Lecturing: Small Changes – Big Difference!

Aims of lecture:

- To draw on theory and experience to discuss how to plan and deliver effective lectures
    - To illustrate a variety of ways to capture and keep students' attention
- To share good practice

Outline

- Why lecture?
- What do students do in lectures?
- What is a critical incident?
- How should I plan a lecture?
- What should I give students?
- How do I get crowd control?
- How do I capture their attention?
- How do I keep their attention?
- How do I evaluate my lecturing?

Study questions

1. What should I put in a handout?
2. Which ideas raised in this lecture about keeping student's attention will I aim to try in my next lecturing block?
3. How will I evaluate my lecturing?

Why lecture?

Jot down some reasons….

What do students do in lectures?

Some things students do in lectures:

- Copy down things from whiteboard or screen
- Copy down verbatim things said by lecturer
- Summarise things discussed by lecturer
- Gaze out windows (if there are any)
- Look at other students
- Worry because they cannot understand what is being talked about
- Watch the clock
- Doodle, yawn, fidget and shuffle, daydream and sleep
- Read things that have nothing to do with the lecture
- Listen to the match on a personal radio
- Think about coursework to be submitted for *other* subjects
- *Do* coursework due to be handed in for other subjects
- Worry about accommodation problems, cash flow problems, personal problems…
- Feel generally unwell – hangover, tiredness, flu… (Race, 2001)

Productive learning processes:

- Wanting to learn
- Needing to learn
- Learning by doing
- Getting feedback on how learning is going
- Making sense of what has been learnt - digesting it

(Race, 2001)

Productive student actions associated with 5 central learning processes:

- Become excited about the subject, and enthused (wanting)
- Wish to find out more about things discussed (wanting)
- See why something is important (needing)
- Solve problems (learning by doing)

- Try out theoretical principles in practice-based examples (learning by doing)
- Make decisions (learning by doing, also digesting)
- Explain things to fellow students sitting nearby (doing, digesting, feedback)
- Ask questions (seeking feedback)
- Work out questions to find out the answers to later (preparing to seek feedback)
- Prioritise issues and information (digesting)
- Summarise (digesting)
- Make notes in a way so important things 'stand out from the page' (digesting, learning by doing)
- Answer questions (learning by doing, getting feedback) (Race, 2001)

What is a "critical incident"?

= brief written (or spoken) depictions of vividly remembered events

- *Try to recall a lecture in which you felt a real "high" of excitement and fulfillment.*
  - *Write down a brief description of this event including:*
    - *Where and when it occurred*
    - *Who was involved*
    - *What made it so enjoyable*

A note about critical incidents:

- Can be about learning "highs" or "lows"
- Early on in the lecture
  - To attract attention
  - Understand concerns
- During lecture
  - To help focus on themes

(Brookfield, 1990)

How should I plan a lecture?

- What do my students need to learn?
  - NOT what I want to teach!
  - sort out ‘need to know’ vs. ‘nice to know’
- What is the background of my students?
- How can students best learn in a lecture?

Ways of organising a lecture (Soliman, 1999):

Classical lecture structure

- Introduction and overview
  - purpose and context
  - revision of earlier material
  - overview of main points in lecture
- First main point
  - development and explanation
  - examples
  - restatement
- Second main point
  - as above
- Third main point
  - as above
- Summary and conclusion
  - restatement and review of main points
  - conclusion and implications

Comparative structure

- Introduction and overview
- Theory A
- Theory B
- Criteria for comparing theories
- Comparisons and contrasts between A and B
- Summary and conclusions

Problem-focused structure

- Statement of problem and overview of solutions
    - Solution A
    - Solution B
    - Solution C
- Criteria for comparing solutions
- Summary and conclusions

Academic argument structure

- Overview of position on the topic and of supporting arguments
- Counter arguments
- Demolition of counter arguments
- Arguments in favour of lecturer's position
- Conclusion – restatement of lecturer's position

Other ways of organising a lecture (Soliman, 1999):

- Simple → complex ideas
- Big picture → smaller part (or reverse)
- Linking what students may be expected to know to what they already know
- Clarification of misconceptions
- Observations of reality linked to abstract ideas, theories and principles
- Clarifying the underlying story/sequence/plot that ties the details together

Hints about structuring:

- **Signposts** - statements which signal the direction and structure of a lecture
- **Frames** - statements which delineate the beginning and ending of topics
- **Foci** - statements which highlight and emphasize key points
- **Links** - statements that link sections of lecture together or may link the lecture to the experience, previously acquired knowledge and observations of the audience (Brown and Atkins, 1988)

In practice:

- Sketch an outline
    - Have a logical and transparent order
    - Determine the main activities
    - Flexibility for breaks or questions
- Flesh out the content
- How can I incorporate research?
- What sort of audio visuals will I use?
- Practice the lecture!

What should I give to students?

- Students LOVE handouts but what should go in them?
    - Title, lecturer and contact details
    - Outline of lecture
    - Recommended reading
    - Key diagrams, concepts, definitions etc
    - Study questions
    - Cartoon!
    - Structure clearly and make attractive
    - Make handouts interactive – a learning tool

- Blackboard
    - PPT notes - when and what format? Remember pdfs are best to condense files and thus make for a faster download. Find out whether students would prefer 3 slides to a page with note lines or 6 to a page.
    - Extra resources?
    - Discussion or quizzes?

Hints for handouts:

- Make them look attractive
- Use the start to remind students what its purposes are
- Use plenty of headings
- Use white space (i.e. do not cram)
- Make handouts interactive
- Include committed space for students to do things
- Use tasks as chances for students to learn by doing
- Use handouts to get students making notes
- Include annotated bibliographies in handout materials
- Store on disk

(Race, 2001)

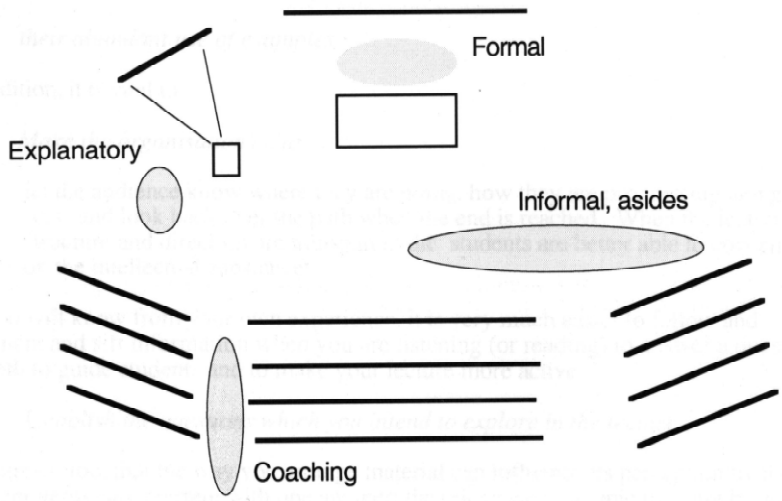
More practical pointers for planning lectures

- Make sure lectures are not just 'transmit-receive' occasions
- Make the most of the opportunities when you have the whole group together
- Put energy and effort into making your lectures interesting and stimulating
- Make good use of your specific learning outcomes for each lecture
- Help students to place the lecture in context
- Use handout material to spare students from copying down lots of information
- Work out some questions which the session will address
- Use lectures to start students learning from each other
- Use lectures to help students make sense of things they have already learnt
- Use large-group sessions to identify and answer students' questions
- Use whole-class time to explain carefully the briefings for assessment tasks
- Show students how the assessor's mind works (Race, 2001)

How do I get crowd control?

- Start off as you mean to carry on - do not tolerate chatter during class!
- At the start
  - Make it clear you are ready to begin
    - Shut doors
    - Ask for quiet etc
- During the lecture
  - 'the stare'
  - Ask for quiet
  - DO NOT ignore
- Know the technology!! (lights, projector, OHP, microphone etc)

Get in the zone!



'Zone structure' of a lecture theatre (UCTLC, 2004)

How do I capture their attention?

- Pose questions for topics
- Use catchy quotes, anecdotes, cartoons, photos, videos, examples from research, humour etc

How do I keep their attention?

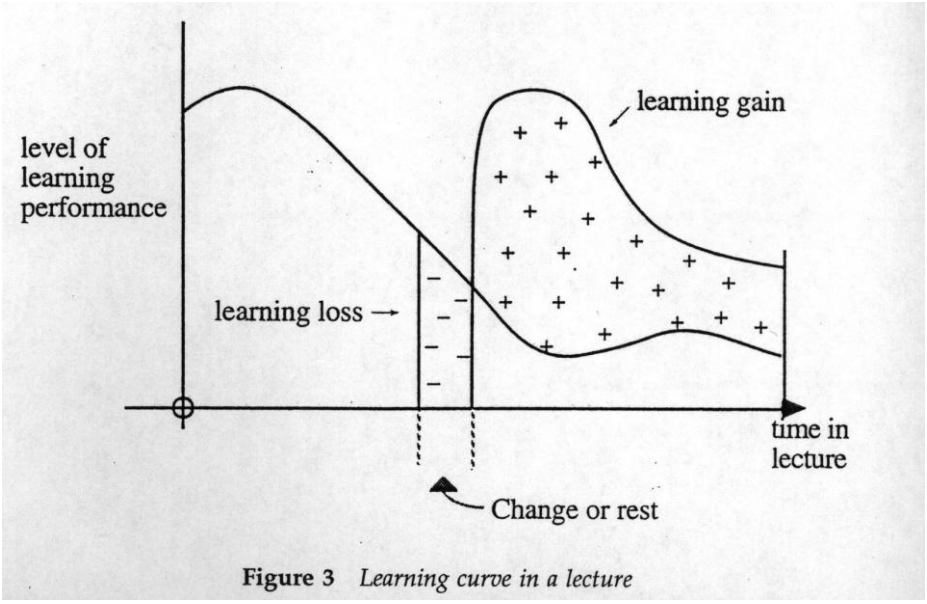


Figure 3 *Learning curve in a lecture*

Learning curve in a lecture (Bligh, 1998)

- Get the pace right! As a rule of thumb about 12-15 PowerPoint slides with text is plenty. There can be more slides with diagrams but if the diagrams are simple these are best drawn together with the class on an OHP (or annotated together on an OHP).
- Construct a diagram together
- Use resources in lecture (e.g. hand out readings and get students to read a section and answer some questions – preferably working with their neighbours)
- Mix up media (PPT, OHPs, video, discussion etc)
- Ask questions, allow time for discussion with neighbours and then seek answers
    - Target different parts of lecture theatre

- *What other activities can promote active learning?*

More practical pointers on delivery:

- Be punctual
- When you are ready to start, capture students' attention
- Face the class when using an OHP or data projector
- Give your students some practice at note-making (rather than just note-taking)
- Get students learning by doing
- Variety is the spice of lectures
- Do not waffle when stuck
- Genuinely solicit students' questions
- Repeat students' questions back so all can hear
- Watch the body language of your audience
- Do not tolerate poor behaviour
- Do not feel you have got to keep going for the full 50 minutes
- Do not feel that you have to get through all the material
- Help the shy or retiring students to have equal opportunity to contribute
- Come to a timely conclusion

(Race, 2001)

How do I evaluate my lecturing?

- **Use a mix of data sources**
  - Quick feedback and do it early!
    - e.g. 3 best aspects of my lecturing, 3 things that need improvement
    - Muddiest point
    - BUT close the loop and tell students!!
  - Reflect on and make notes immediately after the lecture
  - Peer observation
  - Teaching surveys - analyse comments and respond!
  - HEDC

More practical pointers on evaluating your lectures:

- Record yourself on video every now and then (HEDC can assist with this)
- Use all opportunities to observe other people's lectures
- Use some lecture time to draw feedback from students
- Ask students how you are doing (Race, 2001)

References

Bligh, D. (1998) *What's the Use of Lectures?* Exeter: Intellect.

Brookfield, S.D. (1990) *The Skillful Teacher – on Technique, Trust, and Responsiveness in the Classroom*. San Francisco: Josset-Bass.

- See chapter 6 "Lecturing Creatively"
- HEDC Resource Room: LB 2331 BV437

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Dunkin, M.J. (1983) A review of research on lecturing. *Higher Education Research and Development,* 2: 63-78.

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University of Canterbury Teaching and Learning Centre (2004) The Lecture – Structuring the Session. Information Series no. 300/1. http://www.uctl.canterbury.ac.nz/infoseries.shtml (accessed 15/07/04).

Note that there is a Lecturing Resource Folder in HEDC's Resource Library. This file contains a comprehensive collection of research articles, book chapters and web packages pertaining to preparing and delivering lectures. See Kelby Smith Han (ext 5861) or kelby.smith@stonebow.otago.ac.nz for more information.