DITA 2015
COMMUNICATING CLEARLY
Angie Calton
TEACHING = HELPING LEARNING

THROUGH TUTORING

OFFICE HOURS

IN LAB

IN STUDIO

IN DISCUSSION GROUPS

THROUGH GRADING

KNOWLEDGE

SKILLS

ATTITUDES
STUDENTS EXPECT . . .

1. You are knowledgeable in the course material
2. You can communicate the material in a clear, easy-to-understand and systematic way
WHAT IS COMMUNICATION?

Sender

Encode

Assumptions

Language

Cultural Differences

Defensiveness

Message

Emotions

Interpersonal Relationship

Stereotypes

Channel

Decode

Receiver

Feedback
WHAT ARE AMERICAN STUDENTS LIKE?

Talk to the person sitting next to you:
Compare universities/students in your home country with what you think American universities/students are like.
WHAT ARE OU STUDENTS LIKE?

- Come from very different backgrounds
- Take courses for very different reasons
- Pay a lot for education
- Expect privacy: *Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)*
- Ask questions in class and share opinions
- Expect an informal class environment
- Expect instructors to appear friendly and accessible
- Expect instructors to make communication clearly structured and accessible to everybody (*ADA*)
- Expect multiple assignments throughout the semester
- Dislike too much negative criticism
Students expect . . .

. . . praise when they do well and encouragement when they do not
COMMUNICATING WITH STUDENTS: STARTING OUT

• Briefly introduce yourself and country/culture
• Tell students if English is not your native language
• Encourage them to ask for clarification if they have difficulty understanding you because of your accent
• Be prepared and confident
• Be open-minded and positive
• Talk to other TAs about what American students are like and what you should expect from them
• Be clear about your expectations
GETTING PREPARED

• Clearly organize your ideas (outline/lesson plan)
• Identify key terms
• Check you know the US pronunciation and spelling of key terms
• Listen to pronunciation of key terms with Google or online dictionaries
• Practice by recording yourself on your phone, iPad or laptop
• Prepare a list of key terms to bring to class
### KEY TERMS: PRONUNCIATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keyword + Part of Speech</th>
<th>Transcription + Syllable stress mark(s)</th>
<th>Example (sentence, illustration, anecdote, etc)</th>
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COMMUNICATING WITH STUDENTS

• Signpost your presentation
  – Give an overview
  – State each point
  – Talk about it
    • Expand
    • Digress
  – Summarize it
  – Indicate when you are going to change topics
  – Re-cap
  – Wrap Up

• Use linking words (discourse markers)
  – “On the other hand . . .”
  – “In addition . . .”
COMMUNICATING WITH STUDENTS

1. Write outline on the board (gap-fill)
2. Write technical terms or theoretical concepts on the board
3. If you are unsure of the pronunciation of a word, write it on the board and ask a student/the class to show you the pronunciation
4. Keep your language accessible – avoid unnecessarily sophisticated language
5. If you don’t understand a students’ question, ask another student to rephrase it in a different way
COMMUNICATING WITH STUDENTS

• Be mindful of your pace
• After asking a question, allow 7-10 seconds of ‘wait time’
• Set aside class time for students to explain or discuss their understanding of the course material
LET’S PRACTICE

• Write 5 basic ideas or key concepts new students should learn about your field.
• You will refer to these for all of the activities we will be doing at DITA.
1. Communicating Clearly: Tips for Speakers

Rationale
To practice explaining a basic concept to a student.

Instructions
You will have some time to prepare how you would explain a basic concept, theory or idea from your field. Imagine your ‘student’ has little or no background knowledge in your area. How could you teach this concept to a ‘beginner’? Try to use one or two of the tips and techniques from below.

Tips and techniques

- Briefly introduce yourself and country/culture
- Tell students that English is not your native language
- Encourage students to ask for clarification if they have difficulty understanding your accent
- Be prepared and confident
- Be open-minded and positive
- Be clear about your expectations
- Clearly organize your ideas (outline/lesson plan)
- Check you know the US pronunciation and spelling of key terms
- Listen to pronunciation of key terms with Google or online dictionaries
- Practice by recording yourself on your phone, iPad or laptop
- Signpost your presentation
  - Give an overview
  - State each point
  - Talk about it
    - Expand
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  - Summarize it
  - Indicate when you are going to change topics
  - Re-cap
  - Wrap Up
- Use linking words/phrases (e.g.: “On the other hand . . .”, “In addition . . .”)
- Write outline on the board (gap-fill)
- Write technical terms or theoretical concepts on the board
- If you are unsure of the pronunciation of a word, write it on the board and ask a student/the class to show you the pronunciation
- Keep your language accessible – avoid unnecessarily sophisticated language
- If you don’t understand a students’ question, ask another student to rephrase it in a different way
- Be mindful of your pace. Don’t speak too quickly.
- After asking a question, allow 7-10 seconds of ‘wait time’
- Set aside class time for students to explain or discuss their understanding of the course material
2. Communicating Clearly: Keyword List

After you plan your lesson, make a list of at least 10 keywords. Choose words you will need to use again and again throughout the lesson to explain the main ideas. Look up the word online or in a dictionary. Note the part of speech, the phonetic transcription and syllable stress. Write the sentence or illustration you will actually use in your teaching. After you make your list, practice your pronunciation by following these suggestions:

1. Look up your word or phrase in an online dictionary and click on the audio to hear how the word is pronounced. Be sure you are listening to the US pronunciation.
2. Record the words and sentences on your smartphone, laptop or tablet device. Repeat the words and phrases at least 10 times each.
4. Listen to your sentences for appropriate speed, stress, intonation and pauses between phrases. Keep recording yourself until you sound natural.

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## 3. Communicating Clearly: Listener’s Feedback

<table>
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<tr>
<th>You said...</th>
<th>You should have said...</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(pronunciation, grammar, word choice, etc)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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Circle one: Your speaking pace was  
(a) very fast  
(b) a bit fast  
(c) perfect  
(d) a bit slow  
(e) very slow

You used the following techniques effectively:

The thing I found most confusing was...

If you were to teach this again, you should...
### 4. Communicating Clearly: Student Slang

The following are some slang terms you may hear from your American students.

Note: Most of these are very informal and may not be appropriate for you to use with students.

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<th>Slang Term or Phrase</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Example</th>
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<td>A pop quiz</td>
<td>An unannounced quiz</td>
<td>“The TA gave a pop quiz today.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>A makeup exam</td>
<td>An exam taken after the date it was originally given due to illness or some other excuse</td>
<td>“I had to get a note from the doctor before I was allowed to take the makeup exam.”</td>
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| To blow off someone or something | 1. To not take someone seriously  
2. To not show up for a class or a meeting | 1. “He totally blew off that course”  
2. “He stayed in bed and blew off class.” |
| To blow something  | To fail or to do badly | “I bombed the pop quiz.” |
| To screw up         | To bomb | |
| To nail something   | 1. To do well  
2. To discredit by detecting or exposing something or somebody | 1. “She nailed the makeup exam”  
2. “Our TA nailed him for cheating.” |
| To ace              | To get an A, to do well | “She aced the final.” |
| To cram             | To try to learn a lot in a short period of time | “You might be able to pass the test if you cram all night, but you won’t remember anything six months from now.” |
| A heavy load / a light load | The number of credit hours a student is currently enrolled in | “I want to graduate on time so I’m taking a heavy load this semester.” |
| To be swamped       | To have a lot of work to do | “With work plus mid-terms, I’m totally swamped.” |
| To freak out        | To become very upset | “He freaked out when the TA gave him a D on his project.” |
| To freeze           | To become unable to think, function or perform | “He totally froze on the Spanish oral exam.” |
| To breeze through something | To do something quickly, easily | “She breezed through the math problems.” |
| To tune out / zone out / space out | To be distracted or lose concentration | “I’m so tired. I completely spaced out during the lecture.” |
| To catch something  | To hear or understand something | “Could you repeat that, please? I’m afraid I didn’t catch what you’ve said.” |
| To get something    | To understand something | “I had to read four different chapters from four different books before I got the theory.” |
| To get something across | To explain something successfully | “Our TA is really good at getting the materials across.” |