Five Steps to Getting Abstracts Accepted:

Some strategies for Conference Abstract Writing

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What is Conference Abstract like?

Abstract (298/300 words)
In the context of L2 speaking research, listeners’ perception toward L2 speech has been extensively examined to capture meaningful constructs for oral proficiency. Motivated by this line of research, scholars have paid increasing attention to comprehensibility and perceived fluency, as both constructs are crucial in L2 communication and also attainable learning goals even for late learners (De Jong et al., 2012; Derwing & Munro, 2009; Saito, Trofimovich, & Isaacs, 2016). The investigation into complex interplays of linguistic features behind listeners’ perceptions can offer insights into which aspects of speech should be prioritized to make L2 speech perceived to be more comprehensible and/or fluent. However, the relationship between comprehensibility and perceived fluency has been surprisingly underresearched (for a rare exception see Derwing, Rossiter, Munro, & Thomson, 2004). The current study, therefore, investigates how listeners perceive comprehensibility and fluency in relation to linguistic features of speech.

The speech data were elicited from a total of 40 Japanese learners of English via an argumentative task, and then rated by 10 untrained native speakers of English in terms of comprehensibility and fluency. Due to the exploratory nature of the study, a comprehensive set of objective linguistic measures was selected based on psycholinguistic model of speech production (Kormos, 2006; Segalowitz, 2010).

The results showed that whereas comprehensibility and perceived fluency scores were highly correlated (r = .95, p < .001), raters provided significantly lower scores on fluency compared to comprehensibility. Furthermore, according to the multiple regression analyses, both comprehensibility and fluency were commonly associated with mean pause duration and morphological accuracy. However, comprehensibility was uniquely related to articulation rate and syntactic accuracy, while perceived fluency was connected with pause frequency and lexical appropriateness. The presentation will also discuss how native listeners perceive comprehensibility and fluency distinctively with reference to psycholinguistic processing of speech.

- Title (10-20 words)
- Keywords (optional)
- Summary (e.g., 50 words)
- Abstract (250-300 words; excl. references)
- Two readers:
  - Audience: Title & Summary
  - Reviewers: Main text
- If possible, ask your supervisors to share their actual abstracts.
5 Steps to Abstract Writing

1. Know about reviewer’s expectation
2. Know about your study
3. Write up your 1st draft
4. Revise the draft
5. Ask peers/supervisor for proofreading
1. Know about reviewer’s expectation

**Reviewer’s decision is made in terms of...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Rate</th>
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<tr>
<td>Appropriateness and Importance of the Topic</td>
<td>5/</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theoretical Orientation</td>
<td>5/</td>
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<td>Research Design / Conceptual Framework</td>
<td>5/</td>
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<td>Organization and Clarity</td>
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<th>Comments to the Author</th>
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**EuroSLA**
European Second Language Association

**Reviewer's Scores**

- Theoretical underpinning: 6
- Originality: 6
- Methodological rigour: 6
- Clarity: 6
- Significance: 6
- Overall impression: 6
- Reviewer confidence: 6

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*Probably, 7-point scale...?*
1. Know about reviewer’s expectation (Cont’d)

**Topic**
- How much does your research topic match the conference theme (audience)?

**Research Quality** judged through **Abstract**
- How much is your study (RQ) motivated by theories or real-world problems?
- How rigorous the design of the study is?
- How significant the results of the study is?

**Clarity**
- How clearly the abstract tells these to the reviewers?
Components of Conference Abstract

Abstract (250-300 words)
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Background of Study
- Introduction (Topic)
- Literature Review
  - What has been already known?
- Statement of Problems
  - Any gaps or inconsistency?
  - Any methodological shortcomings?
- Research Question

Let reviewers easily understand (a) what your study addresses; and (b) how important your RQ is.
Trigger Questions for Literature Review

**Theoretical issues**
- What are the existing theories?
- What are the characteristics of the key factors/variables?
  - Construct definitions and operationalizations
  - Common measurements
  - Any methodological challenge for a valid measurement? (If any, relate it to the design of your study)
- What are the relationships between the key factors/variables?
- Any moderator variables?

**Empirical evidence = Synthesis of key references**
- What has been already known in the area?
- Where are the gaps and inconsistencies across studies?
- What evidence is inconclusive/contradictory?
- What views need to be further tested?
- What existing research designs or methods seem unsatisfactory?
- What contribution is your research expected to make?
Components of Conference Abstract (Cont’d)

Abstract (298/300 words)
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Methods
• Participants
• Materials
• Procedure
• Analysis ...etc.

You might have written these in somewhere else!

Let reviewers make sure
(a) how your study addresses your RQ; &
(b) that you actually DID it (even if you WILL do later).

Reviewer’s concern: Will you surely give your talk?
Components of Conference Abstract (Cont’d)

Findings

- Results with concrete information (e.g., Statistics, Coding scheme, etc.)
- Theoretical interpretations of the results
- Contribution(s) the results would make

Consistency with “Background”

Let reviewers make sure
(a) that your study addressED RQs &
(b) how important your findings are.
→ Reviewer’s concern: Will the audience appreciate your talk?

Abstract (298/300 words)

In the context of L2 speaking research, listeners’ perception toward L2 speech has been extensively examined to capture meaningful constructs for oral proficiency. Motivated by this line of research, scholars have paid increasing attention to comprehensibility and perceived fluency, as both constructs are crucial in L2 communication and also attainable learning goals even for late learners (De Jong et al., 2012; Derwing & Munro, 2009; Saito, Trofimovich, & Isaacs, 2016). The investigation into complex interplays of linguistic features behind listeners’ perceptions can offer insights into which aspects of speech should be prioritized to make L2 speech perceived to be more comprehensible and/or fluent. However, the relationship between comprehensibility and perceived fluency has been surprisingly underresearched (for a rare exception see Derwing, Rossiter, Munro, & Thomson, 2004). The current study, therefore, investigates how listeners perceive comprehensibility and fluency in relation to linguistic features of speech.

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5. Ask peers/supervisor for proofreading
2. Know about your study

**Starting point of your research**
- Ideally, a clear rationale for your study (i.e., Statement of Problems)
- Even your anecdotes would be useful for Introduction.

**Key findings**
- Must correspond to the Results as well as RQs

**Strengths**
- Any theoretical/methodological contributions? (cf. Statement of Problems)
- Methodological advances?

**(Methodological) Weaknesses**
- Should be neutrally mentioned in the TALK
- Usually, NOT in the abstract due to the word limit.
Paper Specification Sheet for a Conference Abstract

Project:
Venue:
  - URL to the website:

What was the starting point of the study? (Statement of Problems)
  -

What findings do you want to tell the audience?
  -

Strengths of the study
1) Theoretical contributions?
  - ...
    - Note that you should be aware of (and may write in the abstract) some theoretical assumptions to extract the theoretical meanings of the findings above.
2) Methodological contributions? (e.g., any guidance to future studies)
  -
3) Methodological advance? (e.g., any innovative methods in the study?)
  -

Weaknesses (to be neutrally mentioned in the talk, but NOT in the abstract)
  -

Paper specification template:
https://shungosuzuki.files.wordpress.com/2021/03/paper_specification_conference.docx
5 Steps to Abstract Writing

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5. Ask peers/supervisor for proofreading
3. Write up 1st draft

- Brainstorming: Just list information as much as possible
  - *Without what to write, you CAN’T write.*
- Write each information in one or two sentences
- Put them in the **EXPECTED** order (cf. Components of Abstract)
- Wordcount estimates
  - Background: 100 words
  - Methods: 100 words
  - Findings: 100 words
  - BUT it depends on the strengths/highlights of your study.
4. Revise the draft

Goal: to Let reviewers understand by reading ONCE

- Density...Reduce the redundant information
- Consistency...Iteratively edit across Components
- BUT ... save the first draft separately for your presentation.
  - Overly informative for abstract, but very useful for talk/paper when drafting the slides

Priority

- The highlights of your study
- Info. to understand the highlights & its theoretical importance
- Info. to understand the design of your study
  - Refer only to major references which reviewers should know.
5 Steps to Abstract Writing

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4. Revise the draft
5. Ask peers/supervisor for proofreading
5. Ask peers/supervisor for proofreading

- Person who knows much about your area and your study
  - Supervisor
- Person who knows about your area but NOT about your study
  - Colleagues
  - Reviewers should be those kind of people.
- If necessary (highly possible), ask them again after the revision.
- If you’re asked to proofread your colleague’s abstract, focus on...
  - Where your reading stops
  - How clearly information is expressed (cf. Components of Abstract)
Take-home message

1. Know about reviewer’s expectation
2. Know about your study
3. Write up 1st draft
4. Revise the draft
5. Ask peer/supervisor for proofreading
One more thing...

• Science is one particular kind of communication of knowledge only done by DISSEMINATION.

• A conference presentation is the starting point for early researchers and even for top researchers to disseminate their research and to see how the audience would react.

• Giving a presentation can be tough, but ... }
Thank you for your attention!

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