

## **Unit 4**

### **Class Presentations**

#### **Objectives:**

- Understand the purposes of the lecture.
- Know the varieties of lecturing.
- Know what makes a lecture effective.
- Identify and begin to develop the skills that contribute to being an effective lecturer.
- Plan a class presentation.
- Identify ways technology can enhance lectures.

Picture someone who is teaching, then imagine yourself as a teacher. What aspects of these two images are similar? We would bet that in most of these images of teaching, students are seated and the teacher is standing in the front of a room talking. Like so many teachers before them, these teachers are giving a lecture.

If you ask teachers what educational method they use most in their classes, a frequent response will be the lecture-discussion method. This type of teaching is so prevalent in higher education that an individual with the rank of instructor in a U.S. or Canadian university is called lecturer in the United Kingdom and other parts of the world (Cox & Light, 2001). When teachers are observed as they implement this method, they tend to talk more than 80% of the time with some of their students talking (not necessarily discussing) less than 20% of the time (Nunn, 1996). Teachers continue to rely heavily on the lecture method as a primary way of teaching, which is why we place it first in these sections on teaching strategies. This unit focuses on three aspects of lecturing: preparing to lecture in general, implementing interactive lecturing, and using technology as a tool in lectures.

## **What is a lecture? Why use lectures in teaching?**

What do we mean when we talk about lecture? There are many variations of what is meant by lecture. The political speech and religious sermon usually are pure lectures. While many teachers might give pure lectures, other teachers routinely complement lectures with demonstrations, visual aids such as videos and PowerPoint, technologies such as student response systems, and a variety of interactive and discussion-based activities. For us, the term lecture refers to a heterogeneous collection of class presentations or teacher-centered techniques designed to maintain student engagement with what is being taught.

Donald Bligh (2000), in his book-length review of the research titled, *What's the Use of Lectures?*, begins his first chapter with this conclusion: "The lecture is *as effective* as other methods for transmitting information. Most lectures are *not* as effective as discussion for promoting thought" (p. 3, italics added). He also concludes that lectures are "relatively ineffective" for teaching values, inspiring interest, for personal and social adjustment, and for teaching behavioral skills. In short, if your goal as an educator is to promote the storage of knowledge, lecturing seems to be a viable method of instruction. However, if your goal is to facilitate critical thinking, influence others to action or keep students' attention for extended periods of time while you talk, you might be best advised to consider another mode of instruction. That's pretty discouraging news about this most widely used teaching method, but we will see that there still is something to be said for its continued use (Benjamin, 2002). In the remainder of this chapter, we will focus on why you might want to lecture and ways to do it more effectively.

***Critical Thinking Interruption***

- Under what circumstances do [or would] you lecture and why?
- How does the use of lecturing fit with your evolving teaching philosophy?

## Why Lecture?

One of Jim's colleagues, who loved his course topic, would say that he could not miss a class because, "I have a lot to tell them." Providing information that we want students to know is one reason to lecture, and it appears that there is research to support the lecture as one, though not the only, effective way to do this. Lecturing is an effective way to introduce new topics and relate the new topic to previously taught material. Some information may be so new that it has not yet been included in a textbook. Often information is scattered around across many sources, making it such that the teacher is best suited to integrate and summarize this important information for students. Even lecturing on material that already is in the textbook can be helpful. The instructor can rephrase an idea that may need clarification, and add examples adapted to the background and interests of the students. Keep in mind that transmitting information is a major objective for lecturing, but not the only objective. According to Burgan (2006)

...excellent lecture sessions raise questions in ways that inspire students to seek answers together. In doing so, they also can provide a shortcut for the student through the thicket of detail and argument that presenters already know by heart. ... Most important, though, is the possibility of being 'plugged in' to a learning process that is shared in reaching understanding. ... the vitality of the educational exchange in college often derives from the engagement of the student with a professor who is himself involved in a lifetime of discovery (p. 34).

Lectures when done well can motivate students and stimulate their interest in the subject matter (e.g., Benjamin, 2002; Cashin, 1985). Bligh (2000) reviewed 31 studies and concluded that lectures rarely influence the lives of students as powerfully as we teachers might fantasize.

When the measure is increased interest, lectures were found to be more effective than discussion or other methods in only 13% of the studies, and less effective in 52%, with no significant difference in the other studies.

The conclusion seems clear: lectures, as broadly defined here, represent one good way to transmit some informational objectives some of the time. However, lectures should, by no means, be viewed as a tool for all purposes in the college classroom. Traditional lectures have not been found to instill analytical thinking or critical synthesis skills in our students. Yet, lecturing “does not lead to poor learning ... It is how lecturing is used that determines its effectiveness (Ramsden, 2003, p. 148).”

Other factors contribute to such frequent use of lecture in higher education. The furniture arrangement in a classroom leads students to make assumptions about the teaching style of the instructor (Graetz, 2006). Most university classrooms are designed to facilitate lecturing. This is particularly true in large classrooms containing rows of fixed seats facing the front of the room where the instructor’s station is situated. This leads to expectations that the instructor will primarily lecture.

Several years ago, Mary interviewed students in a computer science course that involved one session per week in a traditional classroom and a second session in a computer lab. The students actively asked questions and responded to questions from the instructor during the sessions in the computer lab; however, in the traditional classroom, they remained silent when the instructor asked questions and encouraged them to ask questions. When asked why they behaved differently in the two settings, the students routinely responded that in the traditional classroom, they expected the instructor to lecture to them (“that’s his job”) while when in the

more informal lab setting, they expected to be actively involved in working on material learned in lecture and asking and answering questions.

Class size is often another contributing factor in instructors choosing to lecture. Teacher talking time is correlated positively with class size. Larger classes tend to make some student-centered, active learning methods (e.g., group activities, class demonstrations, debates) more difficult to implement, but we will see in a later section that there always are opportunities for student involvement even in very large classes, so class size should not be the primary criterion for lecturing.

Let us confess to another purpose we have observed for lecturing; boosting the ego of the teacher. Many teachers have an image of themselves as exciting, inspirational classroom performers. Over the years, we have heard many of our colleagues talk about the “buzz” they get from performing well in front of a class when students are excited, ask a lot of questions, and laugh at your jokes. All these student responses can serve as powerful reinforcers for lecturing. This is fine if it enhances the teacher's enthusiasm and accountability, because that will help maintain the students' attention. But it is a problem if it blinds the teacher to more effective ways of accomplishing course objectives. Ludy Benjamin (2002) summarizes well why teachers lecture in a way that speaks to the roles of teacher and student.

The lecture clearly acknowledges the scholarly authority of the teacher -- an authority that most college students feel they have paid to see. It offers the teacher the best chance to illustrate the creativity, magic, and insight that are components of great lectures. It offers faculty the opportunity to inspire and students the opportunity to be moved, enlightened, or changed in dramatic ways. . . . [This is] an awesome responsibility . . . . so if you lecture learn to do it well; if you do it well, learn to do it better" (p. 66).

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**Activity: Think further about why you lecture**

Based on this discussion of the lecture method, reflect on the circumstances you identified earlier for lecturing and make any appropriate revisions to what you wrote earlier in this unit. Continue to be cognizant of how your thinking fits within the broader framework of your evolving teaching philosophy statement.

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## **Lecture as Presentation**

Lecturing is more than simply delivering a monologue to transmit content. It involves using good presentation skills and when appropriate, auxiliary instruments such as visuals and technologies, to increase understanding and to engage students in the content. Mastering these skills usually requires extensive practice and work.

We can return to the idea of how the influences of the artist and the scientist can be used in planning individual classes, just as they were utilized in articulating your teaching philosophy keeping in mind one caveat from Bain (2004). "Teaching is not acting, yet good teachers do expect to affect their audience when they talk: to capture their attention, to inspire, to provoke thoughts and questions (p. 121)." This does not preclude us from using the analogy of "college classrooms as dramatic arenas" (Lowman, 1995, p. 100), in which the teacher is the lead actor, the stage manager, and the author of the play when we discuss lecture presentations. Light and Cox (2001) echo the use of this analogy, explaining

"All too frequently lecturers have regarded themselves primarily as the writer of a lecture, and sometimes, albeit reluctantly as an actor delivering the lines. In truth they are writer, actor, director and producer, responsible for all aspects of performance and its preparation. The main function of these roles is to ensure that the key links between the lecturer, the students and the material shared between them are integrated, aligned and working together (p. 107)". We will therefore use aspects of the theatre (acting, staging, scripting) to look more closely at lecture presentations.

### **Acting**

The first problem for many of us is simply getting on the stage. We may experience stage fright, that common anxiety about public speaking. Over the years, we have experienced

ourselves or observed colleagues using some of the following strategies to help alleviate the anxiety of lecturing.

- Learn to relax. A colleague of Mary's regularly sets aside 15 minutes before class time when he is not available for interruptions. He spends this time focusing on what he wants to accomplish in the lecture including the content of the lecture and how he hopes to engage the students. He enters the classroom focused and relaxed. Other colleagues use deep breathing exercises to help them relax, while still others find engaging in informal conversations with students immediately before beginning class a good technique for relaxing. There are a variety of self-help books (Manoth & Kase, 2007; Esposito, 2003) and websites ([Fearless Public Speaking](#)) that contains suggestions for being relaxed in speaking situations. If you are particularly fearful and stressed about speaking, you might consider investing in a few sessions with a therapist.
- Begin to lecture in small steps. This technique is called systematic desensitization. You develop a hierarchy of steps toward your ultimate goal, which might be to lecture in front of a class of 100 students. The first step might be to imagine yourself talking to a group of several friends. Later steps might be talking for five minutes in a small seminar, then in a class of 25 students. After you learn to relax, you go through the steps in this hierarchy while you are relaxed, until you feel comfortable with your class of 100 students.
- Understand that in most classes students are your friends. They want you to do well because then class will be more interesting, and they also sympathize with you because fear of public speaking is so common. Later in this unit we will suggest things that you can do to build on this initial student sympathy.

- Finally, practice speaking whenever you get the chance. You might have a few favorite mini-lectures that you can volunteer to give in colleagues' classes. If you are a graduate student, use opportunities to give seminar reports to develop your presentation skill.
- Develop good communication skills. In order to be a successful lecturer, you must be able to communicate well. This includes speaking loudly enough to be heard throughout the classroom; articulating clearly (no mumbling, no monotone); and speaking coherently using organized, complete sentences. This takes practice and requires feedback so you can identify what you need to improve. You might find resources, such as the following useful :
  - Lowman (1995), Chapter 4, "Analyzing and improving classroom performance." In addition to good advice, you will find a "communication assessment rating form" (p. 125-128) that you can use to analyze a videotape of your performance.
  - Use a book of advice on public speaking. One that we like is *I Can See You Naked* by Ron Hoff (1992). The title comes from the old advice about overcoming fear of speaking by imaging your audience in an embarrassing circumstance, but Hoff has a lot of helpful advice about effective presentations.

### **Staging**

Your attire can become a creative aspect of staging. Different attire can create different impressions. Occasionally, a real costume can make a powerful impression. When Jim's colleague, Belden Lane, a professor of theological studies, lectures on Francis of Assisi, he dresses in a robe to look like Francis of Assisi. He also brings his dog to class because of his role as St. Francis, but the dog often "upstages" professor Lane, so be careful how you select

your props. Costumes and props will contribute to student learning only if they help students to make associations between the costumes and the ideas being presented.

Another aspect of staging to keep in mind is how resources, space and technology might be used within your lecture presentation. Before your first session, examine the space in which you will lecture keeping in mind how movement might be used (or restricted) by the space. An actor moves about the stage. Will you be constricted by space and equipment to remain behind a lectern or will you be able to engage your students more by moving within the space and not obscure students' view of what you might want to demonstrate or show within the lecture? What resources will you have available (e.g. flip charts, white boards, maps, projectors, blackboards, video equipment, Internet connection)? Do you know how to operate the equipment in the room? What additional resources might you use to supplement the resources available in the space? Are visual aids, whether written on the board or projected PowerPoint slides, readable for all students?

Will you include demonstrations or visual examples either live or recorded in your presentation? Preparing the staging for such demonstrations prior to the presentation is very important. Is there sufficient space for the demonstration? Do all mechanical devices work correctly? Are all the necessary props in place? Will the demonstration achieve the desired effect? There is a risk in using demonstrations that are very dramatic in that students will remember only the dramatic effect and not the principle it exemplifies.

### **The Script**

Lowman (1995) recommends that we create dramatic suspense in our lectures by telling a story that gives "listeners a sense of unfolding and discovery" (p. 124). We must be good storytellers.

To tell any story well, the narrator must become almost as caught up in the plot as the listeners. Even if they have told a story countless times, masters of the ancient storytellers' art grow excited at hearing the tale once again. They save the big surprises until the end, laying the groundwork early by posing questions from the opening moments and dropping cues along the way (Lowman, 1995, p. 124).

In writing your play (lecture) you can use other devices from the theater in addition to costumes, so that your audience enjoys the performance. For instance, visual effect and vivid demonstrations are often well received. Friedman (1995) [Not in our reference list.] suggests that the teacher can serve as a great actor in several other ways:

- Great actors and teachers move around and use a lot of hand gestures. These movements foster attention and interest in audiences.
- Great actors work hard to make their performances seem especially unique each time. This is often very difficult when you have played an acting role or taught a particular class manytimes. However, it is those great lecturers that make it seem as if the words they utter have never been spoken before and have never been said so meaningfully.
- Great actors and great teachers are passionate and emotional at work. In Friedman's words, they "feel the content."

For example, when teaching the chapter on psychological disorders, Jim typically plays the role of a person with a variety of anxiety problems related to the weather, while descriptions of severe weather forecasts from the National Weather Service are projected on the screen. Students are divided into groups, whose task is to use their textbook to diagnose the disorder and speculate on possible causes. This demonstration incorporates enthusiasm, uniqueness, and student activity.

Light and Cox (2001) suggest using a template for scripting a lecture. Such a template allows you to craft a tentative time schedule that summarizes information such as how you will organize the content, the teaching and learning activities you will use for different parts of the lecture, what and when materials will be distributed, and when and how you will use resources and space. Such a template can serve two purposes: to help you organize what you will do during your allotted time, and as an outline during your lecture to keep you on track. However, no matter how well scripted your lecture might be, you should be prepared to be flexible in terms of adding or deleting material from the lecture depending on student questions and feedback.

## **Interactive Lecturing**

Many authors have claimed that students' attention declines about 10 to 15 minutes into a lecture. Some of these statements are based on casual observation or personal experience. However, examination of the empirical research on this issue found little support for the 10-15 minute estimate (Wilson & Korn, 2007). Clearly attention is variable across individuals and classroom situations, so the teachers must use every reasonable tool to maintain all students' interest during the lecture period.

In a study in which three two minute pauses during which students discussed and modified their lecture notes were inserted into lectures, findings showed that students in the experimental section significantly outperformed students in the control sections (lecture without pauses) on related quizzes and a comprehensive test (Ruhl, et al., 1987). Hake (1998) found that the positive impact of including interactive components on increasing student learning and engagement held regardless of the class size. What does this mean to you as you prepare to lecture? According to Biggs & Tang

The time periods [before inserting a meaningful break] depend on the students, the skill of the lecturer, the pace of the lecture, the difficulty of the material, the use of technology involving a change of activity the time of day, and so on. But the basic points remains: Do not talk longer than 15-20 minutes without a pause unless you are *certain* you still have their attention. When you pause, get the students to change their activity. (p. 109-110)

Some lecturers are very charismatic and can keep attention for long periods of time. If you examine one of their lectures, you will most likely find that they include a variety of attention keeping strategies, such as inclusion of stories, humor, dramatic episodes, questions,

and challenges that engage students in the content. According to Bain (2004), the lecture becomes a way “to clarify and simplify complex material while engaging important and challenging questions or to inspire attention to important matters, to provoke, to focus” (p. 107).

For those of us who are not charismatic in this way, there are quick, interactive strategies that can be used to create interactive lectures that intersperse lecture material with activities that engage and challenge students to reflect upon and apply the material while providing feedback on student understanding to the instructor. The Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs) developed by Angelo and Cross (1993) are examples of activities that can be interspersed in lectures to make them interactive. An example of a CAT is “the muddiest point,” in which students answer the question, “at what point in today’s class were you most confused” or “what idea was most difficult for you to understand today?” The responses can be reviewed quickly after class and “muddiest points” can be cleared up in the next class. Some of our colleagues use a modification of this technique within the lecture by asking the students to write one question they have on the material just covered. If the class is small, the questions are collected immediately and the most frequent questions answered before proceeding on to the next topic in the lecture. Some additional strategies that we or our colleagues have used include: asking students to solve a problem or provide an example related to the content; asking students to make predictions, then polling the students on their responses; providing two minute break for students to work with a partner and compare notes they have just taken on a topic; or having students write the most important thing they learned about a topic. Additional strategies that involve technologies will be discussed in the next section on technology.

Websites such as [Starting Point: Teaching Entry Level Geoscience](#) and the [Cain Project in Engineering and Professional Communication](#) contain additional examples of strategies for making lectures interactive.

## **Incorporating Technologies into Lectures**

There are many arguments for incorporating technologies in a *meaningful* way into lectures. The current generation of college age students has grown up in a digital world where technologies that allow them to explore information in non-linear format are prevalent. These technologies encourage users to explore information in a variety of formats (Tapscott, 2009). The incorporation of technologies into lectures assists the lecturer in presenting information in a way that addresses a variety of students' learning styles through inclusion of visual, audio and kinesthetic prompts. Technology enables the instructor to demonstrate things (e.g. experiments) that could not be demonstrated live either because of time or safety constraints. It allows the lecturer to include visuals and videos to illustrate key concepts.

However, there are challenges to be considered when including technologies as well. The first thing that every lecturer quickly learns is that when you intend to use technology, you should always have a plan B in the event the technology is not available or is not functioning as intended. You will always want to check the location where you will be teaching to see what equipment is available and to try the equipment in advance to make sure that you know how to use it and that it is working. Will your use of the technology require particular technology skills on the part of the students, and if so, how will they obtain those skills?

If you intend to use technology in your lecture, make sure that the way in which you use it is meaningful to the objectives you have set for the lecture. This advice from a prestigious group of educators in a 1972 report on what they called "the fourth revolution" (Carnegie Commission, 1972) is very much applicable today. Use technology when:

- The teaching-learning task to be performed [is] essential to the course of instruction to which it is applied.

- The task to be performed could not be performed as well – if at all – for the students served without the technology contemplated.

In other words, avoid using technology simply to use it.

The use of several types of technologies and applications tend to be more prevalent in lecturing, and research studies provide some guidance on ways they might be used effectively in teaching. We'll look specifically at two of these: presentation software such as [PowerPoint](#) or [Prezi](#) and personal response systems (clickers).

### **Presentation Software**

The two current popular presentation software applications being used in teaching are PowerPoint and the relatively new, Prezi. PowerPoint tends to be used in a linear fashion which fits well with a traditional linear lecture. Prezi is used primarily in nonlinear presentations where the instructor might not have a particular order in which items must be discussed, but rather specific elements to be included at some point within the lecture. The order does not matter. Prezi is also used as a graphic organizer of key points enabling the instructor to display layers of complexity related to different points in a lecture. It should be noted that PowerPoint shows can be set up in a way that slides need not be accessed linearly as well.

Much has been written about the dangers of using PowerPoint incorrectly (Tufte, 2003). This classic example of converting the [Gettysburg address to a PowerPoint](#) address shows what can be lost when PowerPoint is used in some situations. Many resources exist to help you avoid pitfalls such as reading the slides, including too many slides or too much content on individual slides, overusing animations and graphics, and using fonts that are too small or blend into the background when using PowerPoint or any presentation software (Ball, 2002; Caputo, 2002;

Jackson, 1997). Ideas for using Prezi effectively in teaching can be found at sites such as [Prezi.com](http://Prezi.com) and [13 interesting ways to use Prezi in the classroom](#).

Several research studies have explored the use of PowerPoint to facilitate student learning and student course satisfaction. Research in 1980 by Kulik, Kulik, & Cohen, revealed that students exposed to PowerPoint slides appeared to benefit more from those lectures. However, more recent research by Hardin (2007) discovered that while PowerPoint slides can provide catchy visual, and sometimes auditory, aids to facilitate student engagement with content, there is more to the story than that. More specifically, Hardin warns that good teaching continues to matter, with or without PowerPoint slides. Failing to give a good lecture can just as easily result in negative learning outcomes for students as the lecturer who fails to include any pedagogical aids to supplement their presentation. Research results from a study conducted by Brock and Joglekar (2011) on the effectiveness of using PowerPoint slides in teaching showed that effectiveness of using PowerPoint varies depending on instructor's teaching styles and that lower text density, higher use of visual images tend to increase student engagement and learning.

Many instructors make their PowerPoint slides available to students either before or after a class session. Many times students request copies be available during class sessions so that they can concentrate on what the instructor is saying instead of trying to copy what is appears on the PowerPoint slides. There are several downsides to this particularly if the slides contain all pertinent information for the lecture including decreased student attention and engagement. Many instructors have found providing outlines of the slides which require the students to expand the outline based on the lecture is particularly effective way to use PowerPoint and increase student engagement.

### **Mobile Devices**

Research has shown that using a variety of mobile devices ranging from PC tablets and iPads personal response systems not only increase student engagement but can lead to increased attendance (Deslauriers, L., Schelew, E. , & Wieman, C.. 2011; Fisher et al., 2007; Hake, R., 1998; Mazur, 2009; Xiang et al., 2009). This research includes ways that clickers are being used very effectively in large and small enrollment physics courses. Each of these studies provides examples of ways to use the mobile devices effectively in teaching. If you choose to use such technologies in your teaching, the critical consideration is how you might use them to increase student engagement and learning. As with any technology, using electronic devices simply for the sake of using them without connecting them to achieving your objectives for the lecture will not have the desired effect.

Many instructors find student use of mobile technologies such as laptops distracting not only to themselves but to other students particularly when students are engaged in activities on laptops unrelated to course activities. Instructors handle this situation in several ways. Some instructors ban the use of laptops in classes. Some set up a laptop section of the classroom and require students who wish to use laptops for class purposes to sit in this area and banning laptop use from other areas of the classroom. One of Mary's colleagues created a contract in which students agreed that they would only use laptops for class related purposes and any violation of this would result in banning that student's use of a laptop in future class sessions.

### **Internet as a Resource and Tool**

The Internet can provide a range of supporting materials for a lecture and even provide ways for students to access audio and video recording of lectures. For instance, a teacher might create a podcast or vodcast to allow opportunities for students to review the lecture at a later

time. Many instructors use tables, figures, pictures, and videos from the Internet to support lectures (Weiten, 2002). There are many other ways that technologies might be used to support lectures. Several of our colleagues ask students to post or email the instructor questions they have on material read in preparation for a lecture. The questions help the instructor understand what points to emphasize during the lecture on the material. Other instructors use online discussion boards to promote continued discussion on material discussed in a lecture session. Other colleagues use voice over internet protocol systems (VoIP) such as [Skype](#) or live virtual classrooms such as [Wimba](#) to deliver online lectures, or conduct virtual office hours or review sessions in which they answer student questions on course content.

It's important to realize how the current zeitgeist calls for instructors to tap the full bounds of the Internet to support teacher-centered ventures in class. As an example, in a witty little piece from the *Chronicle of Higher Education* entitled from You Tube to You Niversity, Jenkins (2007) articulates how Internet resources like *YouTube* are revolutionizing the social, recreational, and analytical lives of adolescents and young adults. Gone are the days where lecturers would include figures and pictures to be consistent with research documenting the importance of presenting information through multiple sensory modalities to fuel student learning. Today, it's not the number of sensory modalities that are tapped during a lecture, it's the *power* of those resources to garner student attention in this technological age.

There are many websites that contain excellent suggestions and resources for using technology in teaching, including: [Society for the Teaching of Psychology](#) site, the [Pursuit of Technology Integration Happiness](#), [World Lecture Hall](#), and [Multimedia Educational Resource for Learning and Teaching Online \(MERLOT\)](#).

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**Activity: Planning a presentation.**

This extended activity consists of six parts and is designed to help you plan a class presentation or lecture that is teacher-centered. First, select a topic that you might present a 50-minute class. Pick a relatively small topic that you can expand later if you desire. For example, the topic, theories of personality, is too broad for a 50 minute period, but an aspect of the topic such as trait theories would be sufficient.

Second, decide what information you students to learn about your topic. What are the terms, facts, and ideas that you want students to know? Your task here is to state specific objectives for the class. How will you know that your students know these things? For example, you may want students to list and define the "big five" personality traits. At what cognitive level [See unit 3] do you want your students to use the information? Perhaps you just want them to remember things, like the five traits, or you may want them to be able to give examples of each trait. In Jim's lecture on personality traits, he presented the heredity-environment issue. One of his objectives might be that students are able to state one research finding that supports each side of this issue, or, at a higher cognitive level that students are able to evaluate the importance of this issue if raising children. What are the specific objectives for the topic you will present?

Third, organize the information. Clear organization will help both you and your students remember the material. There are several forms of organization (see Bligh) including tree or hierarchical structures and concept maps. You might choose a dramatic form, such as a story, to present your topic. Using our example on personality traits, imagine telling a story about a family of five adopted children, each of whom has one dominant personality trait. Now, create an individualized outline or structure for your topic.

Fourth, Create vivid examples that relate to students' experiences. Students will understand and remember the information better if it is meaningful to them. This is where a background questionnaire completed at the beginning of a course or information culled from informal conversations with students before and after class can be particularly helpful. If it is difficult to find examples in students' lives for a particular topic, you may have to create a common experience in class. In a unit on perception, Jim used a demonstration of speech played backwards, which is something few students ever have heard. Write three examples that you will use in your presentation.

Fifth, transmit information in a way that catches and maintains students' attention. You have started to do this by organizing the material and making it meaningful to your students. Varying sensory input is another way to hold students' attention. Move around the room, but in a way that fits your presentation. Pacing back and forth can become boring or a distraction, but moving up the aisle and then pointing back to the front of the room may be dramatic. The use of visual aids from writing on the chalkboard to showing video clips and technologies such as PowerPoint or clickers increase students' attention. Be careful not to overuse these things, however. Remember that using strategies such as demonstrations and student participation enhances student attention.

The sections on interactive lecturing and technology provided ideas that you might want to consider using. A later unit on active learning will present additional strategies you might choose to use.

Review your outline and determine places and strategies that you might use to increase attention.

Sixth, prepare lecture notes. Universal advice from experts on lecturing is to avoid writing your notes verbatim, using complete sentences. Instead, use an outline to help you remember what you want to say. Some individuals need more support than others from notes, and while it doesn't hurt to have the words there, you will give a better presentation the more natural you appear to be. If you have written everything that you intend to say, you will end up reading the notes instead of speaking naturally. Regardless of whether you use a template as described in the scripting section, an outline, notes or some other organizational tool, it should remind you not only of the content of your lecture, but also give you stage directions to remind you when to move, talk more slowly, pause for effect, or insert a prop or demonstration or activity to achieve a point.

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You now have a plan for a lecture that will help you teach the information in a way that meets your objectives. You have chosen the content, organized it clearly, and have designed ways to maintain students' interest and attention. At some time you will have to deliver this lecture. We now turn our attention to two characteristics that many studies (e.g., Murray, 1983) have shown will enhance your effectiveness in the classroom: enthusiasm and rapport.

Enthusiasm is conveyed in a number of ways in your speech and gestures. You can tell when a speaker is tired and bored by a topic or when that person is excited about it. Not all of us, however, are naturally exuberant, and teachers cannot be passionate about every topic in their course. With some effort, you can learn to be enthusiastic about anything. According to McKeachie "like other learned behaviors, this takes practice" and that it will help if you "put into each lecture something that you are really excited about" (2002, p. 53).

Rapport means having a good, but not necessarily close, relationship with your students. Joseph Lowman (1995) has an excellent section on "fostering personal relationships with students" (p. 66ff). There are two important things that he recommends. First, learn your students' names. This is easy to do when you have less than forty students, and more challenging in large classes of up to 100 students. You may be fortunate to be at an institution that provides student photos with class rosters in a classroom management system such as [Blackboard](#). If not, you might want to try something like this. Take pictures of students in groups of six. One person in the group holds a 5" by 8" card with the group number on it. After the picture is taken, an assistant writes the names of the students on the back of the card corresponding to their position in the picture. Later, you match the cards to the pictures and practice associating their names. Students are impressed not only when you are successful in remembering their names and maybe even something about them, but also in your effort to do this.

Another recommendation to increase rapport suggested by Lowman is to you come to class early and talk informally with the students as they arrive. If you previously obtained background information from students, you can discuss their interests, as well as current events on campus or even the assignment for that day. All these things indicate that you care about your students, and if that is part of your teaching philosophy then these are ways to make your ideals real.

## **Getting Feedback on Your Lecture**

A lot of work goes into planning a class and delivering a lecture, so it is important to find out what you did well and what needs to be improved. Your sources for this feedback are your students, your colleagues, and yourself.

### **Students**

You stated your objectives in terms of what you want students to know, so obviously you will need to find out how much they know. You can find this out when you give them an examination or assignment, but if you find out sooner, you can do something that will help students perform better on the exams. The CATs developed by Angelo and Cross which were mentioned in the interactive teaching section are one way to obtain this information on a regular basis.

Students also can give you their view of the dramatic aspects of your presentation. You can ask them whether they enjoyed your lecture, were able to maintain their attention, and found your examples helpful. Even before they answer questions like this, you will be able to see their response to your presentation by their non-verbal behaviors. Do not focus on the few students who seem tired or bored when most of your students appear attentive and are responding as you had hoped. Some students are, in fact, tired because of illness or working a night job. However, when most students seem to be lost, this is a good time to use a CAT or even stop lecturing, and ask students why you are not reaching them.

### **Colleagues**

Ask a peer to come to class and observe your teaching. In Unit 8 we will look at specific observation techniques. The least helpful observer is the one who visits your class and then, when you ask for comments, simply says, "that was a really good class. I liked your example of

the ball and chain." You learn nothing from these general, courteous comments, although you do want an observer who is nonthreatening. A colleague within the same department may focus on content rather than teaching. If you want feedback on your teaching, consider inviting a colleague from a different discipline or a trained observer from a campus teaching center should your institution have one.

Make a recording of your teaching. That can be a stressful option, but it provides a record of your teaching for you to review and perhaps discuss with a colleague. Davis (2009) contains a good section on reviewing videotapes of teaching. We suggest that you watch the recording three times. First, watch the tape by yourself to get a general sense of where you need feedback. Be aware that you will most likely notice personal habits that another viewer will not notice. Next, ask a colleague or someone from the teaching center to watch it with you and pay attention to those aspects that concern you the most. Finally, review it a second time by yourself, stopping the tape at places where your colleague made suggestions and think about what you might do differently when you give this lecture again.

### **Yourself**

You will have good days, OK days, and discouraging days. Immediately after the class, find a quiet place to sit and reflect on the class you just finished. What do you think worked well? What might have gone better and why? Consider making notes on your thoughts and put these with your notes for that day's class, so you can review the notes before you teach this class again.

**Looking Ahead**

In the next two Units we will look at methods that are student-centered: discussion, writing, and other forms of active learning. Before going to those units, look at your teaching philosophy and the objectives in your practice syllabus. How well do teacher-centered methods fit within your philosophy?

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