



# USC University of Southern California

## **ALI 256 High Intermediate Oral Communication for International Teaching Assistants**

Instructor: TESSY TZOYTZOYRAKOS  
Section: 10171D  
Day/Time: T/TH, 12:00PM-1:50PM  
Classroom: DCC B25

Office Phone: 213-740-0079  
Office: PSD 106F

E-mail: [tzoitzoy@usc.edu](mailto:tzoitzoy@usc.edu)  
Office Hours: by appointment

### **Course Description:**

This high-intermediate to advanced 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 pronunciation as well as linguistic accuracy and pragmatic competence. Participants will also work on honing their knowledge and use of oral grammar and vocabulary as they are both components of oral discourse fluency. Class projects and assignments will assess students' ability to communicate with linguistic competence in a dynamic academic environment.

### **Learning Objectives and Outcomes:**

The purpose of this course is to prepare students to successfully carry out their duties as International Teaching Assistants in a rigorous and dynamic academic environment. Very often communication breakdowns between students and their TAs occur due to lack of linguistic and pragmatic competence. This course is designed to strengthen students' linguistic competence by placing primary focus on the supra-segmental aspects of pronunciation such as discourse intonation, pitch movement and tone choice. Secondary focus will be on fluency, particularly on oral grammar and vocabulary use. In addition, students will hone their pragmatic discourse skills as this is an essential component of effective communication for ITAs who are currently scheduled to teach or may potentially teach and/or assist students in the classroom. The

assignments and activities in this course are designed to help ITAs communicate with greater linguistic accuracy and fluency as well as cultural appropriacy.

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

- demonstrate ability to introduce themselves and their course with fluency and accuracy, engaging the audience, and generating excitement for their course
- successfully incorporate oral speech techniques such as interactive elements and anecdotes to build rapport with audience
- teach an introductory lesson related to their field and demonstrate ability to explain technical terms using vivid examples and interactive techniques
- lead and effectively participate in academic group discussions
- discuss a variety of topics with improved accuracy and fluency
- demonstrate improvement in pronunciation skills (individual sounds, rhythm, word stress, and discourse intonation)
- demonstrate competency and pragmatic knowledge in a variety of communication functions (i.e. interacting with native speakers in the classroom and/or during lab and office hours, offering advice to students, handling student questions, etc.)

### **Course Requirements and Assignments**

**Materials will be distributed on Bb; No textbook required for this class**

**Oral Communication Project:** Students will prepare a formal introduction of themselves and a course for which they will be TAing. Focus will be on building rapport with the audience and delivering the presentation with linguistic accuracy and fluency. Students will also be evaluated on the use of effective oral speech techniques. Presentations will be videotaped for self-, peer-, and teacher feedback.

**Midterm Project:** Students will design and present a 7-9 minute introductory lesson related to their field 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. Focus will be on the ability to simplify complex content and present ideas clearly and succinctly. Presentation will be followed by a Q & A session. Presenters will be evaluated on presentation style, delivery, and oral discourse. Presentations will be videotaped for self-, peer-, and teacher feedback.

**Final Project:** Students will observe an experienced teacher and reflect on best teaching practices. This observation will inform their final presentation. Students will select aspects of teaching they want to improve on and design a lesson around these aspects. For example, they

may choose to work on being interactive, using humor, or telling stories to teach a term in their field. The final presentation should be well-constructed demonstrating best teaching and oral communication practices.

### **Field experience assignments:**

**The "uSC" Program:** The "uSC" (Undergraduate Student Consultant) Program offers our ITAs 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) for a total of 20 hours. This is 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. Just as 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.

**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.

**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. Assignments and due dates are posted on Blackboard and are also noted on the course outline.

**ITAs ONLY:** Students must complete ALL course-related assignments, attend ALL meetings with their uSC, and not exceed the maximum number of allowable absences for the course. Students who do not meet these requirements will be at risk of receiving a No Credit and will

have their department notified. Failure to attend the scheduled ITA exam may also result in a No Credit for the course.

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.

**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 Participation:** The amount of interaction in the classroom and your participation– 15%
- **Field Project work-** your participation and performance in the uSCs program– 15%
- **Project work:**
  - Oral Communication Project – 20%
  - Midterm Presentation with Questions – 25%
  - Final Project – 25%

Your projects will be recorded which will require you to critique the accuracy and fluency of your English.

**ITA Test:** Students must complete ALL course-related assignments and not exceed the maximum number of allowable absences for the course (absences include hours missed with uSC). Students who exceed the hours of absences and/or are at risk of receiving a No Credit (NC), will have their department notified. Failure to attend the scheduled ITA exam may result in a NC 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 true learning and improvement. I expect you to improve greatly in this class and a positive attitude is all we need to get started!

## **Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems**

### **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.