ALI oral skills course, the International Student English (ISE) Exam<sup>1</sup>, or the International Teaching Assistant (ITA) Exam<sup>2</sup>. In addition, international students who want to fine-tune their pronunciation or modify their accent are welcomed to enroll in this course as “volunteers.”

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** This course is designed to help you improve your comprehension of American English, as well as help you to improve your intelligibility to American ears. In other words, we want your English pronunciation to be easy for Americans to understand, so that they do not have to put much effort into deciphering what you are saying to them and can enjoy conversation with you.

We will be working on the following areas of pronunciation:

- Segmentals (vowels and consonants)
- Syllables (combinations of vowels and consonants)
- Word stress
- Intonational units or “thought groups”
- Prominence (sentence stress)
- Intonation
- Rhythm
- Connected speech

These language areas will be addressed and practiced primarily through various drilling exercises and other practice activities, leading to more communicative activities in which you will have the opportunity to demonstrate automaticity with accurate pronunciation.

Accurate, fluent pronunciation will be addressed in four stages:

1. Knowledge: understanding how sounds and patterns of sounds are made (both physical and non-physical features)
2. Comprehension: being able to decipher the difference between similar sounds and patterns
3. Production: producing accurate sounds while concentrating on the physical and non-physical features necessary to produce the sounds and patterns
4. Automaticity: comprehension and production of sounds and patterns without thought, as a fluent second language speaker (or native speaker with a modified accent).

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<sup>1</sup> <http://ali.usc.edu/ise/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://ali.usc.edu/ita/>

**COURSE MATERIALS:** All handouts will be made available in class or on Blackboard.

**ALI ATTENDANCE POLICY:** More than **3** hours of absence will be reported to the ALI Student Advisor. More than **6** hours of absence will result in a course grade of **NC** (no credit). Absence is counted for *any* reason, including illness, emergencies, and conference attendance.

**TARDINESS POLICY:** Attending class on time is important since tardiness is an inconvenience to your classmates. Coming to class late will also count towards the number of hours missed.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:** ALI and USC are very diligent in keeping students honest about their assignments and tests. Obviously, this is not so much of an issue in a pronunciation class since you cannot have someone else speak for you. However, occasionally a student may be tempted to cheat on a test, or copy another's words from the Internet for a presentation. While these "shortcuts" may make passing a test or preparing a presentation easier, they do not help you learn or improve; therefore, it really is in your best interest to do your own work.

**ASSESSMENT:**

Quizzes	50%
Class projects	50%

*Quizzes*, covering various pronunciation topics, will periodically be given and graded in class. These are designed to check your *knowledge*, *comprehension*, and *production*. *Class projects* can include presentations and skits. These are a chance for you to demonstrate *automaticity* in the areas of pronunciation.

If you are required to take this course because of an ITA exam placement, you will also be required to meet with an "undergraduate student consultant" (uSC) for 2 hours per week to practice your language and teaching skills. You will receive more information about this via email from the ITA assistants.

Please note: This is a credit/no credit (CR/NC) class, which means that you will not receive a final letter grade (A/B/C/F) on your USC transcript. Since this is a proficiency-based course designed to help improve your oral skills, your proficiency in these oral skills at the end of the course or the ITA exam determines whether you will be advised to take an additional class or not.

**CONFERENCING AND OFFICE HOURS:** During the semester I will be meeting with you individually to discuss your progress and strategize with you to help you reach your personal goals in English communication. In addition, please feel free to stop by during my office hours to practice your pronunciation. I will post my office hours weekly on Blackboard under "Announcements." On most weeks, there will be both "private" and

“group” office hours posted. If you are required to take the ITA exam again, I strongly recommend that you drop by my office hours several times during the session to practice teaching a term from your department’s list of terms.

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:** Any student requiring accommodation based on a disability is required to register with the Disability Services and Programs office (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved recommendations can be obtained through DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the session as possible.

**CLASSROOM COURTESY:**

- Use of technology (e.g., smart phones, iPads) is permissible when checking the definition or pronunciation of a word; however, text-messaging is distracting and takes your attention from learning and practice, so it is forbidden during class.
- If you need to take a quick break to use the restroom, etc., you do not need to ask permission; just quietly leave and return to class.
- Finally, while it is understandably easier to speak your native language to others from your home country, this can be uncomfortable to others in the class who don’t speak your language and certainly defeats the purpose of being in an English class, so please use English only in the classroom.

**HOW CAN I IMPROVE MY SPEAKING SKILLS?:** Most of you have already studied English for many years, and you have a great deal of passive knowledge; in other words, you know a lot of grammar and vocabulary, but you may have a difficult time using it fluently. In this class, we will give you information and practice to help you improve your pronunciation, intonation, and fluency, but without *lots of practice outside of class*, you will not see much improvement. *This is especially true for improving or modifying pronunciation.* One cannot play piano or basketball by just learning about the instrument or sport; hours and hours of practice are necessary. The same is true about improving pronunciation. Just physically being in the US will not improve your English (there are people who have lived in Los Angeles for over 30 years who can hardly speak English). If you really want to improve your English communication skills while you are at USC, make sure you are using English *the majority of the time* you are speaking. Do your best to find opportunities to converse with others in English, even other non-native speakers of English. In a nut shell, comprehension and production will improve with lots of targeted practice; automaticity will improve with lots of opportunities to speak.