

University of Leipzig, Department of Linguistics
Course 04-046-2012/IGRA08
Head movement

Martin Salzmann – martin.salzmann@uni-leipzig.de

How to do a seminar presentation

1 General issues

- Who is the addressee? → this will determine the function/level of your presentation:
 - present the article in a way that is understandable to the other students; the level to be targeted is that of the students (not of the instructor) → so in case you are struggling with a text you can be sure that others will too
 - The purpose of the presentation is not to impress/to bore. Rather your goal should be to teach your fellow students the basic insights of the article, i.e. they should learn something
- you are responsible for the entire slot, but you are not supposed to give a 90-minute lecture; rather, the lesson should be as interactive as possible → you can ask questions, do exercises, ask students to draw tree structures on the board, stir a discussion etc.
- Practice your oral presentation: introduction, most important issues, conclusion etc. (one shouldn't get the impression that this is the first time you look at your handout)

2 Structure

2.1 Abstract

- introduce the main aspects of the text
 - what is the topic/the general problem/the research question?
 - solution
 - general implications
- as with other presentations, this is the moment where you can gain a lot but also lose a lot:
 - don't start with *uh, um, well, ...*
 - speak fluently
 - logical connectors
 - be concise (it helps if you know this part by heart)
- this is like an advertisement

2.2 Introduction

- provide the research context
 - which phenomenon/problem are we dealing with
 - previous work (if relevant)
 - what is the interesting/challenging aspect of it, why should one deal with it? Formulate the research question

2.3 Presentation of the article

- focus on the central issues. Not everything that is in the paper must be mentioned in the presentation/be on the handout (things that are familiar to everyone should not be discussed ad nauseam, no footnotes!); select the material in view of the basic message of the text
- you need not mirror the structure of the text. Instead, you are free to modify it. Not all papers are well-structured. The goal is to present the material in logical order: background → problem → solution

- things you do not understand:
 - a. should be clarified before the presentation (internet, ask you colleagues/the instructor)
 - b. older principles, e.g. GB-principles, can be looked up in Haegeman, Liliane 1995. *Introduction to Government and Binding Theory*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- explain difficult/unfamiliar concepts, spend enough time on complicated arguments/derivations etc. (i.e. the issues you were struggling with yourself)
- you should always make it clear why you are presenting something, how it relates to the problem/the solution → use sentences with logical connectors: *this predicts that ...; this will be shown in ...; from this follows that ...; after having shown that ... we will now ... etc.*
- at the end of this part you should briefly summarize the research question and the solution

2.4 Discussion of controversial issues

- It may be useful to do this separately from the presentation of the text to improve coherence. It is important to select only the central ones (you shouldn't list every single potentially problematic issue)
- a good way of doing this is by organizing a discussion in class

2.5 Discussion of general implications for the seminar topic/linguistic theory

- evaluate what contribution the article makes to the discussion in the seminar so far: i. empirically: is the approach indispensable to account for the data it discusses or would other approaches work as well? ii. theoretically: is the approach superior to others, conceptually and/or empirically (i.e. can it explain other phenomena as well)?
- evaluate the proposal with respect to what you know about linguistic theory: which concepts may be attractive (could be exploited for other phenomena)/problematic (e.g. because they are ad hoc, construction-specific)?
- could the proposal be translated into a different framework?
- you should definitely involve the audience here

3 Timing (roughly)

- abstract: 30 seconds
 - introduction: 2–5 minutes
 - presentation of the text: 30–40 minutes
 - controversial issues: 10–15 minutes
 - general implications: 10–15 minutes
- you need not talk for 90 minutes (you'd better not)
 → it is usually sufficient if your presentation lasts 45 minutes and the rest is devoted to discussion

4 Handout (if you use slides: print them out!)

- name of the university, department, name of the course, date, your name, your e-mail address
- font size should not be too small, e.g. 12 point Times
- page numbers!
- things that belong together should not be spread over several pages
- examples: original and glosses must be lined up (tabs/Latex)
- examples should be glossed according to the Leipzig glossing rules, cf. <http://www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/pdf/LGR08.02.05.pdf>
- If you can't find answers to your questions, ask the instructor for help → make an appointment
- you are expected to provide the copies and send a pdf-version to me