

Active Lecture

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Teaching is an essential part of education. Its special function is to impart knowledge, develop understanding and skills. There are different methods of teaching and of these, lecture method is the commonest. At the same time, it is much criticised teaching method. Most educators learn how to teach based on their experiences as students. This, “teach as I was taught” approach tends to perpetuate the lecture as a passive, one-way method of transferring information.

Studies show that lecture method is as effective as any other teaching method if it is made ‘active’. “To know how to teach is the great art of teaching” so, the educator should learn the strategies to deliver active lecture.

Definition of effective/active Lecture

Active or effective lecture refers to imparting information that is complex and difficult to understand and needs to be organised in ways that made it clear and reasonable for students to grasp.

LECTURE should be L - Lively, E - Educative, C - Creative, T - Thought provoking, U - Understandable, R - Relevant, and E - Enjoyable

When to Lecture

The Instructor / Lecturer must be sure that the lecture is appropriate for the particular learning situation.

Lecture is appropriate when : Disseminating information quickly to a large audience; Presenting new information; Providing an overview of a topic; Arousing interest in a topic (Renner 1993; Ruyle 1995)

Lecture is not appropriate when : Presenting complex, detailed or abstract information; Dealing with information concerning feelings and attitudes; Training in psychomotor skills ; Teaching high level cognitive skills

Effective and Ineffective Lecture

Effective lecture: Increases educator - student interaction; Enhances two-way communication; Stimulates questioning skills; Shared responsibility of active learning; Helps in small group, problem solving activities; Variety of supporting media; and requires limited note taking.

Ineffective Lecture: Involves 100 percent educator talk with limited or no interaction; One-way communication; few questions, if any. The student depends on educator for all information, there are no student activities, nor supporting media, and extensive note taking is required.

Making the Lecture Effective

Effective learning doesn't just happen- it has to be planned. To make the lecture effective, the educator must: (a) Establish the purpose of lecture; (b) Consider the logistic of the lecture; (c) Plan a variety of approaches; and

(d) Prepare lecture notes well in advance.

- > *Step I* - Preparation
- > *Step II* - Setting objectives
- > *Step III* - Delivering the content
- > *Step IV* - Evaluation

Preparation : The instructor probably can't cover everything what he/she wants to have in a lecture. Decide what is essential, what is important, and what is helpful. Cover the first; try to cover the second; forget about the third.

Setting objectives: The primary purpose is to transfer information from the teacher to the students / learners. The objectives should be written in measurable statement describing what the student will learn by attending the lecture.

Delivering the content: The key to making of an effective lecture style is to break down the lecture into its component parts and use a variety of approaches within each component. Beitz (1994) suggests that the instructor can use brainstorming, discussion, problem solving activities, etc. to make the lecture more active.

For delivering Active Lecture

(a) Know your audience/students; (b) Have a map to follow (lecture outline); (c) Grab the student's attention (have a beginning); (d) Recognise student's attention span; (e) Plan an activity for students (have a middle); (f) Use visual aids and movements; (g) Have a conclusion; (h) Have students do something with the lecture material (accountability).

Know your audience : Know students' names; Know their learning styles; Know their attention span limits; Know their background knowledge.

Have a map to follow: Be guided by lecture notes/outline. A daily lecture outline helps the instructor to stay on topic and prevent getting lost; cover the main points without forgetting anything; glance at a specific point and quickly return attention to the students; relax and focus on delivery instead of worrying about what point to make next.

Grab the student's attention: Every lecture needs a beginning (to capture the interest and attention of the students. A good interaction is critical to the success of a lecture) that does some of the following: Engages the audience; Prepares the audience; Builds curiosity; Creates challenges; States a question; Outlines the audience's role; and sets expectations.

The first five minutes of attention are the best five minutes - use them wisely.

Tips for creating an effective introduction (Sullivan and Wircenski, 1996)

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Review lecture objectives; Ask a rhetorical question; Ask a series of questions related to the lecture topic; Use an interesting or famous quotation; Relate the topic to previously covered content; Use a case study or problem solving activity; Show an appropriate cartoon with the overhead or slide projector; Give a demonstration; Use a game or role play; Relate the topic to future work experiences; Share a personal experience; and relate the topic to a real-life experience.

Recognise the attention span of students: Renner (1993) recommends that lectures last no larger than 30 minutes. Interactive lectures should last no longer than 60 minutes without a break.

Plan an activity for the students in the middle of the lecture : Break up lecture by using small groups to write, discuss, summarise, and solve a problem related to the lecture. Have students rise up and stretch at the mid point of the lecture. Lecture with an end of class quiz everyday - research has shown this to raise long term retention of course material. Have a Question Box in the class in the discussion topics related to the lecture.

Use visual aids / voice and movement to hold attention: Maintain eye contact with the students; Exhibit enthusiasm about the topic smiling, moving around the room; gesturing with hands and arms project a feeling of energy and excitement; Attract and hold the student's attention; Should aid the organisation, illustration and clarification of the lecture; and should encourage active thoughts - but not distraction.

When using visual aids...

Don't talk to your slides/board; Don't read the slides word-for-word, let the slides speak for themselves; and limit the amount of information on any slide.

Voice : Use your voice as an attention getting tool; Project the voice so that those in the back of room can hear clearly; Avoid the use of slang or respective words, phrases or gestures; Avoid the use of fillers (e.g., 'um', 'er', 'you know').

Movements : Location in the classroom can force students to pay closer attention - especially if you are standing right next to them. Body movements and posture can convey message to your audience.

Have a conclusion : Lectures should be planned to have an ending - not just a last word for that day. The ending could include: A summary of the day's main points; a recap of the questions that were answered that day; the solution to the problem for that day; an activity for the student; listing of test worthy information from that days lecture; and a chance for students to ask questions.

Have students do something with the lecture material: Current memory research indicates that most learning occurs outside the classroom when students read, reflect, write or experience the information given in lecture.

What should students do? Write summaries of the lecture material; Make mind maps of the information; Answer question about the information; Prepare for a quiz on the information; and make up test questions from the information.

Evaluating lectures: It helps to know the effectiveness of lecture method. There are three formal techniques which can be used to evaluate the quality of a lecture presentation, (i) feedback from the students (ii) self evaluation, and (iii) peer evaluation.

Feedback from the students: It involves asking students to complete an evaluation form about lecture.

Self evaluation: Video recording can be used for self-evaluation.

Peer Evaluation : The evaluator must be an experienced person who watches the lecture and evaluate it using a lecture skills check list. It helps the educator to improve his/her lecture skills

Lecturalgia: It refers to painful lecture. Causes for lecturalgia: Lecture objectives were unclear, was disorganised, did not relate to students, did not respond to students, was boring, and did not include opportunities to ask questions

Do's and Don'ts for a Lecture

Do's : Plan your lesson in advance; Prepare good audio - visual material and use them properly; Always keep the audience in mind; Recognise the limitations of time; Plan illustrative anecdotes or case reports; Plan to ask questions at intervals to create interactive dialogue; Try to keep the attention of the students throughout the lecture; Show enthusiasm and interest in the subjects and students; Summarise the main points towards the end of the lecture, and evaluate your performance.

Don'ts : Don't give a monologue lecture for more than 30 minutes at a stretch; Don't be too sensitive to yawns, restlessness, whispered conversations etc. of the students; Don't try to be complete; Don't mention anything only once; Don't talk to the board/slide; Don't use slang or repetitive gestures; and don't use fillers (e.g. 'um', 'ok', 'you know', etc.)

Conclusion

Effective teaching is the chief instrument of quality education. With planning and effective presentation techniques, the educator can deliver a lively, educative, creative, thought provoking, understandable, relevant and enjoyable active lecture for transferring knowledge to students.

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