



Feast Centre for Indigenous STBBI Research
Centre du festin traditionnel de recherche autochtone sur les ITSS

The Feast Centre for indigenous STBBI Research: Learning Series Conference Papers Writing and Delivery Advice

What is a conference paper?

A conference paper is often both a written document and an oral presentation. They follow the conventions of academic writing and oral style and are a great opportunity to gain valuable feedback from your community of scholars and researchers when presented at conferences. They are written with the intention of presentation at conferences as well as submission for review and publication. Conference papers offer an opportunity to present original research, new ideas, or findings in a particular academic or professional field. Presenting at a conference is a great opportunity for scholars to gain valuable feedback from their academic network.

What is Oral Style?

When writing for a conference paper, consider that you are writing in an oral style. An oral style of writing refers to the way that someone speaks, and can vary depending on the speaker's preferences, intended audience, and context. When writing in an oral style, you can consider intonation, pace, vocabulary and verbal imagery, and overall delivery. You may also want to consider nonverbal elements such as facial expressions, gestures, and body language. All these elements are part of storytelling which offers you as a researcher a unique opportunity to consider the relationship with your audience and communicate your research story. Cherokee scholar and writer Daniel Heath Justice, author of *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*, explains the importance of orality:

Reading can be a very isolated and isolating experience; sharing stories orally is done in the context of living, dynamic peoplehood—one reason why it's so significant to Indigenous communities, where so much knowledge is transmitted between living people, not mediated by objects like books (Justice 25).

When writing in an oral style, consider the rapport you are building between yourself and your audience to convey meaning and effectively communicate ideas and information. You are connecting with your audience audience in a shared collective experience.

Oral style is important to consider when writing your conference paper, as it is writing meant to be presented as well as read.

What is oral style in writing? It is:

- Lively!
- Follows your normal speech patterns.
- Less formal, without being too general. Your presentation can address complex concepts with analytical rigour, in a relaxed or 'unofficial' manner.

- Makes use of contractions such as don't, won't, can't, etc.,
- Has more use of personal pronouns such as I, me, us, etc.
- Meant to be heard. Your sentence structure should be straightforward and not overly complex. For example, avoid the use of parenthesis that separates ideas from the main sentence topic.
- Can use varied rhetorical strategies for persuasion such as compare and contrast, defining, describing, narrating, analysing cause and effect, or explaining a process.
- Uses signposts for your listeners. Signposting is like a roadmap or meta-narrative which allows listeners to understand how your presentation will proceed. Words such as “however,” “moreover,” “initially,” or “finally,” may be helpful. Signposting can make use of the present past or future tense, such as “this essay will,” or “this presentation has...” Examples of signposting within a presentation can include the following:
 - “Our team is going to argue that...”
 - “I will be presenting evidence that...”
 - “We begin by introducing...”
 - “I suggest that...”
 - “To illustrate this point I...”
 - “Thompson argues...”
 - “Furthermore, I cite Thompson when I address...”
 - “We conclude by...”

Writing for Conference papers

When writing for a conference paper presentation, you will want to write a bit less than you think you can fit into your allotted time. This will give you extra time to set up audio or visual equipment or make short asides during your presentation and it will allow you to feel relaxed about the timing of your presentation. Don't write your presentation to fit as much as you can squeeze into your time. Instead, focus on the strategic inclusion of your main points and key pieces such as your supporting evidence or documentation. As you write, read your work out loud. This strategy will assist in refining your oral style and will save time on revisions later, as you will be able to decide if a sentence works or is too cumbersome in the first draft of your paper.

Practicing your paper

When practicing and delivering your presentation remember to look at your audience frequently. Practice will increase familiarity with your text so you can engage your audience effectively. Consider producing a working-text version of your paper for presentation that notes pauses, timing, and places you want to emphasize, or signal a change of tone. For example, you could include phonetic pronunciation of challenging text. Familiarity with your working text will also allow space for spontaneity such as small asides, if you are comfortable. For example, if you are part of a panel, you could draw comparisons with your co-panelists. When presenting remember to use body language including hand gestures and facial expressions, etc. and to vary the intonation of your voice. Practice moderating your speed and do not rush through your paper. This can

mean you speak a little bit slower or pause where you think your audience could most use a few seconds of reflection.

Presenting your paper

When presenting your paper, there is always the chance that something will not go as planned. To prepare for unexpected technology issues, test your technology or equipment in advance and have a back-up plan in case it fails. For example, have some printed handouts or information available via the cloud in case your USB slide deck fails). Be positive if your technology crashes! It can happen to anyone, and everyone is there to hear your ideas. Remember to stick respectfully to your time limit during your presentation.

Works Cited

Justice, Daniel Heath. *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2018. ProQuest.