

**AGENDA**  
**Kansas State University Faculty Senate Meeting**  
**Tuesday, October 11, 2005, 3:30 pm**  
**K-State Union, Big 12 Room**

- I. Call meeting to order
- II. Approval of minutes, September 13, 2005
- III. Ombudsperson Report – **Attachment 1**
- IV. Honor System Report – **Attachment 2**
- V. Reports from Standing Committees
  - A. Academic Affairs Committee – Alice Trussell
    - 1. Course and Curriculum Changes
      - a. Undergraduate Education
        - 1. Approve undergraduate course and curriculum changes approved by the College of Business Administration May 19, 2005:
          - a. Changes in receiving a minor in business
          - b. Changes in proposed enrollment management
          - c. Changes to current policy on Transfer Students
          - d. Changes to current policy of curriculum from other K-State Colleges (DOE to K-State Fall 2001 or later)
          - e. Changes to current policy on readmission qualifications of students dismissed from the College of Business Administration (DOE to K-State Fall 2001 or later)
          - f. Changes to current policy on reinstatement
      - b. Graduate Education
        - 1. Approve graduate course and curriculum changes approved by the Graduate Council on September 6, 2005:  
  
**NEW**  
CE 745 Structural Dynamics  
CE 824 Strength and Deformation of Geo-materials  
CE 872 Transportation Safety  
EECE 888 Power System Stability and Control  
MANGT 660 Demand-Based Management for Supply Chain
    - c. General Education
      - 1. Approve SPAN 165 (Accelerated Beginning) for UGE status.
  - 2. Approve the May 2005 graduation list.
  - 3. Approve additions to graduation lists:
    - August 2004  
Stephanie Powers – BA from Arts and Sciences  
Albert John Ghergich III – Bachelor of Fine Arts from Arts and Sciences
    - May 2005  
Andrew R. Woody – BS from Arts and Sciences  
Marie Elizabeth Schulte – BS from Arts and Sciences  
Christopher C. Boggas – Arts & Sciences  
Christopher Andrew Hannon – Technology & Aviation  
Steven Carl Palmer – Technology & Aviation

Ryan Joshua Toma – Technology & Aviation  
Kelsey Wayne Veer – Technology & Aviation  
Kyle L. Martin – Technology & Aviation  
Paul Ryan Hendrickson – Technology & Aviation

4. CAPP

1. Academic Definitions, Prerequisites, etc. – **Attachment 3a**

B. Faculty Affairs Committee – Frank Spikes

1. Revised handbook language concerning English Language Assessment – **Attachment 4**

2. Guidelines for assessing spoken English language competency – **Attachment 5**

C. Faculty Senate Committee on University Planning - Walter Schumm

D. Faculty Senate Committee on Technology – Michael North

VI. Announcements

A. Faculty Senate Leadership Council

B. Kansas Board of Regents Meeting

C. Report from Student Senate

D. Other

VII. Old Business

VIII. New Business

IX. For the Good of the University

X. Adjournment

# ATTACHMENT 1

## **Brief Report to KSU Faculty Senate**

### **Ombudsperson Activities June 1, 2004 – May 31, 2005**

**Submitted by:**

**Betsy Cauble  
Warren White  
Judy Woellhof**

**The confidential nature of the ombudsperson relationship requires that the identity of the client be protected. There is no specific information about any individual or their status. All conversations, actions, and outcomes are privileged information and appear as aggregate data.**

This report represents the ombudspersons' activities from June 1, 2004 to May 31, 2005. We have chosen to combine the activities of the three ombudspersons in order to provide a complete picture of activity and protect the confidentiality of all parties.

Summary:

We saw 45 cases involving 217 hours and 50 minutes:

Ombudsperson	# Cases	%	Hours:Min.	%
BC	22	48.9%	125:10	57.5
WW	16	35.5%	54:55	25.2
JW	7	15.6%	37:45	17.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>217:50</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Of the 45 cases:

Men	33 (53.2%)	Graduate Students	2 (3.2%)
Women	29 (46.8%)	Unclassified Professionals	22 (35.5%)
Minorities	4 (6.5%)	<u>Faculty (Tenured/Tenure Track)</u>	<u>38 (61.3%)</u>
Groups	4	Total	62 (100.0%)

Nature of complaints (60 complaints in 10 categories):

Workplace Climate	17 (28.3%)	Performance Evaluations	9 (15.0%)
Promotion and Tenure	5 (8.3%)	Work Load	1 (1.6%)
Compensation	7 (11.7%)	Appointment	4 (6.7%)
Contract	6 (10.0%)	Sexual Harassment	0 (0.0%)
Discrimination	7 (11.7%)	Inquiry	4 (6.7%)

There were no cases referred to mediation and three cases were referred to Rusty Andrews, Human Systems Consultant. All cases came from the Manhattan campus including seven colleges and several administrative units. We are aware of four cases where individuals left the University.

General Observations:

- Resolutions can be extremely time consuming and elusive;
- Locating faculty advocates for grievances is **VERY** difficult and **must be addressed**;
- Of the 19 cases that were resolved, 4 individuals left the university; either contracts were not renewed or the individuals left because they were unhappy with their situation;
- Creating balanced caseloads for ombudspersons continues to be problematic. In a meeting with Faculty Senate Leadership on August 15, 2005, we discussed a plan to redistribute cases. We agreed on a trial basis to refer new cases to another ombudsperson when we are overcommitted. We will track the data and analyze the results at the end of the year to determine if this is a viable solution.

**Table 1. Caseload Activity by Issue, Time, and Resolution**

Case	Issue	Time	Resolution			
			Grievance	Pending	Resolved	Unknown
1	Workplace Climate/Evaluation/Discrimination	7:00			X	
2	Workplace Climate/Evaluation/Discrimination	6:30		X		
3	Workplace Climate/Appointment	12:30		X		
4	Workplace Climate/Appointment	6:00		X		
5	Workplace Climate/Discrimination	4:15				X
6	Workplace Climate	15:30		X		
7	Workplace Climate	6:45		X		
8	Workplace Climate	6:00			X	
9	Workplace Climate	5:30			X	
10	Workplace Climate	3:00		X		
11	Workplace Climate	2:20		X		
12	Workplace Climate	1:30		X		
13	Workplace Climate	1:15				X
14	Workplace Climate	:10			X	
15	Promotion & Tenure/Discrimination	15:30			X	
16	Promotion & Tenure	15:45		X		
17	Promotion & Tenure	6:30		X		
18	Promotion & Tenure	6:00			X	
19	Promotion & Tenure	:10				X
20	Compensation/Evaluation/Workplace Climate	13:15		X		
21	Compensation/Appointment	4:30				X
22	Compensation	12:00		X		
23	Compensation	4:00			X	
24	Compensation	2:00		X		
25	Compensation	1:30		X		
26	Compensation	:15			X	
27	Compensation	:10			X	
28	Contract/Workplace Environment/Evaluation	15:45		X		
29	Contract/Workplace Environment/Evaluation	:15		X		
30	Contract/Evaluation	12:00			X	
31	Contract	1:45			X	
32	Contract	1:30				X
33	Contract	1:00			X	
34	Discrimination	7:45			X	
35	Discrimination	3:30				X
36	Discrimination	2:25			X	
37	Performance Evaluation	3:10			X	
38	Performance Evaluation	1:35			X	
39	Performance Evaluation	:45			X	
40	Work Load	2:20			X	
41	Appointment	3:00			X	
42	Inquiry	:30				X
43	Inquiry	:20				X
44	Inquiry	:15				X
45	Inquiry	:10				X
<b>Total</b>		217:50	0.0%	35.6%	42.2%	22.2%

## ATTACHMENT 2 KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY HONOR SYSTEM

Annual Review - 2004/2005

*Education, Consultation, Mediation, Adjudication:  
We do it all with student development in mind.\**

\* The Honor System moto, originated by members of the Honesty and Integrity Peer Educators (HIPE)

**Article VI of our By Laws (now named *Investigation & Adjudication Procedures*) requires the Honor System Director to provide an annual report to Student Senate, Faculty Senate and the Provost at the beginning of the subsequent fall semester. This report summarizes the activities of the Honor System for the 2004/2005 academic year.**

The primary purpose of the Honor System is to promote academic honesty as the cornerstone of our university's academic integrity. When called upon to help defend academic integrity, our secondary purpose is to provide the organizational structure of the Honor Council to investigate and adjudicate allegations of Honor Pledge violations.

Helene Marcoux's report (distributed separately) will focus on our Honor System's activities in promoting and educating the academic community; my report will focus on our investigation and adjudication procedures of Honor Pledge violations.

During the 2004/2005 academic year there were 123 Honor System Violation Reports submitted to our office, involving 162 Kansas State University undergraduate, graduate, and distance education students. The total number of cases increased 38% from the previous year. Of the 162 students alleged to have violated the Honor Pledge, 109 were male and 53 were female, which supports national research suggesting that males are more likely to violate the Honor Pledge than females.

Plagiarizing was the single most common Honor Pledge violation and was the chief factor in 77 cases. Usually the plagiarized source was from the Internet and faculty have become more adept at detecting those transgressions. Occasionally students plagiarize the work of other students, claiming only to want to see, "how you completed the assignment." Students who unwittingly share their completed work with other students are usually surprised to discover they have provided unauthorized aid and will need to defend their actions before an Honor Council Hearing Panel, which will likely take a dim view of the situation. Numerous faculty have mentioned their interest in the University subscribing to Turnitin.com, a web site which detects plagiarized work. The Provost is aware of that interest although the cost of subscribing is considerable (approximately \$12,000 annually) for a university of our size.

Unauthorized collaboration on assignments was the second most common violation. When adjudicating those cases, Hearing Panels examine closely what is stated in the course syllabus as well as any written instructions that may appear on the assignment itself or were verbalized during class. We've discovered that students often take a too casual approach to the specifics of course syllabi, not recognizing that the syllabus is a contract and becomes one of the factors in determining whether an Honor Pledge violation has occurred. One faculty member was so concerned with this casual approach by students that he began implementing a quiz based on the course requirements as stated in the syllabus. The reader may be interested in the strategies of other KSU faculty by going to our web site <[ksu.edu/honor](http://ksu.edu/honor)> and clicking on "Faculty Tips" and then on "Best Practices." Those faculty who encourage and allow collaboration should read Richard Fogg's carefully crafted instructions regarding collaboration on assignments. We constantly remind students, when in doubt about the specifics of an assignment, please ask the course Instructor.

Other Honor Pledge violations included providing false information on an assignment by falsifying an interview; falsifying a returned test, claiming it was inaccurately graded; falsely claiming to have completed an exam in a large lecture class; or falsely claiming to be present in class by having a friend sign the attendance roster.

Subsequent forms of cheating involved unauthorized notes during an exam or copying the exam of a neighbor. In most large lecture classes where monitoring tests can be difficult due to crowded classrooms and close proximity between students, most faculty provide multiple versions of the same exam so that test copying is discouraged, although we continue to receive cases involving students who unwittingly copy test answers of a neighbor who has a different version

of the exam. In addition, some faculty require that students write the names of those persons sitting to the left, right, front and back, so that test cheating is more likely to be detected and/or curtailed.

Faculty should also be aware of recent electronic innovations such as cell phones that can create and transmit pictures or text messages to other like devices. I believe our Faculty Senate Technology Committee should consider placing a university sign in all classrooms that requires electronic devices to be turned off during class so that they don't cause a disturbance and can't be used for purposes of unauthorized aid.

We have observed that students are becoming more involved in detecting Honor Pledge violations and initiating occasional action to curtail it, usually alerting the Instructor of the problem. Frequently, a student may serve as the catalyst by calling the Instructor's attention to a possible Honor Pledge violation; the Instructor, however, becomes the Reporter for the case, while the student likely would become a witness to the occurrence. In one case, a student caught another student plagiarizing a piece of art created by the first student. Because the incident took place outside of a classroom, the Honor System did not have jurisdiction to decide the matter, however, both the new Director and Associate Director helped to negotiate a reasonable settlement between the involved parties. Another case involved a stolen photo, used as part of a class assignment. A third case involved a student who allegedly stole the class notes of another student. After consulting with KSU police, it was determined that the reported action may have constituted burglary and theft; the reporting student, however, declined to press charges and the case was dropped.

The most serious breach of the Honor Pledge involved a student, also employed as an ITAC technician, who gained access to an Associate Professor's electronic grade book and altered grades. The Associate Professor discovered the grade alterations and confronted the student. The student admitted changing grades in the course and received an XF as a result, plus the recommendation by the Associate Professor that the student be dismissed from the University. The student was also relieved of employment with ITAC. An Honor Council Hearing Panel heard the case and recommended to the Provost that the student be suspended from the University for a period of one year, after which the student would be allowed to re-enroll in classes. In addition, the student was required to immediately enroll in just the Academic Integrity course. During the 2006-2007 academic year, the student will perform community service by making 10 speaking presentations to a variety of student groups on the importance of honesty and integrity in one's academic work. The Provost is expected to follow the Hearing Panel's recommendation. The Director of ITAC also demanded written apologies to various supervisors including Vice Provost Unger and in addition, implemented a code of ethics which all ITAC employees must agree to abide by and sign a letter of acknowledgment. ITAC will also notify all faculty who have an ITAC employee in their class, of that person's name and that the student knows not to access the course grade book or any other information which would constitute a breach of ethics and integrity. ITAC also intends to monitor ITAC employee logs to help ensure the integrity of our electronic data.

Students who violated the Honor Pledge had the following majors, placed in descending order by college:

Arts & Sciences 45  
Engineering 37  
Agriculture 21  
Human Ecology 18  
Business Administration 14  
Open 11  
Education 9  
Technology & Aviation 4  
Architecture 3  
Distance Education 2

The number of reported Honor Pledge violations, however, occurred in descending order by college:

Arts & Sciences 102  
Engineering 27  
Agriculture 15  
Human Ecology 9  
Business Administration 6  
Technology & Aviation 4  
Education 1  
Distance Education 2  
Architecture 0

Based on those numbers, one supposition might be that students are more likely to cheat in a class which is not in their major; most likely an Arts & Sciences course.

Faculty reported Honor Pledge violations in the following ratio:

Professors 14  
Associate Professors 31  
Assistant Professors 30  
Instructors 21  
Lab Directors 1  
GTAs 25

Violations were reported in the following ratio by class size:

Large class (100 plus students) --20 cases  
Medium class (25-99 students) --49 cases  
Small class (1-24 students) --82 cases  
Distance Education (Internet course) --2 cases

Violations were reported in the following ratio by year in school:

Freshmen 42  
Sophomores 29  
Juniors 44  
Seniors 38  
Graduate Students 8

In most cases, faculty who discover violations of the Honor Pledge handle the matter themselves by sanctioning the student(s) and then filling out the Honor System Violation Report Form (available at our web site <[ksu.edu/honor](http://ksu.edu/honor)>). When the report is received, the Director writes the student(s) a letter informing them of the allegation and providing the student(s) the right to contest. The student(s) is also invited to make an appointment with Helene Marcoux, the Associate Director, who reviews the report with the student and explains their rights under the Honor System. If the student wishes to contest the allegation, the Director is informed and the investigation and adjudication process is initiated. Students can only contest whether there has been an Honor Pledge violation; they cannot contest the severity of the sanction imposed by faculty. Most cases are settled without the need of an investigation and hearing. Of our 123 cases, 104 were handled entirely by faculty and reported to the Honor System. Most of the remaining cases went through the case investigation and adjudication stage.

Faculty also have the option of turning a case over to the Honor System for investigation and adjudication. Some faculty do not wish to be burdened with the sanctioning decision or otherwise believe that an Honor Council Hearing Panel will arrive at a more fair decision. One exceptionally difficult case involved a GTA who determined that one student copied the exam of another student in the class. The student adamantly denied the allegation, however, during a lengthy investigation, inconsistencies began to arise and it appeared that two other students may have been involved in a conspiracy. The Case Investigators' report eventually totaled twelve pages plus additional documentation which convinced the Hearing Panel that the accused student was not telling the truth and they doubted the veracity of the other two students as well. The Hearing lasted for 3 and one-half hours followed by another 90 minutes of deliberation. The accused student was suspended from the University until spring 2006 semester, although the student was allowed to take the Academic Integrity course during summer 2005. The other two students were not charged due to insufficient information. The suspended student later admitted to the Director that all three had lied about what had occurred.

In five cases it was discovered that the student had received a second Honor Pledge violation which automatically calls for an Honor Council Hearing Panel to determine whether an additional sanction would be appropriate. None of the five students had previously taken the Academic Integrity course. In two cases Hearing Panels recommended that the Provost suspend the students for one semester from the University. The students will be allowed to re-enroll in classes at the end of the suspension period. Another student was expelled for one year after falsely claiming to have taken exams in two classes for which there was no record. The Professors and Assistant Professor for both classes established a thorough and



reliable system for tracking students and their exams and it was clear that the student's claim of having taken the exams was obviously false. The remaining two cases resulted in the student's having to immediately enroll in the Academic Integrity course and complete community service in the form of a series of speaking engagements to various student groups on the importance of academic honesty and integrity.

In two cases, the Honor Council Case Investigators were able to conclude that sufficient information did not exist to support the charge of an Honor Pledge violation. When that happens, the Reporter is asked to meet with the Case Investigators so that they can explain how they arrived at their conclusion. In both cases, the faculty Reporter accepted their decision and the cases were dropped.

During this past academic year, the Honor Council was asked to consider and approve the following constitutional change:

Article I. #2 of the Honor System Constitution: *In order to provide students the right to address allegations of academic dishonesty, all members of the academic community, both students and faculty, are urged to report violations of the Honor Pledge to the office of the Honor System. Violations that result in an academic sanction being imposed must be reported. An academic sanction is any action that would lower a student's grade on an assignment or for the course.*

*An Honor Pledge violation must be reported when:*

- a. A faculty member alleges a violation and imposes an academic sanction.*
- b. A faculty member alleges a violation and requests an investigation and hearing.*
- c. A student or faculty member suspects an Honor Pledge violation and requests an investigation. The case investigation concludes once a decision has been made whether there is sufficient information to proceed to the adjudication stage.*

*An Honor Pledge violation may not need to be reported when:*

- a. A faculty member alleges a violation and issues a warning but imposes no academic sanction.*
- b. A faculty member alleges a violation, issues a warning and provides the student an opportunity to correct the transgression, but imposes no academic sanction.*
- c. A faculty member alleges a violation, issues a warning and provides an opportunity for the student to redo the assignment or exam, but imposes no academic sanction.*

The primary reason for this amendment is to provide students the right to contest allegations of Honor Pledge violations, to have the allegations investigated and adjudicated according to established Honor System procedures.

The second reason for this amendment is to be able to track repeat Honor Pledge violators.

The third reason for this amendment is to protect faculty from legal redress by following established academic procedures.

The fourth reason is to help promote academic integrity and to help students grow in ethical development.

This amendment will require the approval of both Faculty Senate and Student Senate. I have also asked the new Director, Dave Allen, and the Associate Director, Helene Marcoux, to offer this amendment once again to the current Honor Council for their approval.

I would like to once again express my sincere thanks to former Provost James R. Coffman for his trust in naming me the first Honor System Director. His original charge and hope was that the Honor System would become part of the Kansas State University culture within five years. I believe we have met that goal.

Provost Duane Nellis named former Honor Council member Dr. Dave Allen to be the new Honor System Director, beginning fall 2005 semester. Dr. Allen proved to be one of our most effective Honor Council members, frequently serving most capably as a Case Investigator and on Hearing Panels. Whenever we had a particularly difficult or sensitive case, we called on Dr. Allen to play a key role in helping resolve the issue. I have no doubt that Dr. Allen will prove to be an outstanding choice as Honor System Director.

And finally, I'd like the university community to know of my admiration, respect, trust and fondness for Helene Marcoux, the Associate Director, who has been involved in every aspect of the Honor System's development during its first seven years and who is truly the heart and soul of our Honor System. Helene, and the new Director, Dave Allen, have already established a strong working relationship and I believe their partnership will improve and enhance academic integrity at Kansas State University.

Phil Anderson  
Honor System Director 1998-2005  
September 2005

**ATTACHMENT 3a**  
**ACADEMIC DEFINITIONS: Prerequisites, etc.**  
**(Recommended by CAPP, 7-13-05; approved by Academic Affairs, 9-20-05)**

Course prerequisite (Pr.): a requirement that a student must satisfy before he/she is permitted to enroll in that course. This requirement can be one or any combination of the following: complete one or more lower level courses (if no grade specified, earn at least a P, CR, or D grade in the prerequisite course); complete a lower level course with a grade specified (C,B,A); a specified class rank for the student (sophomore, junior, senior), or instructor's permission.

Course recommended prerequisite (Rec. Pr.): a requirement a student need not satisfy before enrolling in the course, but recommended in order to enhance the student's learning of the course material.

Corequisite (Coreq.): a concurrent requirement (course, practicum, etc.), which must be completed at the same time, during the same session, as the course with which it is listed as a corequisite.

Course prerequisite or corequisite (Pr. or Coreq.): a requirement of one or more courses in which a student should either complete with the appropriate grade prior to enrolling in this course, or take concurrently with this course.

## **ATTACHMENT 4**

### **Proposed Change in University Handbook**

#### **Background**

In 1996 the Board of Regents adopted a policy requiring that prospective faculty members and graduate teaching assistants have their language capability assessed. Minimum scores on the TSE or SPEAK test were established. Faculty members or graduate teaching assistants who scored below this minimum could not be appointed without spoken English language remediation. Changes in the scoring standards of the TSE/SPEAK test combined with the results of a Legislative Audit conducted of all Regents' institutions in Fall 2004 lead the Board of Regents to modify this policy. The proposed changes to C22.2 of the University Handbook reflect the changes in the Board of Regents Policy.

#### **Current Policy**

C22.2 All prospective faculty members and graduate assistants will have their language capability assessed in accordance with Kansas Board of Regents' policies. Prospective faculty members found to be potentially deficient will be required to achieve prescribed minimum scores on the TSE or SPEAK. The Regents' policy provides that the minimum score for appointment is 240. Individuals must have scored at or above the prescribed minimum on the SPEAK, to be appointed without spoken English language remediation conditions. (BOR 6-27-96)

#### **Proposed Policy**

C22.2 All prospective faculty members and graduate teaching assistants will have their spoken English competency assessed in accordance with Kansas Board of Regents' policies. Prospective faculty members are to have such an assessment performed on a face-to-face basis at the time of the on-campus interview or by mediated means in the instance of telephone interviews. Graduate teaching assistants will have such an assessment interview performed upon their arrival for their first semester on campus. An oral interview is to be conducted by no fewer than three institutional personnel, one of whom shall be a student. Prospective teaching personnel found to be potentially deficient in speaking ability will be required to achieve a minimum score of 50 on the Test of Spoken English (TSE) or the Speaking Proficiency English Assessment Kit (SPEAK) in order to be appointed to teaching responsibilities without first completing spoken English language remediation. (BOR 1-19-05; BOR 6-27-96)

## ATTACHMENT 5

### Guidelines for assessing spoken English language competency

#### General features of speech to assess:

Vocabulary/Grammar/Fluency  
Loudness/Rapidity of Speech  
Enunciation  
Clarity of Expression  
Skill in Explaining Concepts

**A score of 50 or better on the SPEAK test is necessary to demonstrate spoken English competency. The following are features on the SPEAK test that correspond to scores of 50 and scores of 60.**

#### Score of 50:

Speaker exhibits the following traits with regard to selection of vocabulary, control of grammatical structure, accurate pronunciation, and delivery:

- Errors are not unusual, but rarely major
- Accent may be slightly distracting
- There is some range in grammatical structure and vocabulary, which may be slightly distracting
- Delivery is generally smooth, with hesitancy and pauses

Communication is generally effective; tasks are performed competently, little listener effort is required

- Speaker is able to select reasonable language for the task
- Speaker generally uses appropriate response to audience/situation
- Response is generally coherent, with generally clear, logical organization, adequate development and some effective use of cohesive devices (e.g. however, therefore, after that, nevertheless, etc.)
- Speaker uses linguistic features that are generally effective; communication is generally not affected by errors

#### Score of 60:

Speaker exhibits the following traits with regard to selection of vocabulary, control of grammatical structure, accurate pronunciation, and delivery:

- Errors not noticeable
- Accent not distracting
- Range in grammatical structure and vocabulary
- Delivery often has native-like smoothness

Communication is almost always effective; tasks are performed very competently, almost no listener effort is required

- Speaker is highly skillful in selecting appropriate language for the task
- Speaker uses appropriate response to audience/situation
- Response is coherent, with logical organization, clear development and effective use of cohesive devices
- Speaker uses linguistic features that are almost always effective; communication is not affected by minor errors

Note: A score of 60 does not mean that the person must speak perfectly with absolutely no accent. It means that the minor language problems do not interfere with communication at all.