Lecture Case Study 2: Interactive Windows

Method: “Each lecture contains a minimum of two interactive windows. These consist of short problem-solving exercises or discussion points. ‘Buzz groups’ of two or three students are given three to six minutes to discuss the problem; the correct answers are explained in class immediately after the interactive session.” (p. 20)

Disscussion: “The current study posed two questions: are interactive windows popular with students, and can they enhance recall and understanding? The results support a positive response to both of these. Semi-structured student evaluations identified ‘interaction’ as the single most highly-rated feature of the lectures. Student answers to class tests and examination questions showed a significant trend towards enhanced performance in topics covered during interactive windows.” (p. 25)

Conclusion: “In conclusion, the present study found that interactive windows opened in traditional lectures were popular with students. The high rating for interaction was consistent in all years and was shown in both full-time and part-time classes, despite previous suggestions that these different groups of students may differ in their responses to interactive methods. Interactive windows had a generally small, but measurable, effect on recall and understanding. There are reasons to believe that these conclusions are conservative (because interaction may enhance learning in the lecture as a whole, and not only in the topics covered interactively, and because my sample sizes – in particular for the part-time group – were small). Many of the potential disadvantages of interactive methods, such as overcoming student expectations and loss of time and content, are mitigated by incorporating small interactive sessions into traditional lectures, rather than replacing lectures entirely. Hence the costs of incorporating interaction in this way are likely to be small. Given this, along with the enthusiastic response of students to the interactive windows in this study, these results support the inclusion of interactive windows in lectures.” (p. 29)

From Huxham, M. (2005). Learning in lectures: Do “interactive windows” help? *Active Learning in Higher Education* 6(1), pp. 17-31.

Questions for discussion:

- **How might interactive windows help engage students in your lectures? What do you think is the pedagogic value in this technique?**
- **Are there any barriers to creating interactive windows in your lectures? How might you overcome these (will you need to smash some windows rather than simply opening them)?**