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

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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 the campus.

Solution 1: Summer Prep Program on-site

- Taught through one or all of these:
  - **ESL programs**
  - **Graduate College**
  - **Center for Teaching Excellence**
- **Allows ITAs to become familiar with campus**
- **Allows ITAs to become familiar with their duties and the expectations prior to teaching**
- **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**

Solution 2: Online 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 for 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.Reparing 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 hold 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

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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

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