

How to give good seminar presentations – some hints

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Why should we care?

- Presentation skills are required in professional life
 - Present yourself, your research, your company, an idea, a product...
 - You are often evaluated based on a presentation
- In the context of this seminar, learn how to present scientific content
- Also learn
 - How to digest different knowledge sources and make a consistent picture out of it
 - To present the result in a structured way, adequate for the audience
 - To make and defend your point in front of a group

The 80-20 rule of presentations

- 80% presentation, 20% content?
 - No!
- Clearly, content is crucial
- But content does not get through if presentation is
 - Confusing
 - Boring
 - Too advanced (or too easy) for the audience
 - Too long (or too short)
 - ...

Outline

- Basics 
- Preparing the slides
- Giving the presentation

Goal: Maximize benefit for the audience

- ((For once, you are a teacher!))
- Consider structure, layout, design of the presentation
- What can be assumed the audience knows?
 - What not?
- How can we arouse interest in the audience?
- Maximize knowledge transfer

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- Think of your audience – assume you are part of it

When preparing a talk...

- For whom is the presentation?
 - Target audience, knowledge, expectations
 - What is the message you want to convey?
 - What is the purpose of your presentation?
 - Teach, inspire, sell, convince,...?
 - What (technical) equipment do you have available?
 - Room, projector, blackboard, light, ...
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- In the context of this seminar, the answers should be given!

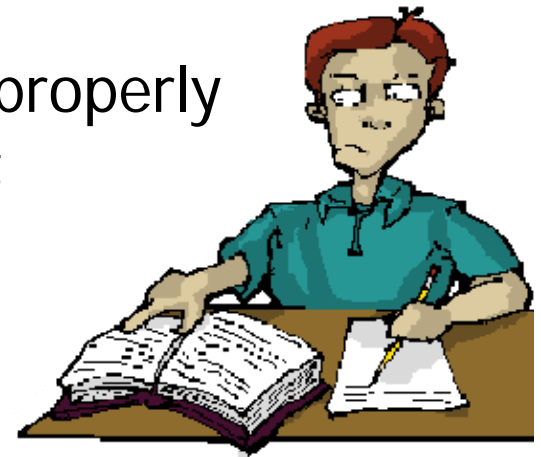
Academic presentations

- Limited time (e.g., 20, 30, or 45 minutes)
 - Fix your milestones
 - Know when you should be where in your talk
 - Be ready to shorten your talk dynamically
 - Be prepared to questions from the audience delaying your talk
- Message
 - A novel scientific result, a report on your and/or others' work
 - Make clear what is your contribution and what is general knowledge or results achieved by others



Plagiarism

- Make a clear difference between your results and those of others
 - Report all your references and cite them properly
 - Briefly in the talk, but fully in the written report
 - Plagiarism has many forms
 - Copy & paste without explicit citation
 - Paraphrase of text without reference
 - Unacknowledged adoption of ideas, structure, design, ...
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- Keep your presentation prosaic, objective, factual
 - Convince with arguments, not with rhetoric
 - You are not a salesperson

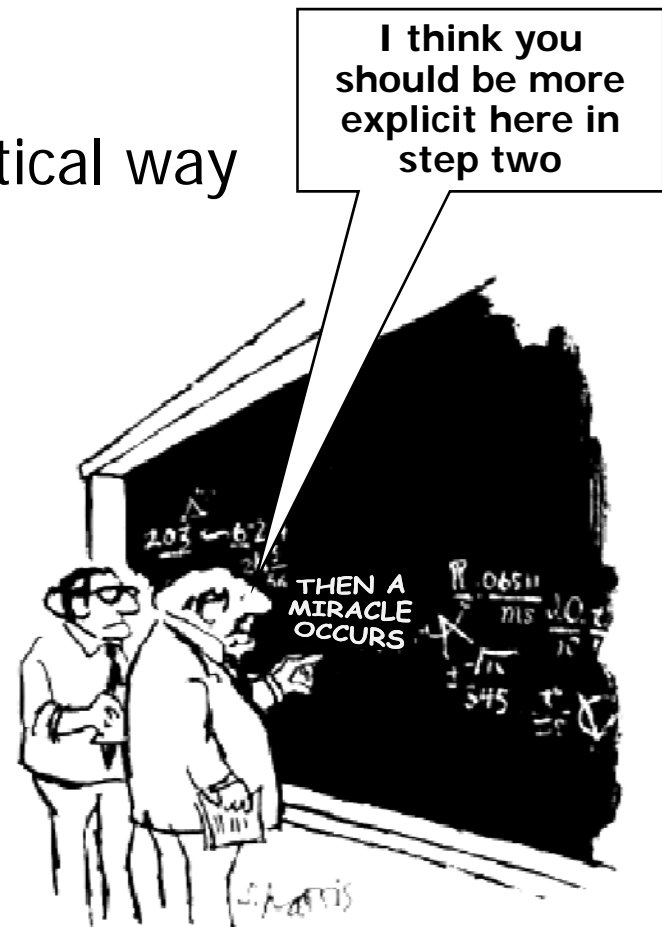


You are not a salesperson



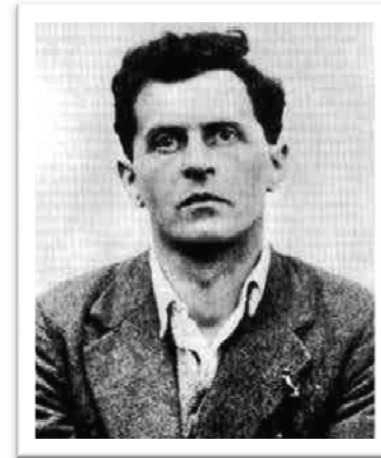
Academic presentations (II)

- Try to convince, not to persuade
- Read and use the literature in a critical way
 - The authors are *almost* always right
- Read and use different references
 - Typically, scientific articles are more reliable than information on the Web
- You should understand 100% of what your are saying

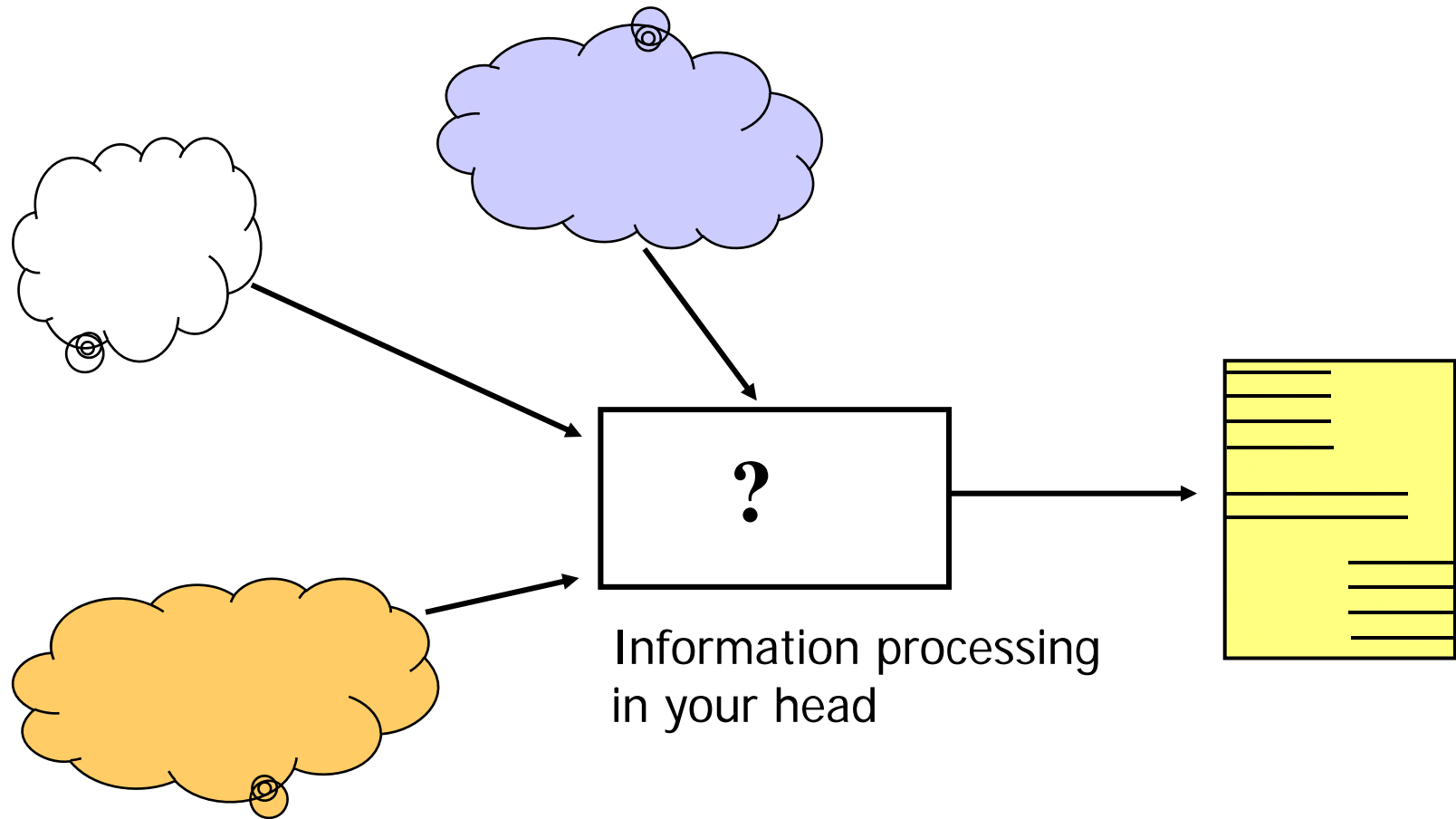


“Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent”

- *„Wovon man nicht reden kann,
darüber muss man schweigen“*
- Ludwig Wittgenstein
(last sentence of his Tract. Log. Phil., 1922)

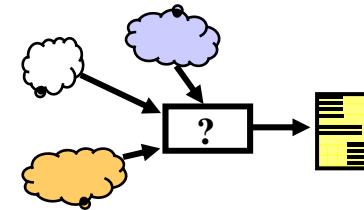


Intellectual challenge and clarity of thought



Information *processing*

- Use your own words
 - Do not paraphrase or just translate from other languages
- Be careful with foreign languages
 - E.g., “Operating system” (EN) → Betriebssystem (DE)
 - not: Operationssystem
- Focus on relevant aspects
 - Identification of “the” relevant aspects is the most important point
 - But go into details when necessary or appropriate
- Avoid abbreviations and acronyms whenever possible

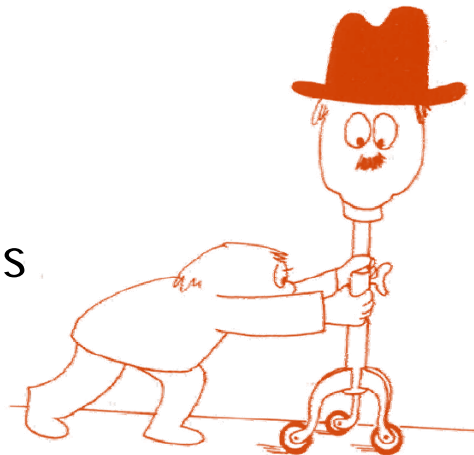


Preparation



- Observe and evaluate other speakers
 - Do they do it well? Why? How?
- Practice your talk
 - Make a true “dress rehearsal”

- Test your presentation
 - Animations, colors, ...
- Know your audience
 - Competences, expectations
- Dress properly



Preparation (II)



- Complete your preparation on time
 - Not just the night before...
- Be on time the day of the presentation
 - Take some time to check projector and laptop configuration
 - What if something does not work?
- Be prepared for spontaneous drawings
 - Clean the blackboard
 - Make sure chinks / markers are available

Be prepared to questions and discussion

- Allow time for it
- Your answers should show that you are competent
 - How you reply to questions could be an important issue when your talk is used to evaluate you (e.g., as part of a job interview)



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Slide layout

- Rule of thumb: only one train of thoughts per slide
 - Bullet points / key phrases better than complete sentences
- Slide title should summarize the content of the slide
 - In a meaningful and self-contained way
 - Sometimes people only read the title of a slide (→ newspapers)
- For academic presentations avoid logo, name, date, etc. on every slide
 - This is not a sales pitch
 - Background noise
 - Risk of drawing off attention from content
 - But: Corporate design?

Slide layout (II)

- Font
 - Sans serif (e.g., “Arial” or “Tahoma”)
 - Do not mix (too many) different fonts (size / style) on a slide
- Font size
 - Must be “big enough” (rule of thumb?)
 - 12pt, 16pt, 18pt, 20pt, 24pt, 28pt
- Bullet points
 - Do not “exaggerate” (no more than ~7 main items per slide)

Slide layout (III)

- Avoid overloading your slides
 - Not meant to provide full content
- Be careful (and frugal) with animations
- No point in quickly browsing through slides one has not enough time for presenting

Images, plots, and diagrams instead of text

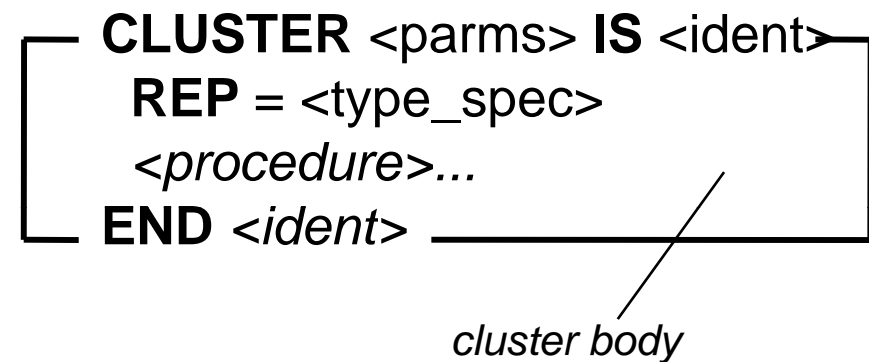
- *"A picture is worth a thousand words."*
 - But: avoid too striking pictures (unless you want to shock / provoke your audience)
- Plots / diagrams must help you in making your point
 - They must be easy to explain / understand
- Photographs convey emotions, graphics and drawings convey exactness



Schemes and graphics, an example

A cluster has the following form:

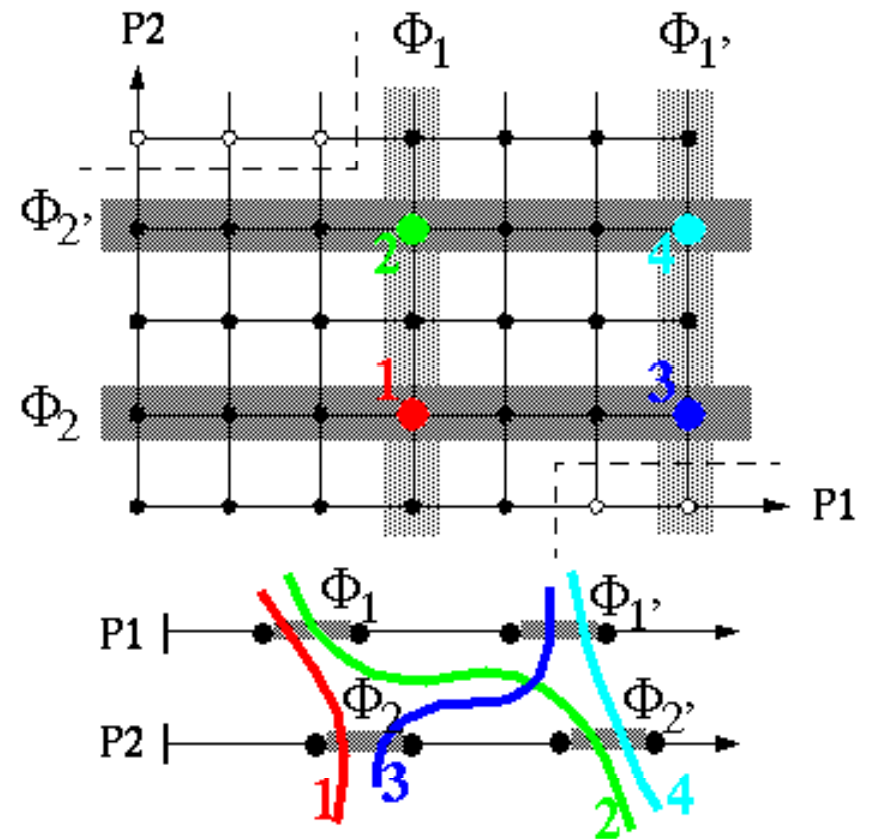
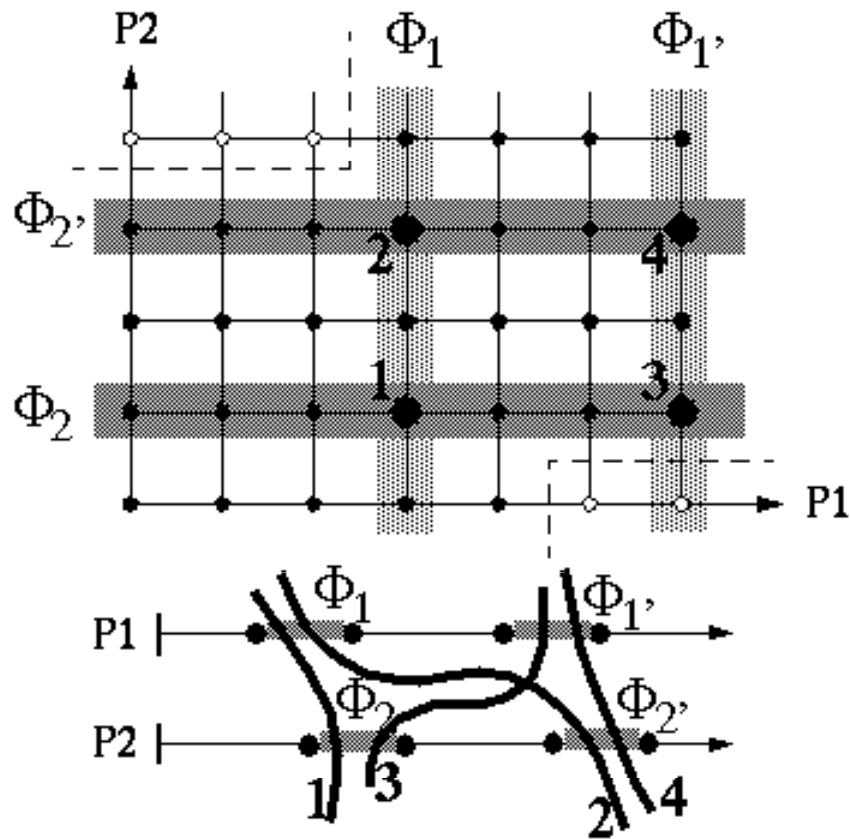
```
ident = CLUSTER [parms] IS ident
  cluster_body
END ident
cluster_body = REP = type_spec
  routine {routine}
routine = procedure
```






Much better:

- Striking
- Less text
- Less forward references

The power of colors



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Start with an outline of the talk?

- A matter of taste
- Do not spend too much time explaining the outline
 - High risk of boring your audience
 - List few, self-explaining items
- A (negative) example:
 - Introduction *[Necessary?]*
 - Topic 1
 - Subtopic 1 bla bla *[Avoid nested bullet points in the outline!]*
 - Topic 2
 - ...
 - Topic 7 *[too many items!]*
 - Summary *[Necessary?]*

Make a good start



- Be happy!
- Look at your audience
 - Not at slides, laptop, window, ...
 - Not at one single person (e.g., professor)
- Friendly start of the talk
 - Welcome
 - Present yourself
 - Present your topic
 - If applicable, put your presentation in context (e.g., relation to previous presentations in the seminar)

Beware of yourself!

- Look
 - At your audience
- Speak
 - Slowly (enough)
 - Loud (enough)
 - Fluently
 - Free (do not memorize your talk!)
 - Pause if necessary or appropriate
- Move
 - Slowly (avoid hopping around)
 - Use your mimic (hands / body)
 - Do not stand between the projector and the projected area

During the presentation

- Engage with your audience
 - Eye contact
 - Questions
 - Provocations, contradictions, surprises? (risky, but effective)
- Motivate your audience
 - Why is your presentation worth listening to?
 - Why are you worth listening to?
- Remain authentic, stay calm, be flexible
 - Be ready to react to questions, interruptions

Almost done

- Do not leave important questions unanswered at the end of the presentation
 - Open issues should be explicitly addressed (e.g., future work)
- Provide a summary of the main message of your presentation
 - Try to close the circle: link the results at the end to the motivating questions at the beginning
- Make clear that the end of the talk has come
 - Keep on looking at the audience
 - Thank and the audience
 - Ask for questions

Summary

- Understand your topic
- Be well prepared
- Structure and balance your talk well
- Think of your audience
- Keep the time
- Stay calm, be flexible
- ... and it will be a great success!!

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Pictures from: www.leander.lib.tx.us/LILT/citing and
www1.ku-eichstaett.de/PPF/PDMueller/lerntech/referat/