

LIN 405 - Writing in Linguistics

Summer 2021 - Scott Nelson

Abstract Writing

Overview

- There are different types of abstracts
 - Paper abstract, conference abstract, dissertation abstract, invited talk abstract, etc...
- We'll focus on the first two

What is the goal of an abstract?

- You want to provide people with a brief overview of your paper/talk topic
- Focus on **what, why, and how**
 - **What** is the problem you are addressing?
 - **Why** is it worth pursuing?
 - **How** did you solve the problem?

Conference Abstract

- Typically 1-2 pages
- Can be about a paper that has not been written yet
- You should try to get your point across as minimally as possible while still maintaining the crucial arguments
- Typically has labeled sections
- Includes references

Conference Abstract

- Macauley (2011) lists the following elements that conference abstracts should include:
 - Title
 - Statement of the Problem and Hypothesis
 - Data
 - Context
 - Methodology (if relevant)
 - Solution

Conference Abstract - Iskarous Slides

- Good argumentation is a learnt skill
- Ask a question that generates tension
- Hypothesis A/Hypothesis B Method
- Gradually lay out results
- Use metawords like: argue, hypothesize, ask, predict, evidence, results, conclude
- Successive abstraction
- Have an explicit conclusion

Conference Abstract

- Like anything else, have someone proofread it before submitting!
- Submission is usually anonymous
 - People reviewing the abstract won't know who wrote it
 - You also won't know who reviewed it
- Make sure you submit on time and follow all formatting guidelines

Example Conference Abstract

Paper Abstract

- Typically 250 words or less
- Written once the paper is finished
- Summarizes the main points of the paper
- Does not have labeled sections
- Does not include references

Paper Abstract

- Macauley (2011) doesn't some short advice on paper abstracts
 - It is ok to reuse passages verbatim from the paper itself
 - Recommends seeing if the journal you are submitting to has preferences
- In my experience there is no standard for these types of abstracts
- My best recommendation is once again the "mirroring" method

Zoom and Swift Polls

Discussion

- What did you find most difficult about writing an abstract?
- What advice from the Iskarous slides/LSA website resonated with you the most?
- Are there any other questions about abstract writing that you still have?