Communicating with International Students More Effectively

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What is the Problem?

• The Problem is NOT…
  – International
  – Cultural
  – Intellectual
Then, What Is the Problem?

• The problem is NOT...
  – Unique to international students
  – Characteristic of a country or a region
  – Persistent in individual students
So, Tell Me the Problem!

- The problem…
  - Exists in all of us
  - Arises whenever we use it, hear it, and see it

- The problem is
  - LANGUAGE
  - It happens to be English when you are here
Let’s Check

• The problem of English is
  – Not international; Domestic students also have it
  – Not cultural; People from all cultures have it
  – Not intellectual; People who cannot express themselves in English are not dumb; They sound intelligent when you hear them speak their native tongue
How do we solve the problem?

- Speak their languages – maybe in 5 years
- Ask the students to speak English – they’ve been doing it for 5 months
- But, we still have the problem
Tips to minimize the problem

• Be patient, very patient
• Speak slowly, very slow……….ly
• Use short sentences
• Pause for an instant after each sentence to give students time to process what you said
More Tips

• When a student smiles or nods, it doesn’t necessarily mean he or she understood.
• A smile may mean “I’m confused but too embarrassed to ask questions”
• Try asking a question to check comprehension
More Tips for Native English Speakers

• Avoid using language occurring chiefly in casual and playful speech, made up typically of short-lived coinages and figures of speech that are deliberately used in place of standard terms for added raciness, humor, irreverence, etc.

• SLANG
Tips Continued

• Minimize the use of expressions that are peculiar grammatically or cannot be understood from the individual meanings of the individual elements

• Idioms or phrasal verbs
  – To keep tabs on = to observe carefully
  – Get over one’s illness = recover from it
  – Get on with the project = continue the project
Use Visual Aids

• Remember the problem is only English
• Example: “Endoplasmic Reticulum”
  – A network of continuous tubules and flattened sacs that underlie the plasma membrane, course through the cytoplasm, connect to the nuclear envelope, attach to the vacuole and mitochondria, but remain distinct from the plasma membrane
Here is ER
Write it Down

• Sometimes, words written in a piece of paper is easier to understand than words coming out of a person’s mouth
• Provide handouts, outlines, slides, etc.
Listen to Understand

• Listen carefully
  – In their native languages, the grammar is different; they need to think what English words to use, what verb tense to use, and in what order
  – Example: I ate a meal.
  – In Japanese, the order is I meal ate. Watashiwa GoHan O Tabeta (Tabemashita) わたしわご飯を食べた (食べました).
  – In Chinese, wo chi fan le. 我吃饭了
More About Meals

- **Example:** Did you eat your meal?
- **Japanese:** あなたはご飯を食べたか？
- **Chinese:** 你吃饭了吗？
- **Breakfast:** 朝ご飯 (Japanese), 早饭 (Chinese)
- **Lunch:** 昼ご飯, 午饭
- **Supper:** 晩ご飯, 晚饭
Listen More

• Be creative. Try to figure out what the student is trying to say, but check your hunches
• Paraphrase what you think the student said and ask the student if that’s what he or she means
• Don’t be shy to ask the student to repeat
Be Persistent and
YOU’LL SUCCEED

• Use those tips persistently
• The problem will not persist in the students
• They will quickly learn your language and move on