

2023-2024

OEPP ANNUAL REPORT



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Executive Summary

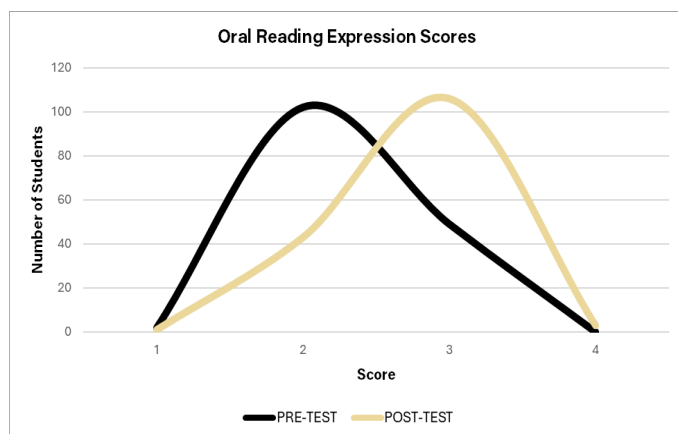
The OEPP is responsible for certifying the oral English proficiency of international graduate students who are not first-language speakers of English and who have been identified by their departments as prospective teaching assistants. The program meets this responsibility in three ways: (1) by administering the Oral English Proficiency Test; (2) by offering English 620 "Classroom Communication in ESL for International Teaching Assistants" to help students improve their language skills and achieve certification; and (3) by reviewing the certification status of all international graduate students serving as teaching assistants.

Activity Highlights from 2023/24

- Oral English Proficiency Tests: 677
- Student Enrollment in English 620: 181
- Undergraduate Volunteers: 1,483
- Volunteer Hours: 2,469
- Compliance Documentations: 2,914

Student Success in English 620

Students in English 620 complete an in-class assessment at the beginning and end of the semester. As the graph makes plain, the course helped students enrolled in 2023/24 greatly improve their spoken English.



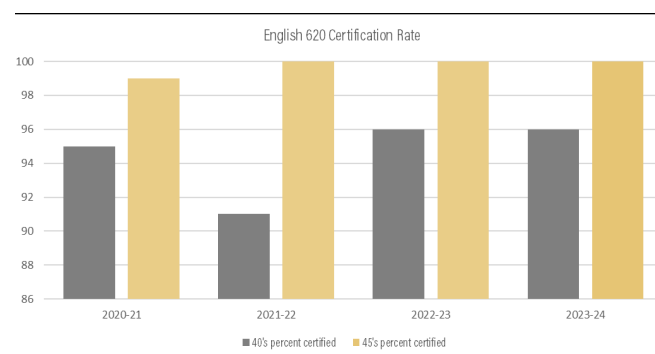
Curricular and Instructional Success in English 620

As the data from CIE Course Evaluations clearly show, students in English 620 consistently find the course and instructors to be highly effective.

- Response Rate: 98.3%
- Average Score: >4.9 (out of 5.0)

English 620 Certification Rate

As is evident in the graph, students in English 620 continue to meet the criteria for certification at very high rates by the end of the course.



Oral English Proficiency Test Statistics

- Pass Rate: 61%
- Spearman Interrater Reliability: .72
- Interrater Exact Agreement: 57%

Looking Back and Looking Forward: The OEPP continues to see increasing demand for its services. Spring 2024 saw a record number of international teaching assistants (ITAs), and the OEPP reviewed compliance with Purdue policy for more than 1500 TA positions on the West Lafayette campus. The OEPP continues to work with departments to ensure ITAs have the language skills to be successful in their own classrooms. Virtual testing will be offered in the summer of 2024 and will allow the OEPP to meet the increasing demand while allowing maximum flexibility for departments and students.

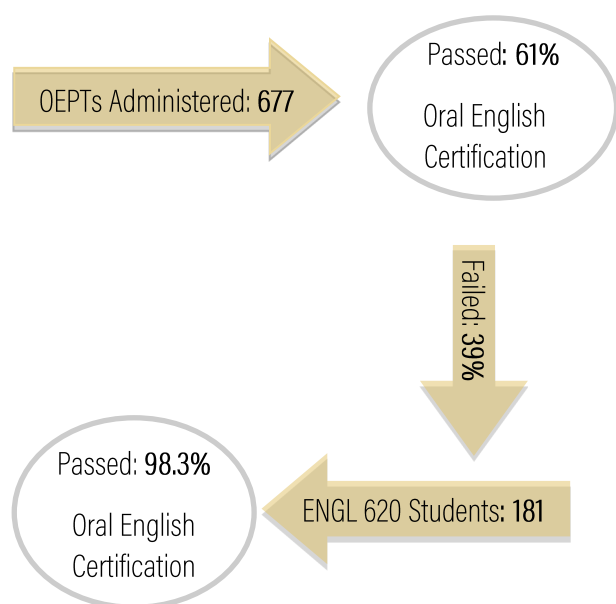
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OEPP in Brief

The Oral English Proficiency Test (OEPT)

In 2023/24, the OEPP tested 677 students. In most cases, prospective TAs take the OEPT when their scores on standardized tests like the TOEFL fall below the University's established cut-offs for certification. The OEPT is specifically designed to determine whether non-native speakers of English have the necessary proficiency to communicate successfully in an instructional role with undergraduates, so the eight-item test focuses on instructional scenarios that TAs commonly encounter. A built-for-purpose online platform delivers the items and records the voice of test-takers as they speak, and at least 2 raters assess each student's performance. Upon hire, raters complete a 25-hour training, and they then complete 3 hours of calibration activities per month. For most of the year, scores on the OEPT are delivered to departments in less than one week.

Figure 1: OEPT Testing and ENGL 620 Statistics for 2023/24



Liaison Outreach

Each department at Purdue appoints a liaison to the OEPP. In 2022/23, the OEPP started hosting Liaison Meetings to improve communication of procedures and practices related to ITA verification, test registration, and enrollment in English 620. This year, Mark Haugen, April Fidler and Rochelle Hines hosted liaison meetings in both the fall and spring semester.

ITA Verification

The OEPP is charged with ITA Verification, or documenting compliance with Purdue's policy on oral English proficiency for international graduate students serving as TAs. In short, the policy requires that adequate English proficiency be demonstrated before international graduate students who speak English as a second language are assigned duties involving direct instruction of students.

The ITA Verification process begins when the OEPP makes a request to Human Resources for a list of all international graduate students who are classified as TAs for a current semester. The list typically contains 1,200 such students, and the Spring 2024 list contained more than 1,500! The OEPP uses Banner, SLATE, and the OEPT platform to determine whether students have demonstrated the requisite proficiency. A Teaching Assistantship is documented as compliant when the assigned TA has a TOEFL speaking score of at least 27, an IELTS speaking score of at least 8.0, or an OEPT score of at least 50, or when the TA has achieved certification in English 620. In all other cases, the OEPP works with liaisons to identify whether the TA duties involve direct instruction, and, as necessary, to register the assigned TA to take the OEPT and/or English 620.

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ITA Verification (Continued)

Teaching Assistantships are ultimately considered out of compliance when a TA in question has not demonstrated adequate proficiency or when a hiring department does not respond to repeated requests for information.

As Table 1 shows, few Teaching Assistantships are out of compliance. In general, departments excel at ensuring that international graduate students working as TAs have the necessary language skills for their instructional duties.

Table 1: Number of TAs Out of Compliance by College, Fall 2023 to Spring 2024

COLLEGE	Fall 2023	Spring 2024
Engineering	2	3
Science	0	3
Polytechnic	0	0
Vet Sciences	0	0
DSB	0	0
Liberal Arts	1	6
Education	0	0
Others	0	8

English 620, Language Improvement, and Certification

As we saw in the Executive Summary, students in English 620 evaluated their instructors very favorably in 2023/24. Likewise, we saw that our in-class assessments at the beginning and end of the semester provide evidence that these students made meaningful gains in their language skills. Correspondingly, 100% of the students who entered English 620 with a score of 45 on

the OEPT ended up meeting the criteria for certification by the end of the semester, and 96% of the students with a score of 40 on the OEPT did so. In 2023/24, only three students had to repeat English 620 and all three ended up meeting the criteria for certification. The highest enrollment numbers in English 620 in 2023/24 came from the College of Science (45%), followed by the College of Engineering (29%).

CIE Course and Instructor Evaluations

As in previous years, students in English 620 gave high scores to the course and their instructors on CIE evaluations. Over 98.3% of students completed their evaluations, and the average rating (out of 5.0) for all instructors was above 4.9! These incredible evaluation scores showcase the commitment to excellence that OEPP instructors bring to the classroom.

Representative Student Comments from CIE Evaluations in 2023/24

"The class was truly exceptional. The lectures were not only informative but also provided an opportunity for us to delve into and discuss the topics in-depth. Kyle's receptiveness and consistently positive attitude added immensely to the overall experience; he was exceptionally kind and considerate towards us throughout the course."

"Your teaching style is truly exceptional and inspiring. The way you effortlessly break down complex concepts into understandable parts and engage us in active learning is remarkable. Your passion for the subject matter shines through in every lesson, making it not just informative but also enjoyable."

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End-of-Semester Reflections

The OEPP is committed to helping students become autonomous learners, so students are guided to evaluate their abilities and make a plan for improvement after each major assignment. They also reflect at the end of the semester in response to the following prompt:

How has your English developed and improved this semester? Please be as specific as possible. Please also comment on how you intend to continue to develop your English skills and strategies going forward.

Representative Student Reflections from 2023/24:

"My progress from Presentation 1 to Presentation 4 has been quite remarkable. In the initial presentation, I struggled with fluency, and my pronunciation is not that clear especially for some vowels and stress. However, by the time I reached Presentation 4, I could see significant improvements. My fluency had notably improved, and I felt much more comfortable and confident in expressing my content and ideas. Most importantly, I had worked to improve my pronunciation, resulting in clearer and more accurate pronunciation of words."

"Throughout this course, our emphasis has been on effectively conveying information in front of an audience. As a TA, I spend a significant amount of time speaking in front of students. Consequently, skills such as making eye contact, organizing thought groups, and using effective phrases have contributed to my ability to communicate effectively with the students I am assisting. Especially when comparing to the early weeks of this semester when I hadn't learned anything about those skills, I have noticed recently that students seldom ask me for clarification during office hours."

Volunteer Program



Volunteer of the Year Terrence Omar Ducksworth with OEPP Director Mark Haugen and Senior Lecturer Beth Lageveen. Terrence spent a total of 85 hours volunteering for the OEPP!

Undergraduates make important contributions to preparing students in English 620 to be highly-effective TAs. On presentation days, the undergraduates participate in mini-lessons taught by students in English 620 and they provide written feedback. On roundtable days, they share their ideas and experiences with English 620 students about living and learning at Purdue. In 2023/24, 1,483 unique undergraduate volunteers spent a combined total of 2,469 hours volunteering in the OEPP.

The OEPP issues Intercultural Communication Partner Certificates to volunteers that give more than 10 hours of their time to volunteering in the OEPP. In 2023/24, the OEPP awarded certificates to 87 volunteers.

In 2023/24, the OEPP Volunteer of the Year was Terrence Omar Ducksworth, a senior in the College of Pharmacy.

We are endlessly grateful to our volunteers and to the individuals and organizations across the university that help us get the word out about the opportunity to volunteer in the OEPP!

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Data Digest

Oral English Proficiency Testing

In 2023/24, the OEPP administered the Oral English Proficiency Test (OEPT) 677 times: 488 times in-person during the academic year, and 189 times virtually during the summer. For virtual OEPTs, the OEPP continued to use ProctorU, a commercial service that relies on a combination of artificial intelligence and humans for invigilation. Departments have appreciated that virtual testing allows students to take the OEPT from anywhere, even before they come to the U.S. ProctorU charges \$10 per test, and the OEPP has so far been paying the fee from its own budget. Additionally, the OEPT platform continues to work smoothly, but test-takers occasionally encounter technical issues on their end.

Retests are offered in several circumstances. Students scoring a 45 on the OEPT are allowed to retest after six months, and students scoring lower may retest after one year. Naturally, retests are also available in extenuating circumstances, e.g, severe technical issues and illness.

As Figure 2 shows, testing volume has increased considerably over time, requiring greater resources from staff. We can also see that test volume in the week prior to the start of the academic year in August has been increasing after a sharp drop during the pandemic.

Figure 2: Number of OEPTs by Year, 2006/07 to 2023/24

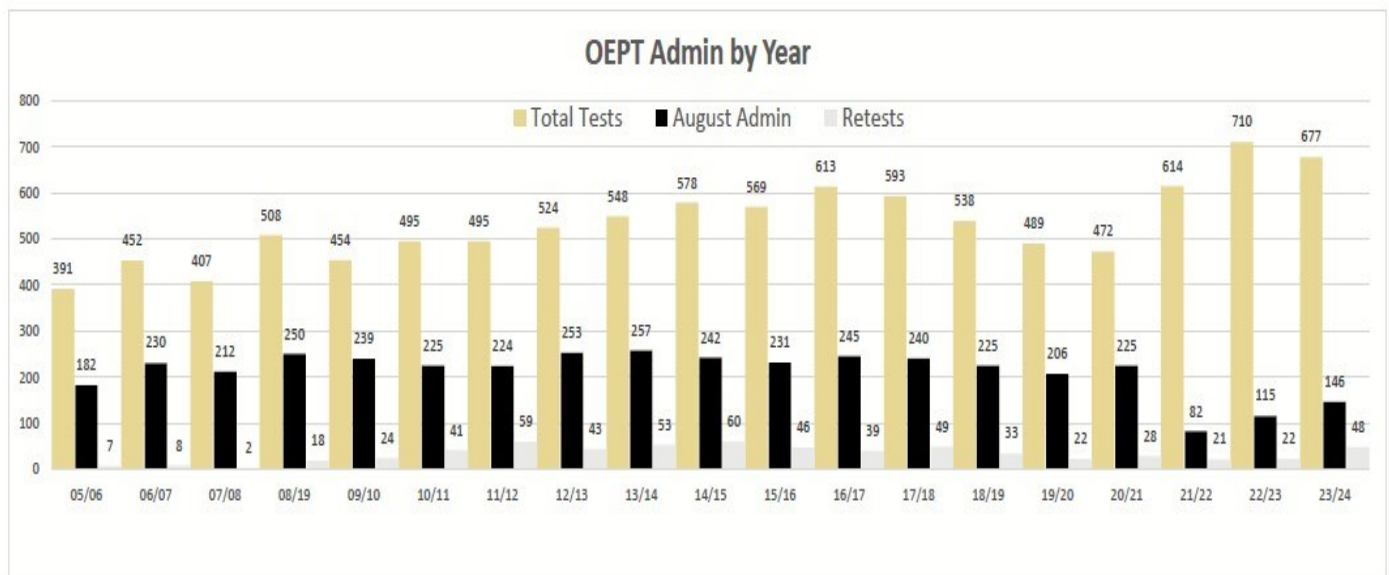


Figure 3 on the next page shows the total number of OEPT examinees alongside the pass and fail rates for the last five years. The pass rate for the OEPT increased slightly between 2022/23 and 2023/24, from 55% to 61%. However, as the historical data shown make clear, small variations of this order of magnitude are fully expected from year to year.

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Figure 3: OEPT Pass Rates, 2018/19 to 2023/24

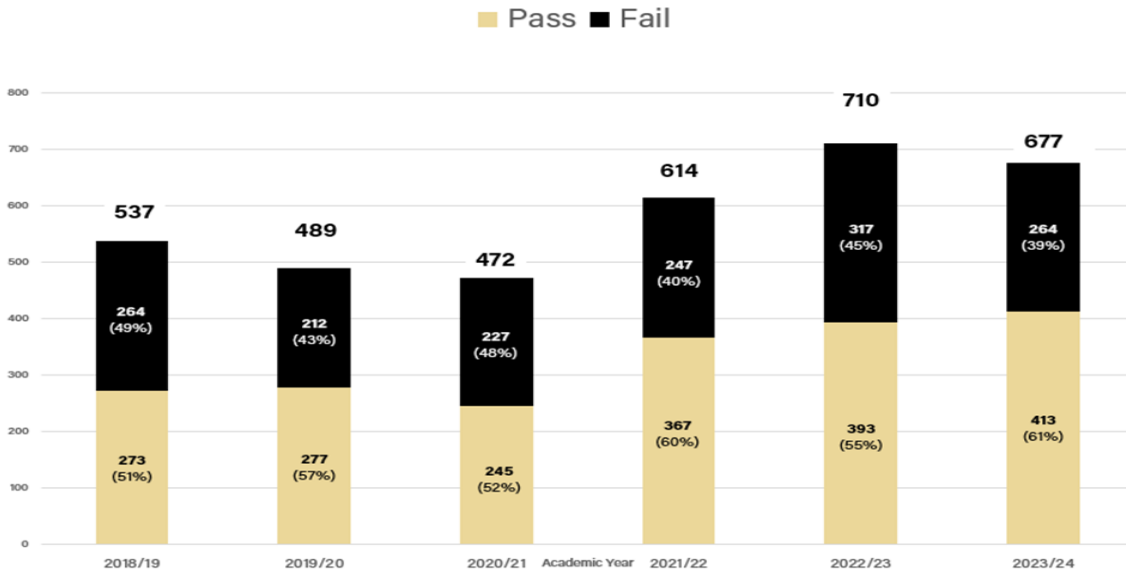
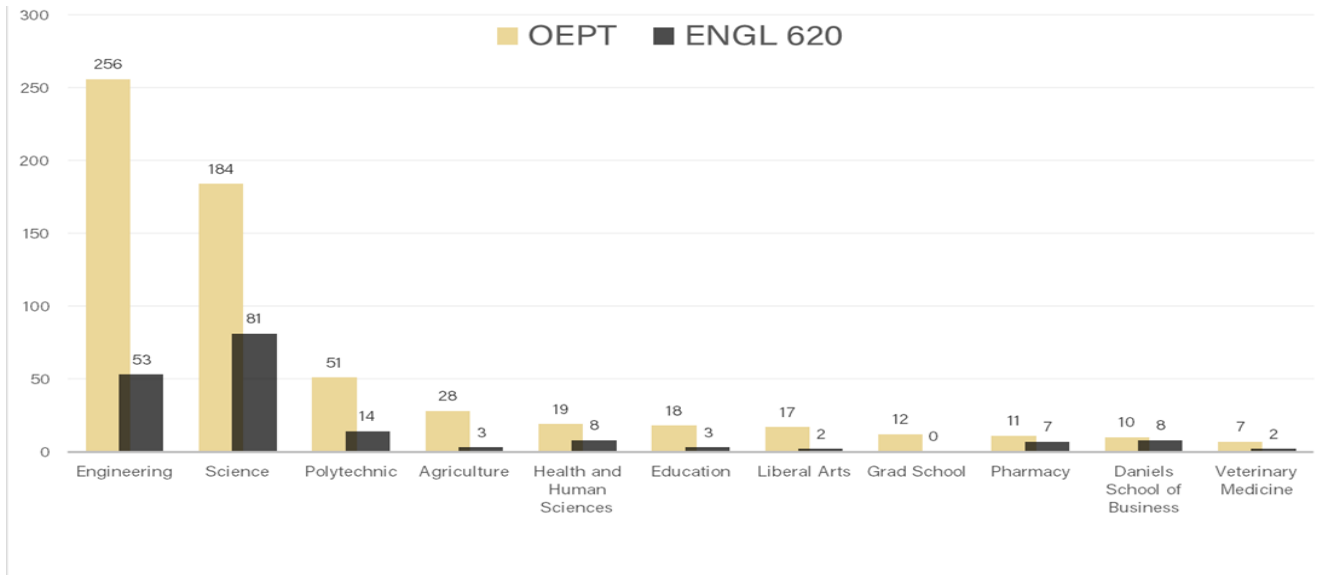


Figure 4 below shows that the OEPP provides testing and instructional services for stakeholders across the University. It also shows that the College of Engineering had the largest number of OEPT examinees (256, or 38%) and the second largest number of ENGL 620 students (53, or 29%) among all the colleges. The College of Science had the second largest number of OEPT examinees (184, or 27%) and largest number of ENGL 620 students (81, or 45%). While the data in the figure come from 2023/24, these trends have been consistent for the last our years.

Figure 4: Summary of Total Annual OEPT Tests and Total Annual English 620 Students by College for 2023/24



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Table 2 below shows the number of Oral English Proficiency Tests administered by month, semester, and year for the past 10 years. As the summer (SU) column indicates, substantial demand for virtual summer testing emerged during the pandemic and has not abated even as the pandemic has waned—it is the new normal. We have also seen increased demand for the OEPT in general. The OEPP administered 677 tests during 2023/24, the second-highest number of tests ever, and only slightly less than the all-time high of 710 in 2022/23.

Table 2: OEPTs by Month, Semester and Year, 2013/14 to 2023/24

Year	May	Jun	Jul	SU	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	FA	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	SP	Total
13/14	0	0	34	34	257	35	29	45	0	366	38	31	37	42	148	548
14/15	0	0	56	56	242	36	27	56	0	361	54	21	38	54	167	584
15/16	0	0	35	35	231	34	39	62	0	366	60	25	35	48	168	569
16/17	0	0	49	49	239	44	44	57	1	385	60	27	39	53	179	613
17/18	0	51	0	51	240	37	40	57	1	375	78	21	33	35	167	593
18/19	1	0	29	30	225	35	40	58	0	358	64	28	26	32	150	538
19/20	0	0	43	43	206	32	40	53	0	331	70	15	30	0	115	489
20/21	0	0	128	128	97	23	22	50	0	192	68	35	18	31	152	472
21/22	0	107	105	212	82	26	47	48	0	203	68	23	50	58	199	614
22/23	49	113	50	212	115	28	62	65	0	270	74	35	56	63	228	710
23/24	24	108	57	189	146	41	55	57	0	299	71	42	49	27	189	677

Oral English Proficiency Testing by College and Department

Table 3 on the next page shows for selected departments the percentage of test-takers that earn a score of 50 or 55 on the OEPT, thereby meeting the criteria for certification. As the data make clear, the rates vary across various factors. For instance, the percentage of students earning scores of 50 or 55 has been increasing noticeably in the College of Engineering in general. At the same time some trends can be discerned, we highlight that context must be taken into account when considering the data. For instance, few students from Math take the OEPT, so the percentages are not necessarily as informative as they are for units that send larger numbers of students to take the test. Likewise, Math has administered its own route to certification since before the OEPP was created, so only students who fail to meet their internal criteria are sent to take the OEPT.

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Table 3: Certification by OEPT by Department, 2021/22 to 2023/24

Academic Year	2021/22			2022/23			2023/24		
College/Dept	N	N Cert	% Cert	N	N Cert	% Cert	N	N Cert	% Cert
Engineering	271	167	62%	274	175	64%	256	176	69%
AAE	11	9	82%	20	15	75%	23	15	65%
CE	49	29	59%	35	16	46%	33	24	73%
CHE	16	6	38%	20	9	45%	21	15	71%
ECE	91	62	68%	94	65	69%	84	56	67%
IE	12	9	75%	32	24	75%	22	16	73%
ME	68	43	63%	37	27	73%	41	26	63%
MSE	11	7	64%	23	15	65%	16	12	75%
Science	175	113	65%	210	106	50%	202	124	61%
CHEM	13	11	85%	11	6	55%	56	38	68%
CS	105	71	68%	137	73	53%	90	57	63%
MA	4	1	25%	3	1	33%	8	1	25%
PHYS	30	16	53%	12	6	50%	4	9	50%
STAT	5	2	40%	24	8	33%	18	8	44%
Technology	34	20	59%	81	44	54%	65	35	54%
CGT	15	12	80%	14	9	64%	18	12	67%
SOET	8	3	38%	17	8	47%	13	9	69%
Grad School	12	6	50%	17	11	65%	21	16	70%
PULSE	12	6	50%	16	10	63%	21	14	67%
Liberal Arts	14	7	50%	13	8	62%	13	9	64%
VPA-AD	7	2	29%	5	3	60%	3	1	33%

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Oral English Proficiency Testing by Country and Region of Examinees

Table 4 below shows OEPT examinees by region and home country. As in the previous two years, the majority of OEPT examinees in 2023/24 were from East Asia (46%), followed by South Asia (35%).

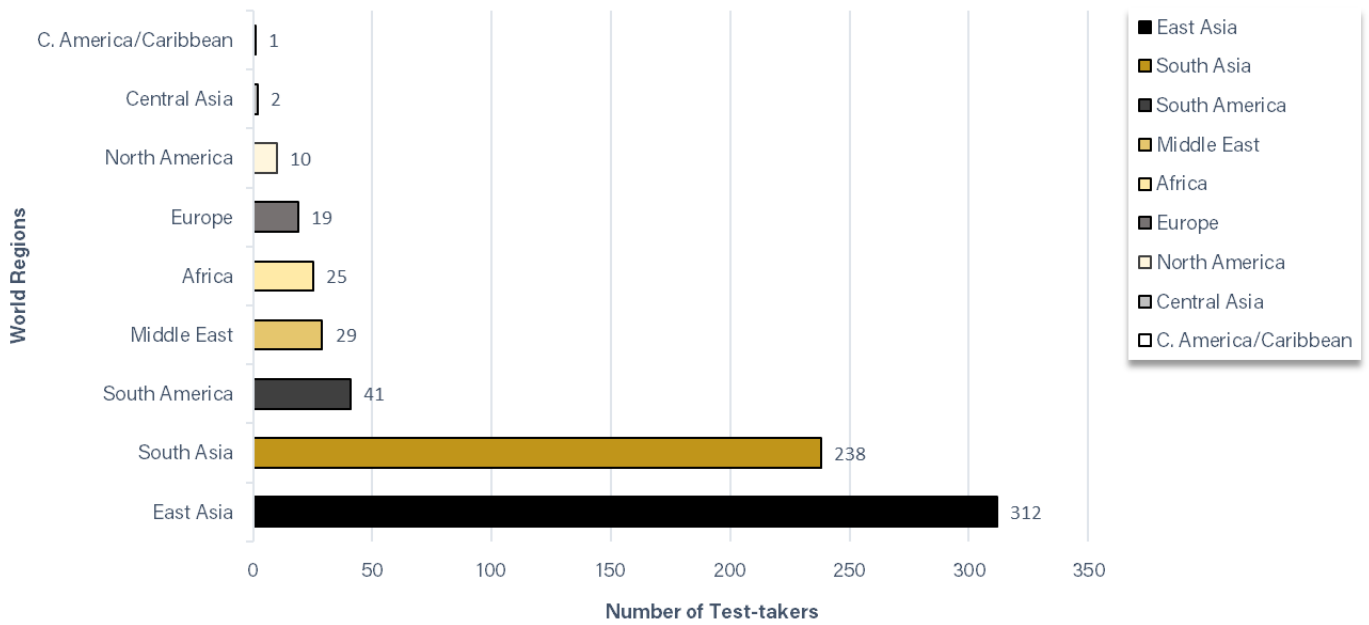
Table 4: OEPTs by Examinee Region and Country of Origin, 2021/22 to 2023/24

Region	2021/22		2022/2023		2023/24	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
East Asia	286	47%	326	46%	312	46%
China	207	34%	231	33%	248	37%
South Korea	55	9%	55	8%	38	6%
Taiwan	22	4%	29	4%	18	3%
Vietnam	1	<1%	3	<1%	3	<1%
All others	1	<1%	8	1%	5	1%
South Asia	249	41%	273	38%	238	35%
India	197	32%	220	31%	179	26%
Bangladesh	17	3%	19	3%	27	4%
All others	35	6%	34	5%	32	5%
Europe	15	2%	27	4%	19	3%
Turkey	4	1%	10	1%	10	1%
All others	11	2%	17	2%	9	1%
S. America	24	4%	27	4%	41	6%
Colombia	13	2%	19	3%	29	4%
Brazil	4	1%	6	1%	8	1%
All others	7	1%	2	<1%	4	1%
N. America	4	1%	10	1%	10	1%
Mexico	4	1%	5	1%	5	1%
US and Canada	0	0%	1	<1%	0	0%
Africa	7	1%	22	3%	25	4%
Egypt	2	<1%	10	1%	12	2%
All others	5	1%	12	2%	13	2%
C. America and Caribbean	8	1%	1	<1%	1	<1%
Middle East	21	3%	23	3%	29	4%
Iran	15	2%	18	3%	21	3%
All others	6	1%	5	1%	8	1%
Central Asia	0	0%	1	<1%	2	<1%
Oceania	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Total	614		710		677	

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Figure 5 shows the number of OEPT examinees by region in 2023/24. Even as 81% of OEPT test-takers come from Asia, a considerable proportion of OEPT test-takers—nearly one in five—comes from elsewhere.

Figure 5: OEPTs by Examinee Region of Origin, 2023/24



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ITA Verification

One important component of the OEPP mission is documenting departmental compliance with the University policy that requires that “any person whose first language is not English, and who holds or is a candidate for appointment as a graduate teaching assistant/instructor, demonstrate adequate English proficiency before being assigned duties involving direct instruction of students.” The OEPP performs this function as described in the “ITA Verification” section of “The OEPP in Brief” (pp. 5-6). Table 5 on this and the next page shows the number of teaching assistantships in and out of compliance from the Spring 2022 to Spring 2024 semesters.

Table 5: Number of Relevant Teaching Assistantships In or Out of Compliance by School and Department from Spring 2022 to Spring 2024

School/Department	SP 2022		FA 2022		SP 2023		FA 2023		SP 2024	
	IN	OUT	IN	OUT	IN	OUT	IN	OUT	IN	OUT
ENGINEERING										
AAE	27	4	30	3	49	0	54	0	59	0
ABE	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
BME	14	0	11	0	20	0	13	0	20	0
CE	86	9	38	1	41	0	37	0	40	0
CEM	4	0	5	0	5	0	9	0	6	0
CHE	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	113	0
ECE	88	5	74	12	125	1	109	0	123	0
EEE	12	1	3	0	2	0	5	0	2	0
ENE/FYE	3	0	15	0	11	0	13	0	15	0
EPICS	3	3	4	4	7	2	7	2	6	3
IE	19	9	31	0	40	0	37	0	44	0
ME	98	5	88	8	97	1	118	0	92	0
MSE	13	0	10	0	8	0	12	0	9	0
NUCL	1	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	2	0
OPP	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	0
SCIENCE										
BIOL	35	10	51	0	50	2	64	0	56	1
CHM	88	4	61	0	72	3	75	0	87	2
CS	147	0	200	0	185	0	170	0	191	0
EAPS	5	1	10	0	14	0	13	0	18	0
MA	52	0	46	0	59	0	60	0	60	0
PHYS	70	0	65	0	63	0	49	0	66	0
STAT	52	0	49	1	49	0	51	0	61	0

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Table 5—Continued: Number of International Teaching Assistantships In or Out of Compliance by School and Department from Spring 2022 to Spring 2024

School/ Department	SP 2022		FA 2022		SP 2023		FA 2023		SP 2024	
	IN	OUT	IN	OUT	IN	OUT	IN	OUT	IN	OUT
TECHNOLOGY										
AT	7	1	6	0	6	0	7	0	0	0
BCMT	13	0	17	0	15	0	20	0	22	0
CGT	19	2	46	1	22	0	15	0	17	0
CIT	21	3	0	0	34	0	35	0	37	0
SOET	13	3	0	0	22	0	31	0	33	0
TECH	0	0	16	0	0	0	2	0	10	0
TLI	2	1	5	2	2	0	1	0	2	0
OTHER SCHOOLS										
LIBERAL ARTS	76	12	59	2	77	1	66	1	72	6
AGRICULTURE	25	4	24	6	43	0	112	0	81	3
DSB	12	0	0	0	0	0	54	0	69	0
HEALTH & HUMAN SCIENCES	44	2	64	1	52	0	46	0	53	0
EDUCATION	22	3	29	0	35	0	34	0	39	0
PHARMACY	19	3	25	0	29	0	25	0	23	5
VETERINARY SCIENCES	2	0	3	0	5	1	6	0	7	0
TOTALS	1,096	85	1,085	41	1,241	11	1,353	3	1,537	20

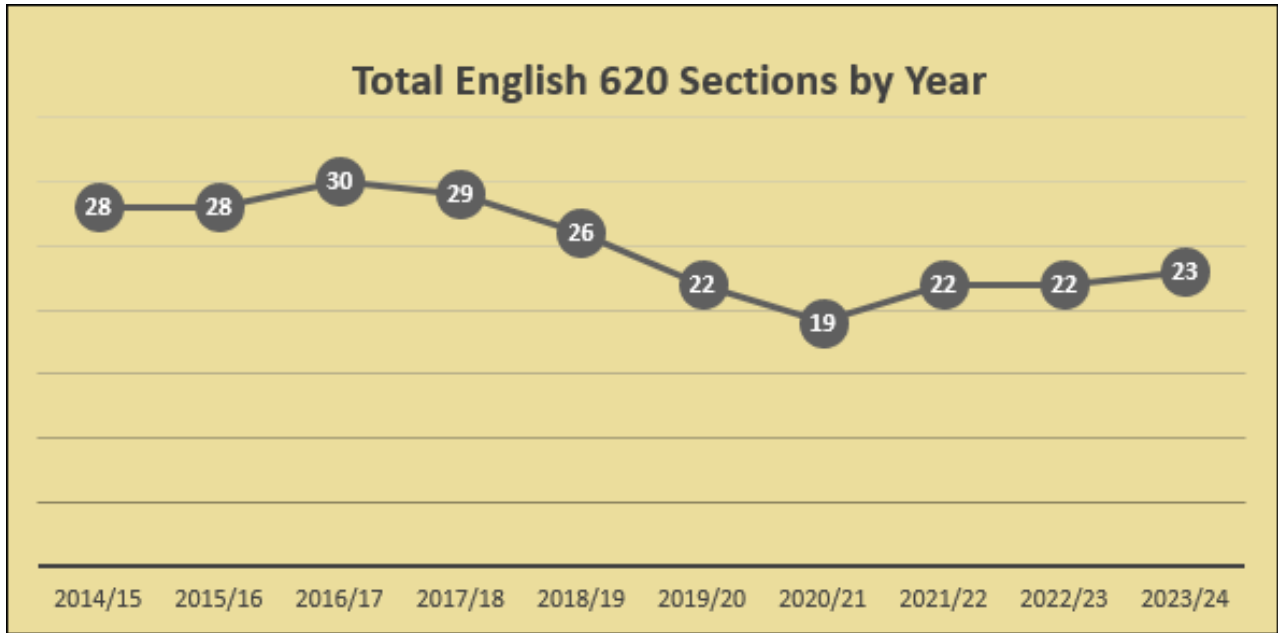
As Table 5 indicates, the number of Teaching Assistantships on Purdue’s West Lafayette campus has been increasing significantly in recent years, and therefore so has the amount of resources that the OEPP and departments must put into ITA Verification. At the same time, compliance has substantially improved: In Spring 2022, 7.8% of TA positions were out of compliance, but, in Spring 2024, only 1.3% were, despite the fact that there were 441 more TA positions, a 40% increase. Departments have therefore been excelling at getting their students certified. We are very grateful to the departments and their OEPP liaisons!

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OEPP Instruction: English 620

The OEPP offers English 620 to help students improve their skills so that they can meet the criteria for certification. The number of sections of English 620 that the OEPP has offered from 2014/15 to 2023/24 is shown in Figure 6 below. Overall, the number of sections that the OEPP offers represents a balance between demand for enrollments and OEPP staffing resources. The number of sections has decreased from a high of 30 in 2017/18, in part due to the transition from the use of graduate students from the former Ph.D. program in Second Language Studies as classroom instructors to the use of a professional staff consisting of five Continuing Lecturers. In 2023/24, the OEPP was able to offer 23 sections, due to the willingness and availability of the Director to teach.

Figure 6: Number of ENGL 620 Sections, 2014/15 to 2023/24



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Figure 7 and Table 6 show information about the number of students who end up meeting the criteria for certification by improving their skills in English 620. The data show that students are always very successful in this regard, and 2023/24 is no exception: 100% of the students who entered English 620 with a score of 45 on the OEPT met the criteria for certification by the end of the course, and 96% of the students who entered with a score of 40 on the OEPT did so.

Figure 7: English 620 Certification Rate by OEPT Score, 2020/21 to 2023/24

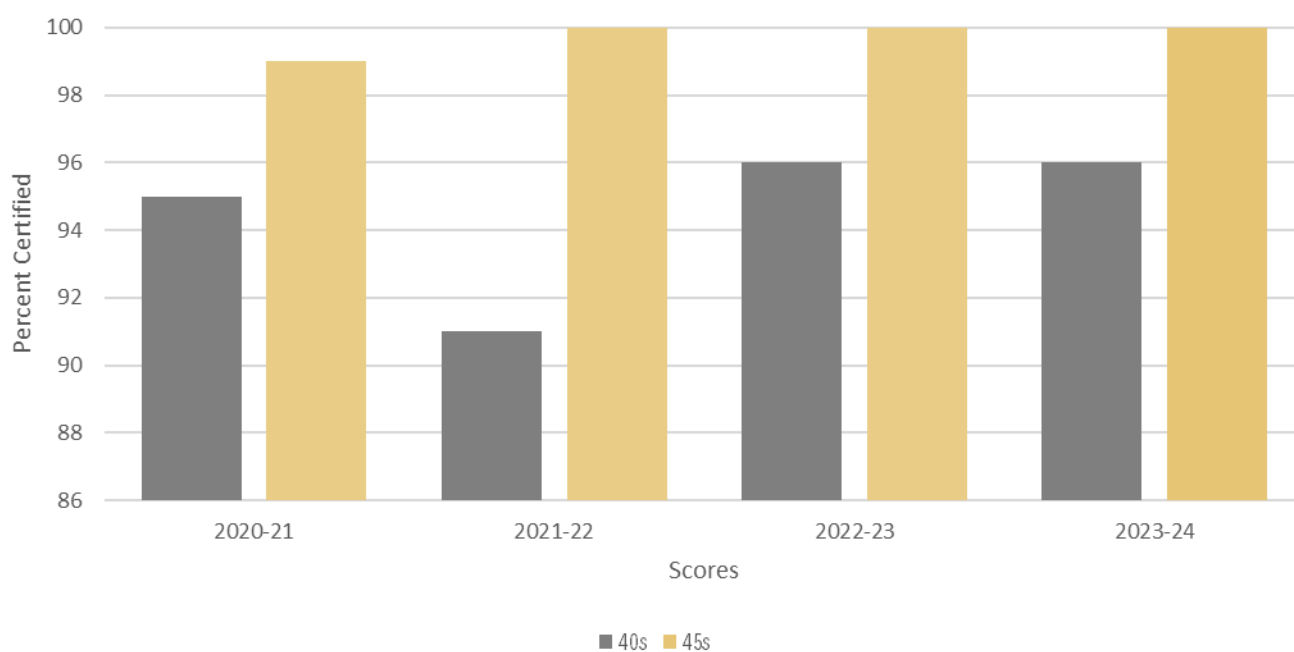


Table 6: English 620 Enrollment and Certifications by OEPT Score, 2023/24

Semester/Year	OEPT Score	Enrolled ENGL 620	Number Certified	Percent Certified
Summer 2023	40s	7	7	100%
	45s	9	9	100%
	Semester Subtotal	16	16	100%
Fall 2023	40s	30	27	90%
	45s	57	57	100%
	Semester Subtotal	87	84	96.6%
Spring 2024	40s	36	36	100%
	45s	42	42	100%
	Semester Subtotal	78	78	100%
TOTAL for 2023/24		181	178	98.3%

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Table 7 shows course enrollments, certification information, and the number of students certified for the Summer 2023, Fall 2023, and Spring 2024 semesters. Although students can take English 620 up to three times, we can see that the vast majority were certified in the first semester of enrollment in English 620 — 175 out of 181 students. Furthermore, we can also see that three students who enrolled in English 620 for a second semester ended up meeting the criteria for certification by the end of the semester. In light of the information discussed previously in this section, it is easy to see that this high degree of student success in 2023/24 is typical.

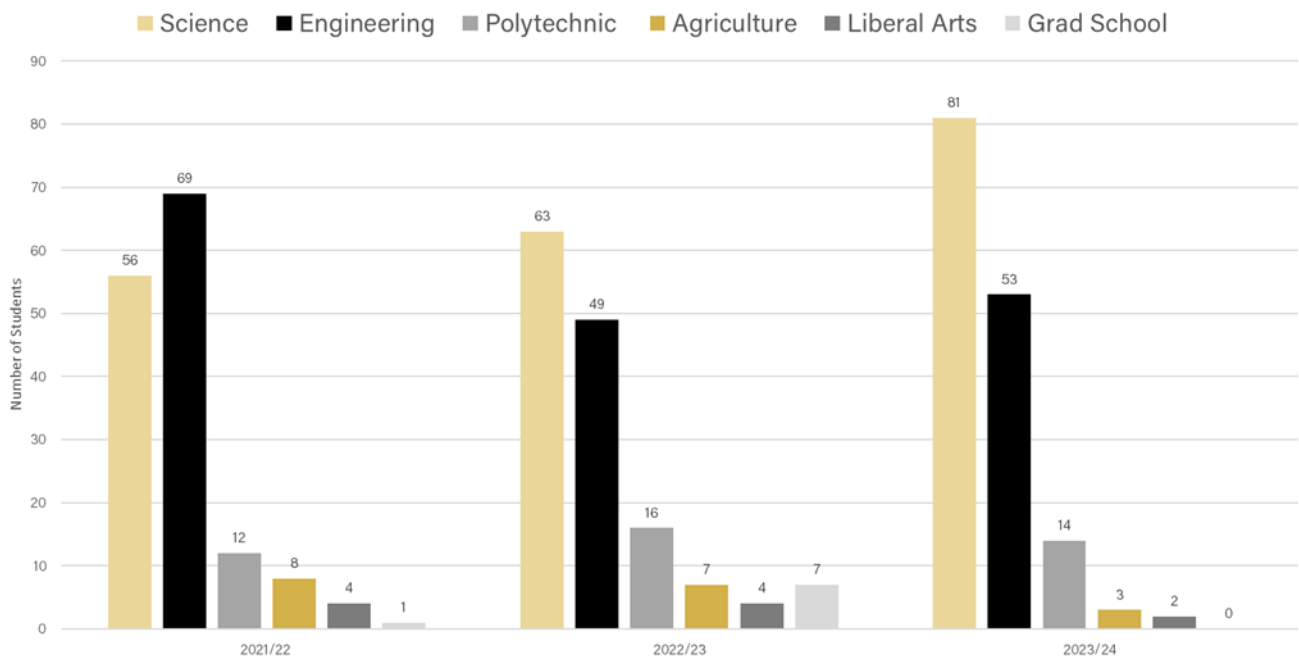
Table 7: ENGL 620 Enrollments and Certifications, 2023/24

Semester	OEPT Score	Total	First-Time Students	Certified	Repeating Students	Certified
Summer 2023	40	7	6	6	1	1
	45	9	9	9	0	N/A
	Semester Subtotal	16	15	15	1	1
Fall 2023	40	30	29	26	1	1
	45	57	57	57	0	N/A
	Semester Subtotal	87	87	83	1	1
Spring 2024	40	36	35	35	1	1
	45	42	42	42	0	N/A
	Semester Subtotal	78	77	77	1	1
TOTALS for 2023/24		181	179	175	3	3

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Figure 4 (p. 9) showed that the College of Engineering and the College of Science have the highest demand for the OEPT. As we saw in Table 3 (p. 11), a fairly high percentage of students are certified by taking the OEPT, e.g., 69% in Engineering. It is therefore unsurprising that these two colleges also have the highest demand for enrollment in English 620. In 2023/24, students from these two colleges accounted for 88% of students in English 620.

Figure 8: English 620 Enrollments by College, 2021/22 to 2023/24



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CIE Evaluations of English 620 and Instructors

Table 8 shows that students in English 620 gave high scores to the course and their instructors on CIE evaluations, continuing the OEPP's record of true excellence in instruction. 178 out of 181 students—98.3%—completed their evaluations, and the average rating out of 5.0 for all instructors was above 4.9. We are very proud of the success of our course and instructional team!

Table 8: Average Scores on CIE Evaluations by Semester and Question, 2023/24

Question	Summer 2023	Fall 2023	Spring 2024
The course is well organized	5.0	5.0	4.8
The assignments aid me in achieving the class objectives	5.0	5.0	4.8
The instructor communicates clearly	5.0	5.0	4.9
The instructor effectively answers students' questions	5.0	5.0	4.9
The instructor seems to care that I learned this material	5.0	5.0	5.0
The instructor makes time to help students	5.0	5.0	4.9
The instructor is fair in evaluating my performance in the course	5.0	5.0	4.9
The instructor created an inclusive learning environment	5.0	5.0	4.9

Sample Qualitative Comments from CIE Evaluations of English 620, 2023/24

"The class was truly exceptional. The lectures were not only informative but also provided an opportunity for us to delve into and discuss the topics in-depth. The instructor's receptiveness and consistently positive attitude added immensely to the overall experience; he was exceptionally kind and considerate towards us throughout the course."

"The instructor is very helpful. She seemed to be very experienced with her teaching and cared a lot about her students. She will make sure that we are making a good amount of progress by having personalized assignments/goals for different students. She is also friendly to her students and encourages them to ask questions about the course. She also helped finding opportunities for her students to practice their English after class."

"I appreciate his friendly and professional demeanor. He is open to students' ideas and provides insightful suggestions and I hope he continues this attitude. Also, he creates a very engaging learning environment in the class."

"I have no suggestions for improving the course. The course is already great!"

"The instructor always tries to help students to perform the best during our presentations, guiding us through step-by-step. The hypothesized conversation is a valuable opportunity for us to see different perspectives."

"Your teaching style is truly exceptional and inspiring. The way you effortlessly break down complex concepts into understandable parts and engage us in active learning is remarkable. Your passion for the subject matter shines through in every lesson, making it not just informative but also enjoyable. I appreciate how patient and encouraging you are, always willing to answer our questions and provide guidance. Your dedication to our learning is evident, and it motivates me to strive for excellence. Thank you for being such an outstanding educator, and for making every class a valuable and enriching experience."

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Sample Qualitative Comments from Students on Reflection Assignment in English 620, 2023/24

"The ENGL 6200 course was an excellent opportunity to improve my language skills. I thank Dr. Wright and Ms. Cobb for teaching me this semester, motivating me to focus on improving my language and letting me know my areas of improvement. I noticed a change in my communication throughout the semester and received positive responses from my students and peers. I can successfully interact with others."

"Throughout this course, I have not only gained practical knowledge of various phrases and presentation strategies but also developed a deeper understanding of effective teaching and communication methods."

"One of the most valuable aspects of this course was the focus on teaching and communication skills. Learning how to effectively communicate with students and deliver information in an engaging manner has been an eye-opening experience."

"The idea of enrolling and having to take an English Language Proficiency class at Purdue is one that never crossed my mind... but taking this course gave me a rare opportunity to advance my English language and oral presentation skills by granting me the privilege of listening to myself speak, through recorded sessions and presentations. This helped me observe seemingly salient issues such as organization, speed, pauses, and pronunciation of certain letters that affected overall intelligibility."

"If I had to sum up my opinion about this course in one sentence: My English speaking skills have definitely improved."

"The pronunciation drills we did were a game changer for me. Initially, there were so many words that tripped me up—words I'd avoid in conversations at all costs. Now, I can tackle them head-on, and even if I stumble, I notice the slip-up immediately and correct it on the fly."

"ENGL 620 has been more than just a series of presentations; it has been a transformative experience that has expanded my capabilities as an international teaching assistant. The lessons learned extend beyond the classroom, shaping how I will communicate in academic and professional settings going forward. I move ahead with a set of refined skills, a clearer voice, and an unwavering commitment to excellence in education. I salute the instructor Rick and tutor Caroline for the excellent work. Keep up the good work!"

"To be honest, before I took this course, I found it challenging to communicate with native English speakers, often struggling to understand what they were saying, not only with fellow students but also my professors (especially those with accents). This was incredibly stressful! However, after taking this course, not only has my speaking improved, but my listening skills have also significantly enhanced. I can now almost fully understand what they say and engage effectively in discussions and answer questions. This has undoubtedly increased the efficiency of both my TA/RA work and my studies."

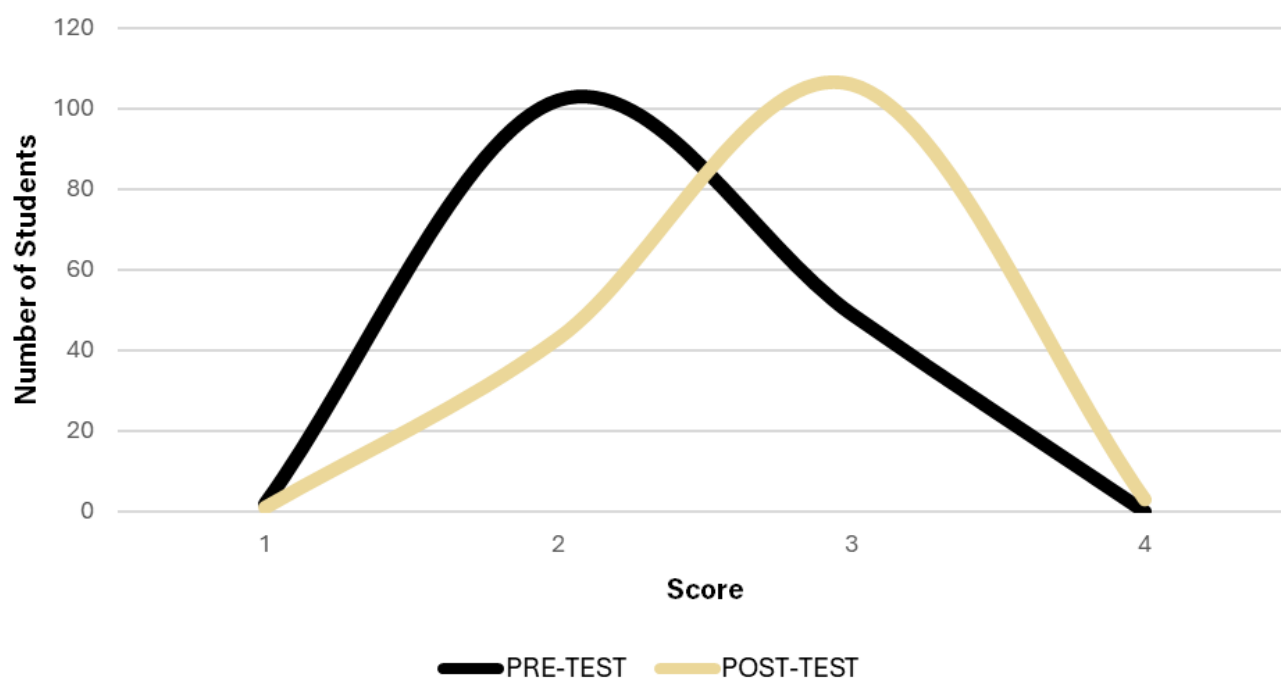
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Quantitative Evidence of Student Improvement

In English 620, students primarily work on improving their language skills, and a meaningful amount of instructional attention is also given to developing general communication, presentation, teaching and professional skills. Students demonstrate that their growth has allowed them to meet the criteria for certification in presentations, essentially micro-teaching opportunities. Additionally, students complete a pre-test and a post-test at the beginning and end of the semester, respectively. As part of those tests, each student reads a passage aloud, and their speech is then assigned scores for Expression, Accuracy, and Rate. Expression refers to how smooth or choppy the speech sounds. In linguistic terms, it is the suprasegmental aspects of the speech—the prosody, rhythm and intonation. Accuracy refers to intelligibility—that is, whether a listener can easily understand the words that the speaker says. Finally, Rate refers to fluency; it is measured in words-per-minute. For 2023/24, we report the data from 153 students—Due to technical issues, data from 28 students is not available. Figures 7-9 show student improvement from the pre-test to the post-test on each of the mentioned measures.

Appropriate expression is an important instructional focus in English 620: Most non-native speakers never get the opportunity to learn about the features of smooth speech, but it is critically important, as listeners tend to find choppy speech difficult. Figure 9 shows that students substantially improved their expression during their time in English 620. A score of 3 indicates appropriately smooth expression, and 57 more students demonstrated this level of proficiency on the post-test than on the pre-test. 3 students even demonstrated excellent expression on the post-test, whereas none did on the pre-test. It is clear then that the Purdue students that these TA serve will find it meaningfully easier to work with them.

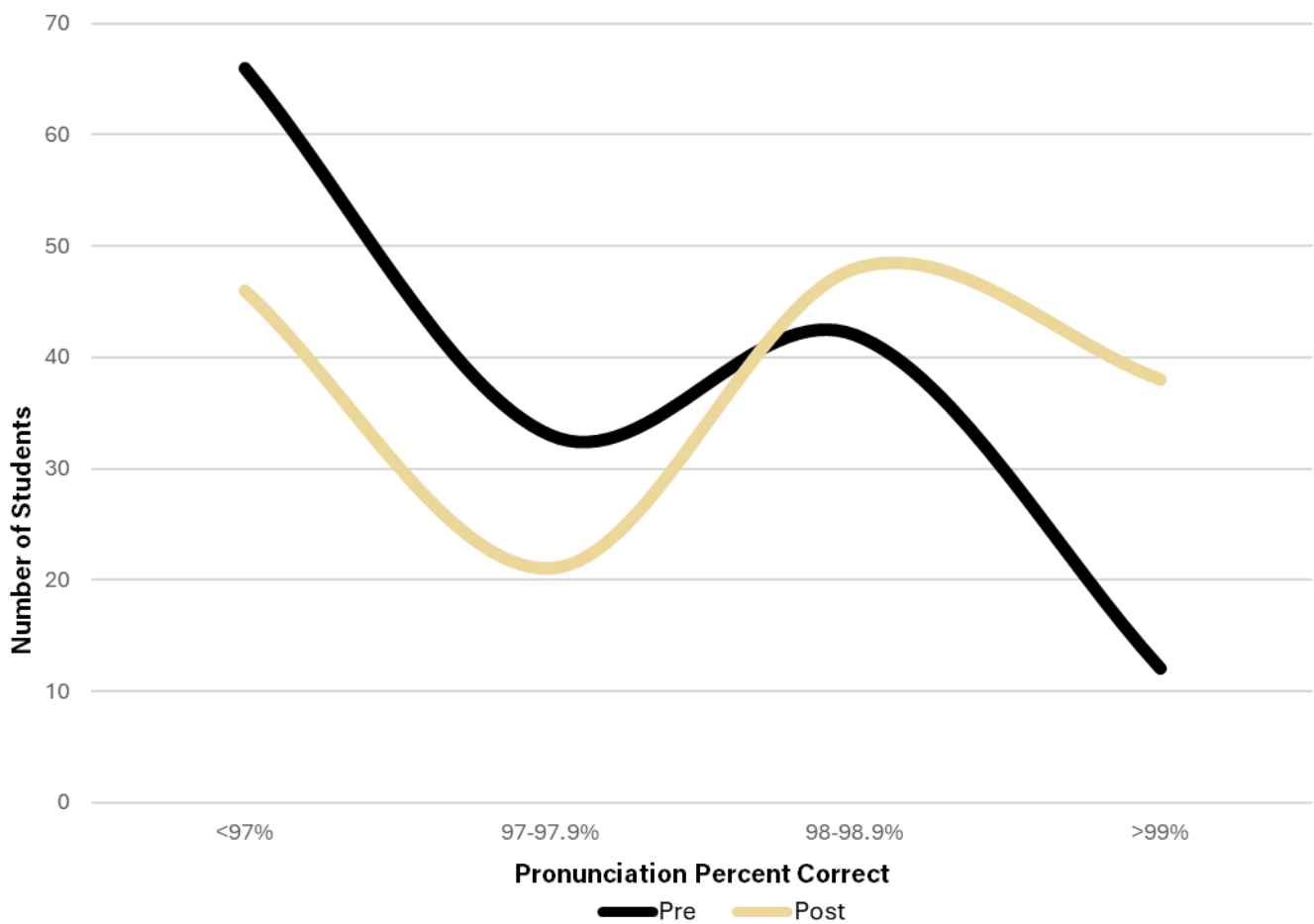
Figure 9: 2023/24 Oral Reading Expression Scores



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Intelligibility, or the ability for a listener to be able to easily understand the words that a speaker says, is paramount for TAs and professionals. Figure 10 shows the percentage of words that students read aloud intelligibly on the pre-test and post-test. Generally, 98% correct is necessary for comprehension, and it is easy to see that the majority of students met this threshold by the end of English 620. Indeed, the post-test showed a more than 60% increase in the number of students who spoke intelligibly in comparison to the pre-test.

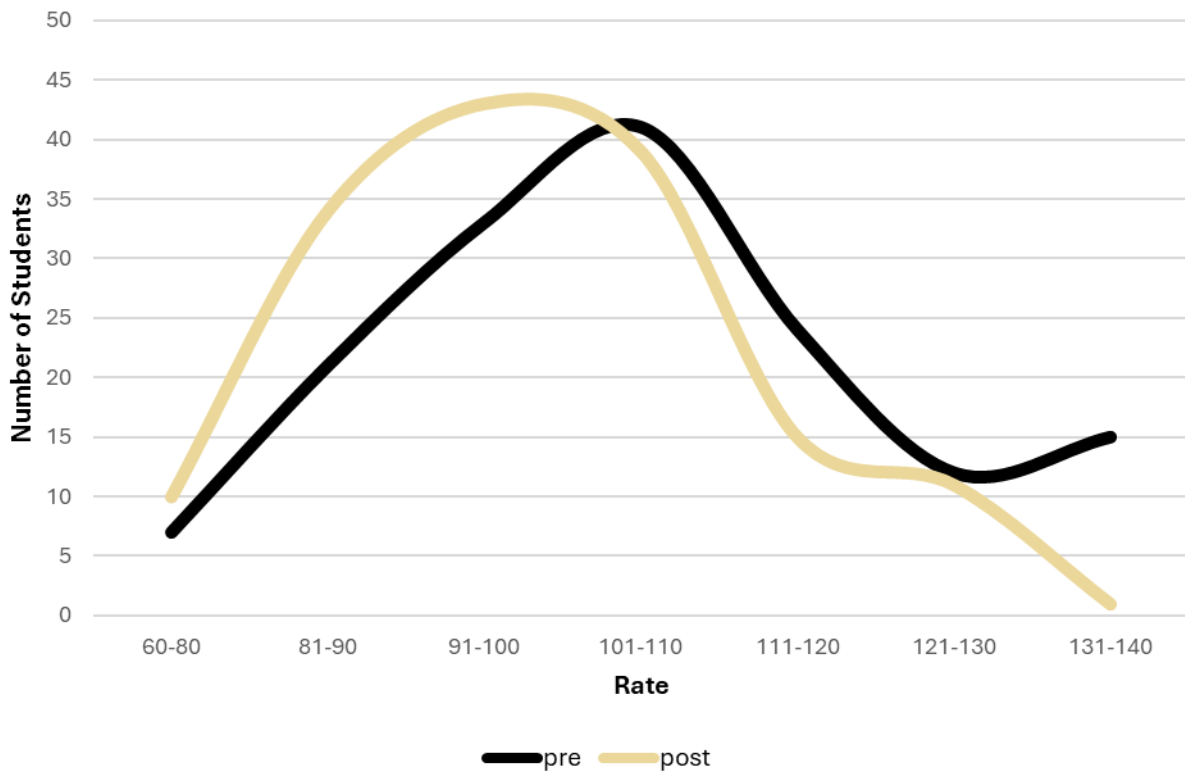
Figure 10: 2023/24 Oral Reading Accuracy



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Figure 11 illustrates the improvement that students made in their fluency, as measured in words-per-minute (WPM). Ideally, non-native speakers would read at 100+ words per minute (WPM) while maintaining strong intelligibility and expression. However, students in English 620 must often strike a balance, guided by their instructors. For instance, students in English 620 occasionally speak too quickly, so their words become slurred and their expression flat. In these cases, students are easier to understand when they slow down, leading to clearer enunciation and smoother speech.

Figure 11: 2023/24 Oral Reading Rate



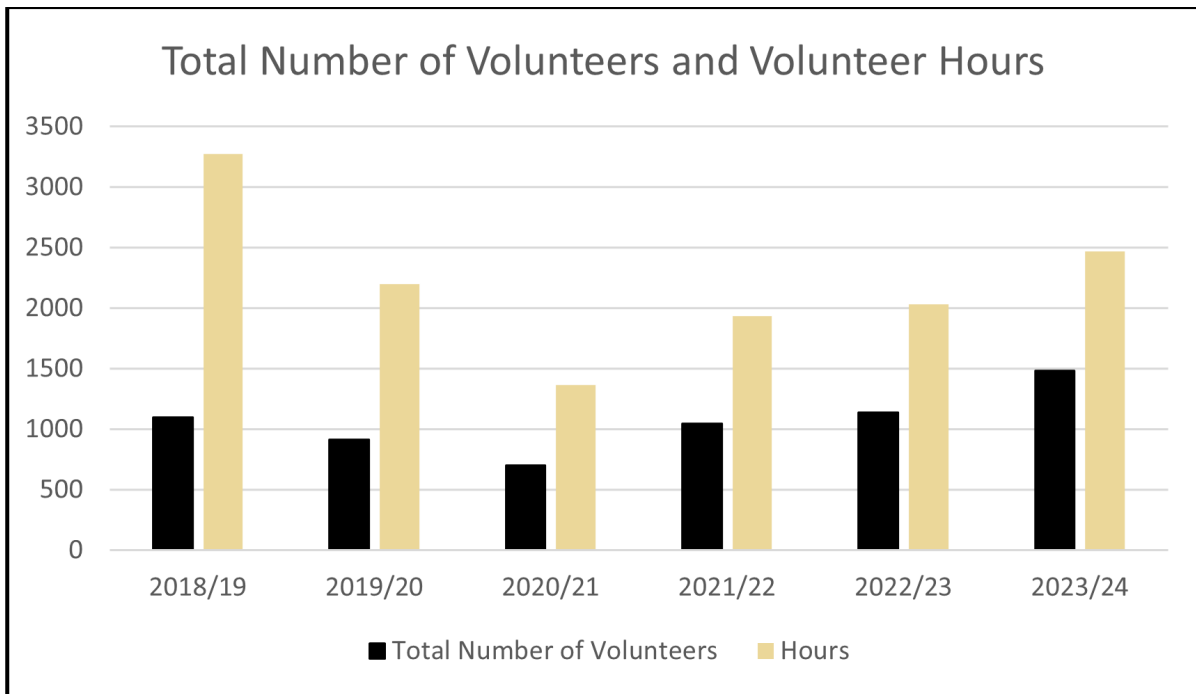
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Volunteer Program

The OEPP benefits greatly from the participation of undergraduate volunteers in multiple types of activities in English 620. On presentation days, they participate in the mini-lessons that students in English 620 teach. They also provide written feedback. During roundtables, the volunteers share their experiences from their time here at Purdue to help students in English 620 understand the cultural aspects of undergraduate education in the United States in general and at Purdue in particular.

Figure 12 below shows that the number of volunteers has been rebounding as the pandemic has waned. In 2023/24 we had over 1,483 unique volunteers, and they volunteered for a total of more than 2,469 hours. The OEPP also offers an *Intercultural Communication Partner Certificate* for those that volunteer for more than 10 hours. In 2023/24 the OEPP awarded a record 87 *Intercultural Communication Partner Certificates*. Our OEPP Volunteer of the Year, Terrence Omar Ducksworth, spent 85 hours volunteering for the OEPP. We are so thankful for our generous volunteers!

Figure 12: Total Number of Volunteers and Volunteer Hours, 2018/19 to 2023/24



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Table 9 below shows the number of individual volunteers and total volunteer hours for the last three years. Although the numbers dropped somewhat during the pandemic, they have been increasing ever since. The growth can be attributed to the work of our indefatigable Senior Lecturer Beth Lageveen, who continues to engage extensively with the campus community to get the word out about the opportunities to volunteer.

Table 9: Number of Undergraduate Volunteers and Hours by Semester, 2021/22 to 2023/24

	SUMMER		FALL		SPRING		TOTALS	
	Volunteers	Hours	Volunteers	Hours	Volunteers	Hours	Volunteers	Hours
2021/22	526	880	448	976	74	88	1048	1935
2022/23	74	88	510	995	551	948	1135	2031
2023/24	58	72	535	1190	890	1207	1483	2469

Our volunteer program could also not exist, let alone flourish as it has, without the continued support of the many instructors in departments all across campus who allow their students to earn extra credit by volunteering in the OEPP. We are exceedingly grateful to them!

Volunteer Certificate Program

Undergraduates who volunteer 10 or more hours per academic year earn a certificate as an "Intercultural Communication Partner," a useful addition to resumes and CVs. Volunteers often participate in English 620 once for a class requirement or extra credit and then continue to come back to volunteer so that they can earn a certificate. Volunteers with 10-19 hours earn a bronze certificate, 20-29 a silver certificate, 30-39 a gold certificate, 40-49 a platinum certificate, and 50+ a diamond certificate. The certificates read:

Intercultural Communication Partner: In recognition of (# of hours) of volunteer service in support of international teaching assistants globalization, and diversity at Purdue University in the Oral English Proficiency Program.

In 2023/24 the OEPP awarded a record 87 Intercultural Communication Partner Certificates. We are very glad that so many volunteers find it meaningful to come back so often!

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Supplementary Material

An OEPP Instructor's Perspective on Incorporating Steps to Leaps into English 620

Steps to Leaps (S2L) is a framework focused on improving students' holistic well-being. In Spring 2023, Purdue announced the launch of the S2L Perspective Project, which supports Purdue instructors in integrating the S2L framework into their courses. I was selected as one of 10 instructors to be a 2023-2024 Perspective Partner. As a Perspective Partner instructor, I aim to bridge the gap between students and available campus resources, and to raise awareness of the importance of students' holistic well-being. I completed my training as a certified Mental Health First Aider in January 2024. I have been thrilled about this opportunity because I have observed an increasing number of international graduate students facing mental health challenges yet also experiencing difficulties seeking help, due to cultural differences and language barriers.

In Fall 2023, I collaborated with the Purdue Writing Lab to integrate the framework into English 620. I have designed a series of class activities to address mental health-related issues, share available campus resources, and prepare students for conversations about mental health challenges. My students were given opportunities to reflect on the relationship between holistic well-being and academic pursuits and to practice the language needed to discuss their needs. My students attended a guest lecture, workshops, and conversation groups offered by the Purdue Writing Lab. In class, they also learned vocabulary words and idioms to describe positive and negative emotions, and practiced conversations through role plays.

As English 620 students are prospective teaching assistants who will have an even greater impact on the wider student population across campus, I found this project extremely important and beneficial. With this knowledge and these resources, I hope to further contribute to students' holistic well-being while helping them succeed academically.

Xiaorui Li, Ph.D.
OEPP Lecturer

2023-2024

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OEPP Interns

Under Director Mark Haugen, the OEPP has generously hosted an internship program for the past two years, continuing the work that Director Emerita April Ginther started as a faculty member in the Department of English. The internship program serves as the capstone experience for students in the “English Language in a Global Context” track in that Department’s major.

As part of the program, Dr. Haugen teaches English 490 “Worksite Internship Practicum.” In short, the course aims to help students develop professional skills and produce deliverables that they can use to secure a job after they graduate. For instance, students write a cover letter and resume, as well as give a practice-oriented presentation on a timely topic in the field—in 2023/24, the use of AI for language learning.

After six weeks in class together, the students in English 490 are paired with an English 620 instructor. This year, participating instructors included Senior Lecturer Beth Lageveen and Lecturers Kyle Swanson, Xiaorui Li, and Judson Wright. The students shadow the instructor and write reflections to connect what they see in the classroom to what they have learned about in prior coursework. Finally, the students and their instructor mentors co-develop a pedagogical project, essentially a lesson that they will deliver in English 620. This year, the projects focused on softening expressions, building emotive vocabulary, and use of common idiomatic expressions. After teaching their lesson in English 620, the students give a final presentation in English 490 in which they critically reflect on their intellectual and professional development at Purdue in general and as interns in particular.

Students in English 490 are required to earn an Intercultural Communication Partner Certificate, adding a vital line to their resumes. Students from this year’s English 490 course have gone on to teach in Thailand, graduate school in Political Communication, and Teach for America. Past students have taught through the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) program and have received Fulbright English Teaching Assistant awards.

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Presentations and Publications by OEPP Staff

Cheng, L. & Li, X. (2023, September 9). *Pre-post elicited imitation: Documenting proficiency development in a two-semester EAP program*. [Paper presentation]. Midwest Association of Language Testers (MwALT) conference, Urbana-Champaign, IL.

This study examined a locally-developed elicited imitation (EI) test to document international freshmen's English proficiency development and to provide empirical evidence for student learning and program effectiveness.

Haugen, M., Swanson, K., & Vahed, S. (2023, September 21). *AI and Language Learning: Developing and Assessing Speaking Skills for Academic and Professional Purposes in English as a Second Language* [Presentation]. 2023 Purdue System -Wide Forum: Reimagining Higher Education with Artificial Intelligence. Virtual, Purdue University.

With examples drawn from our own use case of English as a Second Language for Academic and Professional Purposes, this presentation focused on the opportunities, advantages and disadvantages that the current landscape of AI-powered tools offers for facilitating the learning of new languages, no matter whether participants are language students, language teachers, or stakeholders that work with language learners in other types of academic/professional contexts.

Lageveen, B. (2024, May). *Improving Your Oral English: Phrases and Proficiency*. [Invited Lectures]

This interactive lecture focused on using effective prosody in idiomatic academic phrases. The lecture was given once each at Danang University of Economics, Danang, Vietnam; Hung Vuong University, Hanoi, Vietnam; Shizuoka University of Culture and Arts, Hamamatsu, Japan.

Li, X. (2023, October 27). *An evaluation of an elicited imitation task using item analysis and pre-post changes*. [Paper presentation]. East Coast Organization of Language Testers (ECOLT) Conference, Washington, D.C.

This study analyzed the technical qualities of a locally developed elicited imitation (EI) test and examined students' gains from a pre-test to a post-test to provide suggestions for test revisions and future EI test development.

Miller, D., DeLuca, V., Swanson, K. & Rothman, J. (2023). Neurocognitive methods in Formal Linguistic Approaches to Second Language Acquisition and Processing. In J. van Hell & K. Morgan-Short (Eds), *The Routledge Handbook of Second Language Acquisition and Neurolinguistics* (pp. 177-190). New York: Routledge.

This chapter highlighted how neurocognitive research methods such as EEG and fMRI have been integrated into the way that generative linguistics approaches the study of adult second language acquisition, showing in particular how they have brought new evidence to bear on long-standing questions as well as how they have opened up entirely new avenues of inquiry.

Swanson, K. (2023, November 18). *Teaching Pronunciation in ESL: A Primer* [Workshop]. Indiana Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages 2023, Indianapolis, IN.

To prepare instructors to effectively help their students improve their pronunciation, this workshop introduced the Communicative Framework (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010) as well as articulatory phonetics, engaging activities, and useful resources, including AI.

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Presentations and Publications by OEPP Staff — Continued

Wright, J. (2023, November 18). *Let Them Be Heard: Differentiated Student-Centered Discourse Strategies*. [Workshop]. Indiana Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages 2023, Indianapolis, IN.

This workshop focused on a variety of communicative activities and strategies that support a more learner-centered language-learning environment where every student in the classroom has an opportunity to contribute.

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