

LANG  
SKILLS



# **Online English for International Mobilities e-learning course**

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## **ABOUT THE COURSE**

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**For teachers**

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The e-learning course **Online English for International Mobilities** has been developed to provide the students with hearing loss with an accessible English language course which provides them with authentic material. The course represents an opportunity for students with hearing loss to improve their English language skills with a focus on the academic environment and to simulate the experience of going to study at a foreign university.

# 1. THE LANGSKILLS PROJECT

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## (Language Skills of Deaf Students for EU Mobility)

**This course was created under the LangSkills project.** The main aim of the project is to encourage the participation of Deaf, deaf, and hard of hearing higher education students in international mobilities, which is an area with low participation of learners with hearing loss. The project focuses especially on increasing the students' language skills through a series of activities and learning opportunities.

## 2. NEEDS ANALYSIS

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The course content and purpose of the course correspond with the overall aims of the LangSkills project. Based on years of experience with teaching English to Deaf, deaf, and hard of hearing higher education students as well as students' experience including information gained from research conducted as a part of this project (see Output 1: Survey and case studies of deaf foreign language learners) the following needs were identified.

The Deaf, deaf, and hard of hearing higher education students often:

- **do not have sufficient English language proficiency to take part in international mobilities;**
- **do not have opportunities and experience with interaction in English;**
- **do not recognize the difference between formal and informal communication;**
- **do not have enough knowledge about the process of organization of the study abroad;**
- **do not have experience with instruction (lectures and seminars) in English;**
- **do not have sufficient vocabulary knowledge in the areas of higher education and organization of a study abroad;**
- **lack effective language learning strategies and study strategies and instruments for thinking about their learning.**

Although there are a plethora of language courses offered at and outside of universities:

- **these are usually not easily accessible to the Deaf, deaf, and hard of hearing higher education students;**
- **there is a lack of possibilities of practice in a safe environment;**
- **there is a lack of materials designed so that they are accessible;**
- **there is a lack of materials which concern specific topics related to disabilities and accommodations.**

Thus, the need to offer a suitable, accessible language learning environment which would introduce the students to the area of international mobility, was one of the major drives behind this e-learning course.

### **3. INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE**

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The e-learning course **Online English for International Mobilities** has been developed to provide the students with hearing loss with an accessible English language course which provides them with authentic material. The course represents an opportunity for students with hearing loss to improve their English language skills with a focus on the academic environment and to simulate the experience of going to study at a foreign university.

It is an online course, mounted on the open space platform OpenMoodle which is open to everyone at any time. There is no fee to access and use the course.

The course is suitable for approximately B1 - B2 users of English with hearing loss; teachers of students at lower or higher proficiency levels are encouraged to browse it for inspiration.

The course involves the practice of the following skills:

- **reading comprehension (study stays related texts, lecture transcripts, captioned videos, study materials)**
- **writing (typical academic written assignments, informal & formal e-mail communication)**
- **simulation of speaking skills in real-time chat interaction**

The course involves the practice of the following forms:

- **vocabulary related to higher education and study abroad**
- **grammar practice exercises at intermediate level**

The course also offers training in language learning strategies.

## **4. GOALS OF THE COURSE**

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The course is designed for students to practise and improve their English language skills in the context of studying abroad. The content of the course is arranged around topics which reflect the individual phases of studying at a university abroad: organization of the stay before leaving, practical and administrative arrangements upon arrival at the new city and university and academic issues.

During the course students will:

- **Improve their English language communication skills in the academic context;**
- **Extend their vocabulary in the academic context;**
- **Develop better understanding of lecture transcripts;**
- **Contribute more effectively in seminars and group tutorials;**
- **Interact more confidently online with other students who are studying English;**
- **Practise their reading and writing skills and strategies;**
- **Improve their language learning and study strategies.**

## 5. BELIEFS BEHIND THE COURSE

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The context for which the course was designed is higher education with Deaf, deaf, and hard of hearing who would like to prepare for study abroad such as Erasmus+. There was no obligation to follow any particular curricula or a textbook, so the course was organized around topics to follow the chronological order of the stay. The course builds upon the following views of the language, learning and teaching:

- **Functional view of the language** – with focus on being able to obtain the information one needs and communicate the information one needs to share);
- **Teaching which leads to increasing learners' autonomy** – shifting the responsibility for learning to the learner through self-organization of pace, amount, the choice of activities, and through explicit learning strategies instruction;
- **Deductive approach to learning** – research suggests that deductive approach benefits all aptitude profiles and more structured teaching evens out individual differences Skehan (1989) and our experience with teaching Deaf, deaf, and hard of hearing students supports this view;
- **Formative function of errors** – supported e.g. by the multi-stage writing assignments, the possibility to repeat the quizzes after reviewing one's previous attempt/s;
- **Competence-based view of achievement.**

## 6. WHO IS THE COURSE FOR

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The course is designed for university students who are planning to study abroad. The minimum prerequisite level of English proficiency is B1. It is designed to be accessible and useful to Deaf, deaf and hard of hearing learners both regarding the content and form.



# 7. COURSE MAP

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## (Structure of the course)

The course consists of seven topic-based units related to international mobilities and studying abroad.

- **Unit 1 and Unit 7 consist of Part A only.**
- **Units 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 consist of Part A and Part B.**

The course was originally designed to be completed in a fixed sequence. The course is linear as it is expected that the students complete the activities in each unit in a fixed sequence. However, the teachers are free to follow a different sequence of tasks.

### Unit 1

#### BEFORE WE BEGIN

(Part A)

**Vocabulary:** Important course vocabulary

**Grammar tip:** Downloadable practice test book with a key

**Grammar:** Questions

**Study tip:** How to check spelling and grammar in your assignments

**Social interaction:** Forum discussion – Discussing the reasons to go on an exchange

### Unit 2

#### KNOW YOUR WAY AND MEET PEOPLE

(Part A and B)

**Vocabulary:** Exchange programmes, buddy systems

**Grammar:** Prepositions

**Writing:** Informal email

**Functions:** Making appointments; understanding and giving directions

**Social interaction:** Getting to know you game, Live chat – Pair work activity

## Unit 3

### UNDERSTAND AND FOLLOW ADMINISTRATIVE INSTRUCTIONS

(Part A and B)

**Vocabulary:** Services and adjustments for students with a hearing loss

**Grammar:** Tenses

**Writing:** Formal letter

**Study tip:** How to use a dictionary effectively

**Functions:** Communicating with the International Relations Office / Special Needs Centre

**Social interaction:** Forum discussion – Discussing the services offered at your university or in your home country

## Unit 4

### SEARCH FOR INFORMATION ON A WEBSITE

(Part A and B)

**Vocabulary:** Useful academic vocabulary

**Grammar:** Comparatives and superlatives

**Writing:** Compare and contrast essay: comparing two courses

**Study tip:** How to make your reading more effective: scanning and marking the text

**Functions:** Comparing and contrasting

**Social interaction:** Forum discussion – Find your flatmates

## Unit 5

### MAKE NOTES AND STUDY BASED ON A LECTURE

(Part A and B)

**Vocabulary:** Note taking

**Grammar:** Active & Passive voice

**Writing:** Practical note-taking tasks

**Study tip:** How to take notes more effectively

**Functions:** Note taking strategies in the classroom

**Social interaction:** Forum discussion – Your note taking experience

## Unit 6

### FOLLOW A SEMINAR DISCUSSION AND CONTRIBUTE TO IT

(Part A and B)

**Grammar and vocabulary:** Word formation

**Functions:** Expressing opinion, agreeing and disagreeing

**Writing:** Opinion essay

**Social interaction:** Forum – Join the course discussion

## Unit 7

### REVISION AND COURSE EVALUATION

(Part A)

**Vocabulary:** Revising the vocabulary items studied in previous units

**Grammar and vocabulary:** Word formation - revision

**Social interaction:** Forum discussion – Overall course reflection

**Writing:** Self-evaluation task

# 8. UNIT STRUCTURE

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## 8.1. WRITTEN INPUT

Each unit contains a written input. This is usually a **text** or a **captioned video** or a **speech to text report of a lecture**. This input is further developed in activities focusing on comprehension and vocabulary development. The written input is complemented by a written assignment where the students can practise their writing skills. They receive the teacher's feedback on their work and use it to revise the first draft.

Social element is not less important. In each unit there are online chats and fora where the learners can share their experiences and opinions on the provided discussion questions.

Each unit also includes a grammar exercise where the students can revise selected areas of their grammar knowledge.

## 8.2. VOCABULARY

The vocabulary in each unit is related to a particular topic and is presented in context in the core written input.

The students get to practise their vocabulary skills twice in each unit: for the first time, in Part A and then again in revision exercises in Part B.

The practised areas are:

- **Unit 1 Classroom language**
- **Unit 2 Exchange programmes, buddy systems**
- **Unit 3 Services and adjustments for students with a hearing loss**
- **Unit 4 Using English at college and university**
- **Unit 5 Note taking**
- **Unit 6 Word formation**
- **Unit 7 Revising the vocabulary items studied in previous units**

**Feedback provision**

The vocabulary tasks are corrected automatically by Moodle.

## 8.3. GRAMMAR

This course focuses on developing writing and reading skills in the first place. Grammar is practised implicitly in the written assignments. However, there is at least one grammar exercise in each unit. Additional grammar tests are provided in a downloadable practice test book with a key in the course.

The practised areas are:

- **Unit 1 Questions**
- **Unit 2 Prepositions**
- **Unit 3 Tenses**
- **Unit 4 Comparatives and superlatives**
- **Unit 5 Active & Passive voice**
- **Unit 6 Word formation**
- **Unit 7 Word formation - revision**

**Feedback provision**

The vocabulary tasks are corrected automatically by Moodle.

## 8.4. WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

The course includes different types of texts that are typically related to the academic environment and those that are useful when arranging a study stay abroad.

The practised areas are:

- **Unit 2 Informal email**
- **Unit 3 Formal email**
- **Unit 4 Compare and contrast essay**
- **Unit 5 Note-taking**
- **Unit 6 Opinion essay**
- **Unit 7 Self-evaluation**

### **Process approach to writing**

Writing skills are practised in a several step process. First, there is the preparatory stage which involves learning or revising the vocabulary needed for the assignment, activating the background knowledge of the topic and learning about the rules of the particular form (e.g. formal/informal email, notes, etc.). Second, the student hands in the first version of their assignment and receives formative feedback from the teacher. Based on the feedback, he or she rewrites the first draft and hands in the revised version of the assignment. The teacher gives feedback again. If necessary, the student uses the second feedback to prepare the final version of the assignment.

#### **Feedback provision**

**Moodle cannot provide for individualized feedback on students' essays. This needs to be done by the teacher.**

## 8.5. SOCIAL INTERACTION

While e-learning courses are flexible and easy to use, the learners may feel isolated and miss the interaction with their classmates and the teacher. To promote opinion sharing and to overcome isolation, different social interaction tasks are included in the course.

The practised areas are:

- **Unit 1 Forum discussion – Discussing the reasons to go on an exchange**
- **Unit 2 Getting to know you game, Live chat – Pair work activity**
- **Unit 3 Forum discussion – Discussing the services offered at your university or in your home country**
- **Unit 4 Forum discussion – Find your flatmates**
- **Unit 5 Forum discussion – Your note taking experience**
- **Unit 6 Forum discussion – Join the course discussion**
- **Unit 7 Forum discussion – Overall course reflection**

### **Feedback provision**

The discussion activities focus on fluency rather than accuracy development. There is a minimum character limit to motivate the students' involvement. Mistakes obstructing understanding or repeated mistakes can be corrected by a teacher.

## 8.6. STUDY TIPS

Four units of the course contain useful Study tip parts, which can be helpful not only while proceeding through the course itself but for students' future use as well. Their role is to improve students' awareness of applying different tools and strategies, such as using old favourite dictionaries more effectively. Tips are provided by way of videos, practical illustrations, examples, etc.

The practiced areas are:

- **Unit 1 How to check spelling and grammar in your assignments**
- **Unit 3 How to use a dictionary effectively**
- **Unit 4 How to make your reading more effective: scanning and marking the text**
- **Unit 5 How to take notes more effectively**

# 9. ASSESSMENT

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The course presents many different contexts and tasks. Not all the tasks need to be completed. The students need to follow the teacher's instructions. There is no final end-of-course test.

There are three types of tasks in this course assessment-wise:

## 1. Automatically corrected tasks

Most tasks in this course, such as Task 1.1, are corrected automatically. This means the students know their score immediately after submitting their answers. The teacher can monitor which students already got the required score. For automatically marked tasks, the students need to achieve 60 % correct or more. If not, they must go back, revise and try again. Usually there are three attempts to take the task.

## 2. Written assignments – constructive feedback from an English teacher

An assignment is a task that students need to complete by a given date. The deadline is fixed by the teacher and communicated to students by email or a forum notice. In each unit there is a written assignment with instructions and the required number of characters. After submitting their assignment, students can also read other student submissions.

It is impossible to apply the automatically corrected format because of the original and highly individual answers by the students so the teachers need to do the mark-ups on their own depending on their preferences. The students should be encouraged to go through the teacher's comments carefully and prepare a second version of the assignment. The teacher checks the edited version for the second time.

## 3. Tasks with no error correction

The exercises based on promoting social interaction are typically left without any marking. The aim of these tasks is to try to keep the experience positive for the learner, encourage the learners to express ideas and work on fluency. The teacher may decide to moderate the fora and contribute to them.



## 10. TIME REQUIRED TO STUDY THE COURSE

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The estimated time for the course completion ranges between 30-40 hours depending on the time spent with each activity. The teachers may adapt the length of the course by skipping some parts of it, or adding their own material.

The majority of students enrolled in the two pilot runs studied twice a week for 2 to 3 hours. The first and the last unit are shorter, and can be covered in half the time the other units.

The teachers can't add their materials or delete tasks directly in the e-learning course: they need to notify their students by email and attach any additional materials.

## 11. THE COURSE IN A NUTSHELL

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- **Designed for students with hearing loss planning to study abroad.**
- **For B1-B2 users of English.**
- **No fee to access and use the course.**
- **Open to everyone at any time (OpenMoodle).**
- **The estimated time of completion between 30-40 hours.**
- **A closed group of students possible.**
- **Authentic materials.**
- **Mostly automatically corrected tasks.**
- **Personalized constructive feedback on written assignments.**
- **Useful Study tips included.**

## 12. TECHNICAL GUIDE

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We recommend you look at the Technical Guide that will answer some of the questions such as how to register for the course or where to check the students' scores and grade their assignments, etc.

## 13. CONTACT US

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If you would like to invite your students to the course, contact the LangSkills team to set up a group for you at [langskills@teiresias.muni.cz](mailto:langskills@teiresias.muni.cz).

For more information on the course and the LangSkills project activities please contact the coordinating team at [langskills@teiresias.muni.cz](mailto:langskills@teiresias.muni.cz). Suggestions concerning the content and possible cooperation are welcome.