RMIT UNIVERSITY

Integrating language-focused activities in class

This tip sheet presents language-focused activities that aim to enhance the learning of concepts, reasoning and communication relevant to particular discourses. For further information on implementing the following strategies, contact the SLC.

Strategies	Metacognitive skills practices
1. Assist students to work together in groups to create a glossary of terms and concepts composed of both formal definitions, and examples of student informal use of terms, which they add to week by week	Discourse vocabulary and meta-linguistic skills maintenance
2. Discuss with students the language demands of the course; the idiosyncratic languages of your discourse Use examples.	Awareness of students' need to consciously address language demands of area
3. At start of the lecture, provide a list of new terms and discuss meanings. Discuss differences in everyday meanings and discourse meanings. Provide ongoing reinforcement.	Mapping of concepts, exploring relationships between terms
4. Give students opportunities to practice language during group discussions and oral presentations (See Tip Sheet: Language Development through Student Interaction). Provide ongoing reinforcement.	Application of concepts and vocabulary in speech

5. Use online language exercises such as crosswords, gap-fill (cloze) exercises and scientific readings	Sense making, practice, applying concepts
6. Provide stimulus questions prior to lecture and tutorial to: encourage students to become familiar with language of topic area; return to questions at end of lecture.	Preparation or reflection, just in time learning, online feedback
7. Break down long words to aid memory by identifying prefixes and suffixes exploring the roots and origins of words	Acquisition of new vocabulary, ability to apply word deconstruction in service of meaning making
8. Assign an exercise in which a complex concept has to be communicated in lay person's language	Capacity to categorise and systematise new vocabulary
9. Use good models of student essays and reports to demonstrate the use of appropriate language, e.g. - active and passive voice, - good understanding of terms/concepts, etc. - discuss in relation to assessment criteria	Develops awareness of the language demands of scientific report writing
10. At end of lecture students summarise in own words the concept under discussion in the class	Application of new vocabulary; meaning making

*Zhang, F., Lidbury, B. A., Richardson, A. M., Yates, B. F., Gardiner, M. G., Bridgeman, A. J., Schulte, J., Rodger, J.C., & Mate, K. E. (2012). Sustainable Language Support Practices in Science Education: Technologies and Solutions (pp. 1-266). doi:10.4018/978-1-61350-062-0