

NOT FILMED 840199

MONITORING AND IMPROVING THE ENGLISH SPEAKING PROFICIENCY OF TEACHING ASSISTANTS

Description of Testing and Training

(1) The Test of Spoken English, developed by the Educational Testing Service in 1981, will be administered on campus at the Committee on Language Programs Center, Room 51 Folwell Hall during the following time periods:

Wednesday, November 23 3-5 p.m.
Thursday, December 1 2-5 p.m.

Examinees will be scheduled for testing at half-hour intervals. Departments are asked to identify those teaching assistants whose oral proficiency in English may be questionable and refer them as soon as possible to the English as a Second Language Program so that testing arrangements can be made.

Referrals for the Test of Spoken English should be made to Mark Landa, English as a Second Language Program, 152 Klæber Court, phones 3-0166 or 3-7855. Departments will be told specific times for their examinees to report to the Committee on Language Programs Center for testing. Departments will also then be responsible for informing their teaching assistants of the place and time to report for the test. There is no fee. Results will be made available to students and departments within a week of the test.

Based on the test results, one of the following recommendations will be made for each examinee:

- (a) No need for further training in English communication skills.
(b) Could benefit from further training in English communication skills in order to improve effectiveness as a teaching assistant.
(c) Further training in English communication skills is necessary in order to improve effectiveness as a teaching assistant.
(d) May need more than one quarter of training in English communication skills.

Departments with examinees falling in categories (b) and (c) will be asked to enroll them in the English as a Second Language Program's course in Classroom Communication for Teaching Assistants described below. Examinees falling in category (d) should also be enrolled in the course, but no guarantee can be made regarding their readiness to perform effectively as teaching assistants by the end of the course.

(2) The course, Classroom Communication for Teaching Assistants, will be offered during winter quarter. This is an established course with a track record of success; more than 100 teaching assistants have already benefited from participation in this course at the University of Minnesota since 1978. Teaching assistants who either concurrently hold teaching positions or expect to be

Pursuant to 1983 Session Laws, Chapter 258, section 6, subd 2

offered positions during the 1983-84 academic year should enroll in the course if they fall into any of the above categories except (a). Three or four sections of the course will be offered in the winter:

Section 1	Monday, Wednesday, 8:15-9:00 a.m.	S. Holt
Section 2	Tuesday, Thursday, 3:15-4:00 p.m.	C. Meyers
Section 3	Saturday, 9:00-11:00 a.m.	J. Smith
Section 4	To be arranged.	

In addition, weekly one-hour tutorials will be arranged for all students in these sections. Each section will be limited to the first eight students who register for it.

Departments will be expected to pay half of the instructional costs for their students. This charge will be \$150 for the one-quarter course. The other half of the instructional costs and the full costs of the testing program will be paid by the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

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Monitoring and Improving the English Speaking Proficiency
of Teaching Assistants at the University of Minnesota

Problems in classroom communication between teaching assistants who are non-native speakers of English and their students have been a concern to the University community for a number of years. The first course designed to improve the English speaking skills of these teaching assistants along with their teaching skills was offered in winter 1978.

More than 100 teaching assistants have already benefited from participation in this course since then. These courses were available, however, on a strictly voluntary basis to any teaching assistant realizing the need or to any department recommending a teaching assistant for the course but there was not a University-wide standard for language proficiency.

In May 1983 the State of Minnesota Legislature required that the University address more intently the problem of teaching assistants for whom English is a second language. It required that the University develop a plan for insuring that teaching assistants are proficient in "speaking, reading, and writing the English language as it is spoken in the United States."

The University of Minnesota Graduate School administers the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) as an entrance requirement which sets minimum standards in reading and writing skills for all graduate students for whom English is a second language. Many departments have set minimum scores for entrance into their programs that are higher than the mandatory entrance requirement. Therefore, the University has concentrated its efforts on improving the speaking ability of teaching assistants for whom oral presentation skills are important.

The University put into place for fall quarter 1983 a two-part program involving testing of the English speaking ability of teaching assistants who would have classroom teaching responsibilities and training for those whose spoken English had deficiencies. Department chairpersons or heads were asked to review the teaching assistants in their department who would have classroom teaching responsibilities to identify and refer for testing those whose spoken English might be problematic. This resulted in 30 students being referred for testing and of these referrals 26 were enrolled in training sessions.

The program of testing and training was directed by Dr. Mark H. Landa, Coordinator of Instruction in the Program in English as a Second Language. The Test of Spoken English, developed by the Educational Testing Service in 1981, was selected for determination of the teaching assistants' skills in communication. Departments were told that based on the test results, one of the following recommendations would be made for each examinee:

- (a) No need for further training in English communication skills.
- (b) Could benefit from further training in English communication skills in order to improve effectiveness as a teaching assistant.
- (c) Further training in English communications skills is necessary in order to function as a teaching assistant.
- (c) Needs more than one quarter of training in English communication skills.

Departments with examinees falling in categories (b) and (c) were asked to enroll them in English as a Second Language Program's course in Classroom Communication for Teaching Assistants. Examinees falling in category (d) should also have been enrolled in the course, but no guarantee could be made regarding their readiness to perform effectively as teaching assistants by the end of the course.

The course, Classroom Communication for Teaching Assistants, has been offered during fall quarter 1983 and is designed to improve the teaching assistants' English language skills in pronunciation, grammar, listening comprehension, and group presentation. The teaching assistants met as a group for two hours each week to videotape sample presentations; to discuss effective presentation techniques in the areas of defining a term, explaining diagram, illustration, or model, explaining a process, establishing rapport, short lectures, and fielding questions; and to work on English language skills. Each participant in the course also attended one weekly tutorial hour in which the participant received feedback on his/her video or audiotaped presentations and worked on individual problems in English language skills. Participants were also asked to observe two classes given by native speaking teaching assistants in their fields and were asked to report on their observations. The course will be completed by the participants in December 1983 at which time a posttest will be administered and departments will be informed as to which teaching assistants have met the proficiency standards or need additional training.

The University's experience with the program during fall quarter indicates that rapid progress can be made in the English speaking proficiency of teaching assistants who enroll in the program. Although the posttest will not be administered until the end of fall quarter, it can be confidently predicted that the majority of the 26 enrolled in the course will be ready for classroom teaching. The remainder will be enrolled in a second course which will follow the same basic format of the first course but give additional needed training.

It is the intention of the University to continue a program whereby each quarter department heads and chairs will be asked to refer

for testing any teaching assistants in their departments who may have a problem with their English speaking proficiency. The attached letter to department heads and chairs is a copy of that announcing the testing and course for winter quarter 1984. The fall quarter 1983 experimental program suggested that three or four sections of the course with eight persons each will be required quarterly with one of those sections designated for those requiring a follow-up course.

The program will be evaluated at the end of the fall quarter experiment both as to the level of cooperation of the academic departments and to the effect on the teaching assistants tested and attending the course. With appropriate adjustments based on the fall quarter experience, testing and training will continue in subsequent academic years to assure the same results.

Enclosure



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs
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November 10, 1983

TO: Department Chairpersons and Heads

FROM: John Wallace, Assistant Vice President, Academic Affairs
Robert T. Holt, Dean, Graduate School

John Wallace

RE: Monitoring and Improving the English Speaking Proficiency of
Teaching Assistants

During fall quarter 1983, the University put into place a program for the testing of the English speaking proficiency of teaching assistants who will have classroom teaching responsibilities and for the training of those whose spoken English has deficiencies. This program was set up in response to the Legislature's request that the University develop a plan for insuring that teaching assistants are proficient in the English language as it is spoken in the United States. The demand for this program in the fall quarter--of 30 students tested 26 are currently enrolled in the course in Classroom Communication--was such that we will continue it in the winter quarter and subsequent quarters as long as the need for it lasts. Please see the enclosed description of the two parts of the program.

Department chairpersons and heads have the following two responsibilities which are crucial to the success of the program. (A) Department chairpersons or heads (or their designees) will review the teaching assistants in their departments who will have classroom teaching responsibilities to identify and refer for testing those whose spoken English may be problematic. Classroom teaching is defined for this purpose as direct classroom instruction, laboratory instruction and one-on-one tutorials. (B) Departments will bear half the instructional costs--\$150--for each of their teaching assistants who enroll in the training program. The deadline for referral for testing is November 30, 1983.

An informational meeting on course content and goals will be held November 18, 1983, 3:15-4:00 p.m., in 46 Folwell Hall for all department chairs and teaching assistant supervisors who may be interested in the approach used for improving the communication skills of teaching assistants. Please call 3-7855 if you will be attending.

Our experience with the program during fall quarter indicates that rapid progress can be made in the English speaking proficiency of teaching assistants who enroll in the program. Our goal is to say to the Legislature that we are testing the English speaking proficiency of every teaching assistant who might have a problem and that every teaching assistant who has classroom teaching

Department Chairpersons and Heads
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responsibilities will have met reasonable proficiency standards. It requires the cooperation of all departments across the University to solve this problem. We are grateful for your help.

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cc: C. Peter Magrath, President
University Vice Presidents
Collegiate Deans
Stephen S. Dunham, General Counsel
Mark Landa, English as a Second Language Program
James Shaefer, Graduate Assistants Information and Assistance Office

Encl.