Linguistics TAs and TOs

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Introduction

How TA/TO assignments are made; expectations of TAs

Teaching/Research balance

General Resources: Linguistics profs, Previous TA/TOs, TEFD (UMass Institute for Teaching Excellence and Faculty Development)
Materials and curriculum

http://blogs.umass.edu/linguist/professional-development/ling-201-materials-and-guidance/ - If you get an error message, click on "graduate student resources à Ling 201 materials and guidance." The password is linguist

Prof. for 101 will provide all essential materials.
Materials and curriculum

Course/Section Websites

Moodle: request course site through Spire
Box or Apps(Google Drive):

Log in at http://www.it.umass.edu/online-storage-collaboration

Request a class email list from Spire. (Faculty Home, class email lists)
Moodle also has an email utility.
Syllabus

See example 201syllabi on 201 materials website.

For your first day, it’s good to hand out a 1-page thing that includes:

· contact information
· grading policies
· statement of policy on late assignments
· (re)statement of policy on academic honesty.

→ Your handout should LOOK GOOD!
What you’ll be doing in your section

- Questions; going over difficult points; problem sets and activities, tests(?)
- TAs will meet regularly with Prof., who will tell you what to cover each week.
  For TOs: 201 must cover enough phonology and syntax to prepare students for 401 and 402.
- Avoid reinventing everything. The 201 materials website and/or existing textbooks include reading, assignments and exam questions.
  But also avoid re-using previous assignments and exam questions verbatim.
  Alter them enough to avoid cheating.
How to teach: general

General

First day: tell them who you are, find out who they are

Impersonate a non-nervous person, or else Kyle.

Have a consistent organization for each class and make it clear to students.

Plan how you're going to use the board, overheads.

When you ask a question, wait an eternity before rephrasing or giving up.

Make frequent eye contact and also call on specific people sometimes.

Give them activities they can succeed at.
Teaching: tips for keeping organized

Make a plan for paper juggling. (e.g., put everything you receive in a designated folder with secure edges). And if you are sure you’ll lose something if the student gives it to you at that moment, tell them to wait.

Set aside particular times for dealing with correspondence from students.
General tips for keeping organized

Learn everyone’s name!

Let students know at the beginning how you will communicate with them. Tell them if you’re going to use email. Also tell them how often do you read mail, and how quick a response should they expect.

Keep all your 101 email in a separate folder.
Classroom management and decorum

Start and finish on time!
Try to get to the classroom early. If you're using AV equipment, make sure it's set up and operating correctly.
Adhere carefully to the clock: They have very little time to get to the next class, and making sure they know you won't overtime keeps them from fidgeting and noisily packing their stuff during the last 5 minutes of class.
Classroom management and decorum

Speak up.
Be confident -- you're in charge and they're generally predisposed to accept your authority in the classroom.
Dress just a little bit better than them.
Classroom management and decorum: Handouts?

Detailed handouts hinder class participation.

Non-detailed handouts make students think that’s all they need to know.

Still, handouts are useful for:

- Beginning of class “quizzes”
- Worksheet with places for students to fill in
Classroom management and decorum

Have strict rules and enforce them leniently. For example, your policy on late assignments should be that you do not accept them, but if a student should have exceptional circumstances, they may consult with you about a possible waiver.
Classroom management and decorum

Be alert to incivility between students and to unconscious (and conscious) biases. Discourage interruptions, particularly men interrupting women. Find ways of including everyone in discussion, while making it clear that you respect shy people.

If you need to introduce a raise-your-hand-to-talk policy, do so. Try not to let one or two students dominate.
Classroom management and decorum

When discussing controversial topics, try not to make assumptions about what students will believe, and be respectful of students who hold views that linguists consider to be misconceptions. If you are discussing a dialect of which you are not a native speaker, make it clear where you got your information.
Class Participation Tips

Let them know at the beginning of each class what's going to happen.

When you ask a question, try not to ever answer it yourself. Allow more than ample time for them to answer. If necessary, re-phrase the question.
Class participation tips

Ask questions that have multiple possible answers.

“What are some examples of derivational morphemes in English”

"Let's list the voiced consonants. Taylor, can you think of one? Jayden?"

"Suppose I left you a note saying "Please feed the baby dog biscuits. What would you do?"
Class participation tips

Break down problem sets into pieces. So, instead of "Here's some data on Tzotzil. Solve the problem" walk them through examining the data, relating the data to something they've seen before, finding regularities, explaining regularities.
Class participation tips

When a student asks a question or makes a comment, repeat it for the whole class. Students, particularly those in the front, tend to direct their speech to you, and they're inaudible to everyone else. You need to repeat the student's statement or question loudly. Also, when answering a question from a student in the front, keep your voice up.
Class participation tips

When you transition from one topic to the next, make the demarcation line clear. Have some bit of stage business for the transition -- erasing the board, writing a new topic on the board, etc.

Getting their attention back after group activities is hard. Make them move their chairs back into normal position to signal that the group activity is over and normal classroom behavior has resumed.
Class participation tips

Use the blackboard or the overhead projector as well as your voice. You need to give them important stuff through multiple input channels. Avoid powerpoints and presentation-type handouts.

Be alert to drifting attention, people talking, texting. Get their attention back by speaking up, asking for attention, or even flipping the lights off and on.
Grading and feedback

Criteria for American students grades are laxer than European and Asian grades. In general, A = excellent, B = decent, C = problematic. Check with a 201 or 101 prof. if you aren't sure.

Make sure students know when to expect graded assignments to be returned. Make it a priority to return assignments promptly.

You may want to read over some of the assignments to get a sense for the range of performance before beginning to grade in earnest. Sometimes you can catch this way whether everyone made the same mistake in understanding and keep this in mind when assigning points.
Grading and feedback

Don't agonize over every comment. If there are mistakes that lots of students make, explain it in class with a handout rather than writing the same comment on lots of students' papers. Students have a right to go over tests or assignments with you so that you can explain what they got wrong and help them do better next time. Make it clear at the beginning exactly what can count as “extra credit” (participating in an experiment, for example).
Academic Honesty

Put policy including penalties on first-day handout.

Prevention is the best policy. See http://blogs.umass.edu/linguist/files/2013/06/cheating_prevention_cure.pdf

If you ever suspect cheating, report immediately to Prof. There are procedures that must be followed.
Special Circumstances

Make it clear to students how they can make up work if they miss class due to religious holiday.

Tell them that if they must miss class for any reason, they should let you know in advance, and make arrangements to make up work.
Special circumstances

Students with disabilities have a right to “reasonable accommodations” in their classes. At UMass, the Disability Services office decides what those accommodations are, and they inform Prof. in writing of what we are required to do for each student. This comes to us as a form delivered by the student. The syllabus tells students to bring the form to the Professor for the course. If you're a TA, students will often bring the form to you, in which case it should be passed along to the Prof.
Special Circumstances

The athletic department requests (requires?) progress reports on student athletes several times per semester. TAs usually don’t have to deal with these, but you may be asked by the Prof. about particular students’ grades so far. TOs will get lists of athletes in their classes and instructions to go to a website to fill in a form reporting current progress. Occasionally we’ll get requests for tutors. Our policy is that tutors are not appropriate for this course, since coming to class and/or going to see the instructor are the only ways to do well.