



Teaching Linguistically Diverse Students Online

Linguistic diversity contributes to the richness of UniSA's learning and teaching environment. Language proficiency is central to students' learning, academic achievement and preparation for professional life, so it is important that our programs support its development (UniSA 2019).

Online students can come from anywhere. Although English as an Additional Language/Dialect (EALD) students can be present in our face-to-face classrooms, this diversity increases as the number of online students increase. So, what does all this diversity mean for the teacher? How does having EALD students impact the way that you teach, particularly when you are teaching online?

This *Guide* provides advice on how to develop your teaching approach, content, activities and assessment to better support students develop English language expertise when they are learning in our online courses.

Learning Community

Learning is a social activity, so it is important that you make all your students feel welcome and part of a learning community at the beginning of the course. Display a genuine interest in your students and their progress by starting one-on-one conversations with them using **Dialogue**. Encourage students to learn each other's names using a **Forum-based activity** in the first week (e.g. Arrival forum) and by updating their **learnonline profiles**. You can also find out more about your students before class starts by running an anonymous survey using the **Feedback** tool in Moodle or using a **Poll in Zoom**.

- **learnonline** help – [Dialogue](#)
- Online T&L Guide – [How do you look online?](#)
- Online T&L Guide – [Taking the temperature](#)

To maintain an online learning community a teacher needs to be 'present' in the website – that is, displaying a balance of cognitive, teaching and social presence ([Anderson 2008](#), p 343-365) through their



interactions with students. Cognitive presence relates to the critical thinking in relation to discipline-specific knowledge; teaching presence relates to a knowledge of the learning activities and what students need to do; and social presence is what is done to create a safe and supportive environment where students are motivated to engage in their learning with their peers. By being present, you encourage and support EALD students to engage linguistically in the course.

Delivery of online content

EALD students will have different levels of English language proficiency. For some, the pace of online lecture delivery in software such as Zoom may be challenging. Ideally, EALD students need to be able to see the words written as they are being spoken. We therefore recommend that you create **key concept presentations** of your content using PowerPoint with notes, then record and caption using Panopto and create a slides and notes handout for students as a printable document.

- Online T&L Guide - [Key concept presentations](#)
- learnonline Help – [View, auto-create and edit captions in Panopto](#)

In addition, you can add **comprehension questions** into your Panopto recording so students can test their understanding as they go.

- Online T&L Guide – [Making videos interactive with Panopto quizzes](#)

However, if you do need to give a **Zoom-based lecture presentation**:

- Where possible, post PowerPoint slides prior to scheduled class
- Record your session (with permission) and share the recording by uploading to the course's Panopto folder
- Begin your session with an outline of what will be covered
- Speak at a pace that allows time for notetaking and comprehension of content
- Use plain English and refrain from using idioms or slang
- Where possible, use visuals/diagrams to communicate key ideas



- Where possible, use breakout rooms to stimulate student discussion on a given topic/statement (pairs/groups)
- Allow students to ask questions using Chat during the session (if your class size is large, nominate another person (e.g. tutor or a strong student) to monitor the Chat for you and use the microphone to summarise their questions)
- Conclude by recapping key ideas and directing students to relevant resources.

Website-based EALD supports

There are several tools that you can use to support EALD students in their learning of content, that are based in the website – including communication tools, glossaries of key terms, quizzes and other interactive activities.

Ensure that students are aware that they can **ask questions** about the content by using tools such as **Forum** or **Dialogue**. This helps all learners to clarify any concepts that are not clear. If class sizes are large, then remember to break the groups up into smaller ones (15-20 per group) to minimise the amount of forum reading required of students.

- Online T&L Guide – [Working with large classes online](#)

Creating a **glossary of key terms** for a topic is another way to help EALD students increase their vocabulary. Although this can be simply an uploaded word document or webpage in your website, you can also create a glossary using the Moodle **Glossary** tool or use tools such as the **Accordion** in H5P to present key terms.

For example, in the short course *Engaging Learners Online*, a H5P accordion is used to reveal the definitions of key words by clicking on the term. You can add links (but not images) to your definition to your term in addition to text.



Week 3 Glossary Words - Activity

- ▼ **Constructive alignment (John Biggs)**

In constructive alignment, we start with the outcomes we intend students to learn, and align teaching and assessment to those outcomes.

Find out more <https://www.johnbiggs.com.au/academic/constructive-alignment/>
- > **Formative assessment**
- > **Summative assessment**
- > **Moodle assignment**
- > **Moodle rubric**

- learnonline help – [Glossary](#)
- H5P – [Accordion Tutorial](#)

To support EALD students build a robust vocabulary, they also need to be able to regularly self-test their comprehension and receive formative feedback on their performance. This allows them to detect and rectify any miscomprehensions. Therefore, for each concept being presented, create a ‘low stakes’ related **learning activity with embedded feedback** to support students’ self-testing of their learning and understanding of the course-related discourse.

- Online T&L Guide – [Fast feedback for online learners](#)

There are some tools available in H5P that specifically support the development of language-related activities. For example, **Speak the words** is a H5P interactive content type where students need to answer a question using speech. The marking happens via Google’s speech recognition engine. Also, **Dictation** is a H5P interactive content type where teachers record audio that students need to listen to and type in the words. To create a H5P, select **Add Activity/Resource > Interactive content** and select the H5P content type you would like to add.

You can also require students to communicate using speech in tools such as forums. The **Atto toolbar** allows students to record audio and/or

video directly within a forum. To switch your html editor to Atto you need to access your **Preferences > Editor preferences > Atto HTML editor**

- learnonline– [Preferences](#)

Then the audio and video recording buttons will appear in your toolbar when working in learn**online** (e.g. in forums, wikis, databases).



Select either audio or video and make a recording (limit 2 minutes), check your work and then add the recording directly to your forum post.

If you need to make longer recordings, the **Audio Recorder** is a H5P interactive content type that can be embedded into the course website for students (and teachers) to quickly record speech that can be downloaded as an audio file. The Audio recorder can be coupled with a forum or database activity where students can compare their speech with model answers provided by you and with their peers.

- Online T&L Guide – [How does my work compare to my peers?](#)

Reading

Some EALD students may find reading challenging and so additional support is often required when teaching online. To develop reading capability the teacher needs to help students to become strategic in their reading by supporting them before, during and after they do a reading.

For example, **to prepare students for a complex reading**, you could record audio of yourself identifying key concepts that will be presented in the reading. You can support EALD students **during a reading** by showing them how to read strategically – emphasising that they do not always need to read cover to cover. **After the reading**, you can offer opportunities for students to test their understanding and activities to



test comprehension using tools such as H5P. For more examples see Strategies for developing reading capability guide.

- ELILT Guide – [Strategies for developing reading capability](#)
- Student support – [Reading efficiently video](#) (15:28)

Another strategy to support EALD students to read and understand the content is to source related material in their primary language.

Try to pace assigned readings evenly throughout the study period so that EALD students can keep up with the volume and time it takes to comprehend and respond to complex readings. Some course and program mapping tools for readings are available in the ELILT website.

- ELILT website – [Reading Resources](#).

Conclusion

The addition of linguistically diverse students in your online classroom is an opportunity to develop and improve your course website. In particular, online content, readings, assessment and learning activities can be incorporated to support students developing language skills required to be a successful professional. Creating a community of inquiry is an important first step in the process of getting students to engage. These changes will support all students to improve their learning outcomes.

If you would like to ask online teaching and learning questions related to your course, you can look through our [FAQs](#), write to TIU@unisa.edu.au, have an [online consultation with a member of the TIU](#) or complete the online modules as part of [Introduction to Engaging Learners Online](#).

References

UniSA 2019. *The English Language and Intercultural Learning and Teaching Framework*, University of South Australia,
<<https://lo.unisa.edu.au/course/view.php?id=17391#LL>> Accessed 18 August 2020.

Anderson, T 2008, Teaching in an online learning context, In *Theory and Practice of Online Learning*, 2nd Ed., Edmonton: AU Press, pp 343-365.