



TUTOR CONNECTIONS

June 2017

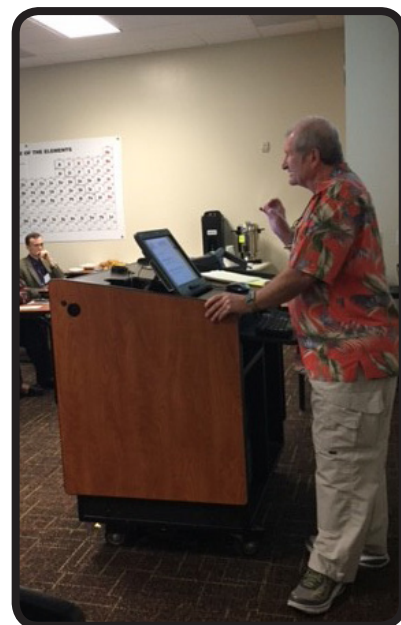
Volume 2, Issue 2



GATA'S SOCIAL MEDIA

SAVE THE DATE
15th Annual GaTA Conference
Middle Georgia State University
Saturday, October 21, 2017
8:30 AM - 4:30 PM

<http://georgiatutoringassociation.org/>



Pictures from Train-the-Trainer 2017

A PRESIDENT'S WELCOME

Greetings GaTA Members,

The 15th Annual Georgia Tutoring Association (GaTA) Conference will be held on Saturday, October 21, 2017, at Middle Georgia State University in Macon, Georgia. This year's theme is "Macon a Difference: The Role of Tutoring in Higher Education."

We want to start early, so let your colleagues know about the advantages of joining GaTA and attending this fun and action-packed conference. The conference is a great way to network with colleagues from across the state and to gain new insights into the world of tutoring. However, WE NEED YOU in order to make the conference a success!

Soon we will ask for your proposals for presentations. We are excited to hear about and see all of the wonderful innovative work that is going on in tutoring centers throughout the state. Please consider becoming a presenter for one or two of our workshop sessions. If you are not sure about presenting, then consider sharing how your tutoring program works at your college, the obstacles you have encountered, or the secrets of running a successful program. Your expertise is definitely needed; therefore, encourage your tutors to present.

So mark your calendars for October 21, 2017, and plan to attend. Stay connected with us through our newsletter, our webpage, our mailing list, and through social media. If you need additional information, please contact me or any board member.

Happy Tutoring!

Kimberley Sloan
GaTA President

2017 TRAIN-THE-TRAINER

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GaTA's Annual Train-the-Trainer Conference took place on Friday, February 24, 2017, at Georgia State University, Perimeter College, on the attractive, high-tech Newton Campus. Thirty-seven members attended, beginning the day with continental breakfast and a meet and-greet, followed by a GaTA administrator get-together and a break for lunch between the following workshops:

- Ideas and Resources for Tutoring Center Administrators, offered by Dr. Alan Craig, Director (retired), Georgia Perimeter College Learning & Tutoring Center
- The Quick and Dirty Guide to Certifying Your Center, presented by Rebecca Cofer, Coordinator, Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College Academic Achievement Center
- 4 Generations in the Workplace & Higher Education, led by Dr. Lizann Gibson, Supervisor, Georgia State University, Perimeter College, Alpharetta Learning & Tutoring Center



We had fun while gaining valuable information and fresh ideas—center administrators, plan to join us in 2018!

HELPING ESL STUDENTS

By Emily Thompson, Professional Tutor
Academic Enhancement Center, Georgia Gwinnett College

Kim* doesn't stand out in my memory because she was my first ESL student. No. I remember her because Kim stormed into our tutoring center angry. Furious. I sat across from Kim with a calming smile. "What seems to be the problem?" I asked.

She slapped a pile of marked-up essays onto the table in front of me. "I don't understand your stupid articles! Why is your language so stupid?" Her thick accent was no mask for her righteous indignation.

"Well, in fairness, I didn't invent the language," I joked. "So, you're having trouble with 'a,' 'an,' and 'the'?"

Kim sank into her chair. She explained how she knew "a" and "the" were both singular but that she was apparently not using them correctly. I took a few minutes to draw a chart and guided her through some examples. She seemed so much more relaxed after that. Then, she frowned.

"I feel so stupid in my English class," she admitted.

"English is a difficult language. Articles are hard for lots of people."

"But no one else could explain them for me. My professor, other tutors. They all think I'm stupid because my English isn't good."

"They don't think you're stupid. Articles are just hard to explain. We, native English speakers I mean, have been using them all the time since we were babies. We don't usually think about them."

*Name has been changed.

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Kim sighed. “Then how am I supposed to get better?”

That question stuck with me.

Like the articles Kim struggled with, these are just grammatical conventions that native speakers do not relearn in their typical English classes. We have internalized the rules from years and years of exposure. In order to really help ESL students, it behooves us as English tutors to get more familiar with our native language. We need to learn about it as a foreign language with rules that are logical, explainable, and not just “the way English is.”

Puzzling Together English Grammar: A Tip for Tutoring ESL Students

Imagine that you have been tasked with solving a puzzle. You have the picture on the box to guide you, and you know to look for the corner and edge pieces before you get started. As you get closer and closer to finishing your puzzle, however, you start to notice something. Every time you put a piece down, your picture starts to change so that it looks nothing like the one on the box. Even worse, some of the pieces you need to complete the puzzle are missing. How frustrating would that be?

In my example above, the picture on the box is the idea in the speaker or writer’s mind. The one thing that all speakers want is to communicate their ideas clearly. Learning a foreign language is a lot like learning to solve a puzzle. At the end of the day, constructing a sentence is just finding a way to connect a subject, a verb, and maybe an object. Adjectives, adverbs, and prepositional phrases connect in just the right places to the words they modify. If you know the grammar rules, you can put any random group of words together to make a lovely sentence and share your ideas. However, if you put all the words you know in the wrong order or use the wrong tense, the image you create in the listener’s mind is going to be nothing like what you imagined.

To help your students fill in these gaps, take the time to learn a little bit about the foreign languages they speak. You don’t have to be fluent by any stretch of the imagination, but knowing how English grammar is different from your students’ first languages is important. It can help you empathize when students struggle with a concept, and being able to say, “I know that your language doesn’t do this, but in English, we...” is a great starting point for scaffolding.

More Tips for Helping ESL Writers

- 1. Take some time to learn about English as a language.** The difference between an ESL student and a native speaker when it comes to grammar is the difference between a person solving a puzzle versus a musician listening for a discordant note. ESL students struggle to tell that something “sounds wrong,” but they will happily let you explain the grammar rules to them so they don’t mess up again.
- 2. Read student papers aloud.** This strategy has many benefits. First, ESL students who struggle with pronunciation and tend to write how they speak may be able to hear their errors and tell you what they meant to say. Secondly, this allows you to read the text and hesitate or inflect your voice like a question if the student is not able to notice the errors by pronunciation alone.
- 3. Help the student understand the difference between “having bad grammar” and “being a bad student.”** ESL students want to be understood and to communicate their ideas clearly. They may feel stupid or slow when you, their professor, peers, or friends point out their grammar mistakes. Remind them of their strengths even as you help them work on improving their weaknesses

- 4. Be aware of cultural differences.** In some cultures, people avert their eyes to show respect and make eye contact only to threaten or intimidate. In others, it is a mark of shame to lose face by asking a question when one doesn't understand. In still others, people show they are engaged in a conversation by slouching and being comfortable. Keep lines of communication open with your students so that you can both bridge that cultural gap.
- 5. Don't be afraid to admit when you're stumped.** ESL students often assume that their native speaker or fluent speaker tutors have every little aspect of English memorized. Letting students see that even experts have trouble and showing them the strategies that you use to overcome your struggles are important in any tutoring session.

ALL QUIET ON THE TUTORING FRONT...OR IS IT?

By Rebecca Cofer, Coordinator
Academic Achievement Center, ABAC



We all hear from our students as they are preparing to leave for the summer, "What are you doing for the break?" It's just natural for students to think that since they're gone for the summer, the tutoring center is out of commission during this time as well. As so many tutoring professionals can attest, though, summer is a busy time for most staff in higher education as we prepare for another busy and successful academic year just around the corner.

Many tutoring center staff members are on twelve-month contracts, so it is anything but quiet for these individuals. The summer usually does mean a quieter, more laid-back work environment, though. During the summer months, my own center uses the lower student numbers to do technology updates, complete a deep cleaning of the center, and prepare for tutor training in the fall semester. A large number of centers, like my own, are open twelve months out of the year, including during the hazy, hot summer months in South Georgia. It can get somewhat boring and even monotonous to come to work on these summer days, but GaTA members have some ideas to keep you productive. From one tutoring professional to another, here are some tips for surviving the summer months and making the most out of the decreased student traffic.

1. Plan, plan, plan and then plan some more!
 - Use any downtime by laying out your fall tutor training schedules, feeling free to contact any campus departments about guest talks now before they get super busy.
2. Get moving when possible.
 - A walk around campus, or in the campus rec center, may be just what you need to refocus your day and your mind.
3. Reconnect with campus departments.
 - I use the summer months to meet with campus departments and continue to strengthen those partnerships that help my center so much. Maybe this means discussing funding options with your office of college advancement or speaking with a financial aid rep to go over work-study options for the upcoming semester—whichever department it is, use your time to schedule those much-needed meetings.

4. Take those vacations!

- We all can tend to feel guilty taking those hard-earned vacation days, but now is the time to give yourself much-needed breaks. Trust me, it makes us better tutoring staff members to give ourselves some time to recover from a long semester.

5. Keep in touch with your tutors over the break.

- I use summer time to send formal invitations to tutor training for all returning and new tutors. Not only do these reminders help the tutors keep in mind important dates, they also give the trainings a feeling of a fun event only certain students are invited to each semester. I also utilize social media to keep in touch with the neat things my tutors are doing during the break. Creating a great center culture requires maintaining relationships even when the tutors are not in classes.

6. Professional orgs need help too!

- GaTA board members can tell you that we truly value our members who volunteer their time to help the association continue to progress. Use your summer months to volunteer for a new committee or group within your favorite professional organization. Let's give back to the organizations that help us be better at our jobs.

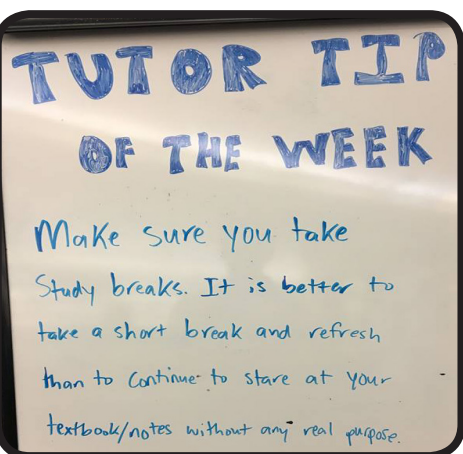
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KEEPING IT REAL AT THE SSC

Hey everyone! My name is AJ Dalal, and I'm the Macon Campus Academic Support Specialist at Middle Georgia State University's Student Success Center. My main duties here are tutoring students, primarily in General Chemistry I and II, and handling a variety of computer tasks. I have been tutoring for quite a while, working mainly with high school students. So this position was a natural fit, and I am really enjoying the work I do here.

One of the biggest tips I have is for all employees to keep their tutoring centers fun. We keep things pretty lively here on our campus in the following ways:



1. We keep a board at the entrance of our center with a fun tutor tip of the week.
2. We regularly talk to students walking in, keeping things light and fun.
3. To make the day more enjoyable, we often joke around with each other, trying to keep things not-too-serious. The students really enjoy this as well.
4. We conduct class visits at the beginning of each semester and toss out candy to students when they correctly answer questions about our center.

Practices like these help not only the tutors but also the students enjoy themselves more at the Student Success Center. Creating a welcoming and fun environment definitely benefits everyone.