

CTL Bulletin

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A bi-weekly information sheet by the Center for Teaching and Learning

New CTL Member – New CTL Services

We would like to introduce a new service area the CTL provides to the campus and with it the newest member of our CTL team, Dr. Kate Hahn. Kate joined the CTL in January of this year. She has ten years experience teaching non-native English speakers at the college level and training ESL teachers. Kate earned a Masters in Teaching English as a Second Language and a Ph.D. in Second Language Acquisition from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Kate's expertise in the area of non-native English speakers opens new possibilities for CTL offerings. In particular, the CTL now offers

- workshops
- one-on-one consultations, and
- customized workshops

on how to make teaching more effective for non-native English speakers and how to make best use of writing assignments in courses across the curriculum

Two **workshops** on the topics of "Issues in Teaching Non-Native English Speakers" and "Responding to the Writing of Non-Native English Speakers" are offered this semester. The workshops are open to faculty members and instructors across the campus. The next dates for these workshops are April 7 and 12, 1-4pm (see detailed announcement at: <http://www.neiu.edu/~ctl/>).

Kate is available for **one-on-one consultations** with faculty members and instructors seeking information and guidance on pedagogical practices for teaching non-native English speakers or incorporating writing assignments to courses.

Customized workshops are offered to departments seeking presentations tailored to meet their individual needs concerning teaching non-native English speakers and utilizing writing assignments. Possible topics for these workshops might include

- 10 Tips for Creating Good Writing Assignments
- Strategies for Increasing Non-Native English Speakers' Comprehension
- Planning and Responding to Writing Assignments Without Losing Your Mind or,
- customized versions of the open workshops.

Suggestions for Helping Non-Native English Speakers

The suggestions below are a sampling of general tips related to helping non-native English speakers in the classroom.

1. Gather information about who *your* students are. Get to know your students, their goals, and their language diversity via a simple questionnaire at the start of the semester.

2. Be explicit with your students about time. Clearly state in writing your policies on attendance, tardiness, and what constitutes a late assignment.
3. Be aware of potential cultural differences in communication. Culturally driven verbal and non-verbal communication can create misunderstandings.
4. Provide outlines of your lectures during the lecture to aid listening comprehension. Outlines can be provided on the board during the lecture and posted online following a class meeting for students to reference when studying.
5. Put important terms on the board even if they seem simple to you. Terms could be listed on an overhead transparency or the board before you begin teaching and then simply referred to during the class to aid comprehension and note-taking.
6. Repeat important information in different ways to counter possible listening comprehension or note-taking problems. Do not simply repeat things verbatim. Rather, present important concepts with different language, and in both oral and written formats.
7. Check for understanding of lectures and reading assignments. Utilize short quizzes, written summaries, or simple comprehension questions that students answer via a Blackboard discussion board.
8. Provide written versions of all assignments. Provide handouts separate from the syllabus that detail all components of the assignment. Post the same information online.
9. Utilize group work and pair work to aid comprehension. Have students discuss questions in small groups before open class discussion, require students to provide feedback to a partner on a draft of a written assignment, or create cohorts within your class.
10. Give students multiple opportunities to speak in class. Require students to make a short, formal presentation. Create informal small group discussion tasks.
11. Do not plan reading assignments based on how much you can read. Give students enough time to accomplish reading by providing all reading assignments for the semester on the syllabus or the reading assignments for an entire unit on a handout.
12. Make students accountable for reading material. Utilize mini-quizzes, informal journal entries, or Blackboard discussion board questions. Each student could be required to present the content of one reading assignment – less lecturing for you!
13. Introduce more and different types of writing assignments to your courses.
14. Think about what level of writing you expect from your students. Be clear with students about what is expected from them in terms of both content and language, and describe the types of feedback that you will provide for each assignment.
15. Provide students with language models (that you create) of the format and level of writing and speaking that you expect in class.

For further information on workshops, consultations, or the suggestions listed here, contact Kate Hahn at mk-hahn@neiu.edu or 442-4490, or call our office assistant, Diane Gritton, at 442-4467.

All CTL Bulletins are available on our website at: <http://www.neiu.edu/~ctl/>