ESL 613

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Lecture Skills for Foreign Teaching Assistants: Goals, Microskills, and Objectives

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Introduction

In many universities throughout the country, there have been problems with students (mostly undergraduates) not being able to understand foreign teaching assistants (FTAs). The situation at the University of Hawaii at Manoa (UHM) is no exception to this problem. At present, there is a program called the English Language Institute (ELI), which is designed for students who are non-native speakers of English. This program has courses in reading, writing, and listening skills. This seems to suffice for most students enrolled in regular American university courses. However, the FTA in addition to these skills, spends much of his time lecturing. This is a productive mode, like writing, which is not included in the current ELI program.

This paper will examine goals, microskills, and objectives for a potential FTA course in the ELI program at UHM. It is primarily based on an earlier work done by Kimzin and Proctor (1986) for the ELI 70 and 80 courses on listening skills. The needs analysis conducted by Weaver, Pickett, Kiu, and Cook (1987) to study the problems between students and FTAs at UHM served as a starting point.

According to Brown's curriculum model (see Appendix 1), Weaver, Pickett, Kiu, and Cook's work centered around stage one: Needs Analysis. The study by Kimzin and Proctor on listening skills offers goals, microskills, and objectives (stage two of Brown's model) geared toward improving listening comprehension for L2 English speaking students. Both of these studies are based on listening skills, a receptive mode. This paper swings
the focus toward speaking skills (a productive mode), which we consider are necessary for FTAs during a classroom lecture. As in the case with Kimzin and Proctor, stage two of Brown's curriculum model is the focus of our research. Other areas which deserve attention to provide a more extensive coverage, are not within the capacity of this paper. These include for example, outside classroom activities such as office visits with FTAs and their supervising faculty, and cultural overtones found in an American classroom (e.g., a student who asks questions during a lecture may seem rude or disrespectful to a FTA). In addition, an overview of the current animosity (i.e., controversial questions of whether foreigners should be allowed to teach) found in American university campuses across the nation will not be discussed (Bailey, 1984).

We begin with a brief background of the ELI program, a needs analysis, and definitions of terminology to be used in this study. A few listening skills that the lecturer may need are also briefly mentioned at the end.
The English Language Institute

The students enrolled in the English Language Institute (ELI) have TOEFL scores between 500 and 600, and have been officially accepted into the UHM. Prior to enrollment in any of the courses, they are given the ELI Placement Battery test, and placed in classes according to their scores.

This program was founded in 1954 to meet the language needs of foreign students and to assist them in successfully completing their courses in American universities. (Weaver, Pickett, Kiu, and Cook, 1987). The first classes in this program were offered experimentally by the English and Speech departments. During this time, these were offered as non-credit courses under the East-West Center at UHM.

In 1964, the ELI was transferred to the UHM Department of Linguistics. Then in 1968, with the establishment of the Department of English as a Second Language, it became part of this department.

The ELI began to grow in 1969; it was separated into three levels: beginning, intermediate, and advanced English in reading, grammar, and writing. In 1972, an Expository Writing course (ESL 100) was added to the program. The primary focus of this course was to help non-native speakers overcome difficulties in their English language abilities. It was different from the other ELI courses, in that it could be used to satisfy the freshman English composition requirement. It also became the first ESL course to be assigned three college credits. Presently, this course is still being honored in this context, and can be
taken in place of English 100.

In August 1987, the ELI at UHM launched a workshop for prospective FTAs (ELI 81). This has been the first attempt in offering a course in speaking, and was created primarily for lecture skills. It will become a one-semester course along with the other ELI courses in Spring 1988.

Needs Analysis

This paper will be based on Brown's Curriculum Design Model (forthcoming, refer to Appendix I). This model consists of six stages: 1) needs, 2) goals, microskills, and objectives, 3) tests, 4) materials, 5) program design and delivery of instruction, and 6) an on-going evaluation process. To save time and money, these stages should follow their enumerated order. It would be nonsensical to outline students' goals without first assessing their needs. For example, if a curriculum designer initially knows the specific and unique needs of the student population, the task of developing appropriate goals, microskills, and objectives will be made possible.

Because the emphasis is on the second stage, this paper will be based on the needs analysis study conducted by Weaver, Pickett, Liu, and Cook for FTAs at the UHM mentioned earlier. They developed their needs analysis on the Pre-Course phase of the Shaw and Garate curriculum model (1984; refer to Appendix II). In their paper the following suggestions were made:

1. Making the application process for FTAs more comprehensive and competitive by requiring audio or video tapes of applicants to assess oral proficiency as a supplement to the score on the standardized test of English.
2. Instituting a brief (two-week) compulsory training and orientation program for all prospective FTAs with assumption of a FTA position contingent on a satisfactory rating of English language skills, perhaps in the form of a video-taped classroom situation role-play.

3. Establishing a UH-committee to insure adequate and appropriate preparation of future FTAs.

(1987)

Definition of Goals, Microskills, and Objectives

Goals, microskills, and objectives have been defined in various ways in curriculum design. They are based on the assumption that the suggestions made in the needs paper (Weaver, Pickett, Liu, and Cook) have been implemented for ELI 81. They are defined as follows:

Instructional Goals: long term aims, described in very general terms. Richards, Platt, and Weber state that these are the underlying reasons for or purposes of a course in instruction (1987:10).

Microskills: a term ... used to refer to the individual processes and abilities which are used in carrying out a complex activity (1987:177).

Performance Objectives: statements which describe the intended outcomes of a particular microskill. Included in this statement is the subject, condition, and a criterion of measure for the performance of the microskill (Brown, forthcoming).

Instructional Objectives: focus attention on the student and on the type of performance he is expected to demonstrate at the
end of instruction. They should be brief, clear statements that describe instructional intent in terms of the desired learning outcomes (Gronlund, 1970:10).

The rationale for the goals and microskills introduced in this paper is based on intuition (i.e., what we feel are vital lecture skills an FTA should possess). Some goals and microskills have been borrowed from some found in papers by Kimzin and Proctor (1986) and Weaver, Pickett, and Kiu and Cook (1987). They have been modified to fit the needs of an ELI 81 course. We have other conceptualized goals and microskills which we deem necessary for an FTA to gain more proficiency in lecture skills. The first step in justifying goals and microskills would be a thorough needs assessment. We could begin with a survey asking the FTA's potential students what lecture skills they feel an effective lecturer should possess. Then the FTA's supervising faculty could also be asked to list lecture skills crucial to a coherent, informative and interesting lecture. Finally, the FTA himself would also be asked for a list of important lecture abilities. Next, these three lists would be compiled and grouped according to the number of responses for each skill.

This tentative list should be presented to all three groups and the participants of these groups should be asked to judge the rankings of each lecture skill. In the event that the participants rerank any of the skills, their reasons for doing so should be justified. The next step would be to look over the revisions of this tentative list. The curriculum designer would have to assess any changes, and the rationale behind the rerankings. After evaluating the revisions, the curriculum
designer would design a final list of goals and microskills that reflect the list of good lecture skills. This list of goals and microskills is not fixed since it can undergo change.

Since the student population will usually undergo some changes due to new enrollment so will the students' needs. With each alteration in the type of student (e.g., academic-oriented vs. social-oriented) an evaluation is needed, followed by a modification of the entire curriculum design. Though a justification of goals and microskills is a sound idea, it becomes a luxury for the design specialist who is pressed for time or money. It would be more practical to expand effort on developing goals and microskills which fit the specific student population. The goals and microskills presented in this paper are based on intuition.

The objectives are also hypothetical. Some lend themselves more to manipulation than to others. In an effort to produce criterion-based objectives, multiple-choice (M-C) questions and oral/visual evaluations based on a 5.0 point interval scale have been used. The levels in this scale are:

- 5 = excellent
- 4 = good
- 3 = average
- 2 = fair
- 1 = poor

Where the evaluator is placed in a purely judgemental role, language attitudes and stereotypes may arise (e.g., associating certain gestures with a particular ethnic group). Though biases cannot be completely eradicated from the student evaluation process, steps can be taken to make it more objective by working with curriculum specialists and test experts.
The following are the goals, microskills, and instructional objectives which are addressed in this paper. The microskills under each goal are not in any specific order. A more thorough survey (mentioned earlier) will have to be done in order to determine the order of importance. The blank numbers appear for the same reason. Since the suggested microskills are tentative, the possibility of revisions (deletion or addition) have been taken into account.
Suggested Goals, Microskills, and Instructional Objectives

I. Goal #1

FTA will be able to clearly and efficiently present basic ideas of an academic lecture.

A. Microskills for Lecture Organization

1. Identify major topic.
2. Present persuasive statements effectively.
3. Cite premises for supporting details.
4. Present cause and effect relationships.
5. Illustrate comparison and contrast relationships.
7. Present lecture topics in a chronological order.
8. Present a coherent summary.

B. Microskills for Lecture Content

1. Present new vocabulary items appropriately.
2. Reinforce key vocabulary items through synonyms, paraphrasings, reiterations, and examples.
3. Use content-specific abbreviations (initials, symbols, acronyms).
4. Use discourse markers effectively (e.g., connectives).
5. Use modals appropriately (i.e., deontic and epistemic modals).
6. Use tense effectively (i.e., present, past).
7. Use correct prepositions (e.g., in, on, at).
8. Use anaphoric and cataphoric references correctly (e.g., personal and relative pronouns).

C. Microskills for Lecturer's Style

1. Articulate with near native-like pronunciation.
2. Produce correct intonation.
3. Use stress-timed rhythm properly.
4. Enunciate words clearly.
5. Use appropriate volume according to class size.
6. Use appropriate wait-time between topics.
7. Use gestures which correspond to its verbal equivalent.
8. Use facial expressions which correspond to its verbal equivalent.
9. Maintain steady eye contact among students.
10. Move around the classroom while maintaining an appropriate physical distance.

11.

II. Goal #2

FTA will be able to enhance the lecture through effective classroom management.

A. Microskills for Classroom Preparation
   1. Write a coherent lesson plan.
   2. Prepare an outline allotting sufficient time for material to be covered.
   3. Follow a prepared check-list (see appendix III).
   4. Construct a back-up activity.
   5.

B. Microskills for Classroom Mechanics
   1. Provide pertinent information in writing.
   2. Operate audio-visual equipment efficiently.
   3. Arrange seating according to class size and type of activity.
   4.

III. Goal #3

FTA will be able to identify informal speech patterns.

A. Microskills for Informal Speech Patterns
   1. Identify the meanings of word reductions correctly.
   2.

IV. Goal #4

FTA will be able to identify different varieties of English

A. Microskills for Different Varieties of English
   1. Identify different dialects of dominant ethnic groups at UHM.
   2.
Instructional Objectives

By the end of ELI 81, the FTA will be able to:

**Goal #1**

Clearly and effectively present the basic ideas of a 30-minute academic lecture with a 4.0 proficiency level on a 5.0 point scale.

**Goal #2**

Enhance the lecture through effective classroom management with a 4.0 proficiency level on a 5.0 point scale.

**Goal #3**

Identify the appropriate full forms of 20 informal speech patterns (i.e., word reductions) with 80% accuracy.

**Goal #4**

Identify five dialects in a ten-minute informal conversation with 80% accuracy.
Goal #1

FTA will be able to clearly and efficiently present the basic ideas of an academic lecture.

Lecture Organization

Microskill #1
Identify major topic.

Objective
FTA will present 3 major topics within a 30-minute academic lecture at a 4.0 proficiency level on a 5.0 point scale.

Microskill #2
Present persuasive statements effectively.

Objective
FTA will present 3 persuasive statements within a 30-minute academic lecture at a 4.0 proficiency level on a 5.0 point scale.

Microskill #3
Cite premises for supporting details.

Objective
FTA will cite a premise with 3 supporting details at a 4.0 proficiency level on a 5.0 point scale.

Microskill #4
Present cause and effect relationships.

Objective
FTA will present 3 cause and effect relationships within 30 minutes at a 4.0 proficiency level on a 5.0 point scale.

Microskill #5
Illustrate comparison and contrast relationships.
Objective
FTA will illustrate 3 comparison and contrast relationships within 30 minutes at a 4.0 proficiency level on a 5.0 point scale.

(Goal #1, cont.)

Microskill #6
Structure lecture in an outlined form.

Objective
FTA will structure a 30-minute academic lecture in outline form with 80% accuracy.

Microskill #7
Present lecture topics in a chronological order.

Objective
FTA will present 5 topics in chronological order within 30 minutes with 80% accuracy.

Microskill #8
Present a coherent summary.

Objective
FTA will present a 5 minute summary for a 30-minute academic lecture with 80% accuracy.
Goal #1 (cont.)

Lecture Content

Microskill #1
Present new vocabulary items appropriately.

Objective
FTA will present 3 new vocabulary items in a 30-minute academic lecture at a 4.0 proficiency level on a 5.0 point scale.

Microskill #2
Use key vocabulary items through synonyms, paraphrasings, reiterations, and examples.

Objective
FTA will be given a written version of a 30-minute academic lecture. Then FTA will use appropriate synonyms, paraphrasings, reiterations and examples at a 4.0 proficiency level on a 5.0 point scale.

Microskill #3
Use content-specific abbreviations (e.g., initials, symbols, acronyms).

Objective
FTA will complete 20 T-F questions with 80% accuracy.

Microskill #4
Use discourse markers efficiently (e.g., connectives).

Objective
FTA will be given a written version of a 30-minute academic lecture with 10 randomly chosen discourse markers omitted. Then FTA will insert the correct discourse markers with 80% accuracy.
Microskill #5
Use modals appropriately (i.e., deontic and epistemic modals).

Objective
FTA will select the appropriate modal on 10 3-item M-C questions with 80% accuracy.

Goal #1 (cont.)

Microskill #6
Use tense effectively (e.g., present, past).

Objective
FTA will select the correct tense on 10 4-item M-C questions with 80% accuracy.

Microskill #7
Use correct prepositions (e.g., in, on, at).

Objective
FTA will be given a written version of a 30-minute academic lecture with 10 pre-determined prepositions omitted. Then FTA will insert the correct prepositions with 80% accuracy.

Microskill #8
Use anaphoric and cataphoric references correctly (e.g., personal and relative pronouns).

Objective
FTA will complete 10 3-item M-C questions with 80% accuracy.
Goal #1 (cont.)

Lecturer’s Style

Microskill #1
Articulate with near native-like pronunciation.

Objective
FTA will articulate with near native-like pronunciation in a 30-minute academic lecture at a 4.0 proficiency level on a 5.0 point scale.

Microskill #2
Produce correct intonation.

Objective
FTA will produce the correct intonation in a 30-minute academic lecture at a 4.0 proficiency level on a 5.0 point scale.

Microskill #3
Use stress-timed rhythm properly.

Objective
FTA will use stress-timed rhythm in a 30-minute academic lecture at a 4.0 proficiency level on a 5.0 point scale.

Microskill #4
Enunciate words clearly.

Objective
FTA will enunciate words in a 30-minute academic lecture at a 4.0 proficiency level on a 5.0 point scale.

Microskill #5
Use appropriate volume according to class size.

Objective
Microskill #6
Use appropriate wait-time between topics.

Objective
FTA will use appropriate wait-time between topics in a 30-minute academic lecture at a 4.0 proficiency level on a 5.0 point scale.

Microskill #7
Use gestures which correspond to its verbal equivalent.

Objective
FTA will use 5 gestures appropriately which correspond to its verbal equivalent in a 30-minute academic lecture at a 4.0 proficiency level on a 5.0 point scale.

Microskill #8
Use facial expressions which correspond to its verbal equivalent.

Objective
FTA will use 5 facial expressions which correspond to its verbal equivalent in a 30-minute academic lecture at a 4.0 proficiency level on a 5.0 point scale.

Microskill #9
Maintain even eye contact among students.

Objective
FTA will maintain eye contact with the students 50% of the class time.

Microskill #10
Move around the classroom while maintaining an appropriate physical distance.

Objective
FTA will move around the classroom while maintaining an appropriate physical distance according to the class size and type of activity at a 4.0 proficiency level on a 5.0 point scale.
Goal #2

FTA will be able to enhance the lecture through effective classroom management.

Classroom Preparation

Microskill #1
Write a coherent lesson plan.

Objective
FTA will write out a lesson plan for a 30-minute academic lecture including an outline and time schedule at a 4.0 proficiency level on a 5.0 point scale.

Microskill #2
Prepare an outline allotting sufficient time for material to be covered.

Objective
FTA will write an outline for a 30-minute academic lecture covering 3 major topics at a 4.0 proficiency level on a 5.0 point scale.

Microskill #3
Follow a prepared check-list (see appendix III).

Objective
FTA will complete relevant activities on the check-list for class preparation with 100% accuracy.

Microskill #4
Construct a back-up activity.
Objective
FTA will construct a 10-minute back-up activity relevant to the lesson plan at a 4.0 proficiency level on a 5.0 point scale.

Goal #2 (cont.)

Classroom Mechanics

Microskill #1
Provide pertinent information in writing (refer to Appendix #4). Using the black board, overhead projector, or handouts.

Objective
FTA will write all pertinent information with 100% accuracy.

Microskill #2
Operate audio-visual equipment efficiently.

Objective
FTA will properly operate an overhead projector, film projector, VCR, tape recorder, etc. properly with 90% accuracy.

Microskill #3
Arrange seating according to class size and type of activity.

Objective
FTA will design a floor plan for a seating arrangement according to class size and type of activity at a 4.0 proficiency level on a 5.0 point scale.
Listening Skills

Since attention is primarily on lecture skills that an FTA might need, listening skills have been limited to two goals:
1) identify informal speech patterns and 2) identify varieties of English. Though the FTA might be confronted by questions from the students, the aural comprehension objectives will probably have been met in ELI 80 to respond adequately to their questions. There will, however, be situations where the FTA might not understand the students' questions not because of the content, but rather the speech variety (e.g., Hawaii Creole English). (Weaver, Pickett, Kiu, and Cook, 1997). Informal speech patterns (e.g., word reductions) will also complicate the situation. The student could direct a question using informal speech, rather than the formal, academic English which the FTA is accustomed to hearing (Zukowski/Faust, 1984). These two goals would also apply to situations outside of the lecture (e.g., office visits, classroom discussions).
Goal #3

FTA will be able to identify informal speech patterns.

Informal Speech Patterns

Microskill #1
Identify meanings of word reductions correctly.

Objective
FTA will identify the meanings of 20 word reductions with 80% accuracy.

Goal #4

FTA will be able to identify different varieties of English.

Speech Varieties

Microskill #1
Distinguish different dialects of dominant ethnic groups at UHM.

Objectives
FTA will distinguish 5 major English dialects in a 10-minute informal conversation with 80% accuracy.
Conclusion

Rice states that even with adequate TOEFL scores and proper academic qualifications some individuals may not be suitable as teaching assistants because of their lack of oral/aural skills (1984:74). The problem with FTAs involves the FTAs themselves, the university, and the students and their parents (Bailey, 1984:3). The university has the responsibility of properly training FTAs for their teaching roles. Based on this premise, this paper has picked up where Weaver, Pickett, Kiu and Cook (1987) have left off in their needs analysis of FTAs at the UHM.

The goals and microskills suggested in this paper centered on five areas of speaking skills (organization, content and lecturer’s style) and two on listening (informal speech patterns and language varieties). The four goals presented should satisfy the FTA’s lecture needs, however, the list of microskills and objectives could be extended.

Though much effort has been taken in quantifying the objectives in this paper, it soon became apparent that a degree of subjectivity would always exist since human judgement cannot be avoided. This situation can be disconcerting for the curriculum designer if criterion-based objectives are viewed as the sole means of assessment. An evaluation process could be
more informative for the teacher and fairer to the FTA if there was some continuous record of his spoken performance on different occasions for different purposes (Brown & Yule, 1983:104). This ongoing record of the FTA's speaking skills should include not only a journal, but also taped performances. By using video tapes, ELI 81 could probably motivate the FTA to improve his lecture skills. If the FTA can visually compare stages in his speaking skills he might realize that his efforts are producing improvements. By having the FTA converse with a native speaker while being video taped the instructor could also evaluate listening skills.

Goals, microskills, and objectives are vital, however, if the sum of the parts is greater than the whole, then the other phases involved in a curriculum design model (needs, tests, materials, teaching, evaluation) should work together in a cohesive, integrated framework.
[insert Appendix I - Brown's curriculum model]
Figure 4. A model for a training course for international teaching assistants.
Appendix III

Checklist for Class Preparation

1. Practice pronunciation of key words.
2. Reserve equipment (e.g., VCR, overhead projector, tape recorder, etc.).
3. Practice operating equipment.
4. Prepare correct amount of handouts.
5. Review and rehearse lesson plan.
6. Prepare necessary stencils.
7. Prepare a course syllabus for the initial class meeting (to be done only once).
Appendix IV

Pertinent Information to be Given in Written Form

1. Lecture information (i.e., names, dates, key words)

2. Citations (i.e., author, title, year)

3. Assignments (i.e., source, page #, due date)

4. Key words and new vocabulary

5. Content-specific abbreviations (initials, symbols, acronyms)
References


Brown, O. and Yule, G. 1983. Teaching the Spoken Language. Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge; Great Britain.


