English Language Proficiency Certification Resources

New Graduate Student Orientation
January 2020
Participants will …

• Discover resources within the university to help them achieve certification and for enhancing their ability to communicate across linguistic differences;

• Identify language certification requirements specific to some TA assignments; and

• Review the format of the English Language Proficiency Exam (ELPE) and strategies for success.
Howdy and Welcome

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English Language Proficiency Consultants
Purpose

The Center for Teaching Excellence’s English Language Proficiency (CTE-ELP) program is a linguistic service provided to international instructors who wish to improve their spoken English proficiency.
How the CTE-ELP can help

- Diagnosis
- Instruction
- Practice opportunities
- For a few students under certain circumstances, permission to retake the ELPE early
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.
Resources available to:

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

Required for conditionally-appointed TAs (TAs with marginal spoken English proficiency [Level 2])
Optional for all others
At no additional cost (funded by international student fees)
Pronunciation Software

- **American Speech Sounds for Academics**
  - Installed on 5 workstations in the lab (LAAH 232)
  - Listening discrimination and pronunciation exercises
  - Teaches academic vocabulary

- **Native Accent by Carnegie Speech**
  - For conditionally-appointed TAs and for faculty
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
Conversation Partners

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

Work on unique challenges in a discreet setting

- articulation of difficult phonemes
- grammar instruction
- feedback on speech
- formative assessment before retesting
Other resources

• ELPE Overviews prior to each exam
• Social events designed for conversation practice
• Classroom observations
• Videotaped micro-teaching
• Weekly Lunchtime Conversation Circle
• Additional resources (link from bottom of CTE-ELP webpage)

cte.tamu.edu/Graduate-Student-Support/
  English-Language-Proficiency/CTE-ELP-Additional-Resources
Where to start?

• Individual instruction: (for current TAs)
  – Send an email to cte@tamu.edu
• Group instruction:
  – Register at ers.tamu.edu/cte
• Computer-based instruction:
  – Book at swan.tamu.edu/cte
  – select “Pronunciation Lab”
Upcoming opportunities

• Introduction to *American SpeechSounds for Academics* software
• Workshop on Academic Communication Skills: Leading a Lab Class
• American English Vowel System
• Practice Group for Instructors
• LAITA Lunch Series (for Liberal Arts International TAs)
• Workshop on Academic Communication Skills: Office Hours
Questions about CTE-ELP programs and services?
Eligibility to Teach at Texas A&M

Which graduate assistants “teach”?  

- graduate assistants having “contact” with students for a course (as teacher of record, recitation leader, lab instructor, TA holding office hours, or grader explaining graded work)

- GAT, GAI, GAL, GTF
TAMU English Language Proficiency Levels

- Level 1 (= Certified): Students **eligible** for teaching assignments.

- Level 2: Students **conditionally eligible** for teaching assignments for one semester only, but **must simultaneously participate** in CTE-ELP instruction and achieve a certifying score on the ELPE by the end of the semester.

- Level 3: Students **not eligible** for teaching assignment. Students **should participate** in spoken language training (such as those provided by CTE-ELP) to assist them in meeting English language proficiency requirements. Student must retake ELP-certifying test.
Do you know your level?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level #</th>
<th>TOEFL speaking section</th>
<th>IELTS speaking section</th>
<th>PTE speaking section</th>
<th>English Language Proficiency Exam (ELPE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>≥26</td>
<td>≥8.0</td>
<td>≥85</td>
<td>≥80</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>23-25</td>
<td>7.0-7.5</td>
<td>75-84</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>&lt;23</td>
<td>&lt;7.0</td>
<td>&lt;75</td>
<td>&lt;75</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Highest officially-reported test score (not necessarily the most recent one) counts.
Alternative Certification

Not automatic; department vouches for the student’s communication skills and submits request to OGAPS

OGAPS Alternative Certification Form

- Earned bachelor’s after 4 or more years of study in the U.S.
- Or if a citizen of an approved country

List of Approved Countries
Approved countries

American Samoa
Anguilla
Antigua and Barbuda
Australia
Bahamas
Barbados
Belize
Bermuda
British Virgin Islands
Canada (except Quebec)
Cayman Islands
Dominica
Federated States of Micronesia
Gambia
Ghana
Gibraltar
Grenada
Guyana
Ireland
Jamaica
Liberia
New Zealand
Nigeria
Saint Kitts and Nevis
Saint Lucia
Trinidad/Tobago
Turks and Caicos Islands
United Kingdom
Accessing your test scores

Login to HOWDY.TAMU.EDU and select **My Record**

- In the **Grades and Transcripts** pane, go to “My Profile.”
- In the menu on the left side of the screen, click on **Prior Education and Testing**.
- Scroll down to the **TESTING** section.
Eligibility questionnaire

Confused about English language certification? Try our new tool u.tamu.edu/TA-ELP (also found on our website)
Requirement for Level 2 TAs

One-time, one-semester teaching assistantship allowed for Level 2 students as long as

1) they begin participation in the CTE-ELP by the end of Week 2 of the semester (Jan. 24)
2) they participate in the CTE-ELP program 5 hours/week and
3) they retest and earn a Level 1 score

Otherwise, they are ineligible for future teaching assignments.

Adherence to Individual Improvement Plan (but not details) will be reported to department.
Level 2 TAs

• This is our PRIORITY GROUP.
• Conditionally-appointed TAs and TAs with Emergency Deferral of Certification should speak with the consultant immediately following this session.
• You will have our full support to reach certification before the end of the semester.
• As soon as you reach certification, you are no longer obligated to continue in the CTE-ELP program (but are still welcome).
Recommended English Language Proficiency Process

CTE-ELP Program

- Schedule and Receive Intake Assessment
- Construct and Choose Options Individual Improvement Plan
- For current Instructors
  - Teaching Observation
  - Private Consultations
  - Practice Groups
  - Conversation Partnerships
  - Pronunciation Workshops
  - Language Laboratory
- Open to all
- Measure Progress Formative Assessment

Re-take ELPE or another recognized exam
Questions about eligibility for teaching assignments?
Overview of the ELPE

• English Language Proficiency Exam (Oral)
• Test of spoken English
• Assesses the oral language demands associated with college level instruction
• Administered by Texas A&M University’s Testing Services
  – testing@tamu.edu
  – testing.tamu.edu
• Offered every month, but cannot be taken more frequently than once every three months
Upcoming ELPE dates

- January 11, 2020
- February 15, 2020
- March 21, 2020

Registration closes the Sunday before the test.
Sections of the ELPE

Three sections can occur in any order:

• A short reading from the student’s major field, which targets careful language production;

• A short (<10 minute) presentation of a topic from an introductory textbook from the student’s major field, which targets planned language production (most important section)

• A brief discussion that is more general in nature, which targets casual, extemporaneous language production.
Assessment

• Conducted by two or three evaluators
• Takes about ten minutes once the test-taker begins the evaluation
• The sole criterion by which test-takers are judged is comprehensibility – the amount of effort required for a listener to understand a speaker.
The process

• Register by the deadline (usually a week before the exam) at Testing Services ELPE Registration
• $45 fee charged to student account
• During the week prior to the exam, you will receive an email with details about exam time and procedures
• On the day of the exam, report to the General Services Complex (GSC). Present your student ID and admission ticket.
• You will receive Scantron forms (on which to input your name and other identifying information) and materials from your major. You will have 20 minutes to complete these Scantrons and prepare a presentation based on those materials.
Strategies for success on the presentation

• Be friendly
• Make eye contact
• Speak slowly enough for your audience to process
• Organize your presentation logically
• Use the whiteboard for a visual aid
• Define terminology
• Give examples
After the exam

• Testing Services posts a score via Howdy within half a week.

• No other feedback is given, unless the test-taker receives a score lower than an 80 and sends a request to Testing Services

• We at the CTE-ELP program are happy to help you interpret any comments that you receive and to identify strategies to overcome any negative criticism. Request a consultation at cte@tamu.edu.
Questions about the ELPE?
Other questions?

cte@tamu.edu

Find out more at

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