Ensuring Successful International Teaching Assistants (ITAs)

Dyanne Foskey
Western Michigan University, dyanne.foskey@wmich.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/instructional-development-grants

Part of the Higher Education Commons

WMU ScholarWorks Citation
https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/instructional-development-grants/31

This Poster is brought to you for free and open access by the Office of Faculty Development at ScholarWorks at WMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Instructional Development Grants by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu.
Ensuring Successful International Teaching Assistants (ITAs)
Dyanne Foskey, MA TESOL
Center for English Language and Culture for International Students (CELCIS)
Funded by Instructional Development Grant

To ensure the success of both the ITAs and their students, various types of training and support are needed.

More than Just Language – 4 Take-A-Ways

1. Training

   **Issue:** ITAs may be unfamiliar with the expectations for their role and unfamiliar with their peers.

   **Solution 1:** Summer Prep Program
   - Taught through one or all of these:
     - ESL programs
     - Graduate College
     - Center for Teaching Excellence
   - Allows ITAs to become familiar with the expectations, as Solution 1, but with the added pre-departure convenience.
   - Allows for ITAs to form connections with their peers
   - Can follow up with ITAs during the academic year with required and optional workshops on teaching and language use

2. Facilitating Discussions

   **Issue:** This type of classroom activity may be unfamiliar to some ITAs due to the format of teaching in their home countries.

   **Solution 1:** Provide specific instruction on expectations of American students
   - Familiarize ITAs with Generation Z expectations
   - Provide common strategies used in facilitating discussions, such as language use for:
     - changing the topic
     - backchanneling
     - summarizing

   **Solution 2:** Provide tips for common situations that occur in discussions, such as:
   - students who dominate the group
   - students who don’t participate
   - students who haven’t completed their homework prior to class

   **Solution 3:** Provide workshops that have undergraduate volunteers who are “students” for the ITAs to practice their strategies
   - undergraduates could earn service learning credit for participating

3. Utilizing Authentic ITA Teaching Videos

   **Issue:** Most instructional videos used for ITA Training are staged by professional actors and are outdated.

   **Solution:** ITA Programs collect authentic videos of ITAs in the classroom/lab. We can have a central location for all to use, including transcripts/worksheets for discussion during training.
   - problems and their solutions
   - language used to resolve problems

4. Repairing for Virtual Office Hours

   **Issue:** This format for holding office hours is becoming more common at American universities; therefore, ITAs need information and support on how to hold virtual office hours. It holds unique challenges and opportunities for ITAs and their students.

   **Solution 1:** Provide information about various platforms used for this
   - Blue Jeans
   - Zoom
   - Google Hangouts
   - Photo Booth (MAC)

   **Solution 2:** Reveal typical challenges ITAs may encounter
   - inappropriate discussions
   - informal / unprofessional language

---

**Sources**

TESOL International: The World Comes Together, March 27-30, 2018, Chicago IL

Aritzeln, Z., Meyers, C., Samuel, D., and Stetsenka, E. “Helping ITAs Successfully Facilitate Discussions Across Disciplines.”

Chiesa, D., Cortes, V., Oreto, R., and Yousuf, S. “Empowering International Teaching Assistants through Research.”


Feak, C. and Imber, B. “Virtual Office Hours and Support for ITAs.”

Pitillo, A. and Bogart, P. “Language, Culture, and Community Online: Preparing International Students for Success.”

Pollock, P. “Beyond Language: Broadening Our Views of ITAs and Their Needs.”


Samuel, D. and Suhadac, S. “Utilizing Authentic ITA Teaching Videos: Collaborating Across Universities.”

**Contact Information**

Dyanne Foskey, Language Specialist
Center for English Language and Culture for International Students (CELCIS)
Ellsworth Hall
Western Michigan University
1903 W. Michigan Avenue
Kalamazoo, MI 49008
dyanne.foskey@wmich.edu
(269) 387-4800