Teaching Online - students who experience hearing loss

Ten Quick Tips

The DRC has developed the following ten tips, based on an ADCET resource[1], to enable quick access to information for teaching staff. Additional information has been added by the DRC and Deakin students.

Tip 1. Understanding hearing loss
There are many levels of hearing loss and many ways students identify. Deaf people (capital D) generally identify as part of the Deaf community and use AUSLAN as their primary communication mode. Some people identify as deaf (small d) to identify the severity of hearing loss. Others may identify as hard of hearing or hearing impaired. Students may use sign interpreters, cochlear implants, hearing aids, other assistive listening devices, and/or lip reading among other means to glean information. Some students are oral and some rely on sign to communicate and the interpreter will 'voice' for them.

Tip 2. Understanding Fatigue
Focusing on multiple forms of communication simultaneously is challenging and exhausting. Deaf/HoH students are often gleaning information from multiple sources and missing information can be a significant issue. Whilst a hearing person can look at notes, slides while still listening, A Deaf/HoH student will be missing interpreting/lipreading etc if they look to other sources of information. You may know the feeling of being in a loud, dimly lit restaurant and working hard to follow conversations. This is a tiny 'snapshot' of what it can be like trying to follow information for Deaf/Hoh students.

Tip 3. Understanding supports
There are various supports students may access in an online environment and this depends on both student preference and the platform used.

Start of trimester
- Pre -recorded captioned videos can be ready for showing in class/uploaded the Unit site WHEN material is provided to the Accessible Materials service at least one week prior to the teaching session. DeakinAir auto captioning rarely meets minimum accuracy requirements -it's useful if you can hear information and recognise mistakes – but not sufficient when the captions are your only source of input.
  NOTE: It is useful to search existing Deakin video databases (e.g. Kanopy) to explore if captioned content is already available for use.

The DRC Accessible Materials service is happy to be contacted to discuss any content you are planning to use in teaching sessions.

Real time
- Remote interpreting – the interpreters join the teaching session via a link.   The student may view the interpreters on one screen and watch the session on the other. Information is 'chunked' by interpreters into Auslan. The DRC organises this support.

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[1] A comprehensive and practical resource is available at ADCET: Guidelines – Supporting Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students Online (75 pages)

- Live Remote Captioning (LRC) – LRC enables students who are Deaf/HoH to access captions of speech in real time (like live captioning on TV). The DRC Accessible Materials service organises a captioner to have audio access to the teaching sessions and the captioner provides a typed feed to the student via a website the student logs into. A transcript is provided.

After class
- Notetaking – notetakers (or academic support workers) are employed by the DRC to provide notes to the student. Notetakers are provided access to the unit site and enter as a visitor. They should be identified as a Notetaker or ASW in platforms such as Zoom and MS teams e.g. Steve – notetaker. Notes are 'tidied' and sent to the student within 24 hours. Notetakers attempt to capture key information.
- Captions of Class recordings. When the class is recorded live, the Accessible Materials Service can add captions after the recording is available. This service has a turnaround of 2-4 days.
- Transcripts- a verbatim text record of the audio content. As above – a turnaround of several days before content is available for the student. This can impact preparation for class and assessments.

Tip 4. Preparatory materials
The provision of any resources/ preparatory materials wherever possible is <u>very helpful</u>. These materials can include things like lecture notes, lesson plans and discussion prompts. For students that use Auslan interpreters or live captioners, the early provision of materials enables the interpreter/captioner to be aware of terminology and key concepts thereby facilitating a quality and smooth interpretation. For students, the ability to pre-read content reduces some of the 'guess work' when following information in class. Early access also means there is reduced need to switch focus from the speaker to the slides as the student knows what to expect. Slides can be made available on the unit site or emailed to the student the day/s before class. Students can disseminate information directly to their support worker or agency – or send to the DRC for dissemination.

Tip 5. Time lag – an important issue to understand
In real time situations there is a 'time lag' while the third party is providing information e.g. captions or AUSLAN, meaning the student is at least seconds behind every other students in having information available. Consideration of time lag in accessing information is essential to consider when asking questions, moving onto a new topic etc. Considering ways you can build additional time or a reminder about 'time lag' into your teaching practice is recommended. It can also be useful for a range of students (CALD, international, neurodiverse students etc). Understanding time lag is essential if asking students to participate as they may need longer to answer as they have not yet received information about the question. Some students will prefer not 'being put on the spot' in case they have not had timely access to information. It can be helpful to check in with students about strategies that enable them to feel confident to participate in teaching sessions.

Tip 6. Break out rooms
- It is essential that any support staff (interpreters, live captioners and/or notetakers) are manually assigned to the breakout room **before** the student requiring support in order to provide access to information and to maintain confidentiality. Auto assigning groups or trying to allocate support workers later means the student's ability to participate in the group is significantly compromised or not possible.
- Consideration of time allocation is also useful e.g a 5 minute breakout room will likely mean speakers are rushed and therefore the quality of interpreting, captioning or lipreading will be impacted. This will also impact the student's opportunity to respond/contribute
- Breakout rooms are not recorded. If students are relying on captioned recordings there will be a need for one group to stay in the main presentation room as only that 'space' can be recorded.

Tip 7. Online etiquette

There are several tips that can aid a student being able to follow information during online classes and seminars

- It is beneficial for the main speaker to use an external microphone rather than the built-in computer mic. This generally significantly improves sound quality.
- One person to speak at a time – it is not possible to follow multiple speakers. In some platforms the 'raise hand' function can be used to manage speakers.
- All speakers to introduce themselves "eg Hi Lisa speaking and I think….."
- Wherever possible students have the camera on to facilitate following information and identifying speakers
- Remember the importance of short pauses – this gives everyone time to process information. Sometimes just a minute between key points is helpful. This will also give the interpreters and captioners time to catch up.
- Consider options for written chats in the seminar
- Consider the chat function to communicate directly with the student during the session to check they are following information or for the interpreter to check content
- If using Zoom, remember the student may have yourself and the interpreter 'pinned' on the screen so will be watching both. For more information about 'pinning' refer to this article on [Mashable Australia](#)
- Students may be watching live captions or interpreters on a different screen and miss some information in the chat. If commenting on posts it can be helpful to include more information. Rather than "Good point Jacob" it is helpful to provide a context "Jacob has posted a good point in the chat that suggest/explains/refers people to x,y or z". This is good inclusive teaching practice.
- Verbalise acronyms. For example say "using H-I-I-T-S we can increase students understanding..." (sounds like hits but means something different).   Interpreters can only translate what they hear and they may provide inaccurate information to the Deaf student

Tip 8. Interactive apps

The use of Kahoot, Mentimeter, Quizlet or other interactive apps are great for student engagement, but present challenges for Deaf/HoH students. Providing the question in written (and verbal) format will enable all students to access the question at the same time. The process of interpreting can mean the group has moved to the next question before a question is interpreted for a Deaf student. For students with a hearing loss – they may never have understood the question and will likely opt out of these activities if they cannot participate.

Tip 9. Summaries

Providing a written summary of key points is good practice and will assist all students to be clear about the outcomes they should achieve for a particular teaching session. This provides a' signpost' for Deaf/HoH students to know if they have missed key points. Engaging all student to provide feedback can be another method to compile a 'list' of important content covered that session.

Tip 10. The benefits of checking in

On campus it is often easier for students to consult with teaching staff as they have built a rapport and can communicate face to face. Online engagement can make it more challenging to ask questions as students often do not know peers or their teachers in the same way. Providing opportunities for check ins (interpreters can be arranged if needed) or inviting the student to make direct contact with you can be helpful in addressing concerns. It can be intimidating for students, particularly those with hearing loss, to post questions on discussion boards for all student to see as they may have misinterpreted information. Maintaining confidentiality and respecting dignity are important for us all to feel valued.