

One-minute Lectures: Variety Increases Student Listening Skills [An activity originally conceived by Jeff Bruce]

Overview

The Academic Skills (AS) class is meant to teach students note-taking skills. The primary activity is to watch and listen to several video lectures on various topics of fifteen to twenty minutes in length. As a supplement to that activity, one of our teachers, Jeff Bruce, has introduced an activity in his AS classes that he calls “One-minute Lectures.” Students have responded so favorably to this activity that we have decided to make it a feature of all the AS classes. In this activity--which takes a very small part of each class—students, by turns, give very short lectures (three times in the course of the semester) on topics of their own choosing in front of the class.

Although this strengthens their capabilities as speakers, the primary purpose is to strengthen the listening abilities of the audience. There are the added benefits of improving class cohesion (in a course in which much of the work is carried out quite independently) and helping students bond with each as they find out about each other’s interests and, potentially, backgrounds.

Format of the Activity

1. Each speaker speaks for one minute. The teacher times them so they will notice if their speeches are too short. The students are cut off at the end of one minute. Students are instructed to practice beforehand to make sure that their speeches are one minute long.
2. Each speaker speaks from *notes*, not from a script. They are allowed to write down a maximum of twenty “main points” on a single note card.
3. During each speech, the members of the audience try to identify as many key terms as they can and write them down. The aim is to guess which terms the speaker chose as main points. That is, the terms that the speaker wrote down on his/her notecard beforehand.
4. After all the speeches for the day have been completed, the speakers show the contents of their note cards to the class. This can be done using the OHC (overhead camera).
5. The members of the audience circle terms on their lists that also appeared on the speakers’ notecards. The aim for the audience is to identify at least 10 key words from each of the speakers’ cards.
6. The score for each person is calculated on a 100-point scale and the one-minute lecture notes from the speakers are handed in. [See scoring sheets in the Appendix.]

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Recommendation: On the first week of class, introduce this activity to students and create a sign-up sheet. How many one-minute lectures will need to be performed in one class depends on the total number of students in the class. Ideally, there would be five or six performances per class, with each student carrying out two or three of them in the course of the semester.

Observations

1. Variety in topic choice is an important part of the activity. Holidays, places the students have visited, hometowns, favorite musical groups, and other topics are all possibilities. The teacher may give guidance as to the type of topic students may choose. Aim for as great a variety of topics as possible and only make suggestions when students are stuck.
2. Variations in speaking styles will strengthen the listening skills of the class members. Some speakers might rush, others might speak too softly, but all of them will become better speakers by listening to the speeches of their classmates.
3. Additional practice strengthens the skills of the listeners. Each person listens to about five speeches per class. In total, they will hear over 60 speeches over the course of the term. Listeners become more accustomed to the activity as they follow the routine of note taking.

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Appendix

Your name: _____ Date: _____ Score: ____ /100

First speaker: _____ /10

Keywords: _____

Second speaker: _____ /10

Keywords: _____

Third speaker: _____ /10

Keywords: _____

Fourth speaker: _____ /10

Keywords: _____

Fifth speaker: _____ /10

Keywords: _____

