



Fundamentals of the Lecture

Prepared by the Office of Educational Enhancement, The University of Tennessee College of Veterinary Medicine, 2004

- I. **Lectures** are “continuous expositions by a speaker who want the audience to learn something” (Bligh, 2000). Probably the oldest and most widely used speaking method.
 - a. University Teaching
 - b. Conferences
 - c. Industry
 - d. Speeches
 - e. Sermons

- II. **How Useful are Lectures?**
 - a. Efficient use of faculty/staff time
 - b. *Effective for transmitting and teaching facts*
 - c. Not as effective as other methods for:
 - i. Promoting thought (but can provoke things to think about later)
 - ii. Teaching values associated with the subject matter (unless these are values already held by the audience member)
 - iii. Inspiring interest in a subject matter?
 - iv. Molding personal or social adjustment
 - v. Teaching behaviors or skills

- III. **When Are Lectures Useful?**
 - a. **To teach information**
 - i. Information that is not readily available
 - ii. Information that is diverse, scattered and needs to be organized/assimilated
 - iii. Current information from an expert
 - iv. Present organized information in a short time frame
 - v. Provide a framework for other learning activities
 - vi. Explain and clarify difficult concepts (to a point!)
 - vii. Present an analysis of a confusing or controversial issue (also to a point!)

- viii. Demonstrate relationships between previously learned and new information or ideas that initially would appear dissimilar
- ix. Challenge beliefs, attitudes or behaviors
- x. To help the lecturer integrate, organize and retrieve their subject matter

b. *The presenter is effective, content expert and comfortable speaker*

c. *The learners are able to assimilate from lecture* (advanced education, intelligent)

d. *Group Size is moderate to large*

e. *Facilities are appropriate for lectures*

IV. What Happens During a Typical Lecture?

- a. Auditory analysis
- b. Word recognition
- c. Contextual understanding of strings of word
- d. Construction of meaning
 - i. Associating or discriminating
 - ii. Chunking or encoding
 - iii. Note taking
- e. Thinking?
- f. Expression – some type of stimulation that occurs as we listen or write down what the lecturer said (“aha...”)
- g. Processing

V. Factors Contributing to “Forgetting”

- a. *Interference* – from things said or heard/thought before or after
- b. *Trace Decay* – the simple fade that happens with time (seconds!)
- c. Trying to learn too much – people can handle strings of 7 to 9 short things verbally
- d. *Repression* – if the fact or interpretation doesn’t “fit” with the rest of the information being presented

VI. Factors Aiding “Remembering”

- a. Meaningful information that fits in with what the person already knows
- b. The “Whole” versus “Parts” approach – depends on the complexity
- c. Organized, logical presentation
- d. *Rehearsal* (to oneself) of learned/heard material
- e. *Repetition*
- f. Feedback
- g. Arousal
- h. *Transfer* (of previously learned material)

VII. Features of Attention During Lectures

a. Arousal

- i. Variation of activity
 1. Auditory
 2. Visual
 3. Posture
 4. Mode or Method of activity
 5. Intensity
 6. Pauses/Breaks
- ii. Arousal regimes during the class (see Figures)
- iii. Daily routines
 1. Morning more effective than afternoon
 2. Monday and Tuesday more effective than Friday
- iv. Environment
 1. Heat, humidity
 2. Seating, posture
 3. Room environment

b. Motivation

VIII. Common Pitfalls of Lecturing (from Indiana University Campus Instructional Consulting)

- a. Trying to cover too much
- b. Failing to prepare adequately
- c. Being perceived as disorganized or unclear
- d. Inadvertently encouraging student passivity
- e. Ignoring student feedback
- f. Failing to use good examples
- g. Distracting or poor delivery style

Resources:

Bligh, DA. *What's the Use of Lectures?* Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 2000.

Farrar SJ. Lecture. In Galbraith MW, ed. *Adult Learning Methods: A Guide for Effective Instruction*, 3rd ed. Krieger, Malabar, FL, 2004.

University Office for Learning Resources. "Improving lecturing skills: Some insights from speech communication", retrieved August 26, 2004 at <http://www.indiana.edu/~teaching/lectskills.html>.