

INNOVATION IN LECTURING: BRITISH STUDIES

The lecture in its many forms is the most commonly used method for transferring information in university education worldwide. There are, however, serious questions in theory, and practice nationally and internationally regarding the effectiveness of still broadly used though often in a hidden way the traditional lecture approach when students for the most part sit, listen and take notes of an uninterrupted teacher's talk.

Seminar is very important as communicative, context-specific and student-centered form of teaching and learning but lecturing could be and should be very beneficial genre of academic teaching. The teacher is not a solo performer any more but an intellectual guide or coach, and the students are not passive audience but actively engaged learners. That sounds fine in theory but how to effectively put it into practice?

The last academic year I after a short break restarted my graduate British Literature course for prospective teachers of the English language. It gave me a good chance to put into action on the basis of the project conducted innovative perspective for transforming teaching and learning in a particular context.

The project focused on the one hand, on a truly cross-disciplinary issue: common teaching formats for humanities but on the other hand it aimed at the improvement of student learning via innovation in the British Literature Course lecturing (discipline-specific). Thus it aimed to explore the issues of lecturing effectively with maximum attention to student learning and to the content of the course.

The project was not only of a personal importance but to the advantage of all those lecturing in humanities both for young academics at the beginning of their career and for those who still use "teach as I was taught" style. Recently the project has acquired an additional institutional interest within research of the BSPU named after M. Tank scientific school on ways of modeling and introducing international innovative educational theory and practice and will last progressively.

The main tools of data gathering were the following (anonymous, answers confidential):

Opening-day questionnaire

The opening-day questionnaire is a fast way to get to know the students, their background on active learning and effective lecturing. Among the

questions were those on students' previous experiences and their understanding of innovation in delivering lectures. The questionnaire contained such questions as: What do you prefer extensive or limited note taking? Do you like interaction between teacher and students at the lecture? Have you ever participated in small group, problem-solving activities at the lectures?

Lecture satisfaction form

It is end-of-class feedback from students (1-3 minutes) with the slight modification of the following questions: Did you enjoy the lecture? What did you like/dislike best? How can your teacher improve the next lecture in your opinion? How can you be more effective as an active participant at the next lecture?

Midcourse evaluation

1. Please rate the lectures (using E for excellent, G for good, F for fair, P for poor) in this course by: breadth (topics covered per lecture); depth (detail provided about topics); readings (connecting readings to lectures); time management (more time on note taking or active learning); visuals (use of computer, overheads, slides, handouts, board); delivery (voice, movement in room); active learning (interaction, exercises about the topic, problem-solving); note taking (its extensiveness).

2. How might the lectures be changed to help you understand the course material more clearly?

3. What's the most vivid, thought-provoking, useful or otherwise memorable information you've learned so far in this class?

4. Please note any other comments about this course that you would like to share.

Reflective-practitioner diary (after-class teacher's reflective thoughts on the effectiveness of the lecture). It is important to keep a record of the ideas that worked and didn't work; to brainstorm alternatives for whatever was problematic; to think about what you learned about yourself as an intellectual guide and coach and about your students as active learners in order to use adaptive flexibility.

Lectures are comprised of two components: content and delivery. Both components are essential for creating a motivating lecture. How well a story is told and understood is dependent upon the quality of the delivery.

The content is discipline specific. No longer do we live in isolation; instead, there is an ever-changing, interdependent world, a multilingual global society. To study foreign literature with all its linguistic and social knowledge gives the students the powerful key to effective human-to-human interaction.

One of the most significant tools to achieve this is lecture delivery. Main strategies that were used.

- *Outline of the lecture in question format* allows students to pick up the thread of the discussion more quickly as their attention fades in and out.

- *Key terms* of the lecture that act as verbal subheadings or memory aids.

- *Visual illustrations* during a lecture to aid memory. Visual illustrations are remembered longer than verbal information, and they can aid the recall of information that is associated with them. Technology helps add other dimensions to the lecture.

- *Electronic Technology-Enhanced Lecturing* allows using computer consoles, DVD/VHS players, displaying teaching files (PowerPoint, sound files, images), and course site or other websites. However, misuse and overuse of this software can lead to a room full of bored looks and glassy stares.

- *Message focus*. “In a lecture, less is more.” It is easy to present too much information, which quickly saturates students, causing them to drop into a passive-listening role. Unless the learner can encode the information in a rich context with *good examples and reasons for remembering it*, the information will not stay in memory very long.

- *Analogies*, comparison between the content of the lecture and knowledge the students already have.

- *Game-like features* for a variety in delivery. They help me to use the subject matter expertise to help students acquire and manipulate information appropriately.

Outcomes: the students showed their ability to critically consider how best to foster their own learning by developing a communicative perspective, a habit of mind that involves thinking critically, examining the options, making appropriate choices, being interested and actively engaged in their learning at the lectures.