## Workshop 1: “Here’s the book”: Challenges for the Teaching Assistant

Lesson Plan

This workshop should last for around an hour and a half. However, the timings specified on this plan are approximate – you may wish to spend more or less time on discussion, explanations etc.

You may either use the handouts which are supplied with this workshop, or alternatively all the handout information can be read from the PowerPoint provided.

Aims and objectives of the workshop as a whole can be found on the [LANGSNAP website](http://generic.wordpress.soton.ac.uk/langsnapguides/), alongside additional materials and supplementary teaching activities.

Stage: Eliciting and reinforcing common beliefs (PowerPoint slides 1-4)

Activity: Student review information available via the British Council as well as presenting their own expectations and beliefs about the scheme

Aim: To contrast students’ own expectations and understanding of the teaching assistant scheme with the information given by organisers, and to reflect on any differences/similarities between the two.

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| Time | Classroom Arrangement | Procedure | Materials |
| 5-7 mins3-5 mins | Student-studentStudent-teacher reporting | Show slide 2 and ask students in pairs to make a list of 3-5 reasons why this type of scheme would be a good option for someone thinking about spending a year abroad.Collect their thoughts, discussing each reason mentioned as you create a list. |  |
| 3-4 mins | Teacher-student discussion | Project the list of benefits on slide 3, taken from the Voice Magazine by the British Council. How does this list compare to the reasons students mentioned? |  |
| 9-10 mins3-4 mins | Student-studentStudent-teacher reporting | Show students slide 4 which contains some questions for students to discuss in pairs.Summarise responses as a class.NotesSome examples that will be discussed later in the workshop will confirm many of the assertions on slide 4 can be true, but it is important to highlight they don’t happen automatically. This workshop has the purpose to give them some strategies they can apply to maximize the opportunities the scheme offers.You may wish to highlight/bring up the next issue, as it leads into the next stage of the workshop:-Is the English classroom the place for the assistant to learn the local language? -What impact do you think this would have in your linguistic improvement?  |  |

Stage: Questioning common beliefs (PowerPoint slides 5-6)

Activity: Students comment on promotional materials from the British Council scheme, particularly with regards to language learning, and compare this with quotes taken from the students in the LANGSNAP project.

Aim: To illustrate the most common beliefs surrounding language learning and teaching assistantships, and to question whether there is enough evidence to hold this view, often observe amongst students, ML staff and even promotional literature/websites.

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| Time | Classroom Arrangement | Procedure | Materials |
| 3 mins2-3 mins | Video watchingTeacher-student discussion | Before playing the video or projecting the quote on slide 5, ask students to pay special attention to what Sally Gascoigne says about the impact of the TA scheme on her linguistic improvement.Play the video, 2’13” (note: switch to slide show view and click on the image to access the original video).After students have watched the video, present the quote and discuss with students. Do they agree with this statement? Gather their thoughts. | British Council, 2013. [*British Council Language Assistants: Sally Gascoigne*.](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UP7s6-7OmS8) Accessed 21 December 2015. |
| 1-2 mins5-6 mins | Teacher-student discussion | Introduce the qualitative data from the LANGSNAP project on slide 6. Explain the quotes come from students preparing to spend a period of nine months abroad.Do students agree with these opinions? Are these their worries too? Is there anything else they worry about or are any of these aspects something they don’t worry about at all? Gather their thoughts. | [[Original Quote: 152aNTV](http://langsnap.soton.ac.uk/330/)][[Original Quote: 121aAGM](http://langsnap.soton.ac.uk/954/)][[Original Quote: 106bKMcM](http://langsnap.soton.ac.uk/413/)][[Original Quote: 151aNTV](http://langsnap.soton.ac.uk/278/)] |

Stage: Providing information and questioning common beliefs (PowerPoint slides 7-10)

Activity: The teacher introduces quantitative data from the LANGSNAP project about the relationship between placement type and linguistic improvement.

Aim: To question the folk belief that prevails amongst students and ML staff regarding which scheme is better for linguistic development.

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| Time | Classroom Arrangement | Procedure | Materials |
| 8-10 mins | Teacher-student | Present the data on slides 7-10, which outlines the methodology and findings of the LANGSNAP research project, which show no statistically significant difference between placement types. | LANGSNAP research website: <http://langsnap.soton.ac.uk/> |

Stage: Raising awareness (PowerPoint slides 11-17)

Activity: Students explore the role of a TA

Aim: To contrast the ‘official’ description of the TAs’ activities available on the BC website with academic research on the topic, including LANGSNAP data.

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| Time | Classroom Arrangement | Procedure | Materials |
| 5-7 mins | Teacher-student | Read through the list of duties for an English Language Assistant on slide 12, and the two quotes from Giraud-Johnstone (13-14). | Giraud-Johnstone. 2012. “Assessing the Work Placement Abroad”. *Scottish Languages Review.* SCILT25, 19-28.British Council. 2105. [‘What will I do?’ Become a Language Assistant](https://www.britishcouncil.org/language-assistants/become/what-will-i-do). Accessed: 22/12/2015. |
| 4-5 mins | Teacher-student | On slide 16, the teacher compares the statements from different sources which appear to contradict each other, highlighting the fact that what is stipulated by the placement organiser may not be what is actually experienced by students during their placement. |  |
| 3-4 mins | Teacher-student Teacher-student discussion | Show the quotes on slide 17 to the students. Explain they come from more interviews with LANGSNAP participants, who were interviewed whilst they were abroad.Are they surprised? Gather their thoughts after showing them both quotes. | [[Original Quote: 151bNTV](http://langsnap.soton.ac.uk/282/)][[Original Quote: 180cPRM](http://langsnap.soton.ac.uk/102/)] |

Stage: Planning together (PowerPoint slides 18-21)

Activity: Students discuss strategies to cope with possible scenarios which could happen in the role as a TA.

Aim: To allow students to think of possible strategies for overcoming issues at work instead of first being provided with them by the workshop convenor.

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| Time | Classroom Arrangement | Procedure | Materials |
| 5-7 mins | Student-studentStudent-teacher reporting | Project the email on slide 19.Ask students to think about 2-3 possible solutions/suggestions they could give to the author of this email in pairs.What could students have done before their departure to prepare for scenarios such as this? Gather their thoughts to come up with a strategy and alternative(s). |  |
| 5-7 mins | Student-studentStudent-teacher reporting | Project and read the second scenario, taken from an interview with a student whilst abroad.Ask students again to think of 2-3 possible suggestions/solutions in pairs, and preparations that could be made now for this type of situation.**Notes:**You may want/need to clarify this is different from the last case, because this is a language class (not Science). Here the main challenge is learning you’ll teach a lesson a minute before the class starts. Gather their thoughts | [[Original Quote: 174cNTV](http://langsnap.soton.ac.uk/389/)] |
| 3-4 mins | Student-teacher discussion | Using responses to both case studies, create a list of strategies together  |  |

Stage: A balanced view (PowerPoint slides 22-29)

Activity: The class explores positive opinions expressed by returning students who discussed their views towards the end of their period abroad.

Aim: To help students see that it is natural to develop negative/pessimistic feelings towards the host culture of their life abroad. Statistically, the experience as a whole seems to improve after a half point (for the LANGSNAP participants who stayed for 9 months, the break-through was invariably “after Christmas”

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| Time | Classroom Arrangement | Procedure | Materials |
| 5 mins | Teacher-student | Show students the email and interview quotes on slides 23-25.**Note:**The conclusion to be reached here is that the process of adaptation takes months and changes and is cyclical, it is not something which happens in the first few weeks of arriving in the new country. | [[Original Quote: 167eNTV](http://langsnap.soton.ac.uk/350/)] |
| 3 mins | Teacher-student | Go through the top tips on slide 27, which summarises many of the key mental preparations a student must take for becoming an English language assistant.Slide 28 contains some more practical guidance for teaching itself. |  |

NOTE: Please refer to the tutor’s notes accompanying this presentation on the [LANGSNAP website](http://generic.wordpress.soton.ac.uk/langsnapguides) to find a few follow-up activities students could develop on their own time as homework. They could also be used as preparation for a follow-up seminar to this workshop.

We hope you found this guide useful.

*Dr Patricia Romero de Mills and the Langsnap team.*