



# USC University of Southern California

## SYLLABUS

FALL 2023

### **ALI 246- Intermediate Oral skills for International Teaching Assistants**

Professor: Tessy Tzoytzoyrakos

Day/Time: M/W 10:00am-11:50am

Classroom: DCC B25

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Office: PSD 106F

Office Hours: by appointment

#### **Course Overview:**

This intermediate oral skills course is designed for International Teaching Assistants who need to improve their oral communication skills. The course is needs-based with a primary emphasis on linguistic accuracy and pronunciation. Participants will also work on broader communication skills with a focus on linguistic fluency. Class projects and assignments will assess students' ability to communicate with linguistic accuracy in an academic environment.

#### **Course Objectives:**

The purpose of this course is to help students improve their oral communication skills in order to be able to effectively carry out their duties as International Teaching Assistants. Oftentimes, the primary complaint of undergraduate students is a difficulty understanding their ITA's pronunciation. In addition, undergraduate students complain about their ITA not being able to either understand or correctly answer their questions. Lack of linguistic and /or pragmatic mastery of the English language are often the cause of communication breakdowns. In this course, students will develop an awareness of the importance of pronunciation and how it affects oral discourse. To that end, they will develop a working knowledge of different aspects of pronunciation such as vowel and consonant phonemes, prominence, intonation, thought groups and pitch variations. This course will also focus on enhancing students' lexico-grammatical accuracy. Students will engage in controlled discussions and practice their use of academic as well as colloquial language.

Upon the completion of this course, students should be able to:

- successfully prepare for and conduct mock interviews with linguistic fluency and cultural appropriateness
- make informal and more formal field-specific presentations
- handle student questions with professionalism and linguistic accuracy
- lead and effectively participate in group discussions
- discuss with improved accuracy and fluency a variety of topics
- demonstrate improvement in pronunciation skills
- demonstrate increased competency in oral skills and functions (i.e. interacting with native speakers in the classroom, lab, office hours, and social settings, expressing opinions, handling student questions, etc.)

### **Course Requirements:**

Select materials will be distributed in class and also available on Bb.

**Mock TA Interviews Project:** Students will prepare for and conduct in-class mock interviews. They will alternate in their roles as “Professors” and TAs and will carry out interviews inquiring about the duties, experiences, and challenges of being a TA. Students will be evaluated on overall fluency, self-introduction and effective storytelling skills. Interviews will be videotaped for self-, peer-, and teacher feedback.

**Midterm Project:** Students will plan and conduct a formal 20-30 min oral interview of an experienced TA in their department or field of study. Alternatively, a professional in your field can be selected (approved by me). Interview will be recorded and shared with the instructor. Students will also design an in-class presentation that will include selected clips of the interview accompanied by an oral summary and commentary of highlights and main points discussed. This project should demonstrate improvement in overall communication and presentation skills, pronunciation, and linguistic accuracy.

**Final Project (Battle of the ITAs):** Students will design and present a 5-7 minute speech which demonstrates their ability to construct and deliver a speech with fluency and linguistic accuracy, integrating effective storytelling techniques and interactive elements that build rapport with the audience. Speech will be followed by a Q & A session. Presenters will be evaluated on presentation style, delivery, and oral discourse. Presentations will be recorded for self-, peer-, and teacher feedback. This project should demonstrate significant improvement in overall communication and presentation skills, pronunciation, and linguistic accuracy from the beginning of the semester.

**Discussions:** Students will participate in formal class discussions covering selected topics of interest. They will be evaluated on preparation, argumentation, fluency, and use of discussion expressions. Feedback will be offered to help students continue to improve on their productive and communication skills.

**The "uSC" Program:** The "uSC" (Undergraduate Student Consultant) Program offers our ITA's a great opportunity to practice English with a native speaker outside the classroom. You will be assigned a uSC with whom you will meet outside of class (two hours per week, starting week 4) for a total of 20 hours. This is a requirement and a chance for you to work on teaching skills, fluency, slang, pronunciation, conversation, or any other areas you wish to improve.

**Class Participation:** Each session will be customized to fit specific class needs and will build on what was covered in previous sessions. Similarly to how graduate students are expected to contribute to class discussions and TAs are expected to be effective and interactive speakers, you will be required to contribute to all classroom activities, including critiquing classmates' presentations on pronunciation and language use. Students learn from analyzing each other's oral performance and exchanging of ideas. Therefore, come ready to interact and engage in class discussions every session.

**Attendance:** More than **4** hours of absence will be reported to the ALI student advisor. More than **8** hours of absence will result in a course grade of **NC** (no credit). If you are late to class, that will also count towards the number of hours missed. In the event you cannot make a class, be sure to check with a classmate for the assignment missed. If you have an unavoidable conflict, please contact me via email as far in advance as possible.

**Assignments:** All assignments must be turned in ON THE DUE DATE. Due to the format of our projects, there will be no makeup midterm or final presentations.

**Class Policy on Use of Electronics:** Out of respect for your fellow students, your instructor, and to foster an environment conducive to effective learning and communication, all electronic devices (smart phones, i-pads, laptops) will be used per the instructor's guidance and for class purposes only. **Students will be marked absent for one hour each time this policy is disregarded..**

**Grading Criteria:** Upon completion of this course, students will receive a grade of Credit (CR) or No Credit (NC). The final grade will be based on the following criteria:

- **Classroom and uSC participation:** The amount of interaction in the classroom and participation in the undergraduate consultant program – 30%
- **Project work:**
  - Mock Interview – 15%
  - Midterm: Interviewing a TA – 20%

- Class Discussions (formal and informal)- 15%
- Final: Battle of the ITAs – 20%

**ITA Exam:** To qualify for the ITA exam at the end of the semester, students must complete ALL course-related assignments, attend all meetings with uSC, and not exceed the maximum number of allowable absences for the course. (Please note that "absences" will include hours missed with uSC; make-up uSC meetings must be held prior to the ITA exam date.) Please note that students who fail to attend their scheduled ITA EXAM will be at risk of receiving a No Credit for the course.

**Recommendations for success:** As TAs, you need to demonstrate a professional, positive attitude in all your interactions with your students, professors, advisors, and classmates. Research also shows that a positive attitude is the driving force behind learning and improvement. I expect you to improve greatly in this class and a positive attitude is all we need to get started.

**Zoom etiquette:** For select sessions on Zoom, I expect you to be UNMUTED and with YOUR VIDEO ON at all times. The only time you should be muted is if there is background noise.

### **Sharing of course materials outside of the learning environment**

USC has a policy that prohibits sharing of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment. *SCampus Section 11.12(B)*

*Distribution or use of notes or recordings based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study is a violation of the USC Student Conduct Code. This includes, but is not limited to, providing materials for distribution by services publishing class notes. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which had been distributed to students or in any way had been displayed for use in relationship to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the Internet or via any other media. (See Section C.1 Class Notes Policy).*

### **USC's GRADUATE ADMISSIONS REQUIREMENTS**

The American Language Institute adheres to the following USC Graduate Admissions English Language Requirements:

*The ability to communicate effectively in English-to read, write and speak the language fluently-is vital to your success as a university student. USC graduate applicants are therefore expected to demonstrate English-language proficiency as part of the application process.*

<https://gradadm.usc.edu/lightboxes/international-students-english-proficiency/>

## **Academic Integrity**

The University of Southern California is foremost a learning community committed to fostering successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Academic misconduct is in contrast to the university's mission to educate students through a broad array of first-rank academic, professional, and extracurricular programs and includes any act of dishonesty in the submission of academic work (either in draft or final form).

This course will follow the expectations for academic integrity as stated in the [USC Student Handbook](#). All students are expected to submit assignments that are original work and prepared specifically for the course/section in this academic term. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s). Students suspected of engaging in academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Other violations of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

For more information about academic integrity see the [student handbook](#) or the [Office of Academic Integrity's website](#), and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).

## **Policy on AI Generator Use**

In this course, I encourage you to use artificial intelligence (AI)-powered programs to help you with assignments that indicate the permitted use of AI. You should also be aware that AI text generation tools may present incorrect information, biased responses, and incomplete analyses; thus they are not yet prepared to produce text that meets the standards of this course. To adhere to our university values, you must cite any AI-generated material (e.g., text, images, etc.) included or referenced in your work and provide the prompts used to generate the content. Using an AI tool to generate content without proper attribution will be treated as plagiarism and reported to the Office of Academic Integrity. Please review the instructions in each assignment for more details on how and when to use AI Generators for your submissions.

Learning to use AI is an emerging skill, and I welcome the opportunity to meet with you to provide guidance with these tools during office hours or after class. Keep in mind the following:

- AI tools are permitted to help you brainstorm topics or revise work you have already written.

- If you provide minimum-effort prompts, you will get low-quality results. You will need to refine your prompts to get good outcomes. This will take work.
- Proceed with caution when using AI tools and do not assume the information provided is accurate or trustworthy. If it gives you a number or fact, assume it is incorrect unless you either know the correct answer or can verify its accuracy with another source. You will be responsible for any errors or omissions provided by the tool. It works best for topics you understand.
- AI is a tool, but one that you need to acknowledge using. Please include a paragraph at the end of any assignment that uses AI explaining how (and why) you used AI and indicate/specify the prompts you used to obtain the results what prompts you used to get the results. Failure to do so is a violation of academic integrity policies.
- Be thoughtful about when AI is useful. Consider its appropriateness for each assignment or circumstance. The use of AI tools requires attribution. You are expected to clearly attribute any material generated by the tool used. ([USC Libraries AI Generators Citation Guidance](#))

**Plagiarism** – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on misconduct, <https://policy.usc.edu/policy-governance/>

#### **Students and Disability Accommodations:**

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University’s educational programs. [The Office of Student Accessibility Services](#) (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at [osas.usc.edu](https://osas.usc.edu). You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at [osasfrontdesk@usc.edu](mailto:osasfrontdesk@usc.edu).

#### **Support Systems:**

[Counseling and Mental Health](#) - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

[988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#) - 988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional

distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

[Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services \(RSVP\)](#) - (213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

[Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX \(EEO-TIX\)](#) - (213) 740-5086

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

[Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment](#) - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

[The Office of Student Accessibility Services \(OSAS\)](#) - (213) 740-0776

OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

[USC Campus Support and Intervention](#) - (213) 740-0411

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

[Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#) - (213) 740-2101

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

[USC Emergency](#) - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

[USC Department of Public Safety](#) - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call

Non-emergency assistance or information.

[Office of the Ombuds](#) - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

[Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice](#) - (323) 442-2850 or [otfp@med.usc.edu](mailto:otfp@med.usc.edu)

Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.