Introduction

This speaking book is aimed at high-intermediate to advanced students who are either in an intensive academic English program or have newly begun their academic careers at a U.S. community college, college, or university at either the undergraduate or graduate level.

The material in this book is the result of a materials development project (of nearly ten years) based on our experiences teaching academic speaking courses in both the regular academic year and the pre-sessional summer programs at the English Language Institute. The goal of these courses—as well as the materials that have emerged from them—is to help students whose first language is not English acquire some of the basic communication skills they need to be successful in a college or university setting. These skills include giving directions, writing effective email messages, participating in class discussions and office hours, as well as giving a group presentation, to name a few.

We have taken what we consider to be the best of our material and created six units. Each of the units, except for Unit 3 on email, which, of course, is not considered a spoken genre, relies heavily on transcripts of actual academic speaking events, particularly classroom interactions and office hours. These transcripts are part of the Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE, pronounced as my-case), an invaluable resource that contains transcripts and recordings of 200 hours (approximately 1.8 million words) of academic speech from across the University of Michigan campus. Each unit has at least one focus on language use, ranging from ellipsis to the language of apologies to hedging. The language focus topics were chosen based on our analyses of the MICASE transcripts as well as our own small corpus of email messages. In addition to the consistent use of MICASE, we have attempted to use published research as much as possible to inform our materials development. In doing so, we hope that we have provided more accurate explanations of how language is actually used and what the expectations of the academic community are, rather than basing our discussion on guesswork and intuition. Other features to be found in each of the units are outlines of learning goals at the beginning, text analysis, and a major speaking activity or, as in the case of the email unit, email writing activities.

Videos accompany this text. The videos are sold separately. They include scenes of academic interactions relevant to each unit, such as giving or asking for directions in Unit 1 and office hour interactions in Unit 4. Other supplementary material, such as examples of gestures and body language, which are important for effective communication, are included

in the videos. In addition to video scenes, each unit includes a brief pronunciation focus section. To supplement each unit, a short reading topically related to each unit can be found in the Instructor's Notes.

Organization

Unit 1 focuses on names and places. This unit offers students opportunities to learn about proper names in the United States, to practice giving directions, and to prepare an informal group presentation.

Unit 2 gives students a chance to understand who their college professors are and what their expectations of students may be.

Unlike the other units that focus on speaking, Unit 3 deals with the challenges of email, including subject headings, greetings, and politeness, among other important aspects of electronic communication.

The emphasis in Unit 4 is office hours. The unit begins by discussing the reasons students go to office hours and then takes a close look at what goes on in office hour interactions by looking at several transcripts of typical student-instructor interactions.

In Unit 5, students learn about class participation. This unit delves into why and how students do or do not participate in class along with what instructors do to encourage participation. The unit closes with a look at the role of personal narratives in the classroom.

The final unit centers on seminar style discussion and a more formal panel presentation. Key aspects of this unit include the language of opinions and interruptions, paraphrasing and summary, and discourse strategies that contribute to a successful panel presentation (e.g., overviews and transitions between speakers). Although there are many other topics we could have chosen, we selected these because our students report having significant difficulty with them.

Working with Transcripts and MICASE

One of the central features of this textbook is the emphasis on authentic language used in an academic setting rather than fabricated examples of language use in a particular context. We are able to provide examples of authentic use thanks to the availability of MICASE. MICASE is publicly available at https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/c/corpus/corpus?c=micase;page=simple. In some cases, sound files are also available for the recorded speech events. To a lesser degree we have also incorporated examples of authentic language from recordings of our own classes.

The use of authentic language examples is not without its drawbacks, however. Problems can arise because everyday spoken language does not necessarily consist of complete, well-formed sentences; nor does it necessarily flow smoothly. To address these issues, the

transcripts of the excerpts we have chosen for the text have, for the most part, been edited or slightly revised from the MICASE version, usually in order to increase readability and clarity. In doing so, we have made every effort to remain true to the spirit of the transcripts while editing the language and adapting content to make them more accessible. By focusing on whether the transcript could be understood as opposed to being grammatically correct, we hope that students will gain confidence in their speaking by realizing that in many speaking contexts there is a high tolerance for false starts, incomplete utterances, grammar errors, and unusual word choices. Another bit of editing we have done on the original transcripts has to do with punctuation. Transcription conventions for MICASE include the use of familiar punctuation marks in unfamiliar ways; thus, one way we have edited the transcripts is to make the punctuation more consistent with standard use (commas for pauses, periods for ends of thought groups). We have also tried to keep to a more standard use of capitalization. In addition, we have added (fictional) names for speakers when it seemed helpful to understanding the interactions. We used the MICASE convention of identifying speakers by number (S1, S2, S3) in some transcripts. Embedded or overlapping speech is indicated within brackets and occurs within the main speaker's words. For example, **Ann:** I'll install the new software if you want me to [**Nadeen:** Really?] but I can't do it until tomorrow.

MICASE is also important to this text because our choices of what to teach and discussions of how language is used are informed and supported by research, and not solely based on our own intuitions. In doing research on the database, we have found that our intuitions of language use (and those represented in many other speaking books) are often incorrect. For instance, our intuition may tell us that in order to make a suggestion, the verb *suggest* is rather important. However, a look at MICASE reveals something very different. More useful than *suggest* is the expression *you might wanna*.

References to the MICASE transcripts on which our excerpts are based are given after each transcript. Instructors and students can and should access the MICASE to further investigate academic spoken language or to look at the complete speech event. By searching MICASE, students can zero in on field- or discipline-specific speech events that may be of interest to them. Students may also want to record and transcribe some of their own speech; this can be accomplished by going to the MICASE website and clicking the link to a free software program called "Soundscriber," which has features that make transcribing recorded speech quite manageable. We also suggest that instructors visit MICASE to create additional tasks for their students. To facilitate this process, suggestions for browsing and searching are available on the MICASE website. More in-depth discussion of how to use MICASE can also be found in *The MICASE Handbook: A Resource for Users of the Michigan Corpus for Academic Spoken English* (Simpson-Vlach and Leicher 2006) published by the University of Michigan Press.

In our own classes at the University of Michigan's English Language Institute, we frequently incorporate MICASE. We have found that it does in fact take some effort to

become comfortable working with transcripts, for both instructors and students. However, after the initial time spent becoming accustomed to reading and analyzing transcripts, the results are highly rewarding.

We have tried to carefully choose the transcripts so that the content does not "get in the way" or cause students to lose focus of the language or important aspects of the speech event illustrated by the transcript. However, spending a few moments before working with a transcript to clarify any unusual vocabulary or content will be time well spent. And it is our hope that student questions about the transcripts, content, or context will provide starting points for valuable discussion and speaking practice. This can be a blessing and a curse—any one transcript could potentially provide hours of classroom material, depending on the focus (vocabulary, speaker roles/status, idiomatic expressions, politeness, pronunciation, word stress and pausing, turn taking, cultural differences, and so on).

We are frequently asked how we present the dialogues and interactions in the transcripts in class without an audio file of the transcript. What we do depends on a number of factors, and there is no single approach that will work well for every transcript. When planning to use a transcript, you need to consider the topic, the length, the number of speakers, the number of turns, and other characteristics of the speaking event.

We have done all of the following approaches in our teaching.

- Students role-play the interaction.
- The instructor reads the parts out loud.
- The instructor and student(s) read the parts out loud.
- Partners or small groups read through/role-play in their own groups.
- Students read through a transcript before class so that class time can focus on the questions and discussion.
- Students read or role-play with a native speaker of English outside of class.
- The instructor prepares an in-house recording for use in class.

Because working through transcripts can take time, some other strategies we use include breaking longer transcripts into chunks and working through relevant questions, such as Lines 1 to 10 and Questions 1 to 3, and dividing questions among smaller groups or pairs of students so each group has one question to prepare and then makes a report to the class.

We have found that it is hard to get back into a transcript activity that was left unfinished at the end of one class. Because momentum is hard to regain, we plan strategic stopping points in the units rather than find ourselves with a lengthy transcript only "half-done."

This volume is the first academic speaking book in which transcripts of authentic spoken English are central. We hope that we have made good transcript and other content choices. We would be most interested in learning the ways in which you use the transcripts as well, and would welcome an email message from you describing what you have done; email us at esladmin@umich.edu.

The Videos

During the planning of this book, we decided that students could gain a better understanding of the language used in academic settings if, in addition to the transcripts in the texts, we provided some video and/or audio examples of key academic interactions, such as office hours and group meetings. In order to demonstrate how different kinds of interactions unfold and to enhance the learning experience of students, we decided to produce videos to complement the material in the book. We had initially thought that we would semi-script the video scenes in order to have some control over the content and language. This, however, proved to be difficult because it would have required the creation of scripts, multiple rehearsals for our volunteer actors, and memorization of scripts. We abandoned this plan in part because of scheduling constraints but mainly because we found that many of our scene topics were relatively easy to role-play as long as the actors had experience with the kinds of situations that we wanted to capture on the videos. In the end, we decided to bring in the camera crew, assign our actors to specific scenes (taking into consideration their individual backgrounds and strengths), and then let the actors play out the designated scenes as they wanted. In other words, the scenes are improvised, based on some limited guidance from us, such as asking an actor to try using *you might wanna* when giving advice or asking the actor to be inconsiderate during the office hour scene. As a result of this process, the language of the videos is unscripted and contains all of the usual characteristics of spoken language: false starts, hesitations, repetitions, "errors," and so on. As a result, we are confident that the material on the videos mirrors actual language in typical academic interactions and provides students with relevant examples of common situations that students are likely to encounter.

We have used the videos in a number of ways beyond reinforcing the material in the book. The various scenes can be used—with or without the transcripts—to:

- practice pronunciation (see more specific suggestions in the Pronunciation Focus section on p. xiv)
- work on listening comprehension
- illustrate grammar
- work on vocabulary building
- discuss slang and idiomatic expressions
- provide a springboard for discussion
- illustrate aspects of U.S. culture
- highlight examples of nonverbal communication (gestures and body language)
- focus on active listening strategies
- compare and contrast different versions of similar academic interactions (for instance, office hours).

Additional suggestions for using the videos, as well as the transcripts for each of the scenes, can be found on the University of Michigan Press website (www.press.umich.edu/elt).

Pronunciation Focus Sections

Each unit contains a Pronunciation Focus designed to help students discover some guidelines for English pronunciation. Additional Pronunciation Focus sections can be found in the Instructor's Notes. In other books, typical pronunciation work begins with a rule and then gives students words or sentences to pronounce. In preparing pronunciation materials for our students, we found this approach to be problematic, especially because there is a fair amount of native speaker variation and because no single rule seems to work for all situations. So, rather than tell students what the "rules" for pronunciation are, we have set out tasks in which students transcribe short segments from video scenes and then write their observations based on what they hear. We think that having students note for themselves what is going on will be more interesting for them and give them a better sense of authentic U.S. English pronunciation. If you want more pronunciation practice for your students, any of the transcripts in the text or Instructor's Notes can also provide a starting point. Some other Pronunciation Focus ideas you may wish to explore include asking students

- to mark the transcript for intonation
- to mark the transcript for chunks or thought groups and figure out where appropriate pauses occur.

You can also create pronunciation exercises by asking students to use transcripts

- to record themselves and compare to a recording of the same text by a native speaker
- to find instances of fast speech
- to identify chunks of language where words are likely blended together (e.g., *some money*).