

## Lecture expressions and strategies

This seminar provides an overview of structuring lectures, transitional expressions for lectures, and the use of questions for class discussion. We will watch, critique and discuss short lecture samples.

### 1. Introductions

Effective introductions in a formal lecture or presentation usually one or more of the following elements.

1. **Overview.** Explain the main points and topics to be covered in the lecture or lesson. This helps students to follow the flow of the lecture / lesson. It is best to organize the lesson around 3-5 main points, as human working memory can keep track of 3-5 main items at once. A fairly detailed overview is most helpful for students with different kinds of learning preferences or styles. It is helpful to summarize the main points of the talk in your introduction, e.g.,

Today we will talk about X because ... In order to understand X, we need to examine A, B, and C. So we'll look at A, which is... [brief description / definition of A], and its implications for B, that is, ... [brief description] and for C ... [brief description]. Afterwards, you will be able to... [explanation of applications, implications or relevance of X, A, B, C].

2. **Rationale.** Explain why the lecture topic and/or main points are relevant or interesting – why should the students care about this? What are its implications? Why will it be important to them later in the course, in their future courses, in the field, in their careers, etc.?
3. **Transition.** Different kinds of lead-ins or transitions can make students mentally ready or help them anticipate what is to come.
  - a. **Bridge.** Remind students of what you talked about last time, and make a connection between the previous class material and today's topic.
  - b. **Lead-in (segue/segway).** An interesting way of raising the topic or issues and getting students to think about it.

A good overview with a rationale can be essentially the same as stating the lesson objectives. Other possibilities include lead-ins that arouse students' attention and that lead into your topic (or into one of the other introductory elements above), such as these.

1. Thought-provoking question - posing a problem, dilemma or interesting question to the class

2. Rhetorical question
3. Statement of a problem
4. A joke or amusing story (more informal)
5. An interesting story or anecdote (more informal)
6. An interesting example
7. A brief analogy

## 2. Cohesion

Cohesion refers to the connectedness or relationship between words. For example, if listeners can understand what nouns and pronouns refer to, so that when you say “he” in a presentation, they know to whom “he” refers, or to whom you refer if you say “the president.” Cohesion can be established in different ways, depending on the type of presentation, topic, and academic field.

1. Repeating the same noun in following sentences – this is easier to do, but can become redundant.
2. Using synonyms and paraphrases to avoid repeating the same words, and thus avoiding redundancy, e.g.:

“the X hypothesis” → “this proposal that X put forth;” “Prof. Y’s hypothesis / theory / proposal / model;” “this hypothesis / theory / proposal / model”  
 “archaeobacteria” → “these primitive unicellular life forms”

3. Predicate-subject chains: a noun (or idea) introduced in the predicate of the previous sentence is repeated as the subject of the next sentence; e.g.:

“...in thermal vents scientists discovered something new, called archaeobacteria. These archaeobacteria, however, have never been known to be pathogenic”

4. New subject – a new noun phrase is used to introduce something new to the discussion.
5. Omitted or deleted subjects. This is less common in English than in East Asian languages. In East Asian languages, nouns (sentence subjects, sometimes direct objects of verbs) can be dropped freely. In English, they are only dropped under certain circumstances.

Between clauses with the same subject: “They performed the experiment, and found some rather strange results.”

In a sentence immediately after a previous sentence that mentions the subject (colloquial style): “How was your performance?” – “Went well.”

### 3. Coherence

How do you use the following when giving lectures or presentations – what kind of transitions do they make? Which of these do not translate well into English?

- |                   |                                    |
|-------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. 특별히, 특히        | 7. NOUN+은/는                        |
| 2. 근데, 그런데        | 8. ... 있다                          |
| 3. 그러나; 그렇지만; 하지만 | 9. ~ 경우에(는), e.g, 내 경우에는; 그런 경우에는; |
| 4. 그래서            | 10. 증거 (e.g, 증거로 해서)               |
| 5. 그래도            | 11. 혹시                             |
| 6. 그러니까           |                                    |

### 4. Disfluencies

A disfluency is what linguists call those instances when a speaker has trouble thinking of the right expression, or has to go back and correct himself/herself<sup>1</sup>. That is when speakers often make pauses. For those times when you need an extra second or two to find and articulate the right expression, which of these are better methods? Which do you use? Which are better or not so good, from the audience's point of view?

- Using pause fillers - “uh, um, er, oh...”
- Using other fillers - “okay, you know, well, I mean, like”
- Using silent pauses
- Apologizing for your speech errors
- Moving on to something else
- Using simple nouns, verbs or pronouns
- Using other simpler vocabulary

Sometimes you have to correct what you have just said, and having to do so may result in disfluencies, errors, or misunderstandings. While these cannot be entirely avoided, they can be minimized or handled more smoothly. These can include:

- recasts: corrected repetition of a word or phrase
- reformulation: rewording what you said in order to clarify

Recasts and reformulations can be marked with so-called discourse markers such as these.

I mean / I meant...	or rather...	excuse me...
you know...	let me back up...	actually...
that is...	oh, ...	let me rephrase that...

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<sup>1</sup> A related phenomenon is the ‘tip of the tongue’ phenomenon, when a speaker is trying to think of the right word, and it seems close or familiar, but cannot find it (“the word is on the tip of my tongue”).

#### 4.1. “Light” words

The following are known as light verbs – simple, common verbs that are very general in meaning. These are often convenient when you cannot think of a more specific verb, so it is helpful to remember these. Using these and other general words can sometimes help avoid disfluencies caused by trying to think of the right word.

- **light verbs:** be, come, do, get, give, go, have, make, put, run, set, take
- **common nouns and adjectives:** good, bad, man / men, woman / women, people, thing
- **indefinite pronouns:** everything, everyone, something, someone, anyone, anything, everywhere, somewhere, anywhere

### 5. Sample lecture

You will hear one or more lecture excerpts. Pay attention to the following criteria, and how well the lecturer does in regard to these aspects of lecturing. Also note the kinds of expressions that s/he uses, such as transition expressions.

#### 5.1. Organization

- introduction, overview
- good organization and flow
- conclusion
- clear objectives

#### 5.2. Expressions

- transitions – what kinds of transitional words or expressions were used?
- handling disfluencies

#### 5.3. Delivery

- voice quality
- intonation
- confidence, poise, body language
- eye contact
- interaction with audience
- well prepared

#### 5.4. Use of media

- use of visual aids or media
- appropriate use of PPT or other technology
- well designed PPT slides