

# Inclusive Teaching Strategies for Supporting EAL Students: Tune into Teaching

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## Anticipating multilingual students in the classroom:



Enrolment data<sup>1</sup> at the University of Toronto for the 2020 – 2021 academic year indicates that international undergraduate and graduate students (i.e. study permit holders) make up **25.9%** of the total student body across three campuses. This figure does not include additional student populations who are permanent residents and newcomers, first-in-the-family students, English as an additional language (EAL) users, and who count international study and work experiences outside of Canada.

Given the diverse backgrounds of many domestic and international students (e.g. multicultural, multilingual, multi-accented), intercultural teaching competence (ITC) is one avenue to consider supporting their learning needs. ITC identifies instructor approaches that are open to a variety of student communication styles; that create assessments validating different and non-linear writing formats; and that recognize barriers that students may face while participating<sup>2</sup>, to name a few.



Supporting EAL users in the classroom is also a key consideration as **64%** of international undergraduate students and **29%** of domestic undergraduate students at U of T speak a language other than English at home<sup>3</sup>.

## Inclusive teaching strategies to consider:

1. Challenge deficit mindsets by using inclusive terminology (e.g. “multilingual” over “non-native speaker”)
2. Validate the different languages and World Englishes in the classroom
3. Encourage students to be patient with each other, but also with themselves
4. Normalize – and incorporate – silence into the space
5. When facilitating discussions, establish expectations... but also alternatives
6. Monitor speed and pace when instructing to support accuracy of closed captioning (or invite synchronous student feedback)
7. Explicitly explain key terminology in rubrics about assignments and thereafter provide actionable feedback that does not focus only on language-based issues

## Additional online delivery considerations:

- Consider scheduling drop-ins or office hours at 9am (or past 6pm) and offering timed assessments over a 24-hour period.
- Encourage community agreements for teamwork by modelling your own.
- Integrate low stakes activities from the beginning to build confidence (e.g. anonymous Mentimeter polls)
- Invite different ways to participate outside of speaking (e.g. direct-messaging the facilitator) or add intentional pauses (e.g. reflective writing time) before placing students into breakouts.

<sup>1</sup> University of Toronto. (2021). *Quick facts*. <https://www.utoronto.ca/about-u-of-t/quick-facts>

<sup>2</sup> Dimitrov, N, et al. (2014). Developing the intercultural competence of graduate students. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education* (44)3, 86 – 103.

<sup>3</sup> Data from the National Survey of Student Engagement (2020) and the Multi-Institutional Survey of Leadership (2018)

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