



研究成果を英語で伝えるスキルに磨きをかけたい皆さんへ：このシリーズでは、東京大学のウッドワード先生が、あなたの今の英語能力を使って成果をより効果的に上手に伝えるためのアイデア、作戦、ヒントを紹介します。また、日本語でのプレゼンにも役立つ多くのアイデアも見つかるでしょう。

## By Invitation of the Editor-in-Chief

# English Scientific Communication Part 12—In conclusion

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Over the course of the last year, this series of articles has tried to describe practical ideas and approaches for improving the quality of scientific presentations delivered in English. Naturally, some of the information has been focused on the particular challenges faced by Japanese scientists in communicating effectively in English, but many of the ideas discussed have been based on general good practice for effective communication and would work effectively in any language. The articles have focused on key concepts and methods as opposed to learning specific phrases or patterns by rote. Like all skills, learning the basics, fitting them to your personal requirements and then practicing hard and learning by experience are the most important things that can be done. In this, the last article, I will present some final tips and tricks, along with some concluding thoughts.

### Make it beautiful

With scientific presentations, sometimes the goal is to convince the audience of something—for example that your explanation for the observed results is correct. One thing that you can do to make the audience find what you are saying more trustworthy, is to make your presentation slides beautiful!

Due to the huge importance of online businesses nowadays, there has been much research conducted into what factors are important for websites to be perceived as trustworthy. It is generally accepted that the visual design of a web-

site (how nice it looks) is very important in establishing customer confidence and building a sense of trust. For example, a paper by Lindgaard *et al.* (G. Lindgaard, G. Fernandes, C. Dudek, J. Brown, *Behav. Inf. Technol.* **2006**, *25*, 115), asserts that the main impression of a website is formed within the first 50 milliseconds of seeing it! People like attractive things and you can take this idea and apply it to your own presentation slides. Spend a bit longer and work a bit harder to make each one of your slides beautiful, by considering the colour, images and layout carefully. If your slides look beautiful, your audience are more likely to trust you and are therefore more likely to be convinced by what you say.

In a previous article, we discussed the importance of knowing how to use your presentation software properly. This idea extends to being able to manipulate images properly. It is worthwhile investing a little time in learning how to deal properly with visual aspects such as cropping, rotation, transparency and borders. By knowing how to use these tools, it becomes easy to create simple yet beautiful graphics for your slides and to tailor images for your particular purpose. Roughly copy and pasted images can look terrible in slides and give an impression of lack of care or effort, reducing the confidence of the audience.

Donald Norman, author of the book, “Emotional Design: Why We Love (or Hate) Everyday Things,” suggests that

looking at beautiful things causes us to relax and in doing so, we become more open and accepting. Therefore, if you’re really aiming to deliver the best possible presentation, focusing on the aesthetics of your slides can bring genuine rewards.

### Entertain your audience

Presentations at scientific meetings are slightly strange things. If I wanted to find out about the work of another scientist and to understand what he or she was doing, the simplest thing would be for me to read his or her publications. However, the scientific community is constructed around conferences, meetings and symposia where scientists stand and talk to audiences about the work they have done *in person*. Why? Is it just a good excuse for scientists to travel around the world and hang out with their friends and colleagues? If not, the implication is that there is more to an oral presentation than just the transfer of information. In terms of sharing detailed technical information, the written word is more effective, so what makes oral presentations so popular? Some would argue that it is the Q&A session that follows presentations that make them important, but almost every conference I have ever been to has had only a tiny proportion of the total presentation time set aside for questions. Presentations are often about grabbing people’s attention—making your own work stand out from the vast number of other studies. A good presentation can do these things—it can make you be re-

membered. When considered in this way, it is useful to see a presentation as a performance. In the presentation, the content is important, but the presenter is also important. While you are in front of the audience, you need to interest and even entertain them.

The best presenters are good storytellers—they understand the need for a narrative and they can use it to focus the attention of the audience on important things. With access to computers and presentation slides, it is very easy to almost entirely remove the presenter from the occasion and indeed I have been to very many presentations where the entire focus is on the presentation slides. It is easy to sit through the entire presentation without once looking at the presenter! If you want to be noticed, this is probably a mistake and so as your confidence and presenting skills grow, take the opportunity sometimes to focus the audience's attention on you. If you make yourself memorable during the presentation, other scientists are more likely to come and introduce themselves or comment on your presentation during networking sessions. In addition, you can use a shift of focus from projector screen to yourself as a way to break up your presentation, or reawaken your audience. For example, at the end of one section of your talk, try inserting a completely blank slide to make the audience look at you and then provide a short summary of the key points from that section followed by a clear piece of signposting to start the next section before moving back to content based slides.

Placing the attention on yourself and being a performer are difficult, particularly when presenting in a different language, so don't try to do this until you have gained some confidence presenting in English. As your skills grow and your confidence increases, you can gradually shift from always having your audience focus on your slides, to creating an interesting performance by dynamic shifts from projected material to yourself, where your facial expressions and gestures can be used to engage the audience in a human-to-human way. The

result is a more, balanced and enjoyable presentation. Even as a beginner, however, try to create an opportunity to let the audience see you smile!

### P is for Presentation

We have finally reached the end of the last article and have covered a lot of material over the last twelve months. Sadly, it appears that it is not possible to write down a simple, magic formula for the ideal presentation. Rather, it takes considerable thought, insight, organization and hard work to put together a good one and to grow and develop the requisite skills. However, we have also seen that by focusing our attention on what is important, it is possible to make rapid improvements in our presentations, which can allow us to build confidence, leading to a virtuous circle of improvement. In this respect, the story is never finished and there is always the possibility to become an even better presenter. I believe that my own presentations have improved even in the last year or so and will continue to do so, particularly as I learn to follow my own advice! Not every idea I have discussed here will suit you personally. You need to find the approach that fits best with your particular character and style. You should, however, feel free to experiment a little as your confidence grows and you may find that your own approach changes quite considerably over time.

The key ideas, though, are true for all presenters and presentations, so let me try to provide a brief summary:

Short term goals for an effective next presentation:

- 1) **Planning**
  - a. Thinking about your audience
  - b. Identifying what you want the presentation to achieve
  - c. Deciding on the core message(s) of your presentation
- 2) **Preparation**
  - a. Constructing the story for your presentation.
  - b. Producing effective visual materials.
  - c. Being ready in advance (technical aspects checked, introductory sen-

tences memorized, pre-presentation trip to the bathroom, etc.).

- 3) **Performance**
  - a. Non-verbal communication (gestures, expressions, use of voice).
  - b. Engaging the audience (pacing, repetition, signposting, hooks).
  - c. Dealing with questions effectively.

Long term goals to become a better presenter

- 1) **Practice**
  - by yourself with a mirror or a smartphone video camera.
  - in front of friends and colleagues.
  - by watching other presenters and critically assessing their performances.
- 2) **Persistence**
  - Not being discouraged by a poor presentation (they can happen anytime, particularly if something unexpected goes wrong).
  - Taking every opportunity to present that you can. All the necessary skills can be learned and improved on.
  - Reflecting on your own performances, being honest about what was good and what was not, and identifying how to improve next time.
- 3) **Patience**
  - Your English language skills will improve!
  - Nobody is a good presenter to begin with.
  - Many improvements are gradual but over time they become very substantial.

So the secret to presenting is the letter P! Follow the three Ps in the short and long term and your presentations will improve significantly.

I sincerely hope that you have enjoyed reading these articles as much as I have enjoyed writing them and that whether you are a true novice presenter or an experienced speaker, they have given you the opportunity to think a little differently about the challenges of communicating science in English. I wish you every success as you construct engaging slides and stride confidently onto the stage...