

Strategies for the Multilingual Classroom

The Minnesota English Language Program (MELP) provides faculty, instructors, and staff at the University of Minnesota with strategies to serve multilingual learners more effectively—in the classroom, in advising sessions, and through other exchanges.

Visit our resource website at <https://esl.umn.edu/teaching-support> to learn more.



Lecture Comprehension. Multilingual students may have difficulties understanding lecture content due to the speed of the lecturer, new vocabulary, idioms, cultural examples, and the use of humor. Tips to enhance students’s comprehension include:

- Use a moderate pace when speaking
- Repeat key words
- Explain new vocabulary, cultural references, and humor
- Suggest preview and review methods
- Provide visual support
- Post resources online

Discussion & Participation. A variety of factors may affect multilingual students’s participation in class, including different cultural norms, personality types, and anxieties about English proficiency. Multilingual students can benefit from:

- More time to process their opinions in pairs or small groups
- Clear guidelines about the types of contributions expected from students
- Options to express opinions in writing or on Moodle discussion forums

Reading. Comprehending new terms, understanding cultural examples, identifying the most important ideas, and critically reflecting on content are some of the key reading challenges that may slow multilingual students’s progress as they read. Provide students the following types of reading support:

- Make the goals of each reading assignment explicit
- Demonstrate how to read critically by annotating key texts as examples
- Explain cultural references
- Provide a reading guide with new terms and important questions to consider

Writing. When writing in a second language, multilingual students may experience difficulties with grammatical accuracy, finding vocabulary to explain their ideas, citing sources accurately, and adapting to the direct and linear communication style expected of academic writing in the US. To support students in writing more successfully, faculty can:

- Provide clear assignment instructions
- Explain grading criteria
- Demonstrate examples of effective writing for your discipline
- Encourage use of campus resources, including **Student English Language Support**, the **Center for Writing**, and **Peer Research Consultants**
- All of these resources and more are available at <http://esl.umn.edu/student-resources>

The Minnesota English Language Program (MELP) offers consultations for faculty and staff working with multilingual learners. To set up a consultation, please contact Bethany Peters, the ESL Faculty & Staff Liaison, at bethanyp@umn.edu.

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