

Resource Guide

Supporting International Students Through Lecture – Lecture Design

Delivering lectures is still a viable and popular means of providing content in higher education. It's convenient and allows us to have a little more control over the content we provide to our students (Shapiro, Farrelly, Tomas, 2023). But when we think about the recent influx of students from outside the US, many of whom do not speak English as their first language, we may consider ways to make that content more accessible. The following considerations may allow our international population to more easily process the course material.

- **Consider making goals and expectations more explicit.** Students learn better from lectures when they understand the purpose. Some ways we can provide that purpose are by
 - explaining how the lecture is related to the reading they have done.
 - letting students know to what level of detail they are expected to recall.
 - telling students how to let you know if they are having trouble understanding lectures.

- **Think about activating students' background knowledge and prior learning.** Reviewing material from the previous class meeting and asking students what they already know allows for students to make connections between the old and new material. Some ways we can help students activate their prior knowledge are by:
 - Asking them to free write or brainstorm in pairs or small groups related to the material from the previous lecture or about a concept to be addressed in the current class.
 - Providing a task before class that would prime students' abilities to make meaning. For example, asking students to provide real-world examples for theoretical concepts.

- **Use a predictable sequence in how you design each lecture.** Being consistent with the lecture process mitigates a barrier of trying to get oriented to what is happening in the lecture. This way, students get accustomed to how the lecture is structured and prevents having to reorient to a new lecture structure from class to class.
 - An example may be that you provide a brainstorming activity for three minutes after which an outline for the lecture is provided. You may also want to include the learning objectives and how this material is relevant to them. Moving into the lecture, consider 15–20-minute blocks with activities in between to allow students to explore questions and create meaning. At the end of the lecture, providing students an opportunity to summarize content and inventory what they know can help them make connections.

- **Think about how quickly you are speaking.** When we are very comfortable with our content fields and often quite passionate, we can begin speaking very quickly without realizing it. In addition, we can feel pressure regarding the amount of content we need to “cover” and lose sight of the fact that there may be students that cannot process what is being said as quickly as we are saying it. Think about providing a video or allowing students to audio record the lecture to allow them to slow down or reexperience some or all of it.
- **Consider repeating important terms and concepts and having students restate them throughout the lecture.** Repetition is very helpful for all students, especially those with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Repetition is a signpost for students letting them know that it is important. Asking students to paraphrase or restate material is another way for students to solidify understanding and make meaning of what is being said.
- **Think about providing a graphic organizer.** Giving students a structure for note taking allows them to have an additional way to access information. Charts, graphs, and flow charts filled in as the lecture goes on allows students to focus on what needs to be written and how it is related to other things on the organizer. You may also be able to turn completing a graphic organizer into an interaction with peers when they consult each other’s work.

These are just a few examples of design considerations for lectures. Remembering that in many cases international students are processing this information in a second language can inform how you present content and support them in making meaning.

Resources

Adapted from: Shapiro, Farrelly and Tomas (2023). *Fostering International Student Success in Higher Education*. TESOL International Association and NAFSA. Alexandria, VA

For more information or to discuss how you might incorporate these ideas into your courses, contact the Reinert Center by [email](#).