Dissertation Content

What goes where? Why?

You, the author, know what you mean – does the reader?

Dissertation Outline

- Abstract (max 250 words)
- Ch 1 – Introduction (10%)
- Ch 2 – Background (20%)
- Ch 3 – Prototype / Experiment (30%)
- Ch 4 – Results & Evaluation (30%)
- Ch 5 – Conclusions (10%)
- References
- Appendices

Outline - comments

- Provides a model & guesstimate
  - Planning: time and amount of text
  - Performance evaluation
- Divide and conquer approach
  - http://www.cs.kau.se/cs/education/courses/davdis/outline.pdf
- Plan the red thread
- Reading plan: abstract + Ch1 + Ch5…

Abstract

- What the project does / is about
- Motivation
- Method and what was achieved
- Summary of **main** results
- Summary of **main** conclusions

Abstract - comments

- Should summarise the whole report
  - Written last!
- Give the reader enough information to decide whether to continue or not!

Chapter 1

- This project….. (opening)
- Rational behind the project
- Project goal – **I will do X**
- A summary of the context – why do this?
- Dissertation layout

Chapter 1 - comments

- Ch1s are often too short!
- Read some examples and decide
- What is the project?
- Why is it worth doing?
- Possible expected results?
  - These can be compared in the evaluation

Chapter 2 - comments

- The "**instant expert**" chapter ☺
- What do you (the writer) assume the reader does / does not know?
- What does the reader need to know?
  - Definitions, terminology, topicality
- A reasonable set of references to pursue the topic further
- Existing systems (evaluation!)

Chapter 3 - comments

- What did you do?
- Give enough information to allow someone else to continue the project
- Stages of the project
  - Time, structure wise – organisation!
- Choices of A over B – why?
- Summary – reader cross checks

Chapter 4 - comments

- Comparison against what was planned
- Comparison against existing systems?
- Issues & problems
- Warnings / advice for future work
  - The second time round (hindsight!)
  - +ve / -ve

Chapter 5

- Project evaluation
- Project vs prototype/experiment
- What did you learn?
- What went well?
- What went less well?
- With hindsight?
- Future development?

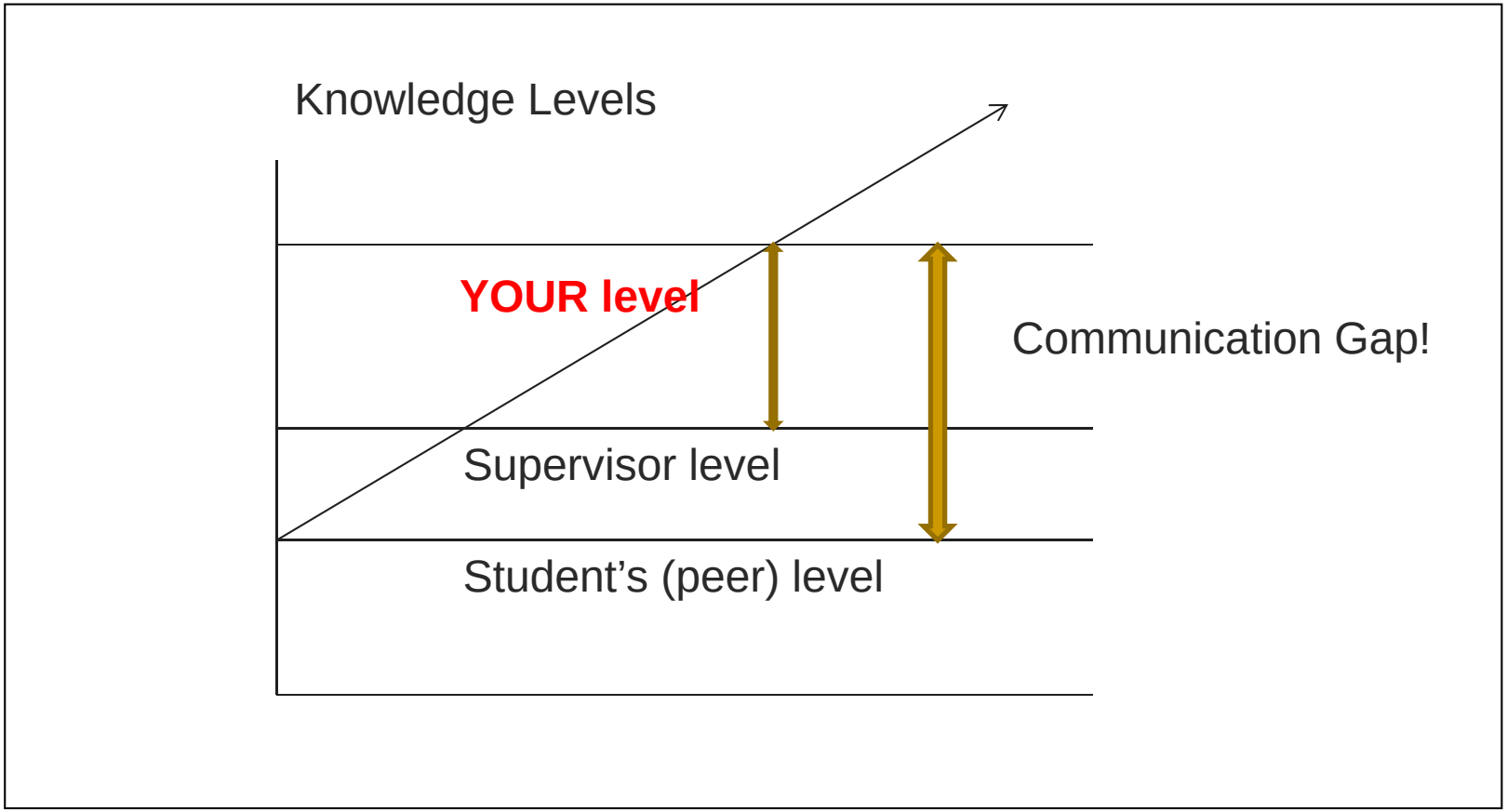
Chapter 5 - comments

- **Sometimes tends to be a summary rather than project evaluation!!!**
- Take up non-computing aspects
  - Writing a specification
  - Working in a company
  - Communication: formal / informal
- More personal comments?

Writing

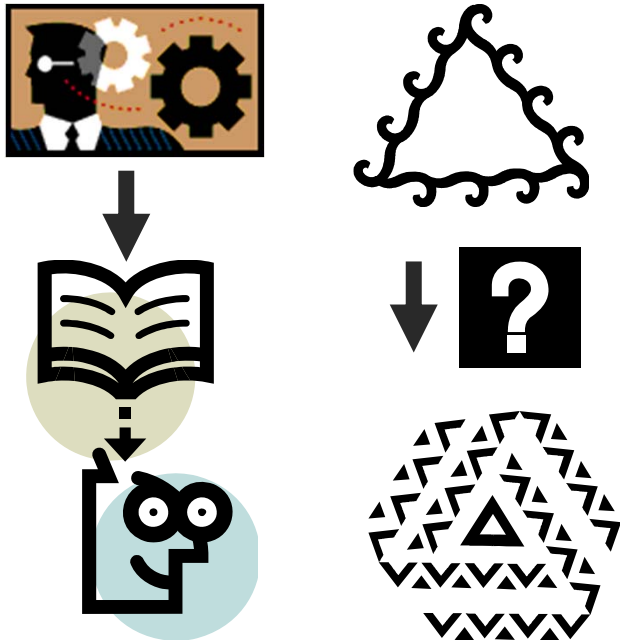
- **Reread, reread, reread!**
  - Get someone else to read and comment!
- Use a spell checker
- Write proper sentences (check)
- Edit (in your head) before you write
- Write outlines
- Decide on presentation structure!!!

Other Aspects



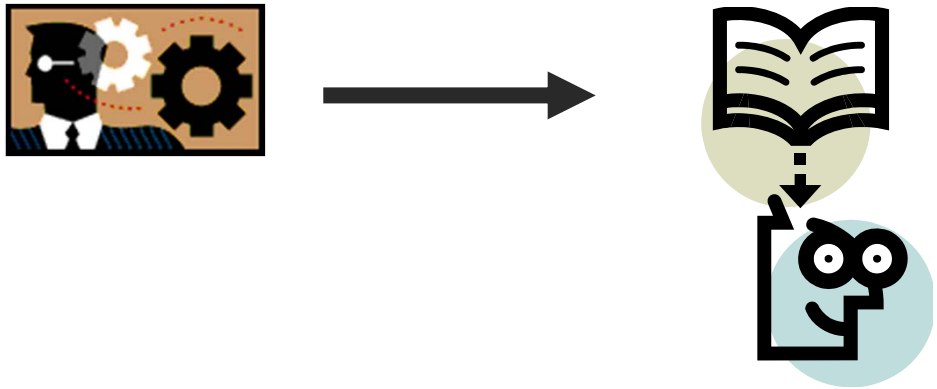
You know what you mean(t)!

- The Communication Problem!



Dissertation

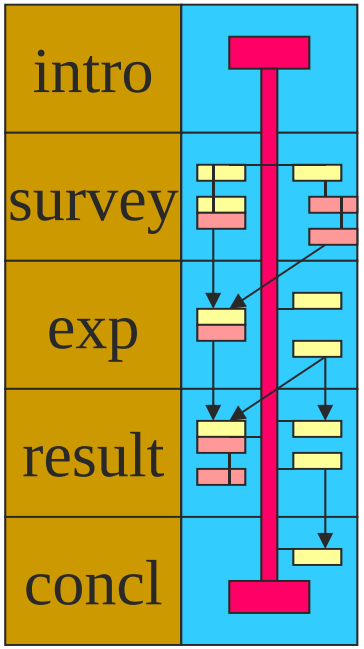
- One-way communication



- The reader needs help! Help her!

Main Points

- You know what you mean(t)
  - Knowledge gap
  - Does the reader?
- The red thread
  - Prepare the reader



Common Faults 1

- “Hemmablindhet” – the gap between your level of knowledge, (C) and the reader’s level of knowledge (A) – see the diagram above

- Not explaining terms and abbreviations. Sometimes a **list** is required to **explain** and/or **define** your terminology. You should also give references where this is helpful – even I you think that this should be obvious

Common Faults 2

- **Ungrammatical sentences** and **bad spelling** – use a spell checker!
- **Everyday language** – this is a technical report and requires a "higher" level (register) of the language in which you are writing – e.g. in English avoid abbreviations such as "don't" – use "do not" instead.
- Sentences where it is difficult to determine references to antecedents ("syftningsfel").
- Not being explicit e.g. **using pronouns instead of nouns** to make your meaning clearer – e.g. "**we chose this rather than that which made it easier to solve it!**" To what do "this", "that", "it" and "it" refer?

Solutions

- Get **someone else** to read what you have written
  - Your dissertation partner! Pair-reading!
- **Edit critically while you write** – re-read every sentence and check if the sentence express your meaning or intent clearly.
- **Re-read** what you have written **the following day** – this gives you some distance from what you have written
- Learn about "**critical reading**" and "**critical writing**"
  - http://www.cs.kau.se/cs/education/courses/davdis/Intro/Documents/critical_reading.pdf