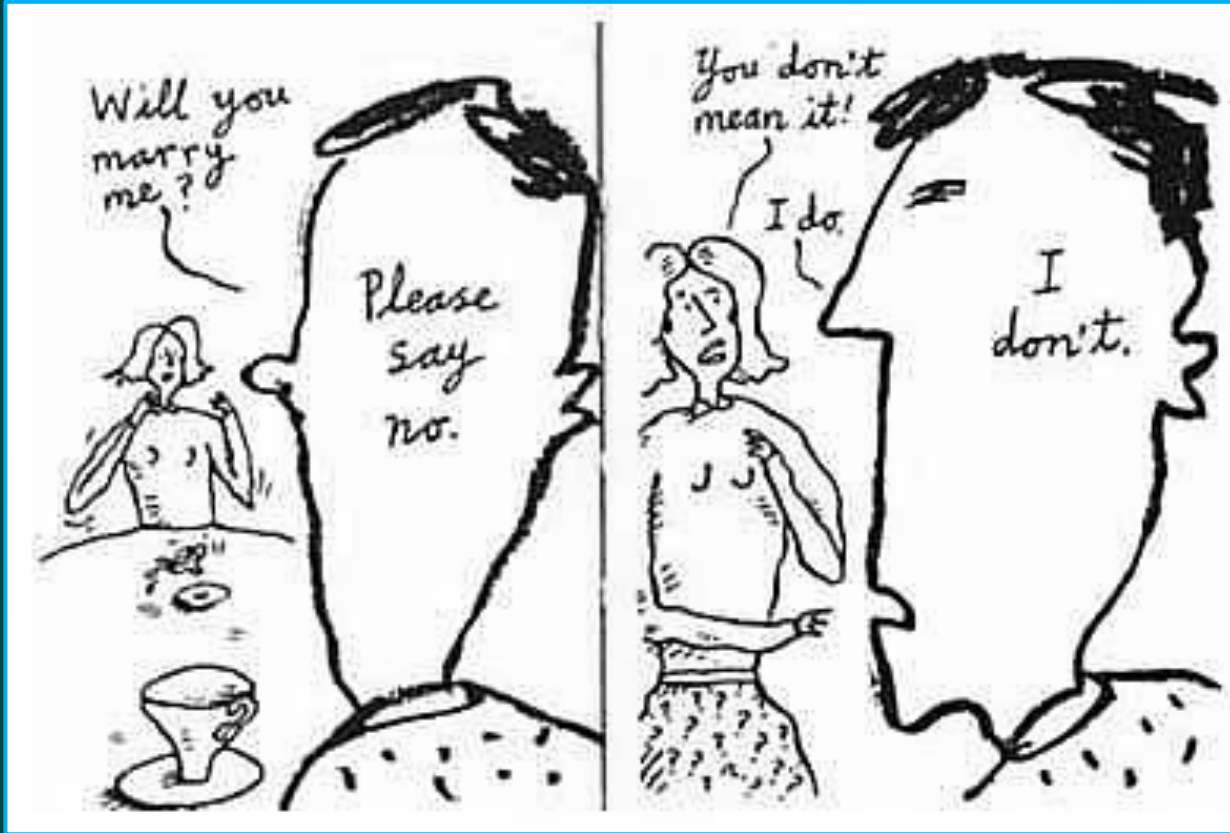




# READING, WRITING & SPEAKING

- Being aware of the nature & purpose of your communication
- The importance of accuracy

# ACADEMIC ACTIVITY: WHAT IS EXPECTED:

- **Lecture** (monologue, with audience as active listeners)
- **Seminar/Workshop** (prepared discussion --- dialogue, conversation)
- **Presentation** (usually as part of seminar) (monologue, with active listeners, then participants)
- **Tutorial/Supervision** (one to one/ small group version of above)

# KEY SKILLS:

- **openness** to the position of others [mutual respect!]
- **participation** (never attend a formal discussion situation without having examined primary material, responded to tutor directives, and made some notes); clarity, relevance, concision, confidence.
- good **listening skills** (it is not uncommon in a seminar to sit at the back and stare out of the window. Ask yourself why you are doing this)
- **reasoned argument** (although the delivery might be different the process is similar to what makes a good written argument, though obviously outside of the formal presentation it might be largely unscripted, though it should rely on evidence --- see preparation above.
- **ask good questions**; listen to the answers! Respond! [In practice the role of interlocutor and claimant should shift around during discussion. A seminar should never be an impromptu lecture by a tutor!]

# LISTENING

- **Back channelling:** but not at the expense of actually listening; visual cues
- **Intervention:** 'So what you saying is ...?' [*Intervention should facilitate and not obscure!*]
- Remember the difference between **open and closed questions:**
  - *That was a good film wasn't it?*
  - *What do you think worked well in that particular film?*

# DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN CONVERSATION, ARGUMENT & DISCUSSION

The function of conversation is ...

The function of argument is ...

The function of discussion is ...

THIS HELPS YOU BE  
CLEAR ABOUT THE  
DISCOURSE YOU  
SHOULD USE

# CONVERSATION, ARGUMENT & DISCUSSION:

## DEFINING DISCOURSES

### CONVERSATION

*really, very, incredibly,  
some people say, everyone knows*

**anecdote and interpersonal connection**

WHY USE THESE IN CONVERSATION?  
WHAT IS THEIR FUNCTION?

### ARGUMENT

*x claims, y argues, z disagrees  
Thus, hence, therefore*

**seeks to establish personal conclusion**

WHY USE THESE IN ARGUMENT?  
WHAT IS THEIR FUNCTION?

### DISCUSSION

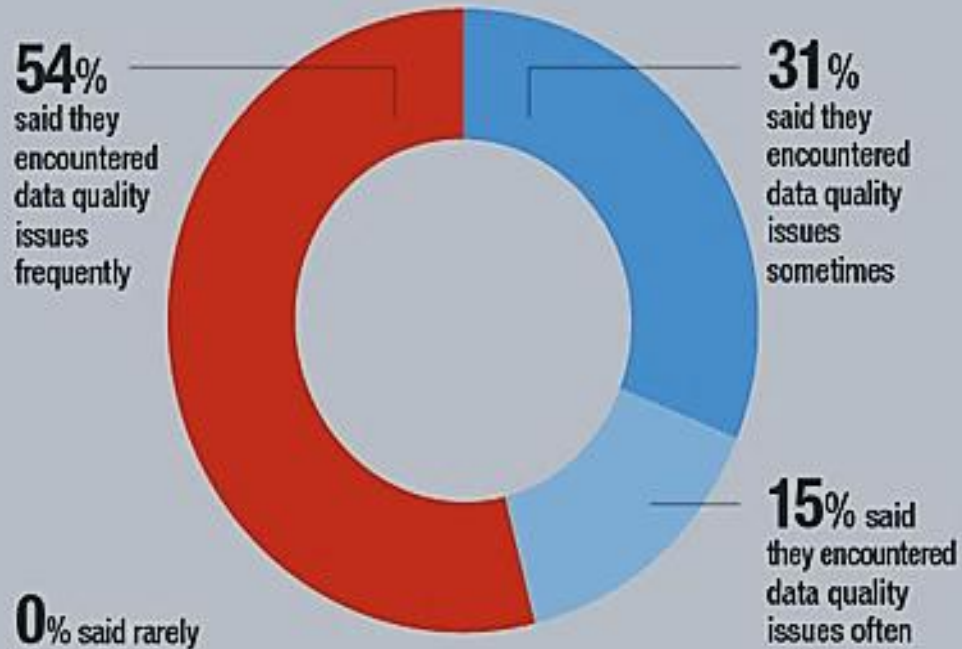
*x claims, y argues, z disagrees  
I think, this suggests, maybe,*

**collaboration/exploration of other's views**

WHY USE THESE IN DISCUSSION?  
WHAT IS THEIR FUNCTION?

# THE COST OF INACCURACY, OR, HOW NOT TO GET ON IN WORK

**How Bad Is It?** Over the past several months, *Governing* interviewed more than 75 public officials in 46 states who analyze data for a living. Each official was asked, "In your work, how often do you run into problems with data integrity, accuracy, availability or timeliness?" Fifteen percent of respondents said they were unable to generalize or couldn't answer the question. But of those who did, 69 percent said they "frequently" or "often" encounter data problems.



- is there any wonder people who don't learn to be accurate and detailed are bad at their jobs? (& waste resources)

Katherine Barrett & Richard Greene, 'The Causes, Costs and Consequences of Bad Government Data', *Governing*, June 24, 2015

<http://www.governing.com/topics/mgmt/gov-bad-data.html>



## Limit use of overly technical language, buzzwords and acronyms

- Tech Speak (defined by Edward Tenner)  
“Post colloquial discourse modulation protocol for user status enhancement. It's a referential system for functional-structural, microscopically specific macroscopic-object redesignation. It's a universal semantic transformation procedure. It's a holophrastic technocratic sociolect. It's a meta-semiotic mode for task specific nomenclature.” Get the idea?
- Buzzword  
An important-sounding word or phrase connected with a specialized field or group that is used primarily to impress laypersons: “‘Sensitivity’ is the buzzword in the beauty industry this fall.”
- Alphabet soup  
Language laced with acronyms. “An RFP was issued by DOE; ORNL responded for the ORR.”

Problem 1:  
the dead  
voice of  
bureaucracy

# USE DETAIL, BE SPECIFIC

"A previous study in this area recruited 150 subjects and found highly significant results ( $p=0.014$ ), and therefore a similar sample size should be sufficient here."

"Our lab usually uses 10 mice per group."

"Sample sizes are not provided because there is no prior information on which to base them."

"The throughput of the clinic is around 50 patients a year, of whom 10% may refuse to take part in the study. Therefore over the 2 years of the study, the sample size will be 90 patients. "

"It is estimated that for a sample size consisting of 6 animals in each trial and with a tumor volume variance from 0.1 to 1.0 cm<sup>3</sup> – that when the difference in the population reaches 0.25, the power will reach 100%."

Problem  
2:  
Vague - or  
confusing  
information



**Brian Bilston**

@brian\_bilston

*ref*



Follow

you took  
the last bus home

don't know how  
you got it through the door

you're always doing amazing stuff

like that time  
you caught a train

Plus side:  
Creative  
play with  
confusion

# THE NATURE OF CONVERSATION:

Give and take: (adjacency pairs)

Turns: claiming and suppressing

Elliptical/ abbreviated forms: context: anaphoric reference; deictic words (this that there); fillers; reinforcers ('you know what I mean?')

*A: Drink? [Would you like a drink?]*

*B: Beer? [Yes please. Could I have a pint of beer?]*

Contractions & spoken forms should not be transferred into written work:

*The scene was ... erm ... great wasn't it?*

*The scene was effective in part because of its use of ... as can be seen in ....*

*As critic X suggests...*

# WHY TALKING IS IMPORTANT:

I don't think you have to be talkative to converse, or even to have a quick mind ... What matters is whether you are willing to think for yourself and say what you think.

(Theodore Zeldin *How Talk Can Change Your Life* (Harville 1999))

# STRUCTURING AN ARGUMENT: CONSIDER THE READER

As with so many writing problems, addressing the proposition is easier if you consider the reader's perspective.

There are three aspects to this.

1. You can think of the reader as having questions in their head as they read your grant application. In the case of the importance proposition, the main question is “How important is this?”
2. The reader's definition of terms like “important” is not necessarily the same as your definition
3. The reader will want to formulate their own answer to their questions, rather than to accept your answers. They will not be impressed by an assertion that your proposed research is important, rather they will be looking for evidence.

# CONSIDER WHO YOU ARE ADDRESSING:

CSSK  
4004

Perhaps it doesn't understand English,' thought Alice; 'I daresay it's a French mouse, come over with William the Conqueror.' ... So she began again: '*Ou est ma chatte?*' which was the first sentence in her French lesson-book. The Mouse gave a sudden leap out of the water, and seemed to quiver all over with fright. 'Oh, I beg your pardon!' cried Alice hastily, afraid that she had hurt the poor animal's feelings. 'I quite forgot you didn't like cats.'

'Not like cats!' cried the Mouse, in a shrill, passionate voice. 'Would you like cats if you were me?'

'Well, perhaps not,' said Alice in a soothing tone: 'don't be angry about it. And yet I wish I could show you our cat Dinah: I think you'd take a fancy to cats if you could only see her. She is such a dear quiet thing,' Alice went on, half to herself, as she swam lazily about in the pool, 'and she sits purring so nicely by the fire, licking her paws and washing her face—and she is such a nice soft thing to nurse—and she's such a capital one for catching mice—oh, I beg your pardon!' cried Alice again, for this time the Mouse was bristling all over, and she felt certain it must be really offended.

Lewis Carrol, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

# TELL THEM; THEN CONVINCE THEM

*Posted on August 21, 2015 by Andrew*

*[When writing a grant application]* you need to be direct. Begin each paragraph with its main message. Then use the rest of the paragraph to convince them that the message is true. In the book we refer to this style as “assert-justify”. An easy way to describe assert-justify style is “Tell them; then convince them”.

As I was writing this I thought of nine reasons you should adopt “Assert-justify” style *[in research grant applications]*. The first four are concerned with meeting the needs of the reader – one of the guiding principles for writing with style. The remaining five are concerned with making the task of writing easier.

Everyday we encounter people from various social categories based on race, gender, etc. Perceiving more than one social category in a person is necessary. However, this useful social tool can lead to inaccurate perceptions. On meeting a person from a negatively stereotyped group, we may attempt to overcome this by 'inhibiting' or reducing one social category in favour of another. For example, when encountering a 'black doctor' we may seek to inhibit perceptions based on the 'black' stereotype, but elevate the 'doctor' stereotype.

One key factor that may be part of this process is 'executive resources' which deal with (in this case) incorporating new with old information. We use this process to keep up with our ever-changing social world, helping us come to terms with new stereotypes. Indeed, during the changing social climate of the nineteen-sixties, new combined stereotypes came in to being, for example 'male nurse'.

By impairing this process in perceivers, using dual task methodologies (Baddeley, 1996), this project aims to determine if executive resources really are essential when perceiving surprising social category combinations. Furthermore, this project deals with the consequences of surprising combinations and whether thinking about such combinations can offer a potential means of reducing prejudice.

This is the first thing the reader wants to know.

information  
the reader  
most wants to  
know – what  
the research  
project  
will do – Is  
buried in the

second half  
of a sentence  
in the last  
paragraph.

# GOOD & BAD CSSK 4004

## WRITING:

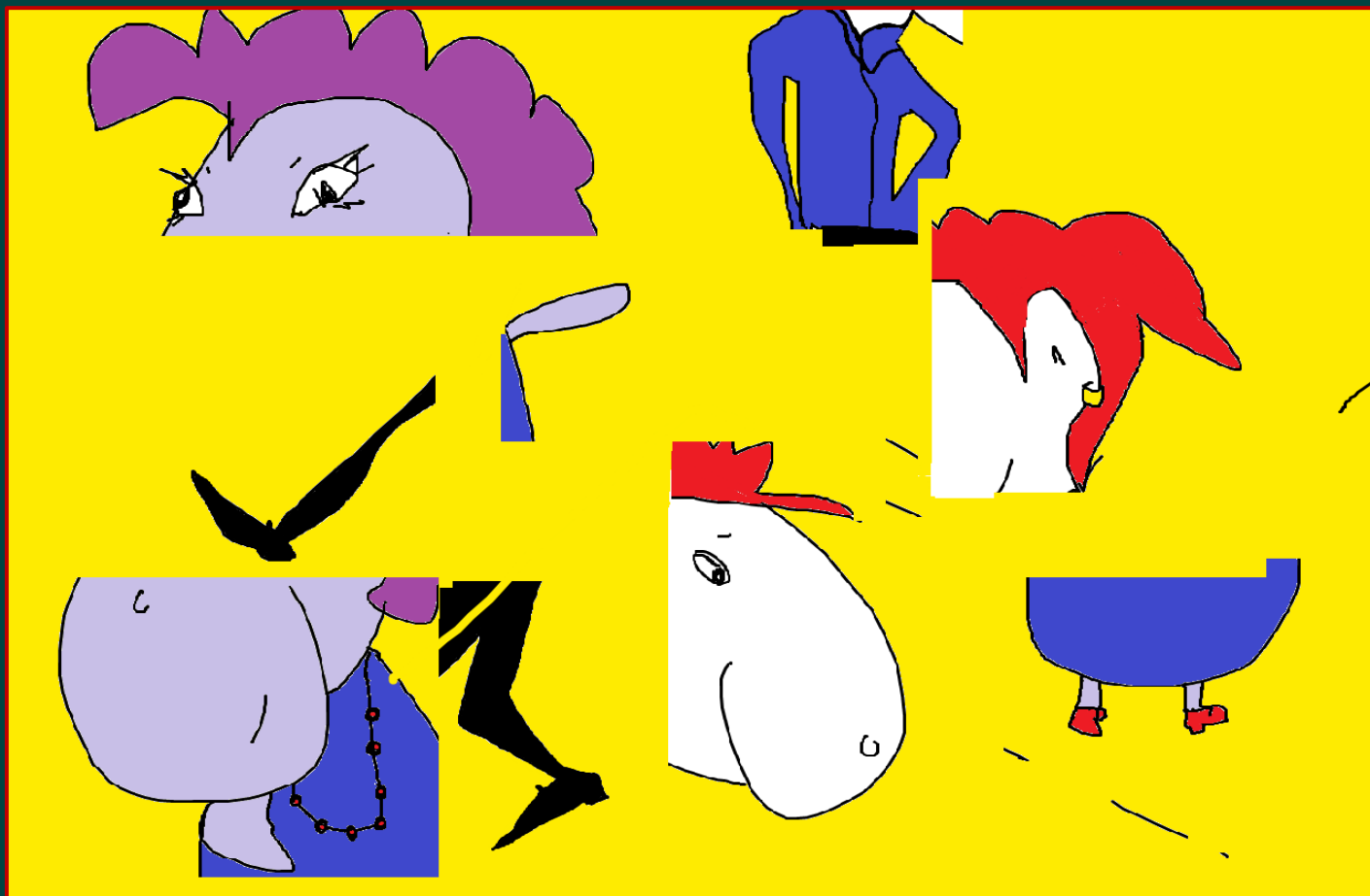
*For*

- Essays

*but also*

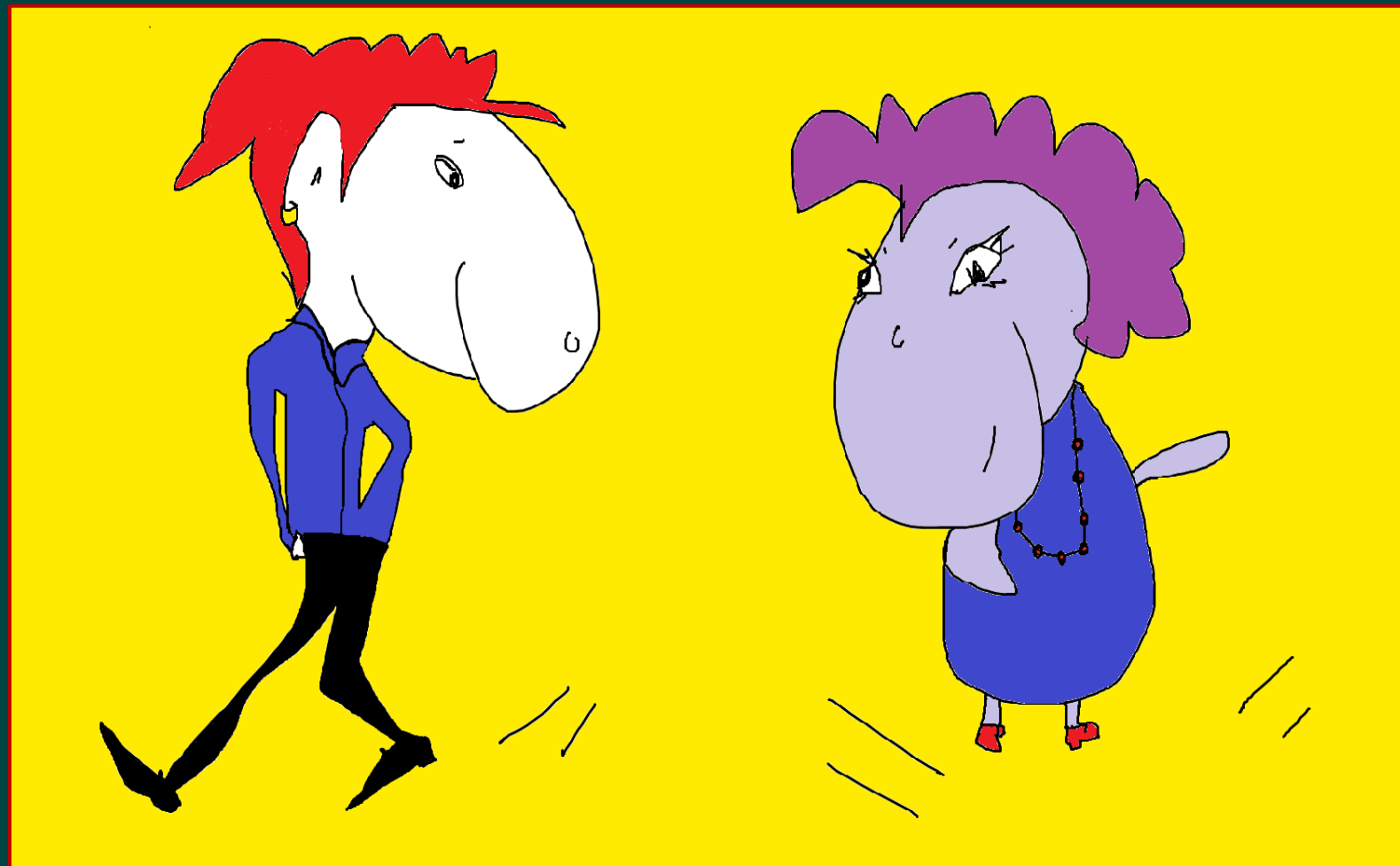
- Report
- Application
- Proposal
- Review
- Journalism
- Short story
- Critique of any kind ...

| A Good Statement...                  |   | A Bad Statement...                             |
|--------------------------------------|---|------------------------------------------------|
| Uses language your constituents use. | ↔ | Uses jargon, doesn't understand your audience. |
| Is emotionally stirring.             | ↔ | Is logical and cold.                           |
| Communicates the "why."              | ↔ | Communicates only the "what" or "how."         |
| Is concise.                          | ↔ | Is really long.                                |
| Is a single, powerful sentence.      | ↔ | Is a rambling paragraph.                       |
| Sounds good spoken out loud.         | ↔ | Is full of clauses and hard to say.            |
| Is memorable.                        | ↔ | Is forgettable.                                |
| Surprises.                           | ↔ | Is dull.                                       |
| Is actionable.                       | ↔ | Can't be quantified.                           |
| Is specific.                         | ↔ | Is vague.                                      |



ARE YOU  
PRODUCING THE  
WRITTEN  
EQUIVALENT OF  
THIS?

# What is wrong with it?



OR THIS?

Why is this better?