

# K.I.S.S.

Applying the  
K.I.S.S. Principle  
to Advanced Business English  
in Higher Education

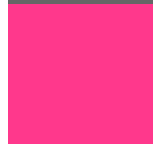
Rachel Lindner  
University of Paderborn



# The teaching context



Paderborn University: <http://www.uni-paderborn.de/>



# The principle of K.I.S.S.



Kelly Johnson

Lockwood Skunk Works

<http://www.wvi.com/~sr71webmaster/kelly.htm>

- Keep it Simple, Stupid!
- Keep it Short and Simple!



# The principle of K.I.S.S.



*‘Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication.’*

Leonardo da Vinci

Google images



# The principle of K.I.S.S.

*Le Petit Prince*

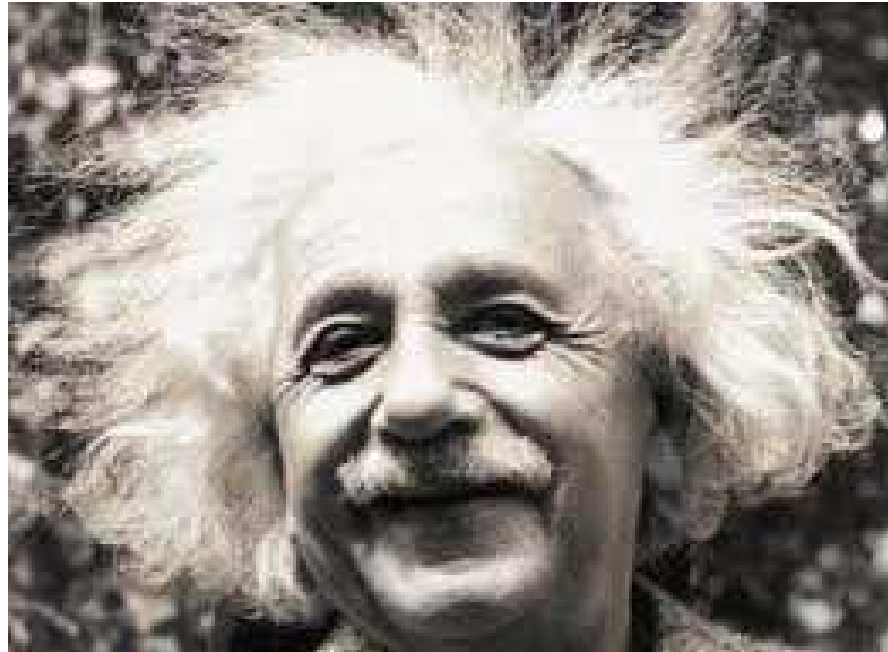


*'It seems that perfection is reached not when there is nothing left to add, but when there is nothing left to take away.'*

Antoine de Saint Exupéry



# The principle of K.I.S.S.



*'Everything should be made as simple as possible, but no simpler.'*

Albert Einstein



# Brevity

‘The concise and exact use of words when speaking and writing.’

*Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*



# Brevity

‘The concise and exact use of words when speaking and writing.’

*Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*

‘The report is a masterpiece of brevity.’

‘It is far better to write a well-structured paper marked by brevity than to compose a long but poorly constructed piece.’

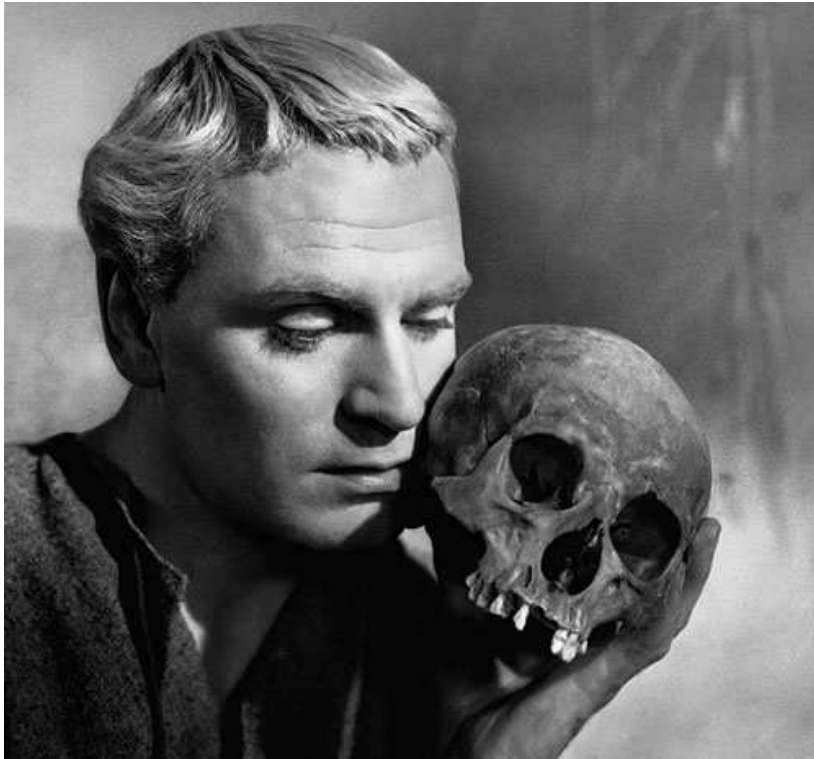
‘When it comes to giving a well-constructed speech or sermon, brevity is often the order of the day.’

‘Newspapers often edit letters to the editor for clarity and brevity.’





# Brevity



*'Brevity is the soul of wit'*  
Hamlet, Act 2, Scene 2



# Brevity



*'He that uses many words for explaining a subject, doth, like the cuttlefish, hide himself for the most part in his own ink.'*

John Ray, 1692



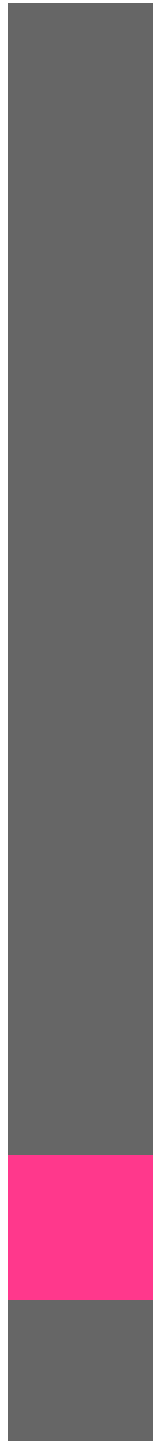
# Situated professional English

- First impressions (rapport building, small talk, interviews etc.)
- Briefing
- Pitching
- Marketing message
- Executive summaries
- Internet presence
- Correspondence



# What skills does brevity require?

- Ability to reformulate, paraphrase, summarise etc.
- Precision of language
- Clarity of language
- Ability to distil the main message to its essence
- Ability to select essential information
- Editing skills
- Focussing in rather than out



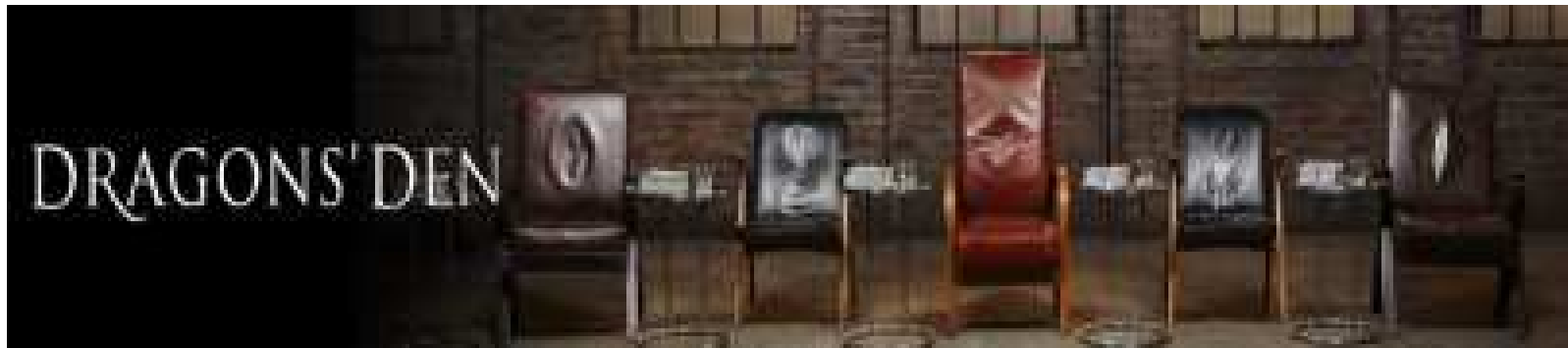
# Task types



## Elevator pitch

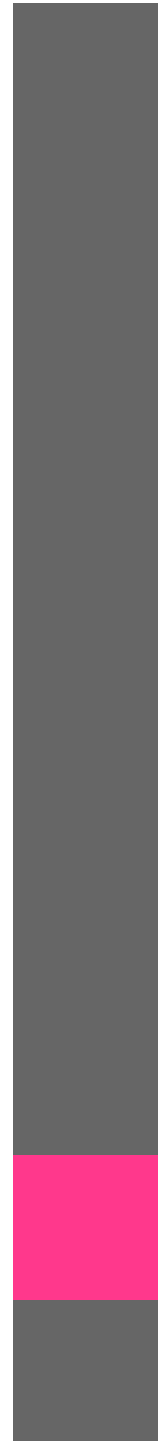
- Sell a product, an idea, market yourself for a job in as long as it takes for the elevator to get to the top floor

# Task types



## Dragon's Den

Convince a team of investors (the other students) to invest money in their business model. **5 minutes with props.**



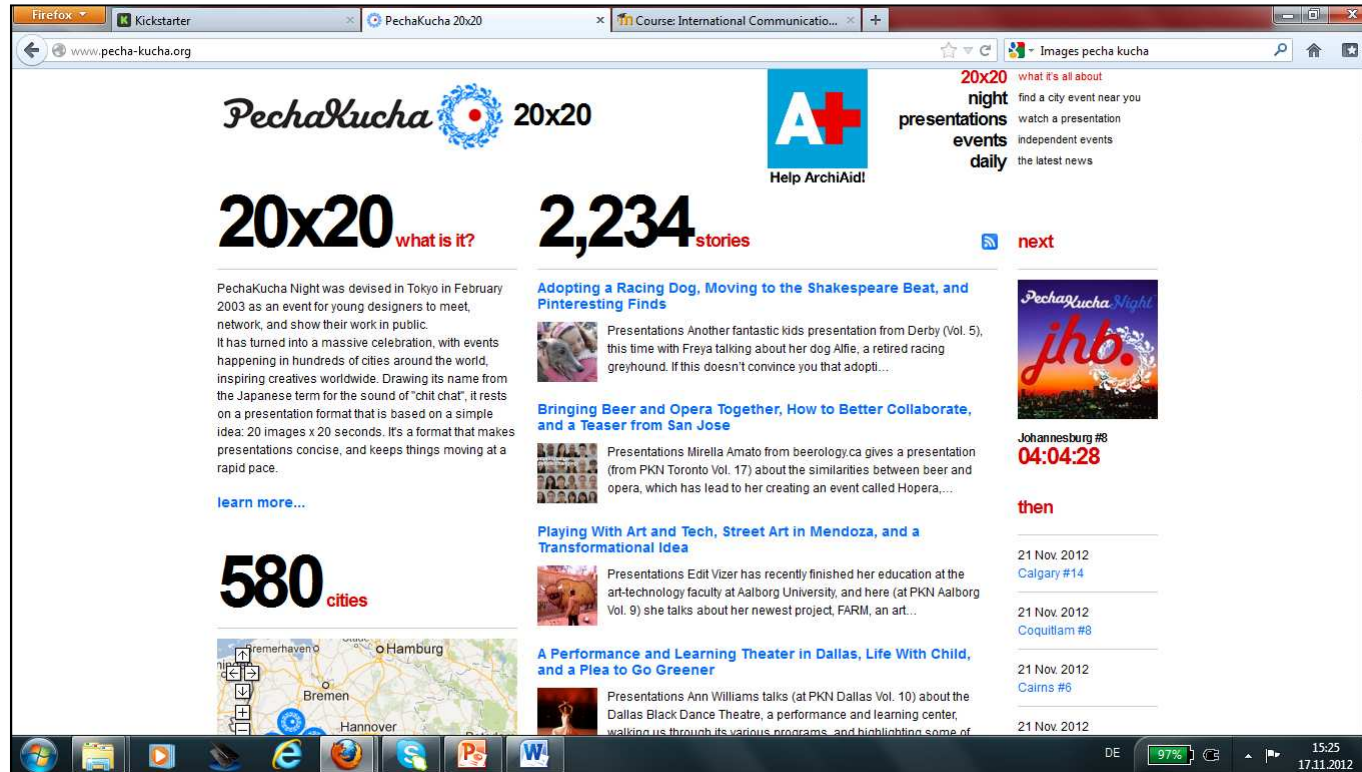
# Task types



## Crowd funding

People looking for investment have to convince potential private investors with the help of a **3-minute video** to invest in their product.

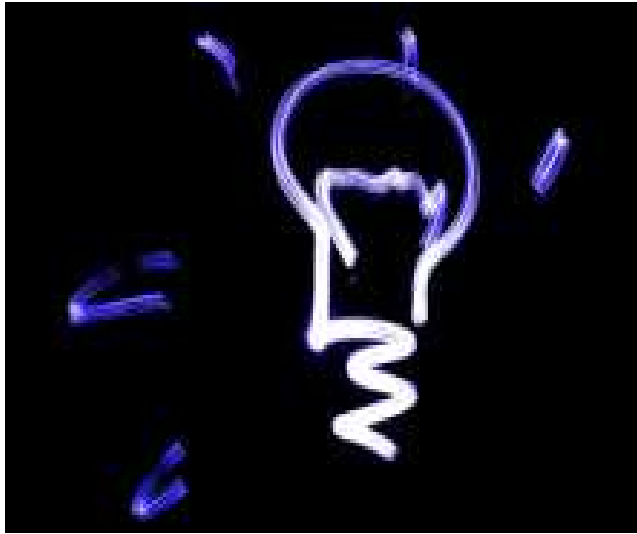
# Task types



**Pecha Kucha: 20 Powerpoint slides at 20 seconds per slide rolling on automatic so students have to be time perfect. 6 minutes 40 seconds.**



# Task types

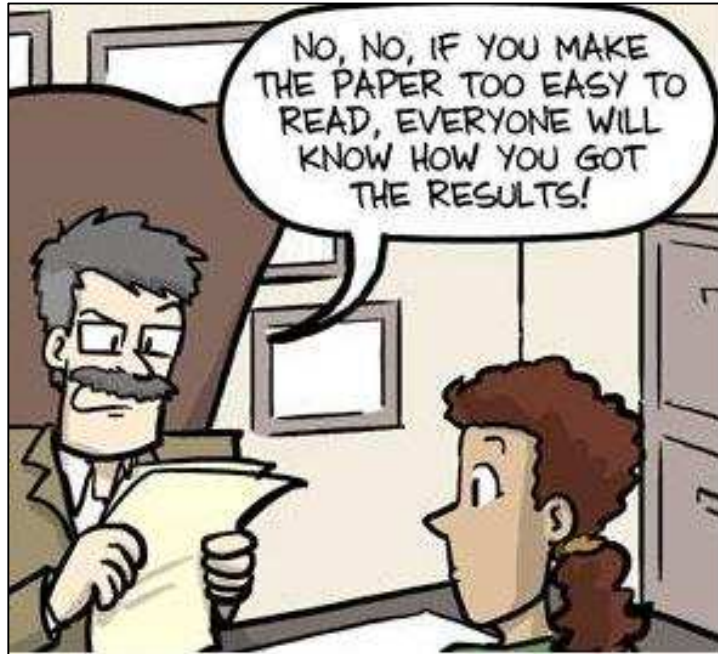


## Science slam

- Present your research in 5 minutes
- 4 slides only!



# Task types



## Writing abstracts

The skills of reducing your research transparently in 180 words.

*See Swales and Feak, 2009*

**Research exposés.** A 400-word document describing your research motivation and intentions.  
**Article reviews.** A 300-word review of an academic paper

# Task types



twitter

Online writing with word limits



# Key characteristics of brevity activities

## Scaffolding



## Word counts

Every  
Word  
Counts!

## Time limits



# Student responses to tasks

- ‘Having to present complicated themes within a few minutes was a **challenging task** and it helped to improve my **time management**.’
- ‘Students often include too many facts for brief summaries. **During my army time I learned that you often do not have much time to make a decision or to give an order, especially in critical situations. I expect this to be rather similar in a business context** and I think working to time and word limits should be done more often for this reason.’
- ‘Even though I consider myself to have good skills, I almost find it **more difficult to write short texts like abstracts than longer papers**. It was really important for me to practise editing for smaller word counts.’
- ‘I think through these shorter presentations it was **easier for me to reflect and to work on improving my skills** in a following presentation.’

