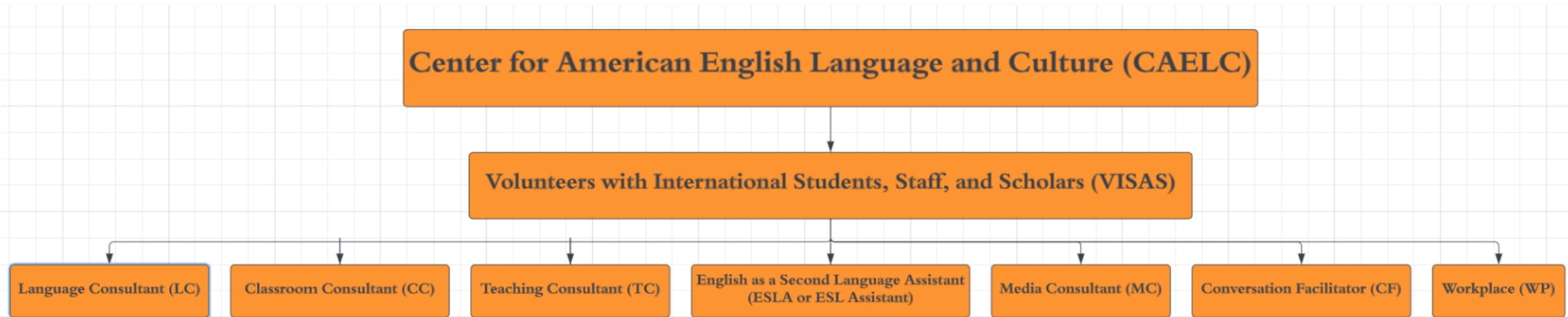


# Language Consultant Orientation

Spring 2025

# VISAS Overview

VISAS (Volunteers with International Students, Staff, and Scholars) is a free English language and cultural exchange program that serves UVA's international community and their families. Through VISAS programs, volunteers and international participants practice English together, meet new people, build meaningful relationships, and learn about other cultures.





# About Me (the Language Consultant Coordinator)

- Major: Biology, Spanish minor
- Year: 3rd year undergraduate
- Interests: dance, food, spending time with family
- 2 Truths and a Lie:
  - I love plantain chips
  - I can speak five languages
  - I have only been to 8 different states

# What is the LC Program?

- 1-hour weekly, casual conversation between an LC (student volunteer) and 1-2 partners for the purposes of English practice and cross-cultural exchange
- Goals for your partner: have a safe, judgement-free environment to improve English and learn about American culture
- Goals for LCs (you): learn about another culture and connect with the UVA community
- It is **NOT** a tutoring/teaching service

# Expectations

## **What does VISAS expect from you?**

- Meet for 1 hour weekly with your partner(s)
- Meet at the same time each week (consistency is important!)
- Communicate with your partners and respect their time and energy
- Complete your required weekly check-ins (I will email this to you every week)
- Read your emails

## **What can you expect from the Language Consultant Coordinator?**

- Help you solve any issues that may arise, be supportive!
- Send out weekly emails with important updates and helpful resources

# Discuss



Have you ever tried to learn a new language?



What did you find helpful when speaking to a native speaker of that language?

# Before Your First Meeting

- Once you receive the LC Groups Spreadsheet, contact your partner(s) as soon as possible
- Decide your weekly meeting time
- Add your meeting time to the LC Groups Spreadsheet

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1	FOR ADMIN USE ONLY -- DO NOT CHANGE THESE COLUMNS (COLUMNS A-F)						PUT YOUR MEETING TIME IN YOUR CORRESPONDING ROW	
2	Language Consultant	Language Consultant Email	Partner 1	Partner 1 Email	Partner 2	Partner 2 Email	What day of the week are you meeting?	What time are you meeting?
3	Ada Zhang	abz2mf@virginia.edu	Harry Potter	harry.potter@virginia.edu	Hermione Granger	hermione.granger@virginia.edu	Mondays	4-5 p.m.
4								
5								
6								
7								
8								

# Deadlines for the Spreadsheet

- Once the sheet is sent out, it is expected that you communicate with your assigned international participant(s) and update your meeting times **within the next 3 days of the sheet being sent (that would be 2/8 at 11:59 pm)**
- We will share a template to email your international participant(s) so the process is easier for you!
- Some suggestions:
  - If you have more than one participant in your group, sharing a when2meet can be a great way to decide a time that works for everyone.
  - Send your first email ASAP so that you can decide on a time together before the deadline!



# During Your First Meeting

## Answer these questions

- Why did you and your partner(s) join VISAS?
- Would you like the meeting to be free-flowing or more "structured" (i.e., specific grammar goals, book club, following along with the weekly newsletter, etc.)
- What does your partner want to accomplish this semester? (this can change throughout the semester!)

## Ask about correcting errors

- Remember that you're not a tutor/teacher but a conversation partner that gives your partner a chance to practice English
- At your first meeting, ask your partners if, when, AND how they wanted to be corrected

# Tips for Correcting Errors

- If you notice an error, think about the following:
  - Is it worth correcting?
  - Is it interfering with understanding?
  - Is it a recurring pattern?
  - When to correct – immediately versus after the sentence?
- Delayed correction: take the last few minutes to talk about errors instead of interrupting right after the error occurs
- "Repeat it back" method:
  - Respond with the correct version of what they said
  - Example: if they say "I eat grapes yesterday," you can say, "oh, you ate grapes yesterday?"
- Don't just point out errors, give positive feedback as well!

# Tips for Speaking to Someone Learning English

- It's normal to have awkwardness/silence and may be cultural, social, or linguistic (especially the first few weeks)
  - Allow time for listening/response
- Speak clearly
- Adapt pace to meet partner's needs
- Make clear transitions between ideas
- Limit or explain slang, jargon, and idioms
- Ask for clarification and check for understanding

# Tips for Working with Beginner-Level Speakers

- Your partner may be able to communicate with you in English to some extent or may not be able to put words together at all (rare case).
- It is best to speak slowly and with a very limited vocabulary. This can help them to understand what you are saying to some extent.
- If you feel that it is difficult to hold a conversation with your English partner due to their proficiency level, **please contact us** and we will arrange for some resources/guidance to help you out!

# Resources to Get Started

- The weekly newsletter will be sent out with possible conversation topics or ideas to get started, along with themes for the week
- You are NOT *required* to follow the newsletter; it is only meant to guide you if you are unsure of what to discuss
- This year we will be including mock conversation situations and current events to practice or discuss as well!
- Our website is also a great resource for all things VISAS: [visasatuva.org](https://visasatuva.org)

# Language Consultant Do's and Don'ts

## LANGUAGE CONSULTANT A:

- I frequently interrupt my partner while they are speaking
- I don't pay attention while my partner is communicating (ex. looking at my phone, focusing on my surroundings, etc.)
- I make myself seem uninterested or obligated

## LANGUAGE CONSULTANT B:

- I give my language partner time to open up
- I encourage them to speak by asking "why" or "how" questions instead of just "what" or "where" questions
- I share a bit about myself, creating a comfortable and welcoming environment

# What would you do?

Your language partner is shy and does not talk very much. How could you use the weekly newsletter to encourage conversation?

## LANGUAGE CONSULTANT NEWSLETTER

9/16 - 9/22

### Theme: Pet Peeves

#### Discussion Questions:

- What is a “pet peeve”?
- Is there a word for “pet peeve” in your language?
- What are your pet peeves?
- Can you explain a time when someone annoyed you, specifically through a pet peeve?
- What are some common pet peeves in your culture?
- Can you describe a common pet peeve in the U.S. that was surprising to you?
- What are some strange pet peeves?

### Current Events

Kamala Harris to represent the democratic party in the 2024 elections!

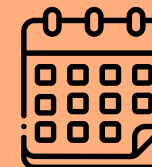
[BBC News Article](#)



### Important Dates

**VISAS Café:** Wednesdays, 5-6 pm

**Orientation:** 9/17, from 8-9:30 pm



### Mock Practice

#### Scenario 1:

After a long time, you are meeting a school friend and decide to catch up over coffee. What would you discuss/talk about?

#### Scenario 2:

You are working on a project with a classmate but they are not making an effort to do their part (take which role you like!). What would you say, and how would you ensure that the project is completed in time?

# Getting Your LC Partner(s)

- You will be emailed the LC Groups Spreadsheet on **February 5, 2025** with all LC groups and members' contact information (1 or 2 partners per volunteer)
- You and your partner(s) will pick a time that works for your whole group
- You will add your meeting time to the spreadsheet once you've decided it
- New partners often sign up for an LC after the program begins. If this happens, I will email your group to let you know if a new member will be joining.
- Returning volunteers: this may be different from before
- All LC Groups are final



# What would you do in these scenarios?

1. One partner does all the talking/your partners have very different English abilities.
2. You have trouble keeping the conversation going and/or there is awkward silence.
3. Your partner makes derogatory comments about you or someone else's identity/culture.
4. Your partner is romantically interested and/or making you feel uncomfortable.

# What would you do in these scenarios?

1. One partner does all the talking/your partners have very different English abilities
  - Ask directed questions
  - Check understanding with the quieter partner
  - Take turns answering questions as a group
2. You have trouble keeping the conversation going and/or there is awkward silence
  - Find activities to do (games, walk, etc.)
  - Come with questions prepared
  - See my weekly emails - it will contain a "newsletter" with conversation questions and activities to do
3. Your partner makes derogatory comments about you or someone else's identity/culture
  - Contextualize (put it in perspective)
  - Identify cultural differences objectively
  - Explain why it is hurtful
  - Change the subject (if you are uncomfortable)
  - Let your partner know kindly that you'd prefer not to talk about this topic (set boundaries)
  - Contact VISAS
4. Your partner is romantically interested and/or making you feel uncomfortable
  - Establish your role early in the semester
  - Be honest and consistent
  - Your comfort/boundaries are important
  - Contact VISAS, please!

# Attendance Policy

- The LC is the "host" of the meetings
- You must attend ALL sessions unless you have a valid excuse for canceling/rescheduling
  - Valid excuses: illnesses, family emergencies, interviews, academic events/requirements, etc.
  - Invalid excuses: being busy, doing homework, studying for a test, forgetting, same-day requests, etc.
- If a scheduling conflict comes up communicate ASAP

# Two-Strike Rule

- We require that volunteers have a valid excuse for absences. If they have **more than 2 excused absences OR any unexcused absences** during a semester, they may be asked to step down from the program for the remainder of the term.
- INTERNATIONAL PARTICIPANT ABSENCE: We understand that you are dedicating time as a language consultant and that it can be frustrating if your international participant is not communicating with you or not showing up to your scheduled meetings. **If this is the case, please email us ASAP.**

# Meeting Locations/Times

- Meet ON GROUNDS and in a PUBLIC place (The Corner counts)
- Your meeting location can change (or stay the same) each week, but please try to keep a consistent meeting time

# Past Volunteer Experiences!

FEEL FREE TO SHARE IF YOU ARE A  
RETURNING VOLUNTEER!

# Looking Ahead

- Thursday, 2/6 from 5-6 p.m. - International Mixer
- Wednesday, 2/5 - LC Groups Spreadsheet released
- Week of 2/9 - VISAS programs begin
- HOV!
- If you and your partner would like to be featured in HOV or know of anybody who would. Please email [visas@virginia.edu](mailto:visas@virginia.edu).

**HUMANS  
OF VISAS**


**VISAS**

"[VISAS] is a great way to get to know someone deeper than how they might present themselves at UVA... to learn more about their life at **home** and their **culture**"

**EMMA BLAU**

"Participating in VISAS feels like an opportunity to meet a really good **friend**... It's nice to have someone help with **daily words** and common phrases"

**SCARLETT SHEN**

A photograph of two young women standing outdoors in front of a building. The woman on the left is wearing a white hoodie and a grey vest, smiling. The woman on the right is wearing a black top and a green skirt, also smiling. The background shows a clear blue sky and some trees.

# What do LC's and IP's have to say?

## INTERNATIONAL PARTICIPANTS:

We went to Asados on the corner for lunch; [My IP] had never been there before and the weather was good enough to hike over there for our first meeting of the semester.

We shared our hobbies and found there are many things we both like. [My LC] is very helpful. She makes sure I understand everything when changing to new topic, that's very considerate.

We are going to go to Bodo's bagel this week!

Great! We usually look at the newsletter topics, but our conversation was so strong that we ended up not needing them.

## LANGUAGE CONSULTANTS:

It was great. We talk about music instruments, kinds of music and things to do on weekends.

Very great! We talked a lot about her work and my life as a student!

Great! We have practiced how to make an order in the restaurant.



# Resources

Ritu Suddapalli, Language Consultant Coordinator

- Email: [xmk3tc@virginia.edu](mailto:xmk3tc@virginia.edu)
- Office Hours: Mondays 10-11 a.m. in Nau Hall 134, or by appointment

## VISAS

- Email: [VISAS@virginia.edu](mailto:VISAS@virginia.edu)
- Website: [visasatuva.org](http://visasatuva.org)
- Instagram: [visasatuva](https://www.instagram.com/visasatuva)
- Facebook: VISAS at UVA

Due to the volume of emails we receive, we cannot respond to everyone immediately. Please wait up to 5 business days for an email response to non-urgent matters before emailing again. (We will often answer much sooner than this).

*Thank you!*

