15 tips for lecturing to an international audience

1. **Use straightforward language**
   Consider the international audience in preparing your lecture. Use straightforward language. Be aware of jargon, colloquialisms, acronyms, cultural references, and new terms that may require an explanation for non-home students. Use examples that are meaningful to an international audience. Be aware of language issues which might inhibit student understanding, such as phrasal verbs or prepositions.

2. **Provide a clear outline**
   Provide students with a clear lecture outline and refer to it throughout the lecture. Being aware of the overall structure of the lecture helps students anticipate what they will hear and guides note-taking.

3. **Use verbal signposts and internal summaries**
   Use clear verbal signposts to mark the beginning and end of sections of the lecture, to indicate a series, to signal examples etc. Summarize key ideas in sections of the lecture and pause between sections to allow students time to absorb information and refine notes.

4. **Be aware of cultural issues**
   Students from different cultural backgrounds may be sensitive to or unaware of particular cultural perspectives, such as the differences between collectivism and individualism, or concepts like feminism. It’s best to approach these with some caution or awareness.

5. **Don’t assume prior knowledge or understanding**
   When planning a lecture try to avoid assuming that students will have an understanding of particular facts or concepts, this can be a problem for all students, but especially international students who may not have the same base knowledge as ‘home’ students. Particularly in a lecture situation where there is not the same opportunity for questions it’s safest to stick to what you can be sure students know.

6. **Highlight key information**
   Emphasise key concepts and ideas throughout the lecture. Paraphrase complex information to offer more than one opportunity to understand the concepts. Give students time to write these key ideas down.

7. **Pause frequently**
   Pause at the end of sections, between slides, before and after key information and immediately after verbal signposts. These short intervals help students absorb the information, prepare mentally for what comes next and take more effective notes.
8. **Keep board work clear**
   Avoid cursive script when writing on the board. Many students are not familiar with this kind of writing. Think ahead about how to organize board work cogently. Check with students before erasing.

9. **Periodically check learning**
   Incorporate non-threatening opportunities to check that students are following the lecture. Encourage questions or devise your own. Consider using Personal Response Systems (sometimes known as PRS, an electronic audience participation system) or other active learning techniques.

10. **Vary teaching techniques during the lecture**
    Change your delivery method or intersperse your lecture with interactive activities. Down-time from extended listening helps students to concentrate and take notes. The typical attention span for native listeners is 15-20 minutes, and for non-native speakers this can be even less.

11. **Welcome the use of lecture recording devices**
    International students often benefit from a second opportunity to listen to the lecture. This second listening can reinforce what they learned in the lecture and may also provide an opportunity to improve their language skill. Many native language speakers also benefit from this! You may want to consider lecture capture if you don’t already use it, or encourage students to bring along voice recorders for their own use.

12. **Use WebCT to help students prepare for your lecture**
    WebCT offers teaching staff opportunities to provide a cross-cultural orientation in advance of the lecture, an outline for the lecture or a list of new terminology. Setting up the lecture in this way helps international students come to class with an expectation of how the lecture will be organized which in turn will make listening easier. WebCT also provides an opportunity for discussion, questions or other forms of support outside of the formal lecture class. It may be particularly useful for students who are not comfortable asking questions in class.

13. **Use PowerPoint to enhance, but not compete with, the lecture**
    Co-ordinate verbal and visual information. Check with students before moving to the next slide. Encourage students to print out PowerPoint slides before the lecture so that they can use them as a basis for note-taking. Consider producing partial notes to encourage attendance.

14. **Allow time at the end of the lecture**
    Leave time at the end of the lecture to summarize key points and give students time to finish writing or to approach you individually.

15. **Solicit feedback**
    Solicit feedback on lectures to address concerns early on. Request written feedback at the end of a lecture, or use PRS.