

ABSTRACTS: key

STRUCTURE – SPECIFIC SECTIONS

1. Background/introduction/situation
2. Present research/purpose
3. Methods/materials/subjects/procedures
4. Results/findings
5. Discussion/conclusion/implications

Ex. 1: Each section answers some implied questions. Match the following questions with the sections above.

- a. What was discovered? Section 4
- b. How was the research done? Section 3
- c. What do we know about the topic and why is it important? Section 1
- d. What do the findings mean? Section 5
- e. What is this study about? Section 2

*Ex. 2: Here is an abstract from a published paper. It is 178 words long. Read it through looking for the main function of each sentence (**background**, **purpose**, **methods**, **findings**, and **discussion**).*

Warmer Climates Boost Cyanobacterial Dominance in Shallow Lakes

(1) Dominance by cyanobacteria hampers human use of lakes and reservoirs worldwide. (2) Previous studies indicate that excessive nutrient loading and warmer conditions promote dominance by cyanobacteria, but evidence from global scale field data has so far been scarce. (3) In this paper we show that although warmer climates do not result in higher overall phytoplankton biomass, the percentage of the total phytoplankton biovolume attributable to cyanobacteria increases steeply with temperature. (4) Our analysis is based on a study of 143 lakes along a latitudinal transect ranging from subarctic Europe to southern South America. (5) Our results reveal that the percent cyanobacteria is greater in lakes with high rates of light absorption. (6) This points to a positive feedback because restriction of light availability is often a consequence of high phytoplankton biovolume, which in turn may be driven by nutrient loading. (7) Our results indicate a synergistic effect of nutrients and climate. (8) The implications are that in a future warmer climate, nutrient concentrations may have to be reduced substantially from present values in many lakes if cyanobacterial dominance is to be controlled.

(Kosten, S. et al. (2012), Warmer climates boost cyanobacterial dominance in shallow lakes. *Global Change Biology*, 18: 118-126.)

Ex. 3: Answer the following questions.

- a. Are introductory statements general or specific? **general**
- b. Are they in first person or third person style? **third person style**
- c. What tense is used? **present simple and present perfect simple**

Language for presenting the findings

The results findings } show, state, suggest, uncover,
indicate, imply, provide...

Ex. 6: Read the following sentences from different abstracts. Each sentence contains a problem in usage (grammar or vocabulary). Identify and fix the problems.

- a. ~~In this contribution are described~~ **The paper describes** several problems with toxic cyanobacterial blooms in Brno Reservoir.
- b. We ~~are also focused~~ **also focus** on the implementation of new technologies for the management of harmful algal blooms.
- c. The aim of the paper is to deal with the ~~problematic~~ **problem/issue** of cyanobacterial influence on tourism.
- d. ~~It was tested by the study~~ **The study tested** whether specific cyanobacteria would react to the applied strategies...
- e. The paper ~~is devoted to the analysis of~~ **analyzes** problems with cyanobacteria.
- f. ~~Laboratory animals are not susceptible to these diseases, so research on them is hampered.~~
Research on these diseases is hampered because laboratory animals are not susceptible to them.
- g. Our results are similar to **those of/the results of** previous studies.

FINAL SUGGESTIONS

Here are some other points to keep in mind when writing abstracts. Read and discuss them.

- If an abstract is read along with the title, do not repeat or rephrase the title. It will likely be read without the rest of the document, however, so make it complete enough to stand on its own.
- Do not refer in the abstract to information that will not be included in the presentation/article.
- Choose whether to write in first person style (“I” or “We”) or third person style (“This dissertation shows...”). If you prefer first person style, however, avoid using “we” unless your work has more than one author. Likewise, avoid beginning each sentence with “I”. In other words, third person style is always preferable.
- Do not overuse passives. “The study tested” is better than “It was tested by the study”.
- If possible avoid trade names, acronyms, abbreviations, or symbols. You would need to explain them, and that takes too much room.
- Abstracts must contain key words about what is essential in the presentation/article. Key words are used to classify abstracts in databases. Effective key words allow researchers to search for your publication easily. For published work, this may result in someone citing your article.
- Be coherent (logical) and cohesive (connect your ideas).

FURTHER PRACTICE = KEY

Read the following conference abstract on conference abstracts ☺ Complete it with the following phrases:

has not yet become a subject of research **As a result, this study raises a broader question**

This paper attempts to describe **to provide some tentative explanations**

plays a significant role

It will also be shown

This issue will be discussed

can be regarded as

has been investigated

Cultural Variation in the Genre of the Conference Abstract: Rhetorical and Linguistic Dimensions

The conference abstract is a common and important genre that A. **plays a significant role** in disseminating new knowledge within scientific communities, both national and international. As a genre with the specific features of "interestingness" created to attract the attention of reviewing committees, the conference abstract B. **has been investigated** by Berkenkotter & Huckin (1995) and Swales (1996). However, the issue of cultural variation in the genre C. **has not yet become a subject of research**, although the conference abstract, like other genres of academic discourse, can be presumed to reflect national proclivities in writing.

D. **This paper attempts to describe** the cultural-specific differences of English versus Ukrainian and Russian conference abstracts on the level of their cognitive structure and language, and E. **to provide some tentative explanations** of the cultural and ideological backgrounds underlying these rhetorical and textlinguistic preferences. F. **It will also be shown** how the inherited cognitive patterns of Slavic writers interplay with the acquired stereotypes of English scientific discourse in the abstracts they construct in English. These texts, hybrid from the viewpoint of their cultural shaping, G. **can be regarded as** evidence of the transition period typical of both sociopolitical and intellectual life of Ukraine and other states of the former Soviet Union. H. **As a result, this study raises a broader question**: To what extent is it necessary to adopt the English conventions of this genre in order to be accepted and recognized by international fora? I. **This issue will be discussed** in connection with the pedagogical implications arising from the findings and observations of this study.

Interesting phrases: tentative explanations, national proclivities