



English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI)
Module 4: Task 1 –3 Video Lectures
Video 4.1: *Lecturing in English—Content Considerations*

Welcome to this video on Lecturing in English. This video will focus on content and planning considerations for EMI lecturing. I'm Dawn Bikowski at Ohio University.

We all know when we lecture that students may or may not be able to understand and follow what we say. Even when we lecture in our native language with students who share the same first language, some students find it difficult to learn from lectures. I bet you can think of several reasons for this—some students, for example, have a hard time paying attention. Others find it difficult to listen carefully and also take good notes that they can review later. Some students aren't as strong at learning from listening as they are from reading. The good news is that we as instructors have many strategies we can try in order to help our students learn when we lecture. And of course, this is particularly important to consider when we're lecturing in a language that is not our students' first. I like to think of lecturing as communication. We are communicating with our students, and communication is a two-way street. This means we are thinking about our listeners' experience when we speak, and offering them time to speak to us as well.

Luckily for us, research has been done and published on students' learning from lectures [on screen: (Mulligan & Kirkpatrick, 2000)]. One study asked students to report how much they learned from the course lectures. What do you think the results were? Of course, each student group is different, but in this case, these were EMI students who came from a non-English speaking background. [pause] Well, the news is concerning. Of the almost 200 students surveyed, only 9% understood the lecture "very well." 68% understood it "fairly well," and 22% "did not understand a lot" of the lecture. This is an important consideration and that we need to take lecturing and student understanding very seriously so that we don't waste our time and our students' time with lectures they can't understand.

So, pause the video and write down at least 3 things EMI instructors can do in order to help increase the chances that students will understand lectures in English. You can compare your list with mine. [pause] Welcome back! Here are 6 considerations related to planning and structuring content that EMI instructors can do to help students understand their lectures. All of these make the assumption that the lecturer has a clear outline of their own on the main points and details for the points they will be making.

1. **First, make your lectures fairly short.** Set yourself a goal to lecture no more than 15 minutes. You can give a mini-lecture for 15 minutes, then have students do an interactive activity such as a small group discussion, and then another mini-lecture if necessary, and so on. Students will become unmotivated, sleepy, and dis-engaged from class if you speak for too long.



2. **Second, use visuals to emphasize your main points.** You can write key points on the board or have them on the screen. If you are using slides, be sure to only include key points—don't make each slide too cluttered with too many words. Repeating key points is helpful for students as well.
3. **Third, give students a handout with key points listed.** When you give students an outline of what you will talk about, they can follow along and don't have to take as many notes while you are talking. That means they can pay more attention to what you are saying. You could even give students the outline before class so that they can prepare by studying any words they don't know, and use the outline to help them study and prepare for class. Just be sure that your handout is clean, clear, and well-organized. You want to help your students focus on the main points you will be making when you lecture.
4. **Fourth, try to relate new course material to students' lives.** As one student commented in the study by Mulligan and Kirkpatrick, "[Good lecturers] give a concept first of what you're going to learn, then ask your opinions or questions, so you know what you're really learning." Students appreciate it when instructors talk about how the lecture content relates to their own lives or future careers and help them understand the purpose for what they are learning.
5. **Fifth, help students set up study groups.** You can put students into groups of 4 or 5 so that they can study together. They can go over notes, discuss difficult problems or concepts, or study for tests. It is usually best if these groups are optional, in case some students can't get together for group time.
6. **Sixth, ask students for their feedback.** You can ask students to anonymously share how much of the content of your lecture they understood—(a) Most of the lecture, (b) Half of the lecture, or (c) Less than half of the lecture. You can distribute small pieces of paper for students, or open a live poll (such as Kahoot! Or PollEverywhere) for them to complete during class. This information can guide future class sessions, including which information to review and also how you lecture moving forward.

As you can see, you have many options for how to plan for and organize your content when you lecture. Share some ideas with colleagues and discuss other ways you can improve your students' chances for success as well.

Reference¹

Mulligan, D., & Kirkpatrick, A. (2000). How much do they understand? Lectures, students and comprehension. *Higher Education Research and Development*, 19(3), 311-335.

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