

Speaking To an International Audience

When presenting before an international audience or communicating with individuals who have varying English language skills, it is important to remember a few key points:

- Both highly technical language and colloquial speech can be difficult for non-native English speakers to understand. Define academic terms and other forms of specialized speech, and limit the use of acronyms, slang, [buzz words, and jargon](#).
- Clear speech is easier to follow. Enunciate and slow down. Pause periodically—between main points or sections of speech—so listeners can process the information you are delivering. Check for understanding by inviting question and reiterating your main point(s). Avoid raising your voice as this does not facilitate understanding.
- PPT, handouts and other visual aids are a great way to highlight key points and provide supplemental information for your audience. Reading English text is often easier than deciphering oral speech, given the many varieties of English (with different accents and regionalism) we have in the U.S.
- Turn on the English subtitles when showing a film/video (Note: Subtitles are not the same thing as captions. Captions in YouTube videos and other online sources are frequently computer generated, so transcription accuracy varies greatly. Preview captions before using them).
- Use a microphone so audience members don't have to strain to hear your presentation. Even if you think your voice carries, a microphone will ease listening and information retention.
- Be mindful of your body language as certain gestures (including pointing or motioning to get someone's attention) can signal different meanings cross-culturally and could be offensive. [American Hand Gestures in Different Cultures](#)
- Be prepared to explain or translate common cultural expressions, as [metaphors and idioms](#) can be confusing for foreign audiences (*common ground, comfort zone, hit the books, from the get-go, out of the box, miss the boat, music to my ears*, etc.)
- Choose your language carefully. Be mindful of double meanings and note that common American expressions aren't necessarily understood by English speakers from other parts of the world.
- Both humor and rhetorical questions can be challenging to grasp for non-native speakers, as the intended pun or message is often subtle and culturally specific. Explain the joke/ pun/context for cultural outsiders.
- Be explicit when explaining program and resource offerings. Forums such as "round-table," "open mic-night," or "coffee talk" may require a description or additional context when promoting to international students.

RESOURCES LINKS:

- Examples of Jargon: <http://examples.yourdictionary.com/examples-of-jargon.html>
- American hand gestures: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OWFPHW7BCCI>
- 20 common idioms: <http://www.englishforums.com/content/lessons/20-most-common-idioms-in-english-and-what-they-mean.htm>