

Notes for speakers

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Lecturing at an international conference demands a particular effort beyond all the normal requirements of public lecturing. You will be talking to an audience whose language is not your own. In addition, you may be lecturing in a language which is not your own first language. It is therefore important to make a special attempt to make yourself understood. Awareness of this should be good experience in making you think more about your presentation, and hopefully make you a better lecturer!

The aim of this advice is to improve our communication with one another, so please read it even if you are an experienced lecturer, and if you have suggestions for improvement, please let us know. Also if you are organising a conference yourself or teaching students how to lecture in public, please feel free to plagiarise these notes.

General guide lines on lecturing.

The basics of how to be heard:

1. Before you start, check the microphone if there is one, and make sure you can be heard at the back of the audience.
2. Do not move away from the microphone when lecturing in a large hall.
3. Try always to look at your audience. Do not turn your back on the audience, talk to the screen or down into your notes.
4. Choose someone at the back of the hall as the person to whom you are talking, and try to keep their interest. This will help you to project your voice to the whole audience.

These are some of the basics of how to be understood:

1. Speak slowly.
2. Keep it simple. Short sentences are most easily understood.
3. In a 20-minute presentation you can only make a limited number of points. Be clear about what is important, and do not attempt to do too much.
4. Try to highlight the main points of your talk in your PowerPoint presentation.
5. Use the Arial or Helvetica fonts because they are most easily read from a distance and of course by people with difficulties such as dyslexia.
6. Names of sites, people and numbers in another language can be difficult to catch, so make sure these appear in your visual aids.
7. Help your audience to concentrate. When pointing to details on the projection screen hold the pointer as still as you can on the detail being indicated for a couple of seconds. Do not wave the pointer about on the screen. Try to avoid pointing and talking at the same time as the audience will probably not hear you if you move away from the microphone. Be sure to point only at the screen if using a laser pointer.

8. Finally, English is the international language for the EAA. You must therefore ensure that your presentation can be understood in English, whatever language you may be speaking in, by using English in your PowerPoint presentation, or in any handouts you prepare. There are various ways of doing this, and rules for helping the audience, and some are listed in the following sections.

Specific guidelines for lecturing in your own language

Note – this section has been written especially (but not only!) for native English speakers. This is because native English speakers are generally less used to lecturing in or listening to another language (and to trying to grasp its meaning) and therefore they can be less sensitive towards an international audience's difficulties of comprehension.

In addition to the suggestions given in the general points above, there are various further suggestions for those lecturing in their mother tongue:

1. Assume you will have three types of people in the audience: those who understand very little or nothing, those who have various levels of understanding but are still improving their skills, and those who speak the language fluently. You must try to cater for all of them.
2. Be extra careful to speak VERY clearly, slowly, distinctly and keep it simple. Do not mumble or run your words together.
3. Summarise the main points of your talk in your PowerPoint presentation because most people usually read a language which is not their own much better than they understand it when spoken.
4. Do not use colloquialisms or expressions which may not be easily understood by those whose mother tongue is not the same as yours.

Specific guidelines for lecturing in a second language

In addition to the suggestions given in the general points above, there are various ways of making your presentation comprehensible specifically for those lecturing in a second language.

First and foremost, recognise that you will probably be speaking with an accent and intonation that may be comprehensible to native speakers but very difficult for others to understand, so try to speak especially slowly and clearly.

1. If possible get a native speaker to check your text beforehand.
2. You can also have three types of additional aids to make your paper understood by everyone in the audience:
 - a. Simultaneous translation. If this is available (it is expensive and rare) try to speak to the translators before your lecture, and give them the text in advance so that specialist terms can be sorted out.
 - b. Handouts for the audience. These should have more detail than the published abstract or summary, and should allow the audience to follow your lecture in detail.
 - c. Verbal summaries of your lecture in another language. These should preferably be given before the lecture itself. It takes up precious time in a session, but may be necessary in discussion sessions.

Styles of lecturing.

There is no single way to give a good lecture, and a mixture of styles may make a session more interesting. In any case, whichever method or combination of methods you choose, it is important to be thoroughly prepared. Nothing makes a worse impression than a hesitant delivery, with many pauses between words and sentences, and an appearance of disorganisation. There are, however, some basic rules which should not be broken.

a) Speaking without a text.

This is a good way for those who can do it – it works on the principle that if you cannot hold in your head what you want to say, there is no way the audience will be able to grasp it. Use your PowerPoint slides as prompts. Remember that it is usually recommended that each slide should have a maximum of 30-35 words. If you are lecturing in a language which is not your own, and forget a word, ask the audience – it keeps them involved! This style needs careful preparation beforehand (talking to oneself!). It allows you to address the audience more directly, to adjust your time (but keep a close eye on the clock!). The disadvantage is that you may miss a key point or over-run badly.

b) Lecturing from a prepared text.

Although this style is normal in some countries, it may not be ideal when speaking to international audiences. Your written style may be too literary for your audience so you should make a special effort to write simply. Pay particular attention to your speaking style and intonation, as this type of lecturing may lead you to read it in a monotonous tone and not to look up at your audience. If something goes wrong, you have very little flexibility. In some lecture theatres there can also be problems with lighting so you cannot read your text and show PowerPoint at the same time. Make the text easy to read – large lettering, and widely spaced. A 20 minute lecture will consist of about 5 typed pages with 1.5 line spacing, but usually you should restrict yourself to 17 minutes to allow time for changeover of speakers. Reading from a text does, however, give you greater control over the timing, but you should read the lecture out loud to yourself -slowly -two or three times beforehand. If you have to read fast, then it is too long.

c) Lecturing with only brief notes.

This can be difficult as you have continually to look up from your notes to the audience, and then back again to the notes. It is better – and helps the audience to follow you – to put your headings on your PowerPoint slides.

Visual aids.

General guidelines:

1. Visual aids should generally be bold and simple – audiences cannot take in too much information when they are listening at the same time.
2. Make sure that every slide makes a point, and do not pad your lecture with unnecessary slides – it is a sign you are insecure.
- 3: Leave the slide on the screen long enough for the audience to absorb its contents.
4. Ensure your text is legible: use a large font size (24 pt or bigger).
5. Do not put too much text on one slide. The ideal maximum number of words is 30-35 per slide. If you have several points to make, spread them over several slides rather than on one slide.
6. Use lower and upper case characters in text rather than simple block letters.

7. Use line weight, style, symbol, etc. to convey important information, but do not use too many variations.
8. Maintain consistency in images, legends, colours, etc.
9. Check for misspellings.
10. You may want to use the background colour to link points together and to change colour when you change topic.

PowerPoint

- a. Most speakers use PowerPoint nowadays. Please take into account that the use of other visual aids such as slides and transparencies (OHPs) is now discouraged as some institutions are disposing of their slide and OHP projectors!
- b. PowerPoint allows a combination of text and graphics, but it is important to get the balance right: too much text is unreadable; too little can leave the audience lost. Here we offer only a few general words of advice.
- c. PowerPoint allows you to use visual gimmicks, but remember that these are more likely to distract your audience than to help them understand your point. Use them only occasionally, when you are sure they will enhance your presentation.
- d. In PowerPoint you have the option of editing the illustrations you import, e.g. darkening or lightening or sharpening them to improve clarity. You can also reduce to size of your files to alleviate problems of presentation – 200-300 dpi is usually sufficient for lecturing.
- e. Use colours in an effective way and remember that some member of the audience may be colour blind or dyslexic. Try to use either light background with black letters or, inversely, dark background with white letters.
- f. Make sure you label slides and plans with the name of the sites (names and large numbers are difficult to understand for those not familiar with them).
- g. Make sure images are properly trimmed, redraw frames, and perhaps clean up lettering on scanned images (poor quality images reflect on your preparation and therefore your credibility).
- h. Make sure your version of PowerPoint is compatible with that which will be used at the conference (e.g. presentations prepared on the most recent versions of PowerPoint may not be compatible with earlier versions).
- i. Bring your file on a memory stick, but perhaps also on a disc as well. Always be prepared to lecture without the visual aids in case some disaster strikes. Make sure your filename includes your name or initials, not just the paper's title or session title.
- j. All the files should be loaded on to the computer before the session starts, and the icons should be displayed on the desktop in the order that the lectures will be given. This means that you should make sure that you contact the session organiser(s) beforehand to ensure that this is done before the session
- K. Often the last slide will stay on the screen while questions are being asked or changing lecturers, so why not suggest three or four items for further reading on it? There is no need to thank your audience for listening!

Some final suggestions -before and after the session.

In addition to the points mentioned above, here are four further suggestions regarding what to do before the session:

1. Make yourself known to the session organiser and any one providing technical help as soon as possible – the organiser should arrange a meeting beforehand of all participants in the session.
2. Try out the equipment in the lecture theatre beforehand, so you know how to switch equipment and lights on and off, use of the mouse, pointer, etc.
3. Run through your PowerPoint to make sure it works, and if possible stand at the back of the room to check that the text is legible.
4. Take a watch or clock with you – all lecture theatres should have a clock, but many don't!

After you have given your paper, try to get advice from someone on how you might have improved your presentation.

Finally, there is the possibility that papers from sessions or round tables may be suitable for publication in the EAA's European Journal of Archaeology (EJA) in whole or part. Please contact the Editor of the EJA in advance of the conference, or as soon as possible after it, if you are considering this option (see <http://eja.e-a-a.org/>). Any conference papers submitted for publication in the EJA will be subject to the normal editorial conditions, including external peer review.