

Podcasts instead of Papers

For my classes you are welcome to create a video presentation or podcast; for some there is a need to create a video of a performance.

These podcasts and presentations will be appended to the website of the corresponding seminar together with the youtube link and any materials you have to or may want to include (see below).

In the following here are a few pointers about how to do this.

- [Definition of a podcast](#)
- [To start with](#)
- [Animation](#)
- [Narration](#)
- [References and quotes](#),
- [Upload](#)

What we mean by a Podcast

A podcast is essentially a presentation consisting of material and ideas presented, normally in the form of slides, and an oral commentary, both combined into a video file. They may include the presenter as a picture in the picture or only her/his voice.

In terms of length, they would correspond to the content of a normal seminar paper, which would work out at anything from 20 minutes to three quarters of an hour, depending on the material and speed at which it is presented.

However, length is not the primary consideration, the roundedness of the material presented is. Similarly, if a presentation is done very skilfully and using rather complex animation techniques, but results in a podcast that makes a relatively complex issue very clear in five or ten minutes, this may be acceptable too. The central question is, what content do I want to communicate and have I done so as effectively as possible. As the content will need to be discussed with and OKed by the instructor (i.e. me), the length follows from this...

To start with

Do the research. This sounds like a simplistic thing to say, but there are many temptations to focus mainly on form and appearance, which *is* part of an effective podcast, but like in most action movies, the “story” matters.

Before you start your podcast work, you will need to have all the things in place that you would need for a paper, i.e.

- a clearly defined, manageable topic
- the required background reading and references
- an argument or a clearly formulated “Take-Home” message for the viewer
- a convincing structure of points to support your argument or to elaborate that take-home message
- a lucid and compelling development of ideas in each section and on each slide

- the various points need to be clinched and connected with the argument or the take-home message, and/or linked to other aspects discussed in your work
- a conclusion that ensures there are no “so-what” questions
- a list of sources at the end, i.e. a reference section

If this sounds like Writing Skills, it is because the same rules apply! This is also true for using other scholars’ materials. Plagiarism needs to be avoided here as in any paper or presentation.

Using animation

In order for a presentation video to be effective you may want to use animations. If you do, use them not as gimmicks but didactically, i.e. to make something you want to demonstrate clearer. There is as little point in having crazy backgrounds, which ruin readability, as there is no sense in text to do fancy loops or perform silly blinking actions.

An introductory primer that shows you how it is done can be watched [here](#), but there are many other suggestions and helpful pages if you google “animating slides in powerpoint”. Another good resource for information is this [website](#).

Narration/Commentary

The necessity of a script

As the subtitle says, you need one. It must include the elements you refer to on the screen, but it also is necessary to have clear formulations of your ideas.

The important insight is that language designed for hearing is different from language intended to be read. In a written text the readers can determine their own speed and they can go back to the beginning of a sentence. In an oral narration the speed is given by the speaker, and what has been said is past and irretrievably so. This means that a script for oral presentation must be simpler in syntax and more carefully structured rhetorically. This [webpdf](#), even if it is not brandnew and a little longwinded, presents some very good insights into the differences and what we need to be aware of.

What to keep in mind

In practice this means

- ideally avoid more than one subordinate or embedded clause per main clause, otherwise prefer coordination to subordination and embedding.
- relative clauses are not too difficult to follow but, again, do not use several in one sentence and avoid recursivity of relative clauses (multiple embeddings).
- generally avoid the overuse of passives; speech perception is easier if the subject of the sentence is the *theme*.
- Take your time, speak relatively slowly and enunciate clearly.
- Explain complicated or specialist concepts, as an apposition or a relative clause.

and most of all:

- your recorded voice will sound strange to you (unless you are used to hearing it), but to your listeners this is your perfectly normal voice.

The basic narration

Podcasts are usually commented (or “narrated”) Powerpoint presentations. How to do such a presentation is documented in some detail [here](#).

Editing a narration

The problem is that this means you need to be able to do the narration pretty much in one go, which is not a problem if you have scripted the entire text (not a bad idea, actually, but not always feasible). However, if there are things in your narration that you are unhappy with, you may want to edit your narration. This [website](#) tells you how. You will need a sound editor for this. A very good free software is [Audacity](#).

References and quotes

Generally these work the same way as they would in a paper. When a quote appears on a slide, attribute it as you would in other written formats.

If you refer to, quote from or summarise somebody else’s work or ideas in your narration, make sure to include with the name(s) of the author(s) and as much information as you can accommodate in your spoken commentary. At the same time create a list of such references (as if you would compile endnotes with bibliographical information, something we don’t do normally) listing them in the sequence in which they appear in your podcast. This list should be sent to me as a PDF.

You also need a list of references as you would have them at the end of a paper to be included on the last slide(s) of your presentation. This can also be sent to me as a PDF.

Any materials that you do not include in your podcast, such as the PDFs mentioned, will be included on a link

Upload of videos and podcasts

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- Sign into Youtube
- Name: V.R. Linguists.
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For the seminar website, email me the youtube link and whatever PDFs you want included as well as the bibliography and list of quotes as outlined above.