

Six key tips for teaching (and communicating) in a foreign language (to students who may also not be native speakers).¹

1/ Master your core "classroom toolkit" vocabulary and subject terminology

- Ensure you have absolute command over the functional language of teaching, including instructions (*My goals in this class are to teach..., Moving on to... As we saw earlier,... Do you have any questions? Can you speak up, please? The key takeouts of the class are: 1/... 2/...*)
- Also make sure you know the technical vocabulary of your discipline well.
- Practice saying these expressions before classes.

2/ Prioritise clarity over complexity

- Identify the essential ideas you need to communicate in each lesson/lecture.
- Use shorter sentences.
- Repeat and rephrase key concepts using simple and consistent terminology for students to remember.

3/ Provide and prepare essential vocabulary (for yourself and students)

- Identify core terminology, and create glossaries or quick-reference sheets. Make vocabulary lists for yourself and encourage students to do the same.

4/ Support comprehension with visual aids and structure

- Use timelines, maps, graphs, diagrams and images to anchor meaning.
- Organise lessons with clear signposting (*First, we'll look at..., Next..., Finally...*).

5/ Build in constant, informal comprehension checks

- Never assume understanding. Ask your students if they are following you. Do this by asking specific questions about content, not just "Do you understand?".
- Take time to repeat information and explanations.

6/ Cultivate a supportive, patient, and interactive environment

- Your classroom culture is your most important asset. Students must feel safe to take linguistic risks and admit when they are confused. So be patient.
- Anxiety is a major barrier to language acquisition and learning, so a supportive atmosphere in class is important.

6. Build cultural bridges

- Students, especially foreign students, have different learning experiences, and communication across different cultures varies. Show understanding for this and try to relate to persons of other cultures. Show interest in the experiences of students from abroad.

DeepSeek's Bonus Tip: **Be kind to yourself.** You are performing a cognitively demanding task. There will be days [when] you feel fluent and brilliant, and days [when] you struggle for the right word. Acknowledge the challenge, reflect on what works, and continue to learn alongside your students. Your own experience with the foreign language makes you a more empathetic and effective teacher in this context.

¹ These are based on my "mashup" of answers by ChatGPT, Perplexity Pro, DeepSeek and Le Chat (Mistral) to the *prompt*: "What are the five key tips you would give someone who needs to teach their subject (history, economics, history of art, etc.) in a foreign language? (24 September 2025). DeepSeek was best!