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PREPARING AND DELIVERING AN EFFECTIVE LECTURE

The problem of the most effective ways of preparing and delivering university lectures is discussed in the article. Being the oldest teaching method lectures are still widely used in universities throughout the world. The latest pedagogical research by Ukrainian scholars doesn't fully reveal this problem and does not allow developing useful guidelines for an instructor interested in organizing and delivering an effective lecture course. This is why the author analyses the British and American researchers' works in the field, summarizes the recommendations and highlights the most vital issues for improving the quality of university lectures.

Setting the learning goals, accurate timing and structuring, cutting down the amount of material, outlining the lecture notes, careful choice of examples and lecturer's flexibility are the key issues, the author considers. Of no less importance is the knowledge of the major stages of presenting a lecture, the peculiarities of keeping the students' effective attention and engaging them throughout active learning practices.

Some practical recommendations based on the studied sources and the author's experience are offered for the lecturers. Some precautious remarks are formulated too. Among them are: using too many different types of illustrative material at a time, and using too many visual aids, PowerPoint presentations and the like. It results in cognitive overload because different forms of processing interfere with each other.

Key words: *effective ways, preparing and delivering university lectures, goals, timing and structuring, flexibility, active learning.*

Lecturing effectively has always been a challenge in our globalized world of rapidly developing information and communication technologies. Most teachers, compiling their academic courses, will at some time face the problem of organizing an effective lecture, despite many other methods of teaching being available, "the lecture is probably the oldest teaching method and still the method most widely used in universities throughout the world" [13, p. 57]. The majority of methods and tools used by our FL teachers seem to be legging behind those used by our foreign colleagues. The latest pedagogical research introduced in the native sources doesn't fully reveal this problem and is insufficient to be used as proper guidelines for an instructor aiming at effective lecture organization and delivering. This fact made us turn to the study of this problem in foreign pedagogy.

The aim of this article is to summarize and highlight the most vital issues for improving the quality of lectures investigated by British and American researchers. A more systematic analysis of effective lecture preparation techniques and the major stages of presenting a lecture, the peculiarities of the students' effective attention and engaging students through active learning practices will be put forward.

One of the essential points related to the effectiveness of the lecture is its proper preparation. The first step is setting learning goals for the academic course in general and for a particular lecture. "Once you and your students know where you're going, the trip is easier and more efficient" [7, p. 1]. Before or while putting forward the objectives bear in mind the background of your students (their age, ethnicity, gender mix, etc.), their predispositions (hopes, fears, level of interest) and knowledge of / experience with subject or lecturer. Moreover, the context in which the students will engage with course information is important (large or small lecture hall, lighting and sound issues, time of day) [16, p.1]. Experts from Berkeley University suggest taking the following steps in establishing the learning goals:

– Answer the question, "What do I want my students to know or be able to do after completing my course?" (e.g., critically analyze a text, understand the causes of WW I, and so on);

– Revise your syllabus to match these goals;

– Decide what evidence you will need to prove that students have met the goals (e. g., certain questions on an exam, a research paper or annotated bibliography that meets particular criteria, and so on)

– Make sure that every goal has a clear assessment [7, p. 1]. Mind that outcomes should be measurable [8, p. 1].

The recommendation of the experienced lecturers is to keep the number of learning goals / outcomes manageable and realistic. Five or six goals might be a good starting point [8, p. 1; 5, p. 3]. The essential issue is informing the students about the procedures for grading, attendance, late homework, missed tests, etc. *in writing* and handing them out *on the first day* [4, p. 3].

The same refers to setting one lecture objectives. Asking the question "What do you want the students to know and be able to do at the end of the lecture?" seems a logical and proper starting point. Besides, working out some *guiding questions* which the lecturer will address will optimize the teaching potential of the lecture. Showing these questions as an overhead or using handout material at the beginning of the class is a way of

helping students to see the nature and scope of the specific learning outcomes they should be able to achieve progressively as the lecture / session proceeds [14, p. 1].

Accurate *timing and structuring* a lecture will definitely result in increasing its effectiveness. While planning a lecture it is advisable to keep in mind that it should cover less than the entire period. Firstly, it takes some time to get going. And secondly, students' questions, as a rule, take up more time than expected [16, p. 3]. Structuring the lecture clearly is emphasized by the majority of scholars as the basic principle of effective lecturing [10, p. 1; 16, p. 3]. Waterloo University experts recommend focusing on the following points in the process of structuring a lecture:

– showing students "the big picture" (lecturer should explain how the lecture relates to previously-learned material and the course themes and goals in general, begin the class with a short review of the key points from the last class, and end with a preview of the topics for the next class (along with a reminder about any readings or assignments to be completed);

– telling students what you're going to say, say it, then tell them what you've just said (before discussing the day's topics provide an overview of what will be discussed; after covering the topics, end with a restatement of the key points; when speaking, repeat yourself to an extent that would be redundant in writing to facilitate students note-taking);

– keeping the lecture outline visible for students (write it on a corner of the blackboard or leave it up on an overhead, return to the outline periodically to show your progress through the material and to reinforce key points);

– making explicit transitions between topics with mini-summaries (link current material to previously-learned content and future lectures, be explicit about how one topic connects to the next, or ask your students to explain the connections; by linking the new material to the previously-learned content the lecturer helps students understand and organize this new information in their minds);

– covering only a few main points in each lecture (plan to cover only four or five points in a seventy-five-minute class; focus on presenting central points or general themes that tie together as many topics as possible) [10, p. 1].

The choice of the material should be thorough and harsh. In foreign pedagogy even a special term *Content Tyranny* was introduced to indicate the problem urgent for most college instructors. Cutting down the amount of material lecturers are trying to cover seems a reasonable way out. The authors of "Content Tyranny" suggest that lectures should cover the following kinds of material:

– key points and general themes;
– especially difficult material;
– material not covered elsewhere;
– examples and illustrations;
– material of high interest to students.

The steps recommended by the researchers in this field to take are to read through the syllabus and mark every topic as either "essential" or "helpful" and then cut out all the "helpful" – move them to "suggested further reading" [7, p. 2].

One of the essential points related to lecturing well is *outlining your lecture* notes. It is desirable to avoid writing out a complete lecture script. As our American colleagues state, a script is too time-consuming to prepare, and it will prevent you from maintaining eye contact with the students. Your ability to be spontaneous will be hindered. It is recommended to avoid visual aids as your notes; your reading from an overhead or computer screen will not keep the students engaged, since your visual focus still will not be on them [10, p. 1]. Professor William E. Cashin from Kansas State University supports the idea of listing major points rather than writing out the lecture to be read verbatim. He suggests under each major point, listing all of the minor points that elaborate upon or explain each major point. He sees the difficulty only in time constraints which limit how much content can be covered [3, p. 2]. Other researchers point out experimenting as an important way to find out what kind of notes will work best for you (detailed outline, list of major points, tree diagram). Lecturer's notes should include key definitions, proofs, solved problems, examples and analogies [10, p. 1].

Another essential aspect in the lecture organization is a careful choice of examples. A relevant example – especially if it is something familiar and meaningful to the students – may help far more than paragraphs of abstract or theoretical description [3, p. 2]. Including notes for yourself or the so-called "delivery notes" is also emphasized by foreign scholars as one of the means of effective lecturing. Lecturer may use wide margins in order to add notes about audio-visual aids, questions to ask students, last-minute examples. You can color-code your notes to include the necessary suggestions [3, p. 2; 10, p. 1].

While following their notes the lecturers should be flexible and "watch students' level of interest and confusion to determine how much time to spend on a topic and what level of explication is required. Your notes should be flexible enough to let you adjust the depth and order of the content based on students' feedback" [10, p. 1]. Delivering lecture's points with the listener in mind is paramount. The content must be presented in the most listener-friendly way possible. So, usage of simple words, short sentences, and a conversational style of speaking is advisable, and of course, as much as possible, the information should be presented both visually and aurally [3, p. 2].

Concerning the stage of *presentation or delivering* the lecture, special attention should be paid to the opening and closing parts. It's recommended to avoid making the opening too predictable. When one is ready to start, they should capture students' attention. It is often easier to do this by dimming the lights and showing the

first overhead, than by trying to quiet down the pre-lecture chatter by talking loudly. It is advised to ignore late-comers [14, p. 1]. Beginning with a provocative question, anecdote, or current event and its relation to the content seems a better idea. Experts also suggest such effective ways of lecture opening as asking someone in class to summarize what happened in the last session, using a question box (selecting the most interesting / difficult questions and addressing those), or setting up a problem and promising that they'll have all the tools for a solution by the end of the class [16, p. 2]. As for the closing of the lecture, instead of talking until the end of the class, which is a typical situation with the majority of lecturers, a better solution would be planning to end with content 5 minutes early in order to summarize, raise questions, preview the next topic, and frame an approach for assigned reading [16, p. 2]. Researchers also recommend avoiding feeling that you have to get through all of your material. Even very experienced lecturers, when preparing a new lecture, often overestimate what they can cover in an hour. It is better to cover part of your material well, than to try to rush through all of it. The future sessions can be adjusted to balance out the content [14, p. 2].

Speaking about the major / core part of the lecture, it is necessary to take into account two important issues: the peculiarities of the students' effective attention and engaging students through active learning practices. D. A. Bligh, the author of a famous *What's the use of Lectures*, suggests the decline in student attention (and lecturer performance) from the start to the end of a traditional lecture. He states that the limit to students' effective attention is 25-30 minutes. But any interruption (even half a minute's respite) has beneficial effects, and any change is almost as good as a rest. So the desired effect may be produced by inviting questions, posing a simple-choice question, answered by a show of hands, setting a simple exercise for buzz groups [9, p. 1].

Notional effect of interruptions on attention
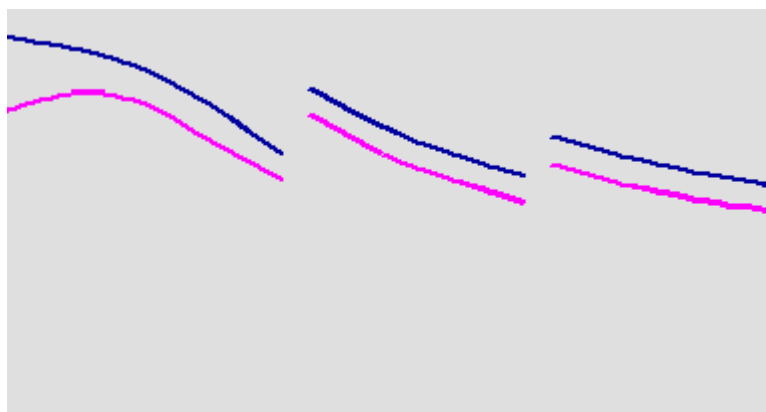
In the review of cognitive theories three phases of the learning process are pointed out by the researchers from Stanford University. In the first one, we orient our attention selectively; consequently the principle lecturer's aim is to capture the attention of the audience. In the second step of learning, people organize what they hear or observe into a coherent mental pattern or structure. So the more the instructor can provide students with a framework for interpreting the lecture material, the easier it is for them to understand the new ideas. These first two stages of learning create a short-term memory for new information. To transfer it to a long-term memory, we need to rehearse the new information and connect it to existing frameworks of knowledge. In the classroom this final stage begins with review and application, and continues out of the classroom through well-crafted assignments [5, p. 1].

A more detailed description of the emotional means of getting the students attention was given in an article [1] of ours. The most important among them are the instructor's expressiveness and enthusiasm for the subject. Another factor stated by our foreign colleagues is lecturer's presence: physical, emotional, and intellectual. In such case no gimmicks are needed – the expressiveness that follows from full presence is a natural attention-grabber [5, p. 2].

The problem of organizing the information into a mental structure, which is the second stage of learning, can be solved by providing students with a framework for each lecture. There are some ways of doing this:

1) preparing a study guide for the course that describes each lecture's objectives, key concepts, and questions to consider [15, p. 57];

2) a handout with the lecture's major points aimed at preparing students to listen and look for the central elements of the lecture; e.g. we use for delivering our lectures on History of GB and the USA the so-called method guide, that includes besides the just-mentioned issues the Lecture Notes (combining the first and the second points in one). It spares students from copying down lots of information;

3) skeletal lecture handouts, with room for students' notes, may be even more effective than providing students with the full lecture notes [6, p. 72];

4) preceding each part of a lecture by a high-level question that the upcoming information can answer [5, p. 2].

Besides, a lecturer should be as explicit as possible about what students should focus on. Variation of pacing and voice, pausing before new / key points, considering gestures will be beneficial. Key concepts and

definitions should be introduced clearly. Experts advise to use verbal and visual cues to highlight the major points and categories; moreover, asking students to review or explain the most important points might turn out to be effective [5, p. 2]. All the above mentioned strategies will help create a framework for students so that they successfully identify the core ideas in the lecture.

On this stage lecturer must be careful not to overload the students' memory, and should remember that students are not sponges and cannot immediately "absorb" the new information [5, p. 2]. Bearing in mind Bligh's statement that the audience's attention in a lecture drops dramatically after ten minutes of listening [2, p. 53], lecturer can make short breaks and include some formal activity or assignment after every 15-20 minutes of presentation. For instance, summarizing might be quite useful in this situation with the purpose to create a change in monotonous flow of the lecture. Researchers recommend giving the students some practice at note-making (rather than just note-taking). "Students learn very little from just copying out bits of what they see or hear, and may need quite a lot of help towards summarizing, prioritizing, and making their notes their own individual learning tools" [14, p. 1]. So dividing the lecture into discrete segments both in terms of time and in terms of material (ten or fifteen minute blocks, each one with a topic) and after the presentation asking the students to summarize and make notes of the material seems effective in interrupting the lecture routine and revitalizing students' attention on the one hand, and engaging them into active learning practices on the other hand.

Another factor, connected with overloading the students which may be fatal, is using too many different types of presentation materials at a time. Lecturers often include audio, video, and written materials in their presentations to attract students' attention. Nevertheless, "cognitive overload may occur when different forms of processing interfere with each other" [12, p. 45]. Speaking about the case when students are presented with an illustration that also includes a written explanation, Mayer found out that replacing the written explanation with an auditory narrative, which uses another sensory channel, is more effective. So a good way out will be coordinating verbal instructions with other media and maintaining reasonable pace [5, p. 3].

The final stage of the learning process, revision and application, can be embodied in two major ways: 1) giving students time, during lecture, to review and apply ideas; 2) giving students assignments that encourage them to review their lecture notes and use the lecture content [5, p. 3]. Among small tasks given during a lecture might be to discuss the problem or issue in pairs, to work alone and then vote on a solution or position, to read extracts from handout material, to create a chart / table / concept map, ask and answer questions, give feedback, do calculations, put things in order of importance and so on. Berkeley University experts suggest such interesting ideas for in-class exercises as:

– breaking the class into groups to investigate a problem and after five minutes randomly calling on groups to respond;

– handing out three-five cards and asking students to jot down a question they have as result of the last 20 minutes, then have them pass the cards three or four people to the left and ask various people if they can answer the question on the card they now have;

– showing a short relevant video clip [5, p. 3].

A wide range of in-class exercises is described by Richard M. Felder, among them our attention was attracted by the following: 1) drawing and labeling a chart; 2) giving reasons why the solution might be useful; 3) brainstorming a list of reasons or possible solutions. The responses may be given / written individually, in pairs or groups, and sometimes worked out alone and combined and improved in pairs ("think-pair-share"). In-class activities can be also used to wrap up a lecture period, if you ask the students to write down and hand in a brief statement of the main point of the lecture or to tell you how they think you could improve the class. R. M. Felder states that "using one or two active learning exercises lasting no more than five minutes in a 50-minute session can provide enough stimulation to keep the class with lecturer for the entire period without ruining the syllabus" [4, p. 2].

The research carried out by our foreign colleagues in this field seems considerable, meanwhile a further and detailed analysis of integrating active learning into the lecturing process in Ukraine is required, which will be an objective of our future investigation.

In conclusion, it is worthwhile mentioning that the problem of effective lecturing still remains an urgent issue. Our reviewing and summarizing the experience of British and American researchers only helps to outline the major directions for further study. The use of active learning and interactivity in the lecture and an appropriate use of visual aids including computer presentations seem to be calling for more detailed analyses and are sure to be the objectives of our future research.

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ПІДГОТОВКА ТА ПРОВЕДЕННЯ ЕФЕКТИВНОГО
ЛЕКЦІЙНОГО ЗАНЯТТЯ

У статті йдеться про найбільш ефективні шляхи підготовки та проведення лекційних занять для студентів-філологів. Розглядаються особливості постановки цілей, розподілу часу та матеріалу, ретельний добір прикладів, гнучкість лектора. Аналізуються основні етапи проведення лекції, особливості ефективної уваги студентів та їх залучення до активного навчання під час лекції.

Ключові слова: підготовка та проведення лекцій, постановка цілей, розподіл часу та матеріалу, гнучкість, увага, активне навчання.

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ПОДГОТОВКА И ПРОВЕДЕНИЕ ЭФФЕКТИВНОГО
ЛЕКЦИОННОГО ЗАНЯТИЯ

В статье рассматриваются эффективные способы подготовки и проведения лекционных занятий для студентов-филологов. Изучаются особенности постановки целей, распределение времени и материала, тщательный отбор примеров, гибкость лектора. Анализируются основные этапы проведения лекции, особенности эффективного внимания студентов и их приобщение к активному обучению во время лекции.

Ключевые слова: подготовка и проведение лекций, постановка целей, распределение времени и материала, гибкость, внимание, активное обучение.