

Effectively Utilizing Undergraduates in ITA Classrooms

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TRAINING UNDERGRADUATES

Meeting with Undergrads

- Orientation
 - Policies and procedures
 - Resources: handbook and online
 - Language and cross-cultural training (see below)
- Mid-semester check-in
 - Continue language and cross-cultural training (see below)
- Debriefing
 - Feedback from ITAs and instructors

Language Training

- Establish an “unsympathetic” filter
 - Listen to a sample of ITA speech
 - Distinguish between discreet phonemic issues and communication interference
- Suprasegmentals
 - Stress, rhythm, and intonation basics
 - Activities: role play, storytelling, discussion, etc.
- How to model language for ITAs
 - Exaggerated stress
 - Descriptive language
 - Use of transitions
 - Conclusions

Cross-Cultural Training

- Inter-cultural communication
 - Experiences with other cultures
 - Avoiding assumptions
 - Establishing boundaries
- Campus culture
 - Improve ITAs’ knowledge of Cornell undergraduates
 - Help ITAs to be more comfortable speaking English
 - Practice slang and idioms

Classroom Expectations of Undergrads

- Give honest feedback
- Take notes
- Provide concrete language criticism
- Ask complex questions
- Don’t take over the activity
- Avoid blanket statements
- Give an undergraduate perspective

UNDERGRADUATE ROLES/DUTIES IN CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Microteaching

- Give undergraduate perspective: asking questions, participating
- Give feedback
 - on teaching
 - on language
 - on cultural issues/interaction/general communication
- Record and/or time lesson
- Give visual signals to assist in monitoring

Class Discussion

- Give undergraduate perspective: asking and answering questions, participating
- Record and/or time discussion
- Play devil's advocate

Other Classroom Activities

- Monitor students in small groups or pairs
 - immediate verbal feedback
 - written feedback (sticky notes work well for delayed feedback)
 - visual signals (hand signal, flash card, sign)
- Pushing language to higher level (if activity is completed early, continue giving prompts for more English practice, e.g. compare this to another activity you did in your lab, tell me about a specific time when this was an issue in class.)
- Moderate debates (or participate as debater if needed to balance teams)
- Perform in role plays

Conversation Hour

- Prepare discussion topics and questions
- Facilitate discussion, form small groups, assign discussion "leaders"
- Give feedback to ITAs
- Provide information as needed (cultural, academic, vocabulary, undergrad perspective)
- Take and report attendance
- Prepare topic-relevant icebreakers, games and communicative activities

OTHER WAYS TO UTILIZE UNDERGRADUATES

- Record undergraduates being interviewed, telling stories, making comparisons. etc. and post video/audio files on course website. These can be used for listening practice, mimicking practice, vocabulary building, etc.
- Review student blogs/podcasts for student life information, vocabulary, language samples
- Have undergrads visit ITAs teaching in sections, record a lesson, give feedback
- Meet one-on-one with ITAs

WHAT ITAS WANT FROM UNDERGRADUATE LANGUAGE CONSULTANTS

- Chatting and forcing me to monitor. When I have to think and monitor vs. having a script it is much harder to monitor. Role play, talk about the language used, give feedback. Do the same thing more than once and try to focus on different things. Pronunciation or intonation practice and correction.
- Have me practice my presentations for my work or class. Work on building and switching vocabulary or expressions as well as pronunciation and intonation. Do it a couple of times so I can practice different things.
- Practice intonation and pronunciation using a short article or a couple of paragraphs from the manual or newspaper. Discuss the vocabulary and then talking about the article using the new vocabulary. Practice the same sample trying to give a summary or use emotion.
- Practice on past tense. Practice on storytelling and trying to have details and descriptions with paragraphs and connectors. Maybe telling the story multiple times to work on the harder stuff.
- Talking about a huge range of topics helps me to build fluency and vocabulary. Trying to come up with more words that mean the same thing and changing those common words around to new ones is very useful.
- Explain something about my field is very helpful. Try to understand me and help me to improve my pronunciation and intonation and how to explain more clearly. I should be able to explain something at least three different ways and use real life examples.
- Talk about "what happened last week", which practices past tense. Talk about daily life. Talk about these things again and try to use connectors and descriptors.
- Role playing and talking about typical things I may have to do: going to a hospital, a dinner, to a party, out for a drink, etc. Talk about typical things that the LC does and role play those. Helps me to understand Cornell culture and undergraduates' life more.
- Building my vocabulary. Taking a field trip. Talking about the architecture on campus, going to the art museum and asking me to describe everything that I see in detail.
- Always corrects my words and pronunciation. Make me explain my research in detail and in summary. Ask me lots of questions when you don't understand. Make me explain what my jargon meant. Corrected my pronunciation, intonation, grammar, time frames and sentences.