

The majority of articles that appear in 'The English Teacher' deal with practical aspects of teaching English at the primary and secondary levels. In contrast, this article is addressed to the growing body of people who lecture in university language centres and teacher training colleges on the methodology of teaching English as a second or foreign language.

The traditional lecture delivered to the class as a whole, has long been regarded as the main method of imparting theoretical learning. However, it is now falling from favour or being supplemented by other methods such as tutorial work and student-centred group activities like discussion and organized talks. Practical teaching demonstrations and micro-teaching comprise other supplementary procedures. Further, individual techniques such as essay writing, graded exercises and assignment work form another set of procedures.

In spite of the tendency to lecture less, there is a place in universities and colleges for lectures. Many lecturers feel that 'immature' students can listen and learn better than by reading (although this has never been proven). Undoubtedly, lectures are useful for such purposes as introducing a new topic and for showing students how to handle a difficult subject. They are important too for helping students systematize their reading; some college and university teachers claim there are too many books for students to manage effectively nowadays. Moreover, a good deal of important ground can be covered in a single lecture. All this assumes the lecture is carefully planned and effectively delivered.

With a growing number of students being trained as TESL teachers in universities and colleges, it appears that the formal lecture will remain an inevitable part of their training. Thus, it is important that lecturers have a knowledge of the proven principles and techniques which underlie good lecturing and the efficient handling of large classes.

### Common-sense Principles of Large-class Instruction

1. *Have a definite aim or purpose in each lecture:* Be very clear in your own mind about this purpose, and let your students know what you are aiming at at the beginning of the lecture.
2. *Prepare your work carefully:* If you are a beginner, plan your lecture in considerable detail. Write it down showing the steps of procedure. This will safeguard you from 'drying up' in the middle of the lecture and also prevent you from being 'side-tracked' by questions. Have all your lecturing aids and necessary equipment ready and in good order before the lecture begins.
3. *Present your subject-matter in a logical sequence:* Proceed from the known to the unknown. To help do this, set down your steps of procedure on a piece of paper and keep it handy during the lecture. Pause to explain newly-introduced terminology or concepts.
4. *Keep your students orientated:* Give occasional guide-marks to enable students to follow the pattern of your lecture. For instance, it helps to give a title for the lecture and to write it on the board. It also helps to build up a very brief chalkboard summary as you go along together with appropriate utterances like: 'There are three steps in this method' or 'Now the first step . . .' etc.
5. *Demonstrate and illustrate wherever possible:* Think out examples beforehand and use them at the appropriate points in the lecture.
6. *Stimulate interest:* Interest stems from your personality and manner. A bright, enthusiastic tone helps, so also does a variation in voice, a gesture, a joke. Use a little showmanship — a raised voice, a dramatic pause, the sudden showing of a picture, or the lively demonstration of a teaching technique. Interest is also stimulated by the judicious use of teaching aids like chalkboard diagrams or realia.

7. *Test each principle or step taught before proceeding to the next*: Test by inviting discussion or by asking pertinent questions. Give everyone a chance to ask questions and to participate.
8. *Encourage active student participation*: Let the students take an active part in the discussion and give them something to do afterwards. Remember 'we learn by doing'. Set reading tasks, essays, assignments or practical tasks at some stage following your lecture.
9. *Recapitulate frequently*: Sum up your lecture briefly using the summary built up on the chalkboard during the course of the lecture. Clinch and draw together the main points taught; this improves retention and often enhances real understanding.

#### **How to Lecture: Some Positive Points for Beginners**

The hints below are for young and inexperienced lecturers keen to improve their teaching.

1. *Remember that the real art of lecturing shows in the way you present your material*: The successful lecturer aims at the best possible presentation of his material. Think *how* to handle your topic, as well as the content.
2. *Look at your class*: Maintain eye contact with the students – all of them, not just a few in the front row. You will then be able to keep their attention as well as see what they are doing and how they are reacting to your lecture.
3. *Always be master of the situation*: Be pleasant as well as firm. Never continue lecturing if a large number of students are inattentive. Do not pretend to ignore inattention. Ask yourself why the students are inattentive. Have you been uninteresting, have you been talking too long?
4. *Do not allow yourself to be side-tracked*: Keep to the main topic; don't digress, however interesting the side-track may be.
5. *Avoid spending much time on explanations to one or two students*: Don't lecture to one or two students at the expense of the rest of the class. Arrange to help the students afterwards or refer them to a textbook.

6. *Summarize the main points of your lecture on the chalkboard as you go along*: This is most helpful to your students – and to yourself in keeping your progress and procedure constantly in mind.
7. *Do not ever lecture vaguely*: Talk directly to your class. Speak readily and clearly. Say what you mean in the first instance. Use simple language. Explain new terms and write them on the chalkboard each time. Remember, students always know when a lecturer is not in control of his subject.
8. *Be sensitive to your class*: Be alert to determine whether your class is following you or whether you have lost contact with them. Try another method of presentation in the next lecture.
9. *Avoid moving about too much*: Generally it is better to stand to lecture to large groups. Too much movement away from the rostrum can be distracting to the students.

#### **Some Lecturing 'Don'ts' for Beginners**

1. *Don't dictate notes or read out of textbooks*: Your class will learn little that way. Expect students to read texts for themselves. If your notes are good and the product of your own thinking and experience, duplicate and issue them to the class.
2. *Don't talk too much*: Students are bored by teachers who talk on and on and who explain obvious facts and give unnecessary explanations.
3. *Don't be a gramophone*: Don't repeat exactly the same lecture (including the same jokes) year after year. Vary your presentation with the standard of the class and with the occasion. Use your own spontaneous thoughts and words.
4. *Don't be a victim of mannerisms*: Obvious mannerisms like breaking up pieces of chalk, walking up and down, tapping the table, fingering your spectacles, pulling your ear, or repeating a word, like 'Right', or 'actually', annoy and distract an audience. Know that these half-conscious expressions sometimes betray your emotional state or tension. They can be controlled!

5. *Don't be cruel*: Never ridicule a student's reply or in any way make jokes about students.
6. *Don't talk to the chalkboard*: Too many university and college lecturers go on talking when turned or half-turned to the chalkboard. Cultivate the habit of talking only when facing the class and then speak out so that your voice reaches the back row of seats. Your voice is lost, and the advantages of using your eyes and face for expression are also lost, if you lecture with your back to the class.

### Why Not Rate Yourself?

A self-rating scale of lecturing proficiency is given below. Allot a letter-grading to each item shown according to the scale:

- A = exceptional
- B = very good
- C = just above average
- D = below average
- E = extremely poor.

The items on the scale cover 1. Lecturing skill; 2. Class management; 3. Team work.

#### 1. Lecturing Skill

- (a) Have you a sound knowledge of your subject-matter?
- (b) Can you impart this knowledge to your students?
- (c) Are you enthusiastic about your subject, and is this enthusiasm contagious?
- (d) Can you get your students to work eagerly and spontaneously; e.g. Do they work willingly outside lecture times?
- (e) Is your work challenging to all your students including the majority as well as the most capable?
- (f) Is your voice well-modulated, and your delivery clear and pleasant?
- (g) Is your manner bright and stimulating?
- (h) Are your methods modern and progressive, and psychologically sound?
- (i) Do you get your students to participate, instead of doing all the work yourself?

#### 2. Class Management

- (a) Are the members of your class attentive and orderly?
- (b) Are you conscious of the individuals in your class, and do you get to know them and their progress in some way?
- (c) Do you readily win your students' co-operation and goodwill?
- (d) Do you use teaching aids effectively?
- (e) Does your lecturing proceed smoothly and systematically?

#### 3. Team Work

- (a) Do you co-operate with other staff in promoting the image of the course you are lecturing on?
- (b) Do you shoulder responsibility?
- (c) Do your students come voluntarily to you for advice?
- (d) Are your examination and assignment records, your attendance sheets (if required) in on time and up to date?
- (e) Does your influence contribute positively to the tone of the course as a whole?

Remember: the value of the formal TESL lecture is determined by your teaching ability. Although there will be various modes of teaching in any TESL course – seminars, tutorials, small group project work, independent student activity – lectures will form an integral part of a course, especially where there is a low teacher: student ratio. It is therefore the responsibility of lecturers to improve their lecturing techniques.