

Rationale

The formal study of Auslan contributes to the overall intellectual and social enrichment of both first language (L1) and second language (L2) learners by providing:

- opportunities for engagement with the Deaf community and insight into its rich cultural heritage
- opportunities to develop intercultural capabilities, understanding and respect for others, appreciation of diversity and openness to different perspectives and experiences.

This curriculum provides direction for an integrated, inclusive and meaningful approach to language education in Auslan for both first and second language learners.

Rationale for first language learners

This curriculum meets the need of young deaf people to formally learn their own language, and it recognises the significance of Auslan in the linguistic landscape of Australia. It provides deaf children, and potentially hearing children of deaf parents, with access to education in and about their first language, playing an important part in the development of a strong sense of self-esteem and identity and contributing in crucial ways to overall learning and achievements. It enables learners to develop a wider recognition and understanding of their language, culture and identity, thus contributing to their psychological wellbeing as well as to their academic development.

Rationale for second language learners

Many deaf children today are educated in inclusive school settings, thus raising the profile of Auslan in the wider community. The presence of deaf students and interpreting practitioners in schools creates a need and offers opportunities for a wider range of peer-group communication partners, and not all interactions can or should be mediated by an interpreting practitioner. One of the key reasons for introducing Auslan in schools, therefore, is for humanistic purposes: to increase opportunities for interaction between deaf children and their hearing or hard of hearing peers, and to reduce barriers to communication. Through learning Auslan, L2 learners gain access to additional knowledge and understanding of the nature and purpose of human languages and of the use of a different language modality. In addition, from a vocational perspective, greater participation of deaf people in society in a diverse range of occupations and breadth of community spheres creates possibilities for future career options and personal fulfilment for L2 learners. In general educational terms, learning Auslan as a second language enables students to engage meaningfully with a different language and culture and to enhance understanding of their own language and culture. Such intercultural learning is essential in the increasingly diverse and changing contexts in which they live and will work.

For all learners

- broadens students' understanding that each language is an integrated, evolving system for the framing and communication of meaning; and encourages understanding of the role of language as an expression of cultural and personal identity and a shaper of perspectives
- contributes to the overall curriculum intent by providing distinctive real-life and intellectual opportunities for students to expand their engagement with the wider world and to reflect on the cultural and social assumptions that underpin their own world view and language use. Such awareness of different perspectives is an integral part of effective communication
- contributes to the development of critical thinking and the ability to adapt to change and equips students with learning strategies and study habits that are the foundation not only for lifelong learning but also for any subsequent language learning.

The opportunity to learn Auslan formally is becoming available in an increasing number of Australian schools, and the aim of this national curriculum is to make this learning opportunity accessible in a systematic manner to students around Australia. Language learning is life enhancing. This national curriculum offers all Australian students the opportunity to benefit from the social, cultural, intellectual and emotional development that will result from learning the unique and sophisticated visual-gestural language of the Australian Deaf community.

Aims

The Australian Curriculum: Languages – Auslan aims to develop the knowledge, understanding and skills to enable students to:

- communicate in Auslan
- understand language, culture and learning and their relationship, and thereby develop an intercultural capability in communication
- understand themselves as communicators
- develop a knowledge and an understanding of the diversity of Deaf experience and the nature of identity.

These aims are interrelated and provide the basis for two organising strands for learning Auslan: Communicating and Understanding.

Key Ideas

Language and culture

The interrelationship of language, culture and learning provides the foundation for the Australian Curriculum: Languages.

In the languages learning area the focus is on both language and culture, as students learn to communicate meaningfully across linguistic and cultural systems, and different contexts. This process involves reflection and analysis, as students move between the new language being learnt and their own existing language(s). It is a reciprocal and dynamic process which develops language use within intercultural dimensions of learning experiences. It is not a 'one plus one' relationship between two languages and cultures, where each language and culture stay separate and self-contained. Comparison and referencing between (at least) two languages and cultures build understanding of how languages 'work', how they relate to each other and how language and culture shape and reflect experience; that is, the experience of language using and language learning. The experience of being in two worlds at once involves noticing, questioning and developing awareness of how language and culture shape identity.

Structure

Learner background and time-on-task are two major variables that influence language learning and they provide the basis for the structure of the Australian Curriculum: Languages. These variables are addressed through the specification of content and the description of achievement standards according to pathways and learning sequences respectively.

Pathways

In the Australian Curriculum: Languages, pathways for second language learners, background language learners and first language learners have been developed as appropriate to cater for the dominant group(s) of students learning each specific language within the current Australian context. For the majority of languages, one curriculum pathway has been developed for Years F–10, catering for the dominant cohort of learners for that language in the current Australian context. For Chinese, pathways have been developed for three learner groups: first language learners, background language learners and second language learners.

The Framework for Aboriginal languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages includes three learner pathways:

- first language learner pathway
- revival language learner pathway
- second language learner pathway.

Sequences of learning

The design of the Australian Curriculum: Languages takes account of different entry points into language learning across Foundation – Year 10, which reflects current practice in languages.

For the second language learner pathway and the background language learner pathway, there are two learning sequences:

- Foundation–Year 10 sequence
- Years 7–10 (Year 7 Entry) sequence.

For the first language learner pathway, there is one learning sequence:

- Years 7–10 (Year 7 Entry) sequence.

Content and achievement standards are described initially in a three-year band for Foundation–Year 2 followed by two-year bands of learning: Years 3–4; Years 5–6, Years 7–8 and Years 9–10.

The Framework for Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages is written in the bands Foundation – Year 2, Years 3–6 and Years 7–10. In the absence of pedagogical evidence across the country for all these languages, the broader band distinctions provide maximum local flexibility in curriculum development.

Year 9 and 10 (Year 7 Entry) Achievement Standard

By the end of Year 10, students interact with peers, teachers and others using Auslan to communicate about personal interests and broader issues relating to the Deaf community. They participate in class discussions, explaining and clarifying positions, asking follow-up questions, using non-manual features for topicalisation or negation and responding to each other's comments, for example IF DS:place-person DEAF TEACHER MEANS DEAF HEARING STUDENT EQUAL-all. They initiate and sustain interactions; ask for repetition, clarification or confirmation; use more elaborate sentence structures, such as embedding clauses; and use discourse markers such as SURPRISE, INCREDIBLE, WOW or UM. They engage in different processes of collaborative learning, including planning, negotiating and problem-solving, using familiar and some spontaneous language. They follow protocols when interacting with each other or with interpreters or Deaf visitors to the classroom, for example by interrupting conversations appropriately, waiting for eye gaze or for the signer to finish, or by providing context for a new participant joining a conversation. Students locate, interpret and analyse information from a variety of signed texts, such as announcements, news reports and vlogs, using context and knowledge of depicting conventions to work out unfamiliar meaning. They demonstrate understanding by paraphrasing, summarising and explaining main ideas, key themes or sequences of events. They interpret different types of creative and imaginative texts, such as Deaf performances or different expressive art forms, describing and comparing their responses. They plan, draft and present informative and imaginative texts, linking and sequencing ideas using conjunctions such as BUT or IF... THEN... as well as joining clauses with NMFs to build cohesion and to extend clauses. With support, they use constructed action (CA) to portray characters in a narrative, modify indicating verbs for non-present referents with increasing accuracy across a text, for example PRO1 ASK-her and use more complex entity depicting signs, for example DS(point):man-walks-slowly. They translate and interpret texts and create bilingual texts and resources to use in the wider school community, comparing different interpretations and making decisions in relation to dealing with instances of non-equivalence. Students explain culturally appropriate and ethical behaviour for interpreting and translating texts, and consider potential consequences of inaccurate interpreting. They reflect on how their own ways of communicating may be interpreted when interacting with deaf people, and modify elements of their behaviour such as the use of eye contact, facial expression or body language as appropriate.

Students identify and describe instances of CA in signed texts and explain how signers use CA and depicting signs in composite utterances. They identify and classify non-manual features in signed texts and describe their function. They know that signs can be iconic in a number of ways, and identify iconic signs that represent a whole object or part of an object. They distinguish between viewer and diagrammatic space, including whether viewer space refers to referents that are present or non-present. Students investigate and analyse the nature of variation in the use of Auslan, explaining influences such as geographical location, social groupings and history, educational experience, age of learners, family background and degree of contact with Signed English or other languages. They make comparisons between the ecologies of Auslan and signed languages in other countries, in relation to issues such as language policies and rights, advocacy, reform and language vitality. They identify factors that help to maintain and strengthen the use of Auslan, such as intergenerational contact and bilingual school programs. Students know that Auslan plays an important role in the expression and maintenance of Deaf culture and in assuring the rights of every deaf person.

Content structure

The content of the Australian Curriculum: Languages is organised through two interrelated strands which realise the three aims. The two strands are:

- Communicating: using language for communicative purposes in interpreting, creating and exchanging meaning
- Understanding: analysing language and culture as a resource for interpreting and creating meaning.

The strands reflect three important aspects of language learning:

- 1) communication
- 2) analysis of aspects of language and culture
- 3) reflection that involves
 - reflection on the experience of communicating
 - reflection on comparative dimensions of the languages available in students' repertoires (for example, the first language in relation to second language and self in relation to others).

Year 9 and 10 (Year 7 Entry) Level Description

The nature of the learners

Learners enter this band with prior experience of Auslan. They bring a range of existing capabilities, strategies and knowledge that can be applied to new learning. This stage of learning coincides with social, physical and cognitive changes associated with adolescence. Increased cognitive maturity enables learners to work more deductively with language and culture systems, to apply more intentional learning strategies and to reflect productively on their learning. Motivation and engagement with language learning and use are influenced by peer-group dynamics, personal interests and values, and issues related to self-concept. The role of language is central to this process and is reflected in the degree to which learners define themselves as members of language communities, how they position themselves in relation to peer groups, and choices they make in relation to linguistic and social practices. These processes are fluid and context responsive and impact on learners' engagement with both Auslan and English language learning. Learners at this level are increasingly aware of the world beyond their own and are engaging with youth, social and environmental issues. They are considering their future pathways and choices, including how Auslan could be part of these. They require continued guidance in learning Auslan, but are increasingly independent and capable of analysis and reflection, including in relation to Auslan and to intercultural experience.

Auslan learning and use

Learners use Auslan to compare and contrast, to sign instructions, problem-solve, make announcements, persuade, and recount experiences in increasing detail. They engage with a range of Auslan texts, and express feelings and emotions creatively in the language. They participate individually and in groups in tasks and learning experiences, explaining or justifying positions, elaborating opinions, and giving and receiving multistep instructions. They create their own signed narratives, and summarise and critically examine viewed texts.

Learners are extending their grammatical knowledge, such as understanding how language structures and features are used intentionally in texts. They use more elaborate sentence structures, including conjoining clauses, and increasingly build cohesion in their texts by setting up and maintaining referents in signing space. Learners explore metaphorical iconicity and begin to use constructed action to represent multiple characters in narratives. They are increasingly aware of connections between language and culture, comparing them to experiences in their own language(s) and culture(s). They are learning to reflect on their own language and culture and on how identity impacts on intercultural experience.

Contexts of interaction

Learners interact with teachers, peers and members of the Deaf community, in real life or via online technologies. They also encounter Auslan in the wider community, such as in the media, at film festivals or community events or via guest speakers.

Texts and resources

Learners engage with a range of increasingly complex live and digital signed texts designed for in-school learning of Auslan. They also work with different types of authentic texts created for deaf people, such as websites, which provide opportunities to extend understanding of language and culture. Texts come from a range of domains or genres, such as oral histories, community announcements, vlogs and stories; and they serve a variety of purposes, such as informative, transactional, communicative, imaginative and expressive. Learners also access texts from other signed languages that make extensive use of the 'visual vernacular'. The Deaf community is the most important resource for learning, as it is the origin of most of the texts and communicative situations engaged with by learners.

Features of Auslan use

Learners at this stage are increasingly aware of differences between Auslan and English. They are expanding their knowledge of vocabulary and sentence construction. With support, they use constructed action to show participants in a text, modify indicating verbs for non-present referents with increasing accuracy across a text, and use more complex entity depicting signs. They are learning to use NMFs to mark manner on verbs or to express negation. They use appropriate strategies to initiate and sustain conversations, and use more elaborate sentence structures, such as embedding clauses. Learners create richer texts, switching between viewer and diagrammatic space to show different perspectives of the same event. They also develop metalanguage for describing aspects of Auslan and how it is structured. They consider connections between language and culture and make comparisons with their own language(s) and culture(s). They consider language variation, for example by experiencing other dialects in the BANZSL family. They develop understanding of the nature of translation and interpretation, noticing the relationship between language, texts and culture. A balance is maintained between activities that focus on language forms and structures and those that involve communicative tasks, performances and experiences. Task characteristics and conditions are more complex and challenging; they involve collaborative as well as independent language planning and performance, and development and strategic use of language and cultural resources.

Level of support

While learners are increasingly less reliant on the teacher for support during communicative interactions, continued support, such as provision of rich language input and modelled language use, is needed to consolidate and sustain language development. The teacher provides implicit and explicit modelling and scaffolding in relation to meaningful language use in a range of contexts, situations and learning experiences, and explicit instruction and explanation in relation to complex structures, grammatical functions and abstract concepts and vocabulary. Provision of opportunities to discuss, clarify, rehearse and apply knowledge is critical in consolidating understanding and skills and in developing autonomy. Learners are encouraged to self-monitor, for example, by keeping records of feedback, through peer support and self-review. They are increasingly aware of and responsible for their own learning, working independently to address their needs, for example by accessing technologies to memorise, learn and expand their language repertoire. They continue to use Signbank, graphic organisers, modelled texts, dictionaries and teacher feedback to interpret and create texts, and may keep records of their learning through means such as a video journal or folio to reflect on their language learning and intercultural experience.

The role of English

Learners and teachers use Auslan as the primary medium of interaction in language-oriented and an increasing number of content-oriented learning experiences. English provides a basis for linguistic and cultural comparison. English is also the medium for expressing experiences, abstract ideas and personal views at a level beyond learners' level of Auslan, for example when justifying a position on a social issue or exploring linguistic and cultural practices. English may be used with Auslan to conduct research, for example when investigating a social issue or cultural practice if a source text in Auslan cannot be found. It is also used in translating and in communicating bilingually. Learners are supported to reflect on the different roles that English and Auslan play in their academic work and in their conceptual development.

Year 9 and 10 (Year 7 Entry) Content Descriptions

Communicating

Socialising

Socialise and exchange views on selected issues using different communication strategies, language structures and techniques.
[Key concepts: issues, debate, discussion, interaction; Key processes: explaining, debating, justifying, code-switching]

Engage in various collaborative tasks that involve making decisions, solving problems and evaluating progress.
[Key concepts: responsibility, evaluation, discussion; Key processes: problem-solving, planning, evaluating, managing]

Interact appropriately with the teaching team, peers and members of the Deaf community, adjusting language when necessary and demonstrating understanding of appropriate protocols in and out of the classroom.
[Key concepts: protocol, behaviour, communication; Key processes: demonstrating, gaining attention, back-channelling, clarifying]

Informing

Engage with a range of signed texts to locate and evaluate information, infer or interpret meaning and to present key points in new forms.
[Key concepts: information, data collection, issues; Key processes: interviewing, observing, rephrasing, summarising]

Preparing and presenting information on different issues, events, people, procedures or experiences, using signed descriptions and visual prompts to inform, report, promote, explain or invite action.
[Key concepts: biography, commentary, procedure, action; Key processes: presenting, describing, explaining, researching, composing, inviting action]

Creating

Respond to different types of creative texts that involve the expression of feelings or experiences, comparing their responses to different elements and making connections with their own experience.
[Key concepts: Deaf experience, expression, cultural values, effect, emotion; Key processes: analysing, evaluating, profiling]

Create and present entertaining individual or collaborative texts that reflect imagined people, places or experiences and draw from elements of their own life experience.
[Key concepts: improvisation, stimulus, performance, humour, tension, interpretation; Key processes: improvising, performing, role-playing, creating, interpreting]

Translating

Translate and interpret different types of familiar texts and consider the effectiveness of examples of different translations, considering the role of culture when transferring meaning from one language to another.
[Key concepts: equivalence, translation, meaning, interpretation, ethics, culture; Key processes: translating, interpreting, comparing, researching, exploring, developing]

Create, develop and resource bilingual texts for use in the wider school community.
[Key concepts: bilingualism, translation, meaning, representation, information; Key processes: translating, composing, comparing, creating, developing]

Identity

Recognise that the concept of identity is complex, dynamic and diverse, and consider how students learn more about their own identity through the exploration of other languages and cultures.
[Key concepts: identity, perception, representation, difference; Key processes: investigating, comparing, evaluating, creating, analysing]

Reflecting

Reflect on the experience of learning and using Auslan and how the experience is influenced by their own languages and cultures, and consider how intercultural communication involves shared responsibility for making meaning.
[Key concepts: intercultural communication, perspective, making meaning, inclusion, exclusion, audism, insider, outsider; Key processes: analysing, explaining, reflecting, considering]

Understanding

Systems of Language

Explore various types of non-manual features and the types of iconicity in signs, and gain confidence in using software to transcribe signs.
[Key concepts: transcription, iconicity, metaphor; Key processes: identifying, recognising, distinguishing, describing, glossing]

Understand that signs can include different information including a gestural overlay, and identify how signers establish spatial locations, types of depicting signs and ways of showing constructed action.
[Key concepts: spatial location, grammatical use of space, constructed action, depicting signs; Key processes: noticing, identifying, recognising, comparing, contrasting, distinguishing]

Understand and control additional elements of Auslan grammar, such as the use of non-manual features for topicalisation, negation or conditional forms, and develop awareness of how signers use constructed action and depicting signs in composite utterances.
[Key concepts: clause types, conjunctions, composite utterances; Key processes: recognising, observing, distinguishing, understanding]

Explore the relationship between particular text types, audience, purpose and context and analyse language features used by signers to create cohesion and achieve the purpose of the text.
[Key concepts: audience, purpose, coherence; Key processes: noticing, analysing]

Language variation and change

Understand that Auslan has evolved and developed through different periods of influence and cultural and societal change.
[Key concepts: language variation, standardisation, change, language borrowing, adaptation; Key processes: researching, interviewing, comparing, identifying, analysing, discussing]

Language awareness

Understand the range of factors that influence the profile, diversity and distribution of Auslan use in the wider Australian society, and consider the concept of Auslan vitality in comparison with other spoken and signed languages used around the world.
[Key concepts: influence, diversity, language vitality, language documentation; Key processes: researching, investigating, exploring, describing, analysing]

Role of language and culture

Understand that Auslan and Deaf culture are interrelated, that they shape and are shaped by each other, that their relationship changes over time and across contexts, and that they may be differently interpreted by users of other languages.
[Key concepts: knowledge, value, transmission, reciprocity, responsibility, stereotype; Key processes: appreciating, discussing, reflecting, exploring, analysing, understanding, identifying, recognising, considering]