

LECTURES

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THE LECTURE AS A TEACHING METHOD

From the times of Aristotle, the lecture has enjoyed a privileged status as a channel through which experts impart knowledge to novices in instructional settings. Incidentally, we know that the Greek philosopher was the tutor of young Alexander the Great, a native speaker of Macedonian (Friedman, 2006), perhaps constituting a very early example of academic listening in a foreign language. Over the centuries, lectures have become the hallmark of higher education and are defined as “an educational talk to an audience, especially one of students in a university” (Oxford Dictionary of English, 2010, p. 1006). On a discursive level, lectures can be broadly characterized as a type of pedagogic discourse, i.e., the set of specialized communicative practices that are involved in the transmission and acquisition of knowledge and skills (Bernstein, 1986).

For the purpose of conveying information, research has shown that lectures are as effective as any other method (Bligh, 2000). From an organizational perspective, the possibility of articulating information into a series of lectures allows instructors to structure and cover content efficiently. This also benefits learners who can then exploit the availability of streamlined information that they do not have to find for themselves. For these reasons, lectures continue to be a popular teaching method among instructors which is also appreciated by students (Clay & Breslow, 2006). Yet, generally speaking, lectures are not considered as

effective as discussion-based methods when it comes to promoting critical thinking or problem-solving skills.

Particularly towards the end of the twentieth century, the lecture came under attack not only as an old-style method, but also an ineffective one that is closely associated with passive learning, i.e., surface learning which carries the risk of poor information retention. In addition, because a lecture consists of one person presenting information to a group of students, it cannot respond to individuals who may have different learning styles and needs. As DiPiro (2009, p. 1) critically comments, “lecturing assumes a one-size-fits all approach to learning.” Other problematic issues are that lecture content can become quickly outdated in today’s rapidly-paced world, and that lectures may fall short in the area of professional development, i.e., helping students adequately prepare for the realities of the workplace (DiPiro, 2009). Nevertheless, despite these shortcomings, the much-maligned lecture remains a core teaching genre of higher education. There are several reasons that come into play here. First of all, lectures are still the most practical way to teach large classes of students typical of higher education around the world. While more interactive formats such as seminars and tutorials may be preferred by both instructors and students, and are often integrated into lecture-based courses, the sheer number of students enrolled in today’s universities necessitates maintaining the lecture as the predominant teaching method. This is especially true in an increasingly competitive academic world where few universities can afford to offer only small interactive learning formats and abandon the lecture entirely (Parini, 2004). Indeed, higher education institutions are under constant pressure to increase enrolments to offset rising costs and cuts in state funding, while seeking to provide quality education and recruit the most talented students, all at the same time.

However, beyond the economic factors behind higher education’s reliance on lectures, some scholars have recently offered new assessments of their unique pedagogical strengths.

For example, Penson (2012) suggests that when lecturers compile information from a range of different sources and then present it synthetically to students in an accessible format, they inspire students to similarly construct their own understanding in ways that are most meaningful to them. Lee (2009) notes that lectures can do much more than introduce conceptual knowledge or integrate textbook information. They also provide an arena in which lecturers can express attitudes and evaluations in relation to content, and thus encourage students to reflect critically, rather than simply assimilate factual knowledge. Charlton (2006) maintains that the importance of lectures as a teaching method is often underestimated, arguing that their spoken and socially-situated nature allows them to exploit the human psychological dimension that can, in turn, facilitate learning.

Further evidence that lectures are perhaps making a 'comeback' is the proliferation of MOOCs (Massive Online Open Courses), and particularly Open CourseWare (OCW) platforms which allow free access to lectures in digital format by students, educators or self-learners who desire to advance their knowledge. Since the Massachusetts Institute of Technology first launched its pioneering OCW project in 2002, institutes of higher education worldwide have developed and implemented this new medium of learning in which digital video recordings of lectures are a core component (Vladoiu, 2011). In addition, the rise of online universities around the world offers opportunities to attend lectures via videoconferencing, and interact directly with professors and other students using chat features. In comparison with traditional lectures, such digital lectures allow for significant flexibility in terms of when, where and how often they can be viewed, thus helping learners to reconcile work and/or family life with studies. However, students do not necessarily favour them over live lectures. In fact, some research found that 94% of students preferred classroom lectures over podcasts versions which were seen mainly as supplemental resources (Bongey et al., 2006). Similarly, Copley's (2007) study found that a majority of students considered

‘real’ lectures as indispensable to guarantee a well-structured learning experience with opportunities for interaction, even if they were appreciative of podcast lectures as a resource for study and review purposes.

From the above discussion, it seems clear that students will continue to attend lectures, whether ‘real’ or ‘virtual’ and, at least for the foreseeable future, lectures will remain a crucial component of higher education. This has important implications for the vast numbers of international students who attend lectures in English-medium universities. According to statistics from NAFSA: Association of International Educators, in the academic year 2013-2014, almost 900,000 international students were enrolled in US colleges and universities, a number which has been steadily rising over the last decade. The corresponding figure for the UK was over 400,000 (UK Council for International Student Affairs), and for Australia it was over 200,000 (Australian Government Department of Education). To these figures, we must add significant numbers of international students enrolled in universities in other countries all over the world where English is increasingly adopted as the language of instruction within a process of internationalization aiming to respond to a globalized academic world (Coleman, 2006). Thus, students whose native language is not English (hereinafter L2/FL learners) attending lectures delivered in English around the world are faced with the challenging task of understanding academic content in a foreign language (cf. Crawford Camiciottoli, 2010). Some comprehension issues that arise during this process will be the focus of the next section.

LECTURES AND L2/FL LISTENING COMPREHENSION

The cognitive and linguistic complexities of an academic lecture can cause significant difficulties for L2/FL listeners. The ‘academic load’ that these learners are exposed to during a lecture is based on a combination of different factors. These include a high concentration of

conceptual information to be assimilated, the necessity to process the verbal message in real time, and different approaches to lecturing, e.g., an emphasis on classroom interaction that requires greater student input which is often a challenge for L2/FL learners (Lynch, 2011). These are some of the factors that contribute to rendering academic listening much more demanding for L2/FL learners with respect to their L1 counterparts, even those at relatively advanced proficiency levels (Mulligan & Kirkpatrick, 2000).

L2/FL listeners must be able to cope with phonological, lexico-syntactic, structural, pragmatic and cultural features that all come into play during a lecture, most of which are typically straightforward and unproblematic for native speakers of English. On a phonological level, it may be difficult for L2/FL listeners to distinguish boundaries between words, which plays a crucial role in successfully recognizing lexical items (Rost, 2002). Because lectures delivered in English by both native and non-native speakers may contain high numbers of dysfluencies such as hesitation fillers, false starts and back-tracking that are common in academic speech (Crawford Camiciottoli, 2007), L2/FL learners must be able to recognize them as such and filter them out during the listening process. The presence of potentially unfamiliar phonological reductions (e.g., *lotta*, *gotta*, *hafta*, *buncha*) in the speech of English mother-tongue lecturers may also cause comprehension difficulties for L2/FL learners, especially if they have had limited exposure to authentic natural-sounding speech (Norris, 1995).

On the lexico-syntactic level, academic lectures are becoming more conversation-like and informal as demonstrated by research based on the MICASE corpus of academic spoken English (Swales, 2004, among others). At the same time, due to their instructional purpose, academic lectures typically introduce advanced vocabulary and technical terms used to explain theoretical concepts within disciplinary fields. Thus, this unique combination of formal and informal language may be disorienting for L2/FL learners.

In terms of overall structure, lectures are rarely organized into what could be described as *introduction*, *main body* and *conclusion* often found in written academic genres. The structuring of lecture discourse may also reflect disciplinary specificity. For example, Dudley-Evan's (1994) study of analysis of the discourse patterns of English-language lectures revealed a problem→solution structure in a highway engineering lecture as compared to a theoretical point-driven structure in a plant biology lecture. Young (1994) found that discursive patterning in economics lectures is characterized by conceptual knowledge followed by exemplifications in real or hypothetical worlds. Yet this author also showed that academic lectures usually have no distinctly recognizable sections, but instead contain a series of interweaving phases that do not appear in a particular order and can resurface throughout a lecture at any time. For example, a *content phase* may be followed by a *conclusion phase* to recap its key points, and then by a *discourse structuring phase* to shift to a new topic. While such non-linearity may not create difficulties for most native speakers, it may prove to be quite challenging for L2/FL listeners who must simultaneously cope with other language-related issues. Academic lectures are also characterized by various types of metadiscursive elements (e.g., *Today we're going to talk about*) that are used by speakers to structure the discourse as it unfolds, functioning as signposts that contribute to facilitating comprehension. Many of these devices are typical of L1 lectures and relatively unproblematic, but others may be create difficulties for L2/FL learners (e.g., *Let's shift gears now*). Thus, these listeners need to be made aware of the wide range of metadiscursive elements that can be found in academic lectures so that they can learn to exploit them.

Features of lectures that perform pragmatic functions in the context of instructor-student interaction may also be unfamiliar to L2/FL listeners. More specifically, these are linguistic elements that reflect the ways in which lecturers attempt to position themselves on an interpersonal level in relation to their instructional role and to their student audience. For

instance, as an expression of person deixis, the first person plural pronoun *we* can encode meanings that are inclusive or exclusive of the audience. It can be used by lecturers to establish a rapport with the audience in the immediate context of the instructional setting or, in contrast, to maintain a distance, e.g., when used to refer to the lecturer as a member of a group of experts that excludes the audience. As pointed out by Fortanet (2004), the ability to distinguish between these meanings may depend on linguistic or extra-linguistic cues that are easily understood by native speakers of English, but can be difficult for non-native speakers. Another pragmatic strategy found in lectures is reflected in language used to mitigate the speaker's authority. For example, epistemic adverbs and modals may be used by lecturers to weaken the illocutionary force of assertives (e.g., *perhaps we can just stop here today*). Lecturers may also engage in mild forms of self-deprecation or self-mockery to downplay their authority and appear more egalitarian, also injecting some humour into the lecture. This seems to be a rather common approach to classroom interaction among lecturers in Western universities, but it may be quite perplexing to L2/FL learners who come from cultures that value clearly delineated authoritative roles based on age and hierarchical status.

Lectures often contain specific cultural references that may be unfamiliar to L2/FL learners. Miller (2002, p. 147) articulates the role of culture in lecture comprehension on four different levels: *ethnic culture* (psycho-sociological features that are triggered when there is a mismatch between the cultural backgrounds of the lecturer and the students), *local culture* (aspects of the lecture that are linked to the local setting and may be unknown to students), *academic culture* (different practices in educational institutions with which students have little experience) and *disciplinary culture* (discipline-specific ways of presenting knowledge that students may not know). Clearly, all of these cultural dimensions can have an impact on whether or not L2/FL learners are able to adequately understand lectures, and therefore need to be taken into consideration by lecturers when speaking to L2/FL student audiences.

To conclude this discussion of the challenges faced by L2/FL listeners during academic lectures, we turn to what has now become a core component of the genre, i.e., visual aids that are used to integrate and reinforce the orally-delivered content of lectures. Today the most common instrument used for this purpose is PowerPoint software. Unfortunately, there are apparently no overall statistics concerning the extent to which PowerPoint is used during academic lectures in universities. It would be interesting to know the percentage of lecturers using PowerPoint and how this usage may be evolving over time. However, it is beyond question that PowerPoint is ubiquitous in university classrooms. A survey conducted by James et al. (2006) found that both instructors and students perceive PowerPoint as having a positive impact, at least on certain aspects of lectures, i.e., emphasising key points, holding the audience's attention and helping students take better quality notes. However, with particular reference to L2/FL academic listening contexts, there is a lack of empirical evidence to determine whether or not using PowerPoint slides actually improves lecture comprehension.

Another facet of the visual dimension of lectures that can have important implications for comprehension is how lecturers use non-verbal signals to accompany the flow of speech. For L2/FL listeners, gestures are helpful to clarify verbal meanings that they may not be able to grasp otherwise (Harris, 2003; Sueyoshi & Hardison, 2005). In addition, gestures may be used not only to replicate verbal meanings, but also to extend them and thus enrich the overall message. Thus, it is important to consider lecture comprehension from a multimodal perspective. In fact, gestures are perceived by learners both aurally and visually, and comprehension can be enhanced when information that is communicated through the two different modes is processed in a complementary way that benefits from both. In the next section, we expand on the notions discussed above by reviewing important empirically-

oriented research that has advanced our understanding of the multi-faceted nature of lecture discourse.

INSIGHTS FROM RESEARCH ON LECTURE DISCOURSE

The approach to analysing lecture discourse has evolved over the years to study the language of teacher-student interaction and how it constructs identities in learning contexts, as well as the multimodal semiotics of classroom interaction (Jocuns, 2013). In fact, it is widely accepted that oral communication is multimodal in nature. The development of multimodal perspectives on teaching and learning is based on the understanding that “meanings are made (as well as distributed, interpreted, and remade) through many forms and resources of which language is but one –image, gesture, gaze, body posture, sound, writing, music, speech, and so on” (Jewitt 2013, p. 4109-4110). These complexities require students (both L1 and L2/FL) not only to acquire academic discourse skills in English, but also multimodal interactional skills (Jocuns, 2013), i.e., the ability to construct meaning from the interaction with different modes, now an imperative for today’s multimodal academic learning environments.

In this selective review, we discuss important studies that have provided empirical evidence related to key features of authentic lecture discourse. We begin with some seminal works that used a variety of analytical techniques to investigate the speech of lecturers, and then look at research that highlights the multimodal aspects of lectures. These studies deal with a number of elements that are highly relevant for L2/FL learners and thus can inform the teaching of lecture comprehension in EAP contexts. They have implemented a range of investigative tools and resources to analyse effects on listening comprehension, including students’ notes, interviews and questionnaires, free-recall tests and cloze-recall tests, multiple-choice tests and true-false tests, as well as audio and/ or video recordings.

In terms of delivery, the **speech rate** of lecturers is a crucial factor affecting L2/FL listening comprehension and has thus received a considerable amount of scholarly attention. Zhao's (1997, p. 49) review of empirical research on this topic foregrounded some contradictory results pertaining to the "common-sense belief that slower rates facilitate listening comprehension". This author also examined the issue from a different approach showing that when students take control of speech rate, comprehension improves when it is slowed down, in line with previous research on the relationship between speech rate and comprehension. Yet it seems that the issue is not so simple since what constitutes a 'normal speed' has not been clearly defined. "Whether a speech is fast or slow is the result of the interaction between the pausological quality of the speech and listener-internal factors" (Zhao, 1997, p. 61). Interestingly, Derwing and Munro (2001) came to a different conclusion: Iranian L2 students' comprehension seemed to be enhanced when exposed to natural speech rates rather than artificially slowed ones.

Empirical studies on **lecturing style** support the beneficial effects of an interactional 'conversational style' on academic listening. Morell (2004, 2007) showed evidence of interaction as a facilitator for Spanish students enrolled in an English Studies degree. Morell (2004) found that, unlike non-interactive or reading-style lectures, interactive lectures are characterized by personal pronouns to engage and include students (e.g., *you, your, we, us*), as well as interactional features that serve to create opportunities to check understanding and negotiate meaning (i.e., confirmation checks, comprehension checks and clarification requests). In addition, the results of a survey conducted with both lecturers and students brought to the fore the key role of lecturers, who can aid comprehension by encouraging students to participate through the use of interpersonal linguistic resources that serve to build a relationship (Morell, 2007). In this respect, even in larger lectures with hundreds of students, the interpersonal role of audience oriented questions which call for an answer was

identified by Querol-Julián (2008); these are opportunities for students to provide “an actual verbal and non-verbal response” (Thompson, 1998, p.140). In this type of interaction, lectures foster interaction, involve students in the learning process and eventually promote the establishment a relationship with them.

On a discursive level, the analysis of the effects of **metadiscursive markers** on lecture comprehension has a relatively long tradition (cf. Chaudron & Richards, 1986; Flowerdew & Tauroza 1995; Jung, 2006). These studies have shown how such devices help students recall content and guide them students through the lecture, while pointing out that miscomprehension can be related to the lack of discourse markers (see Chapter 13 for a comprehensive discussion of the role of discourse markers in lecture listening). How lecturers make use of **metaphors** and how students interpret them has also been a topic of interest. Littlemore (2001) found that metaphor is a common resource in academic lectures, but may cause L2/FL learners to misunderstand important parts of the discourse and even the lecturer’s viewpoint. Littlemore (2003, p. 273) points out that “metaphors are typically culturally-loaded expressions, whose meaning has to be inferred through reference to shared cultural knowledge.” However, as noted above, cultural references may be unfamiliar to L2/FL students. Littlemore (2003) observed that Bangladeshi students in a British university seemed to interpret metaphors during lectures in terms of their own cultural values system, causing misunderstanding of the content and the lecturers’ attitudes. Low et al. (2008) also examined the use of metaphors in three lectures from the British Academic Spoken English (BASE) corpus, two following a non-interactive style and one an interactive style. They found that the use of metaphor was quite frequent in all three lectures, although the interactive style lecture was the most metaphoric. This highlights the need not only to prepare L2/FL students to process meanings at a metaphorical level, but also to encourage lecturers to develop self-awareness to avoid potentially problematic metaphors.

Humour in the classroom is another issue that has received scholarly attention in relation to comprehension. Nesi (2012) studied instances of lecturer-prompted laughter in the BASE corpus, the MICASE corpus, and the Engineering Lecture Corpus (ELC), and found that it functioned to maintain social order, build rapport, relieve tension, and model academic and professional identities. Like Lee's (2006) study of laughter in the MICASE corpus, she also noticed how laughter episodes

place particular demands on international students, both linguistically, if the lecturer makes puns or departs from the normal academic register, and culturally, if the lecturer draws on unfamiliar scripts, refers to taboo topics or alters the expected power and distance differentials" (Nesi, 2012, p. 87-88).

To accompany the verbal message, lecturers often exploit communicative strategies that involve semiotic systems other than speech (e.g., visuals, gestures and actions), which also help to enhance listening comprehension (Sharpe, 2006). The multimodal dimension of communication in academic contexts has been a prolific field of study, even if most research thus far has focused on lower educational levels rather than university settings (cf. Kress et al., 2001). In the remainder of this section, we discuss a selection of studies that have provided insights into the multimodal features of lectures, which can also be applied towards meeting L2/FL lecture comprehension needs.

The prominent role of **visuals** in lectures is now well recognized. From a functional perspective, according to Rowley-Jolivet (2002), visual images that accompany spoken academic events can be classified into four main types: *scriptural* (text-based), *figurative* (photos and images), *numerical* (equations, tables with figures, formulae) and *graphical* (charts, diagrams, maps). The first two are used mainly to structure discourse and to engage the audience, while the second two serve to represent abstract concepts. Even if this scheme

was originally developed with reference to academic conference presentations, it is also useful to understand more about how visuals can be effectively integrated into classroom lectures.

However, as previously mentioned, the actual benefits of using visual instructional resources during lectures, specifically PowerPoint, are a topic of ongoing debate, and the impact on learning is not yet well understood, even in L1 learning contexts. For instance, Savoy et al. (2009) compared the effects on information recall after PowerPoint vs. traditional (i.e., chalk-and-talk) university lectures. Results indicated that the capacity to recall oral-only information was lower when PowerPoint was used, and there were no significant differences in recall when information was presented visually (graphs and alphanumeric content). When the lecturer's verbal explanation was supported with some visuals, there was no notable gain from using PowerPoint with simple graphics and alphanumeric information. However, better results were obtained when complex graphics were represented. The authors suggest that the students focused more attention on the slides than on the lecturer's speech. Wecker (2012) investigated the retention of information from three different presentation modes at university: without slides, with regular slides, and with concise slides (only lists of the key points). The findings revealed that the regular slides had a negative effect on oral information retention due to a "dysfunctional allocation of attention" (Wecker, 2012, p. 260) among students who placed high subjective importance on slides, which could be avoided by using concise slides that create a better balance between oral and visual information. The issue of whether PowerPoint slides have a positive or negative impact on lecture comprehension would seem to take on even greater importance in instructional contexts that involve L2/FL learners.

During lectures, one of the central features of the visual input is **gesture**. Gestures have been classified into four types: beats, deictic, iconic, and metaphorical (McNeill, 1992). *Beats* are abstract interactional gestures that stress the discourse-pragmatic content of the utterances

that they accompany. These gestures may be used by lecturers to focus attention and foster interaction, e.g., when checking comprehension. *Deictic* gestures are pointing movements, commonly performed with the index finger or other body parts. In lectures, pointing is a recurrent gesture when interacting with the PowerPoint slides or other visual resources, and may also be done with a laser pointer. The referent of deictic gestures may be either concrete or abstract. *Iconic* gestures are closely linked to semantic content of the utterance, representing images of concrete objects or events. Similar to iconic gestures, *metaphoric* gestures are pictorial, but encode an abstract idea. Iconic and metaphoric gestures are widely used by lecturers to introduce and explain concepts that can facilitate comprehension. How gesturing contributes to the multimodal expression of meaning in L2/FL lectures is illustrated by the following excerpt from the MASC corpus (Multimodal Academic Spoken Language Corpus), compiled at Universitat Jaume I. Figure 1 illustrates a multimodal ensemble that incorporates visual aids (a projected Powerpoint slide and a handout), deictic gestures and directed gaze) that all accompany an utterance in a lecture to undergraduate students of English Philology at a Spanish university.¹

Insert Figure 1 here

In (1), while gazing directly at the students in order to keep eye contact and focus their attention, the lecturer uses a hand gesture to indicate the information introduced in the slide moments ago, and then pick up the topic again. In (2) and (3), the lecturer looks at the slide to support her explanation of its written text, pointing at the two parts in which the information about “business English” (left side) and “technical English” (right side) is presented; in doing so, she is guiding the students to focus on the slide and better understand by visually recalling the previous explanation and by highlighting the connection between the two types of

English. Finally, in (4), the lecturer looks at the handout to find examples of how the adaptation she refers to was done, shifting to the content (text and images) of this resource; the lack of eye contact with the students here serves to encourage them to focus on the handout and follow the lecturer's explanations.

Studies relating to body language in L1 instructional contexts indicate that gestures can enhance learning, but they may also create comprehension difficulties when lecturers' gestures are shifted temporally or conceptually in relation to the speech that they accompany (Roth and Bowen, 1999). As observed by Roth and Welzel (2001), gestures may also lead to misunderstandings when students interpret metaphoric gestures as iconic, especially when they refer to conceptual identities. Thus, it is important for lecturers to become more aware of the types and functions of the gestures they use in the classroom. The role of **body orientation** together with gestures in the construction of meaning in the classroom was examined by Pozzer-Ardenghi and Roth (2007). They identified up to eight different functions of gestures and body orientations that can help learners interpret photographs: representing, emphasizing, highlighting, pointing, outlining, adding, extending, and positioning. These functions made it possible to fully exploit the visual aids and became crucial resources that allowed listeners to appropriately link photographs with speech. Similar functions could be expected with other visual resources such as PowerPoint slides in lectures. Clearly, if non-verbal input has a key impact on the comprehension of L1 learners, it is even more important in L2/FL settings as a way to boost understanding when language-related difficulties may be present.

When analysing the multimodal aspects of lectures, it is also interesting to consider student perceptions of gesturing by lecturers. Sime's (2006) study set in an EFL classroom revealed that students saw lecturers' gestures, and non-verbal behaviours in general, as an important aspect of learning process. They perceived gestures as accomplishing three

different functions (i.e., cognitive, emotional and organizational) and utilized them to better understand and interact with the teacher. Finally, Sueyoshi and Hardison (2005) investigated the influence of gestures and **facial cues** on ESL learners' listening comprehension. They determined that non-verbal cues played a key role in interaction to promote interlanguage development by facilitating negotiation, comprehension and output. They also observed how the L2/FL interactional experience of higher proficiency L2/FL students contributed to the awareness and use of visible speech cues as a listening strategy. Moreover, they concluded that if gestures and facial cues are not helpful, they can be a distraction for lower proficiency learners, and may even lead to frustration.

To wrap up this review of empirical research dedicated to lecture discourse, we would like to suggest some particular areas that would merit further investigation. As we have seen, many important insights about the key linguistic and discursive features of lectures have emerged in studies carried out thus far. However, what are still lacking are in-depth analyses of lecture discourse with a particular disciplinary focus. When L2/FL learners listen to a lecture in the context of a given discipline, they must cope with verbal and non-verbal input that may be uniquely characteristic that academic subject (cf. Crawford Camiciottoli, 2007). These include not only discipline-specific lexical items, but also distinctive discursive and interactional features. In addition, lecturers from different disciplinary areas may use multimodal resources in distinctive ways. Therefore, the more we know about discipline-specific features of lectures, the better we are able to prepare L2/FL learners by incorporating activities that also target particular disciplines during EAP listening instruction.

Additional work is also needed on the multimodal dimension of lecture discourse, with particular attention to implications for L2/FL listening comprehension. There are relatively few studies that have targeted the non-verbal features that characterize university-level lectures. This type of knowledge would result in a full-circle understanding of the lecture

experience, which can then be applied to design more authentic and effective materials and methods for EAP listening activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO ENHANCE EAP LECTURE COMPREHENSION

To conclude this chapter, we offer some practice-oriented recommendations to help L2/FL learners more successfully cope with lectures delivered in English. Many international students encounter considerable difficulties when attending these lectures, particularly at the beginning of a course, and the consequent negative impact on their overall experience is often underestimated. This is especially true when study abroad is limited in duration (e.g., a single semester) and/or does not provide EAP courses for arriving students that include academic listening skills. Thus, it is extremely important for these students to have opportunities to acquire and practise lecture comprehension skills before they attend content lectures delivered in English. Many universities offer intensive EAP courses to international students who intend to pursue degrees at their institutions. However, in the case of short-term experiences, some form of targeted instruction to help learners develop lecture comprehension skills should be routinely organized as part of pre-departure activities. In this way, the sense of inadequacy and disorientation that many students struggle with during their initial impact with content lectures can be considerably attenuated, thus helping them to achieve maximum benefits from the very beginning of the course and avoid falling behind.

During preparatory instruction, it is crucial to expose L2/FL learners to authentic lecture discourse that contains the features discussed in the previous sections of this chapter. This is the type of language that they will have to contend with, so they need to learn to cope with its challenges and also exploit its unique features to improve comprehension at the linguistic and extra-linguistic levels. In recent years, materials developed specifically for lecture

comprehension courses in EAP contexts have begun to incorporate activities based on real-life lectures. A good example is Salehzadeh's (2005) textbook which includes digital video recordings of both excerpts and full-length lectures from the MICASE corpus. The language that is presented is unedited and thus provides a rich source of natural lecture discourse. Activities are designed to increase awareness of characterizing aspects and provide practice with linguistic, discursive and pragmatic features, such as ellipsis, hedging and boosting, macro organizational patterns, discourse markers, informal style, humour and digressions. In addition to textbooks, lecture comprehension instruction can also make use of a myriad of free Internet resources. As mentioned previously, OCW lectures are now abundantly available. They can be utilized by EAP instructors for learning activities in the classroom and also accessed by students to practise listening to authentic lectures. OCW sites often contain additional resources such as summaries, handouts, even transcripts of lectures that are also quite useful to both instructors and learners. Another resource that can be easily adapted for academic listening is TED Talks (TED = Technology, Entertainment, Design), a digital platform with relatively short monologues (18 minutes or less) given by speakers from all over the world. They aim to disseminate scientific knowledge to a lay public and cover a vast range of topics in different disciplinary areas from which users can freely choose. TED Talks digital videos are also accompanied by transcripts and subtitles, thus providing interesting options for various types of activities, depending on the listening proficiency levels of learners. Takaesu (2013) describes a study in which TED lectures were used to promote listening fluency among Japanese EAP students in the context of extensive listening activities. Self-reported feedback highlighted the students' perceptions of improved comprehension and increased motivation, as well as an appreciation of opportunities to become accustomed to different English accents.

Finally, it is important to find ways for L2/FL learners to continue practising academic listening skills beyond what they can experience in dedicated courses. Students should be encouraged to use online lecture resources on a regular basis as a form of self-directed e-learning that can help them to progressively improve their listening skills. In addition, L2/FL students can benefit from establishing contacts with students in their courses who are native speakers of English and who could act as mentors to support them in their learning. Mendelsohn (2002) experimented with a ‘lecture buddy’ system which paired L2/FL learners with native speakers who were both enrolled in the same introductory economics course. The two students had weekly meetings for which they kept journals. At the end of the semester, interviews with the participants revealed that the mentoring project had a positive impact. The native speakers helped the L2/FL learners acquire more effective note-taking strategies (see Chapter 13 for a detailed discussion of this aspect). In addition, L2/FL learners were better able to cope with difficulties arising from unknown vocabulary since they were able to elicit additional explanations from their mentors of words that they had not understood during the lecture. The types of activities recommended above in which learners take responsibility for their own progress and engage extensively with native speakers of English can be particularly effective ways to enhance lecture comprehension.

RELATED TOPICS

Listening to lectures

Academic literacy

English as a Lingua Franca and EAP

EAP and CLIL

Multimodality and EAP

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Endnote:

¹The authors are grateful to Ana Bocanegra-Valle (Universidad de Cádiz) who kindly consented to the reproduction of her image in this chapter.

Total number of words: 7105 (including biographical notes of 79 words)

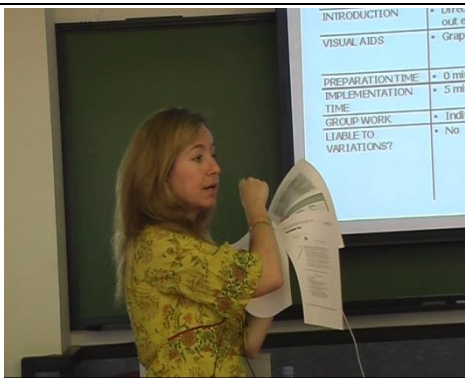
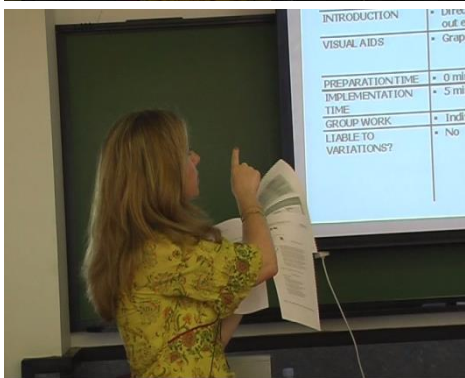
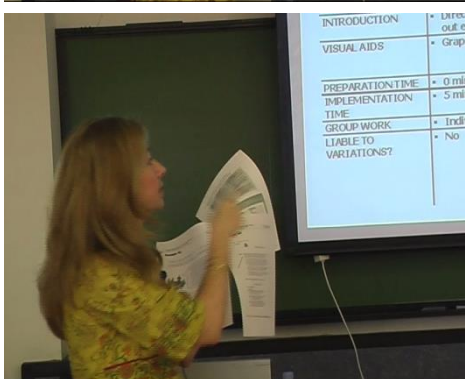
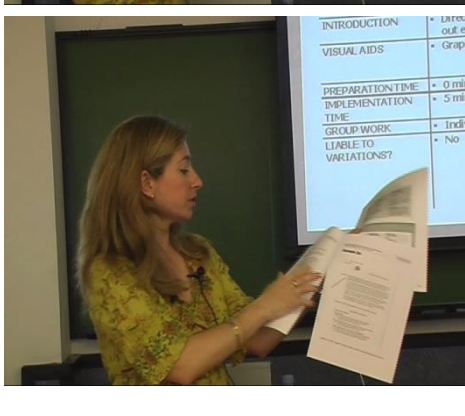
Image	Speech
	(1) [...] to adapt
	(2) the business English
	(3) to the technical English
	(4) and what I've done is [...]

Figure 1. A multimodal ensemble of gestures, gaze, text, image, and speech

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

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