How (not) to give a talk

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IGERT TalkShop

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3 TOP POINTS

- KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE
- BE ENTHUSIASTIC
- BE PREPARED

Start with a joke or story

- Why this was a great way to introduce a talk:

- The audience was the psychology department at the University of Pennsylvania, founded by Ben Franklin

- Speaker's next line:

- While this quote is ripe for many great political and historical discussions, what I will focus on is something brand new:

- Pause

- Why did Franklin say 'the sun and the moon' instead of 'the moon and the sun'. **Why does the sun always come first? More broadly, What does this phrasing tell us about how humans view concepts?**

- Lead in to a talk about prototypes

- (Speaker got a job offer)

So the introductory story . . .

- Funny, cute

- Situationally RELEVANT

- Enable a smooth and speedy transition to the topic of YOUR TALK

The next slides should ask some questions . . .

Do children with ASD manifest some language learning biases?

- Assessed via word learning

- Noun bias
  - For TD children, most early words are refer to *objects*

- Shape bias
  - For TD children, object words capture the dimension of *shape* over color or texture

- Syntactic Bootstrapping
  - For TD children, the sentence in which a verb is used is informative about that verb's meaning

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OUT OF ORDER

Outline

- Major Questions

- Overview of Method

- Findings thus far

- Discussions interspersed

Super-Question

- **How are the *processes* of language development by children with autism *similar to/different from* those of typically developing children?**
- Why possibly different?
  - ASD children begin language development later than TD children
  - ASD children get explicit instruction in language, unlike TD children
- Why possibly similar?
  - Many ASD children show little cognitive impairment
  - Some ASD children make great progress in language development

Major (manageable) Questions

- Does comprehension of language precede language production in ASD?

- Do children with ASD manifest some of the biases/principles of language learning?

- What aspects of early ability predict later progress/outcome?

- Does maternal input influence the pace of language development, and/or its outcome?

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BETTER ORDER

So, Organize!

- Provide an outline

- Provide big-picture questions—why we should care about this topic

- *Then* get to the more specific questions

More about content

Big picture: The talk itself

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This is way too much content for one talk

Better . . .

- **How are the *processes* of language development by children with autism *similar to/different from* those of typically developing children?**

- **Do children with ASD manifest some of the biases/principles of language learning?**

- **1-2 questions per talk**

More about content

- More detail: the slides

Marcus' problems with such noisy feedback

- How big a difference is 34% vs. 14%?
  - Out of 100 utterances, 10 are IF and 90 are WF
  - So, 4 IF utts. and 12 WF utts. will get feedback!
  - What if child thinks the WF utts. have problems??
- How does child learn the 34 vs. 14 contrast?
  - How does child figure out that recasts and expansions mean "change your grammar" while corrections & repetitions mean "stay the course"?
  - Also, the percentages may be different for different dyads—Bohannon's numbers were pooled, but each child only gets feedback from own parents!
- Parents don't provide feedback equally
  - Past tense and missing "is/was" errors recasted more than question errors (*What you do want/What do you want*)
  - So how learn to fix the question formation errors?
- Most adults don't PLAN to recast/correct. They like to REPEAT what kids say (in our culture), and they usually won't repeat errors! So by default, their repetitions of IF sentences are recasts while their repetitions of WF sentences are exact repeats. They aren't trying to give feedback, per se. So why should the kids view these repetitions as feedback for their previous utterances? Why not as POSITIVE evidence????

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THIS IS A HORRIBLE SLIDE

Better . . .

- What's noisy feedback?
  - Child says "Me wuvs you" 10 times
  - Correction rate of 34% = 4 corrections
  - Child says "I love you" 90 times
  - 'Correction'/Feedback rate of 14% = 10 corrections

- CHILD IS CORRECTED MORE (given more feedback)FOR **GRAMMATICAL** SENTENCES THAN FOR **UNGRAMMATICAL** ONES!

Give Concrete Examples

- On the slide

- Using props

- Using video or audio

Another bit about content

- KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE
- Provide relevant background
- For PSYC & SLHS:
  - Describe populations and methods IN DETAIL
- For LING:
  - Describe theoretical concepts IN DETAIL
- For ALL:
  - Adjust descriptions of results to the expectations of the talk/audience
  - RECOGNIZE and AVOID JARGON

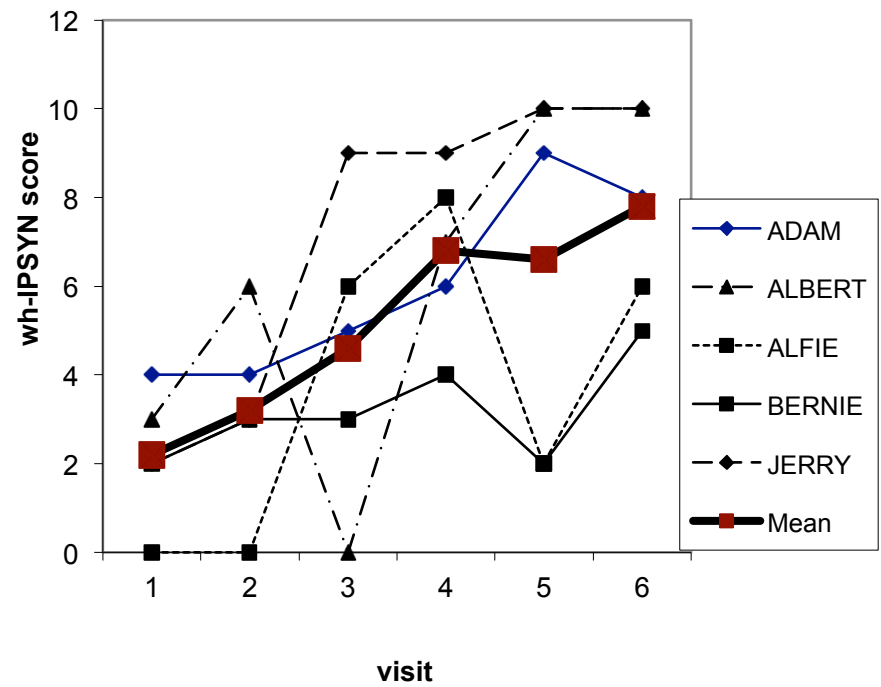# Yet another bit about content

- Verbal vs. graphical/pictorial content?
- Depends on the audience
- Depends on your skill with graphics/animation
- Depends on the content
  - Data are usually best presented in graphics
  - Methods are frequently well presented in graphics
  - For Intro, conceptual background: DEPENDS!

If you do use graphs . . .
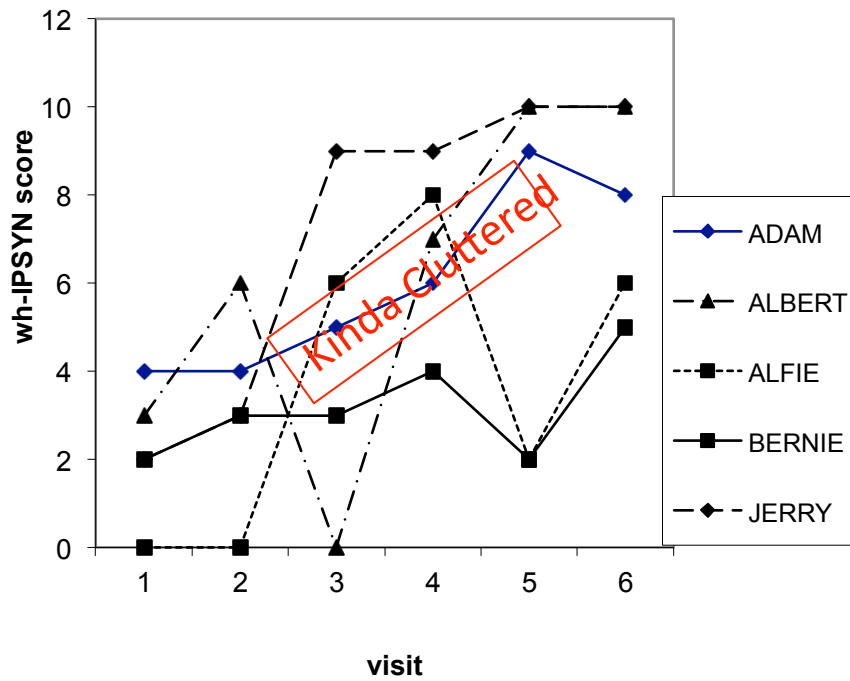
Stylistic tips

- Vary the pace of the talk
  - Distribute video/audio/examples throughout
  - Alternate between the general and specific
- Repeat yourself more than you think you need to
- Talk more slowly than you think you need to

BE ENTHUSIASTIC!

(But not TOO enthusiastic)

Some 'don't's

- DON'T be ARROGANT
  - A more knowledgeable person just might be in the audience
- DON'T be DEFENSIVE
  - You are probably wrong, but then so is everyone else
- DON'T be APOLOGETIC
  - You have done some cool work and we really want to hear about it!

Summary

- Start with a joke or story
- Organize, put an outline first
- Don't put too much into one talk
- Use concrete examples from multiple media
- Make sure your slides are not cluttered
- Know your audience!
- Vary the pace of the talk
- Talk slowly and repeat yourself
- Be enthusiastic
- Don't be arrogant, defensive or apologetic
- Be prepared

Questions?

Acknowledgements

- Usually here, sometimes put in the beginning
- Grant funding
- Advisor/committee
- Others who have contributed
- Participants!