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Michael Guest

Conferencing and Presentation English for Young Academics

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Preface

This book can be used in various ways. It can be read as a basic academic overview of the burgeoning genre of conferencing English or as a textbook for those studying applied linguistics. It can be used as training material by teachers of English for Specific/Academic Purposes (ESP/EAP) and as a guide or reference book for novice academics as regarding preferred patterns and forms of spoken conference English. For any and all readers, it is intended to serve as a source of spoken discourse analysis, explanations, suggestions, and considerations that might make academic conference participation or performance more fruitful and effective for both conference attendees and presenters.

Miyazaki, Japan — Michael (Mike) Guest

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Contents

Abbreviations

CP	(Oral) Conference presentation
DS	Discussion session (Q&A)
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
ELF	English as a Lingua Franca
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
FP/PS	Free paper/Parallel sessions
L1/L2	First language (mother tongue)/Second language
NES	Native English speaker
NNES	Non-native English speaker
RP	Research paper

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Introduction

1

Abstract

This introductory section will explain the scope of this book, its purpose, its intended readership, how it should be approached by readers, the background to its development, which aspects of conference English it intends to cover, and will also introduce some of the key concepts recurring throughout the book.

1.1 What's Included in This Book? Scope and Purpose

This book is geared toward three types of readers. One type of reader is the teacher of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) or English for Academic Purposes (EAP), those who teach oral presentation and/or other professional English skills to young researchers and academics, particularly those teaching non-native English speakers.

The second readers targeted are novice researchers and young academics who plan to present and/or otherwise participate productively at international academic conferences in the future and therefore would like to know a little more about the phenomenon of managing conferencing discourse, particularly those who lack experience participating in academic conferences.

The third target reader is the language researcher, especially those interested in specialist spoken discourses, particularly the use of English in the various sub-genres and speech events that are typically included in academic conferences.

Thus, this is not a book designed solely to offer oral presentation tips, and certainly does not intend to convey techniques regarding the effective design and productions of posters or PowerPoint (or other presentation software) slides. Rather, our focus within will be largely upon the (English) discourse of conferencing itself, as well as those prosodic/paralinguistic (intonation, pronunciation, various forms of 'body language') and environmental (physical, social, cultural) features that

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accompany or influence the interactions and discourse that emerge at academic conferences.

Thus, this book has a dual purpose. The intention is not only to add to the understanding of this specific genre of spoken English, but also to enable both novice and non-native English speaking (hereafter referred to as *NNES*) academics and researchers to perform more effectively at international academic conferences. While the many available 'how-to' commercial presentation guidebooks tend to focus largely upon the prescriptive dimension of oral conference presentations (hereafter *CP*s), in other words what effective performers/presenters *should* do, most academic research into interactive spoken English, such as the fields of genre analysis and discourse analysis, has tended to describe only how interlocutors carry out various types of spoken texts, the actual use of situated speech.

This book aims to cover both perspectives. While it aims to provide a comprehensive outline as what academics actually say at conferences, how they organize, manage, and produce discourse for specific conference speech events, it will also discuss which forms and approaches appear to make for the most effective performance in CPs, poster sessions, or other conference events, formal and informal, static and dynamic.

As a result, it is not my intention to simply supply readers with a list of useful set phrases, nor to repeat the type of stock 'public speaking tips' that could easily found through a Google search. Instead, I intend to expand the scope of inquiry by discussing some of the affective social, environmental, and cultural factors that concern many novice and NNES conference participants, and thereby make practical suggestions based upon a clear understanding of academic conference speech, both as an event and as a language genre, by considering many of the problems that lead to performance anxiety and other difficulties that both novice and NNES conference attendees may experience.

This book is divided into five parts, each further sub-divided into chapters, and, in some cases, even further into narrower sub-sections. Part I of the book deals with the general scope and form of academic conferences, particularly points of convergence and divergence between conference English and the language employed in the broader context of public speaking, particularly the TED phenomenon. Here, we will also introduce the hot potatoes of ESP/EAP discourse, the role and status of the NES versus the NNES, and the emerging field of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), as well as a brief discussion of the distinct notion of 'World Englishes.' Part II introduces a more academic focus, focusing upon discussions of genre analysis, mode, the role of the discourse community, and the structure of spoken narratives. This section should appeal to those with a more academic interest in the management of specialized discourse.

Part III introduces an analysis of oral conference academic presentations based primarily on the author's own research and observations. The linguistic analysis of various 'moves' made within the presentations is derived from the academic analyses that have been described in Part II. Part IV provides an analysis of the linguistic choices made by proficient conference presenters, from openings to managing Q&A sessions. This section contains suggestions and recommendations

Table 1.1 General overview of the book's focus and intended audience by section

Part	Focus	Audience
Part I	Introductory/Outline Linguistics/Sociolinguistics	General Academics/researchers
Part II	Linguistics/Sociolinguistics	Academics/researchers
Part III	Applied linguistics	Academics/researchers
Part IV	Linguistics/Practical/Advisory	Teachers/practitioners
Parts V and VI	Practical/Advisory	Teachers/practitioners

based upon various authentic examples of commonly used formulaic academic phrases, strategies, and modes of text management and should be of particular interest to prospective conference presenters.

Part V extends the scope of observation and analysis to so-called agnate conference roles and speech events, such as chairing, managing poster sessions, and leading workshops, with the intended goal of practical application by both readers and trainers/teachers. The appendix provides several practice materials and related advice pertaining to both classroom practice and last-minute tips for effective CP performance. It is thus hoped that the appeal of this book extends from the practical to the academic, from the student/presenter to the teacher/trainer. A general overview of the book's structure is displayed in Table 1.1:

1.2 Background

Working in the English department in the Faculty of Medicine at a university in Japan for over twenty years, I had frequently heard local medical professionals claim that their English CP skills had not measured up to their own wishes or expectations (or, perhaps more importantly, those of their superiors). Many healthcare professionals reported feeling ineffective or alienated not only as speakers, but also as participants at such conferences—not because they lacked field expertise or English skills per se but because they were unaware of the norms and patterns of English discourse associated with the genre.

My initial underlying research question was thus to determine exactly in what way or ways such conference participants and speakers were falling short of expectations, followed by the question as to why. This book attempts to answer these initial research questions as well as offer some advice on how to address these problems.

I was awarded consecutive Scientific-in-Aid research grants for the period 2012–2016 from the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, and Technology in order to analyze and provide possible solutions to the problem of alleged ineffective performances by Japanese medical professionals at international conferences. My earlier conference discourse research was therefore based upon analyzing the weak

points, their causes, and providing solutions for this problem. I've since surveyed and interviewed numerous Japanese doctors on the topic, and the results from these (Guest, 2013; 2014) inform some of what you'll read in this book.

As an educator myself, with an academic background and an ongoing interest in applied linguistics, over the past twenty years I have attended over two hundred academic/professional conferences related to teaching, curriculum planning, education methodologies, and theoretical linguistic forums in various corners of the globe—in almost every case as a presenter myself. These CPs have run the gamut from shotgun-styled 10-null parallel sessions to elaborate invited plenary speeches. I have been through the novice conference attendee/presenter stage myself and have presented in a foreign tongue (Japanese), both of which have provided me with a perspective from which I can empathize with both novices and NNES speakers.

Initially, in order to gain a more holistic perspective of academic conference English, I took a somewhat 'clinical' approach to the challenges faced by novice presenters and attendees. This was done by first eliciting the 'symptoms' and 'chief complaints' in order to learn more about the 'pathology' of the difficulties encountered. This was carried out through conducting surveys, 'diagnostic' interviews, observing systematic in vivo CP performance, and noting common affective and provoking factors. Thereafter by developing several hypotheses (or 'provisional diagnoses') regarding likely causes of success and failure, I eventually felt sufficiently informed to offer some prescriptive 'treatments.'

Thus, the practical suggestions made in this book, both for those young researchers and NNESs who plan to enter the world of academic conferencing and for those who teach these skills to others, are based upon research and first-hand observations, as well as the subsequent utilization of analytical models widely accepted within the fields of ESP and EAP discourse. While some of these findings, representative of particular academic conference discourses, might be considered prosaic, others should serve to illuminate the bigger picture as to how academics manage spoken discourse at conferences.

This investigative process involved applying the experience of observing and analysis of 170 medical CPs performed in English by medical professionals (so-called 'hard' sciences) and 121 more CPs from the field of applied linguistics/language education ('soft' sciences). Noting and analyzing the most effective methods and approaches, as well as the problematic areas, common to novice and NNES, as both presenters and participants, at these conferences provide the basis for the suggestions and advice I offer in this book. In other words, any advice found in this book is not based simply upon ideal or abstract notions of what 'seems intuitively right' or that which has emerged solely out of my own experience, but also takes into consideration the actual conference interactions and performances of a variety of academic researchers and in-service professionals.

Using established models of linguistic genre analysis and discourse analysis (the academic underpinning of these types of analyses are discussed in detail in Part III of this book), I analyzed those features and patterns of interactive spoken discourse

that were prominent in conference settings, and subsequently uncovered not only which types of speech events, speech genres, and sub-genres were most frequent but also how spoken discourse in these events was typically managed (with the most significant results and observations explained in detail in Parts IV and V).

1.3 What Aspects of Conference English Will This Book Cover (or not Cover)?

There exists one more unique quality to this book. Most readers will be aware that one's English 'performance' at an international academic conference does not begin at the first presentation slide nor does it end when you click the final 'Thank you' (in fact, many CPs represent in-process research, a part of a longer-term investigation). But within the CP speech event itself, the often-dreaded Q&A session (more accurately described as the discussion session or, hereafter, 'DS') invariably follows. Attendees and presenters also usually have to make post-presentation small talk, many have to manage poster sessions, or otherwise participate in extemporaneous discussions connected to their research areas. Some will wish to take part in symposia or colloquia; some might lead or attend workshops. Some may be required to chair CPs or other sessions. This book addresses all of these areas of more 'dynamic' English usage as well, not just the relatively static CP event itself. Therefore, although CPs may constitute the core event of academic conferences, the scope of spoken conference interactions reaches much further. Academic conference speech sub-genres typically include the following:

a. *Conference presentations (CPs)*

This core conference event includes the categories of plenaries, keynote, and other featured and/or invited speeches, plus symposium presentations—as well as free paper/parallel/concurrent sessions. These various categories of presentations must be distinguished for analysis as they all vary considerably in length, physical environment, audience, tenor, and even expected contents. However, as keynote and plenary speakers are generally accomplished presenters and veterans of performing conferencing presentations, this book will focus more upon what are known as the parallel/concurrent sessions or free papers ('free papers' is the preferred title at scientific conferences, whereas these are usually referred to at humanities conferences as 'parallel' or 'concurrent' sessions. Henceforth, the abbreviation *FP/PS* will be used to refer to these events).

It is also important to distinguish between the somewhat formalized, more static, monologic character of the CP per se and the more dynamic, open-ended, dialogic follow-up discussion/Q&A session that typically follows. Readers should note that I will not addressed commercial or business presentations, which are both generally non-academic in register and tend to be given by trained and seasoned field professionals, in this book.

b. *Poster sessions*

Although poster sessions may be unmanned, especially given the recent rise in popularity and number of e-poster submissions, it is assumed at some point that the poster presenter will be involved in discussions with visitors. This serves not only as an essential part of the dissemination of their research findings, but also as a vital means of establishing or maintaining academic networks (manning the poster at a set time is standard practice in the humanities, less so in the hard sciences). A recent trend at scientific conferences has also been poster–presentation combinations, in which a poster 'host' is required to give a very short presentation-based overview of their poster.

c. *Workshops*

Far more common at humanities conferences—particularly in language education circles—than at scientific conferences, both workshop management/leadership and participation roles are discursively distinct from standard CPs. Characteristics of both leading and participating in this highly interactive genre deserve some discussion. For the sake of this book, I have not distinguished a workshop from a seminar, as the difference is functionally negligible with both management and discourse patterns appearing to overlap.

d. *Symposia, colloquia, and other formalized discussions*

Whereas humanities conferences tend to include more workshops, a similar 'teaching' function at scientific conferences is carried out in special symposia, colloquia, or similar discussion forums. These too tend to display specific genre-based characteristics. Although the etymology of the term 'symposia' would seem to indicate that this event has traditionally tended be less academic and more free-discussion oriented than colloquia, the distinction between the two terms has effectively been lost in the current era of widespread academic conferences and thus are, for the most part, conflated in this book.

e. *Active participation (as audience member, attendee, participant)*

For the novice conference-goer, particularly a NNES, such innocuous activities such as registering and collecting passes, getting relevant and accurate conference information, and even finding the location of specific events can be anxiety-inducing. However, because these activities are somewhat idiosyncratic, they do not readily lend themselves to academic discourse analysis and are not dealt with in this book. More central to the role of effective and rewarding conference participation though is active involvement as participants in Q&A/discussion sessions, workshops, and symposia. Since this is an often overlooked feature of conference discourse, this book will contain a few short sections addressing the issue of being a 'good participant.'

f. *Chairing*

Although chairing roles are usually awarded to established, veteran members of the academic community, novice hosts will occasionally find themselves appointed to managing FP/PSs, both including the introduction (and related management) of presenters and as acting as moderators during Q&A/DSs. Therefore, the role, functions, discourse patterns, and potential pitfalls of the being the chair in CPs and symposia will be briefly discussed.

g. *Meetings (topical, organizational, academic)*

Special interest groups regularly use conferences as venues for meetings among board members, group members, and often to recruit those interested in the field. These range from formalized discussions of organization and management (typical of 'congresses') to focused discussions on pertinent topical issues currently circulating in the field. As this type of discourse pertains mostly to field experts, conference veterans, and ranking committee members, this book will not address this area in any detail.

h. *Social events (formal, planned)*

Planned social activities form an essential part of the conference domain, but their idiosyncratic and unpredictable nature (as these could include everything from city tours to set gala dinners to welcome parties) means that they fall largely outside the scope of this book. Effective participation in such endeavors will likely depend more upon the attendees' personality, the vagaries of chance interactions, one's existing social and interactive skills and habits, and related levels of engagement and/or interest more than the aforementioned conference sub-genres.

i. *Social gatherings (unscripted and spontaneous)*

Although extended activities with other participants, both as guests and hosts, is an essential element in conference networking, they fall largely outside the scope of this book for the same reasons as social events above. Unplanned social gatherings, including the kind of spontaneous chitchat that emerges during breaks and just before/after sessions, defy simple analysis, and are thus addressed only briefly.

j. *Management (as host)*

Active organization of a conference will generally be managed by expert host members, with particular conference management duties delegated to others already considered competent in their duties, under which a series of volunteers or venue staff will carry out various other duties. Much of this takes place within pre-conference settings and has more to do with organizational, human resource, and workplace interactive skills than the management of academic discourse. As such, this aspect of conference discourse will not be addressed in this book.

1.4 How Should I Read This Book?

This book aims to appeal to the reader in three ways. First, the research which underlines much of the book is presented in a manner that should meet the basic standards of the academic reader. Discussions regarding specialized discourse fields will be carried out, with the most pertinent research cited and terminology deployed. Thus, at many points, the tenor of the writing will be academic in nature.

But, as mentioned earlier, this book does not intend to serve as an extended research paper. It is also designed to offer practical applications for the findings of conference discourse such that English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) teachers and novice academic conference attendees/participants may also benefit from an understanding as to how these spoken genres are typically managed. Thus, the reader can also expect to occasionally encounter a third, more personal, voice, one marked by anecdotes, interviews, and editorial commentary of a more casual nature.

Readers should once again note that the author's research included representative fields from both the hard sciences (primarily medicine) and the humanities/soft sciences (primarily language education/applied linguistics). When generic distinctions between these two domains are significant, it will be noted. A more detailed outline of some of the fundamental differences between the two academic domains can be found in Chaps. 8 and 9, and is also occasionally raised in other sections.

However, a caveat is needed here. While one can say with a certain degree of authority which linguistic features of academic conference English are most common and that we can, to some degree, assign synopses or formulaic patterns to particular genres or speech events, the question as to whether one linguistic approach or form is better than another can be highly subjective. Whatever pretensions one may have about establishing objective, data-driven, or evidence-based foundations for preferred language choices, there will always be an ephemeral element involved that reflects the observer's or participant's personal orientation. To some extent, then it will be up to the reader as to whether, and to what degree, they might apply the suggestions or preferences expressed in this book to their own interactions and performances.

I have been asked on several occasions to conduct workshops and seminars to help brush up participants' academic CP English skills. Had I responded to such requests by saying that I cannot say whether A is better than B, or that anyone else's judgment is as good as mine, it would have no doubt have been seen as a dereliction of my professional duty, both as a teacher and language researcher. In this book, however, I have tried to consider evaluative factors beyond my own immediate performance likes and dislikes by grounding prescriptive content in descriptive analyses. After all, if a certain interactional or discourse pattern becomes part of the accepted generic canon, there is usually a valid reason for it.

I've already utilized many of the insights I've gained from these surveys, observations, analyses, and related research experience to better instruct my in-house medical students and medical professionals in their English presentation

skills, as well as in conducting English research presentation workshops to medical professionals throughout various parts of Asia. Therefore, I hope that this book may serve as a 'printed workshop' of sorts for its readers.

1.5 What Are the Central Linguistic Notions or Concepts Covered in This Book?

a. *Discourse:*

Discourse refers to the use of language within social contexts, particularly in terms of meaning-making (the larger field of semiotics) between speakers/listeners and/or writers/readers. The manner in which discourse is organized and managed varies according to a number of factors. Discourse that emerges in spoken academic settings, within the generic confines of giving CPs or engaging in academic workshops or symposia, carries certain repeated and recognizable forms. This is the central academic focus of this book.

b. *Speech events:*

A self-contained speech unit that has specific goals and purposes and thus has a loosely codified or conventionalized structure is a speech event. Explaining a conference poster to interested viewers is a speech event, so is chitchat over refreshments during breaks, although the latter is far more loosely codified. There is some blurring between the categories of sub-genres and speech events, although the latter tend to focus more upon the purpose of the spoken discourse itself, whereas the former is more concerned with the interactive conventions that surround and constrain it.

c. *Register:*

Register refers to stylistic variation in language, notably the degree of formality employed. However, register should not be equated solely with levels of formality/informality (which is more closely aligned with the sub-category of *tenor*, explained below).

Halliday and Hasan (1976) define register so as to include the set of meanings and semantic patterns that we use under specified conditions. This includes our choice of words and structures that realize that which we wish to convey. In practice then, register may be said the manner in which we mark our professionalism—or our membership within a field or profession. Understandably, discourse at academic conferences generally displays an academic register, although the register will vary according to the formality of the speech event. Speakers will adjust register according to interlocutors and circumstance—the 'accepted' register

at academic conferences will be marked differently than those of, say, a sporting venue, even if the interlocutors are the same. Register acts an umbrella term for the categories of mode, tenor, and field (all introduced below). Couture (1986) makes the crucial point that register imposes constraints at the levels of vocabulary and syntax whereas genre constraints operate at the level of discourse structure.

This book actually serves as willful example of shifting register. The introduction and first part contain personal and anecdotal contents, maintaining a more familiar voice in an attempt to be accessible to a wide variety of readers. The second and third parts adopt a more academic register as befits the inclusion of more scholarly data, rhetorical structure, and lexis. The fourth and fifth parts utilize a mixture of the academic and personal voices, a blended register more conducive to the practical considerations and advice dispensed in these sections.

d. *Genre:*

Genre refers to a class of communicative events with a shared set of communicative purposes (Mauranen, Perez-Llantada, & Swales, 2010). In particular, genre is concerned with the rhetorical organization of texts, and for Swales (1990), the rhetorical moves made within a text. Genres tend to have a recognizable synoptic structure that is tacitly accepted by a given discourse community. The underlying rationale of a given genre establishes constraints on allowable contributions. Participants are expected to adhere to the expectations of the particular discourse community. As a result, instances of genre can vary in proto-typicality. Macro-genres such as academic conferences can typically be divided into sub-genres, such as poster session discourse and workshop management. Nonetheless, genre codes are inherently flexible and are adapted according to the discursive needs of the discourse community.

Genre differs from register in that it operates in completed texts. Genres would include business reports, research papers (hereafter abbreviated to RPs, although they are also referred to as RAs—research *articles*—by some), and CPs, whereas register focuses upon, for example, the language of newspapers, the language of bureaucrats. The use of generic nomenclature in particular is often considered a source of insight regarding the rhetorical organization of both written and spoken texts.

e. *Mode:*

Mode is the means by which language is conveyed, generally written or spoken. Conferences are particularly nuanced in terms of mode, not only because they are inherently multimodal events, but also because the two modes often emerge within the same speech event, especially in CPs and poster discussions. When the conventions and manners of the two or more modes converge (in short, when they become 'multimodal'), one of the most distinctive features of conference discourse is realized.

f. *Field:*

Field refers to the topical area that is being covered by the discourse. Choice of field often informs both the organization and the tenor of the discourse. At academic conferences, field not only necessitates the use of specialist terminology but also confers an explicit educated or specialist tenor among the participants. This term conflates to some degree with the term *domain*.

g. *Tenor:*

Tenor refers to the relationship between participants and the manner in which this relationship is manifested in discourse. This includes such qualities as the level of language used on scales of formality vs. informality and distance/detachment vs. active engagement. It also refers to the nature of the speaker's 'voice.' Voice is often referred to as an 'identity option,' the manner in which we choose to present ourselves to other members of a community (or even to those considered to be outside the community). This will typically mean that an academic tenor will be used in formalized events involving specific academic discourse communities, such as conferences. Using a situationally appropriate tenor goes a long way toward being persuasive and influential within a specific discourse community. Gender, age, and power status are other factors that can affect or help to determine appropriate tenor.

Questions and Exercises for Chapter 1

Most chapters and sections of this book will end with questions, exercises, tasks, or reflection/discussion points for teachers/readers to address. As the vast majority of these questions and exercises call for the reader or student to reread, interpret, expand upon, and consider the application of the material presented in this book for their own theoretical or practical situations, no answer key is provided.

1. Give one example each of a discourse (1) field, (2) mode, (3) tenor, (4) register, (5) genre, and (6) speech event.
2. Name four types of formalized speech events that are typically held at academic conferences.
3. Name three different categories of CP and think of two ways in which each of them would likely differ in form and structure from the others.

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Part I
The External Framework of Academic Conferences

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2 An 'Age of Conferencing?'

Abstract

This chapter will discuss some of the reasons behind the current flourishing of academic conferences as a social phenomenon, the related nomenclature, and their importance in establishing an academic identity or presence. We will also look at the typical structure of a conference and offer some pre-conference considerations for both presenters and general participants.

Conferences are ubiquitous these days. Among the academic conferences I noted in a recent online browse were the Comic Arts Conference (pop culture is an ever-expanding source of conference themes), the Catholic Conference on Geocentrism (a niche conference dedicated to the notion that the sun revolves around the earth), and the International Conference on Prostitution (academic analyses of social phenomena constitute a growing proportion of conference topics). As I write this, just down the hall from my office, there is a poster announcing the International Congress on Rabbit Biotechnology.

Why the burgeoning conference scene? One reason is that the advent of low-cost carriers has made flying cheaper and often more convenient, opening up not only new locales for business travel but also increasing budgetary opportunities to do so. Almost every city of note worldwide has at least one elaborate structure built explicitly as a conference center. Some sites are so popular that advance reservation requirements of over three years are not unusual.

The increased specialization found in almost all academic research fields is another contributor to the conference phenomenon. As areas of research interest narrow, the number of research areas increases. Naturally, practitioners prefer to meet, and engage with, other practitioners in their specialist fields, particularly as new areas of shared interest and value emerge. The result? More conferences.

Providing research allowances that include attending conferences has always been a mainstay of academic budgeting, but as many travel costs decrease and the number of significant events increase, not only attending conferences but also

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presenting or otherwise playing an active role in the proceedings has become integral parts of any academic or researcher's professional life. Many budgets are now set accordingly, recognizing the opportunities for collaboration and the expansion of knowledge and ideas that conferences can provide. In most academic fields, researchers and practitioners simply cannot afford to fall behind the knowledge curve, making conferences indispensable as central to the dissemination and fertilization of new ideas and practices.

Therefore, it is incumbent upon the novice researcher and/or academic to wet their feet in these expanding discourses. Not only being physically present but also to be productive at conferences is quickly becoming a required quality of academia. However, first perhaps, we need to make some terminological distinctions.

First, how is a conference different from a 'convention' or a 'congress'? In fact, many of the contents do overlap, as all three aim to bring together specialists and advocates for a series of intensive knowledge and idea-sharing events at a set time and place.

Conferences, however, do tend to emphasize the academic aspect of the gathering, with a particular emphasis upon presentations, from plenary speeches by field notables and academic celebrities to standard parallel or FP/PS sessions given by rank-and-file members. Conventions, on the other hand, tend to revolve more around core special exhibitions and related events (hence their reputations of exuding a bit more of a 'party' atmosphere). Congresses tend to be slightly more political in purpose, the core events leaning more toward the establishing of polity or other organizational matters. Further confusing the nomenclature is the term 'forum,' which generally indicates that the event will be more discussion-based.

While all four of the events described above will generally include all of the above qualities, it is the degree to which certain activities constitute the core items that ultimately marks the difference. This book, as the title implies, will concentrate upon conferences, given their greater academic orientation and related demands for active participation among those in academic fields. As the number of conferences proliferate so does the need to recognize, analyze, and understand them as a social phenomenon, with this book aiming to describe the uses of English (the lingua franca of over 95% of all conferences worldwide) as it is used or is expected to be used within these settings.

2.1 The Structure of a Conference

Conference preparation begins well in advance of the event itself with the initial planning, the establishment of a theme or themes by the steering committee, the call for papers, invitations and announcements made to special speakers, followed by the vetting of presentations proposals, submissions of proceedings manuscripts, and the arrangement of presentation categories, slots, times, and rooms, registration and

payment, and ongoing communication with delegates and attendees. The vast majority of this type of extra-textual, extraneous discourse lies outside the intended scope of this book.

What the novice conference attendee will be more concerned with, however, will be his or her choice of conference—assuming that this choice has not been made by a superior. Obviously expense, geography, prestige, and the field or academic/research scope covered by the conference will be major factors in making a decision, not to mention that conferences held in intriguing locales such as Barcelona or Bali tend to attract a greater number of attendees because, well, because they are Barcelona and Bali.

Outside of these obvious factors, the actual venue location should be considered. More scientific conferences tend to take place in established conference centers, whereas humanities conferences will more often be hosted on university campuses, utilizing existing classrooms and lecture halls. Hotel conference' facilities account for most of the rest.

Obviously, the rental of large conference centers and the hiring of assistance staff (which are the best venues for those fields that require more elaborate exhibition and demonstration areas, including trade shows and product displays) and hotel facilities is passed on to the attendee. Medical conference fees I have attended over the past several years (largely to research this book) have ranged from $400 US to $850, even as a non-licensed non-medical participant, and even when prominent pharmaceutical conferences were sponsoring the proceedings.

On the other hand, the costs for conferences hosted on university campuses require much less overhead (depending, to some degree, on the largesse of university officials) and often utilize more volunteer workers. More humanities conferences, often less well-funded, select this option, as it reduces costs for both hosts and attendees. In my experience, conferences hosted at universities or similar public facilities will often cost under $250 US (with many being under $100, or even free).

I have presented at conferences in venues that include everything from non-air-conditioned, unlit, decaying high school classrooms in developing countries, to comfortable but utilitarian university lecture rooms, through luxury hotel wedding banquet halls (complete with wait staff constantly entering and exiting to remove or replace cutlery and glassware), and sleek, all the way to state-of-the-art multimedia conference center presentation halls. Yes, the venue too can affect your enjoyment of, and productivity at, an academic conference.

What novice attendees should be careful of, however, is the increasing number of dubious or 'predatory' conferences, often held in posh and prestigious venues, that have little academic value and are designed largely to produce a profit for non-academically affiliated organizers. Often invitations to attend these arrive as unbidden emails linked to very attractive professionally designed websites, often citing prominent—and well paid—guest speakers, as means of legitimizing themselves.

Hints of the stature of the conference may be noted in conference titles, themes, and history. If the host organization is an established and widely recognized academic organization, if the organizing committee is explicitly named and is made up

of specialists in the academic field, if the conference has a substantial past history, if the themes and disciplines are specific and narrow (overly general, vague titles such as 'The Conference for Research in the Humanities' would generally be a giveaway that this is a dubious conference—particularly if 'The Conference For Scientific Advancement' is being held concurrently, under the same umbrella organization, right next door), if the registration fees seem reasonable, and if the supporting organizations are also well-established and legitimate, then one could expect that the conference itself is also legitimate.

Novice attendees and participants may also want to check previously published online proceedings and programs to gauge the scope and/or quality of previous presentations in order to establish priority, prestige, and suitability for attendance or participation. One red flag to note is if it appears that every proposal was accepted even though many of them seem amateurish and/or well outside the advertised research area.

Only on one occasion have I unwittingly participated in such a predatory conference, duped by an alleged association with a prestigious university that actually had little connection with the event. Organizers appeared to have little or no academic knowledge of the field and, more importantly, did not seem to care much about it. My presentation room was a hotel ballroom with terrible acoustics, with speaking areas partitioned from other speakers by a removable screen. The audience were seated at round meal tables covered with china and cutlery, hardly conducive to the dissemination of academic discourse. I was also strongly pressured to publish my associated paper in the associated conference proceedings that required a hefty extra publishing fee. I declined. And for all this, the cost of registration was twice that of most humanities conferences. Buyer beware.

2.2 Pre-conference Considerations

When choosing a conference, balancing the choice between a highly prestigious conference with a lower success rate of presentation applicants, and a less prestigious affair but one with a higher acceptance rate, can be a dilemma for those new to the arena. My suggestion would be at first to attend a major conference without the intention of presenting, simply to become accustomed to the focus, level, and quality of research presented, as well as to observe and absorb the manner in which the sharing of ideas and knowledge, the discourse of academic and professional interactions, is actually carried out. Hopefully, this book will help in that endeavor.

But if you plan to present, your first priority will be the submitting of your abstract. There are numerous resources available describing how to write an attractive presentation abstract, one that will catch the attention of the organizing committee. Since this book focuses on conference speech, the skill of abstract writing will not be discussed in depth here, except to say that unless the abstract is clear, well-organized, relates to the conference theme or topic, and contains a

suitable academic or professional tenor, the chances of acceptance will be greatly reduced.

Conformity to stated conference themes is another matter worth considering when submitting an abstract. While some conferences adopt very vague or general themes and therefore do not pay much attention to whether individual applicants have addressed the theme in their abstracts, others do explicitly hope or expect that prospective presenters will in some way address the theme, occasionally to the point of making adherence to the theme an element of the vetting process. Generally speaking, annual international conferences hosted by large academic organizations are less concerned with adherence to themes, whereas smaller, specialized affairs will tend to be more insistent upon applicants addressing the stated theme.

A sample of typical considerations regarding CP abstract submissions includes the advice presented in Table 2.1 below:

Of the items noted in Table 2.1, the novelty aspect of the research is the only likely factor that can trump a poorly written abstract. However, if/when the abstract is accepted, there are several considerations that the novice attendee should observe:

a. *Do* follow any and all instructions regarding registration, payment, uploading of papers, revisions of abstracts, uploading of presentation slides, and equipment announcements to a T—*efficiently and promptly*. This will not only allow conference organizers to breathe more easily but will also allow you to focus more upon developing your own CP. Check and update your participant status regularly.

Table 2.1 Considerations for conference presentation abstracts (reproduced courtesy of EALTHY, www.ealthy.com)

It should be clear from your abstract of 150 words that:
1. You have something new to say or that you plan to shed new light on a topic
2. You have respected the level of knowledge of your audience
3. Your session is of practical use for delegates. If your talk is mainly theoretical, include consideration of the practical issues and implications that it raises
4. Your audience can apply your experience to their own context. This is especially important if you are describing a course, project, or product, or if your presentation relies heavily on a description of your local situation
5. If your session is based on research, you should report either on a completed study or on a significant phase that has been completed, rather than discuss general issues
6. If your session is a 60-min workshop, it must include active audience participation
7. If referring to a publication (print or online), you must include the title in the abstract
8. Your abstract should accurately reflect what you are going to talk about

b. Plan to attend a variety of sessions. By perusing the program, many of these can be decided in advance. Observe a plenary speech, a keynote speaker, sit in on a symposium (a theme-based discussion, often highly interactive with multiple expert speakers), attend a workshop, support peer presentations, and try to hear what others from various national, regional, or research backgrounds have to say in your own special area of interest.
c. Prepare to establish connections and possible research collaborations with other attendees. Special study and interest groups tend to hold discussion sessions at conferences. Attend one. Founding future collaborations with like-minded peers is perhaps the most fruitful benefit of conference attendance. Several of my ongoing academic endeavors (and even long-term friendships) have resulted from chance meetings at conferences.
d. Finally, do be prepared to talk about your current institution and academic or research interests with others, not necessarily as a formal presentation but as a result of impromptu meetings and extraneous interactions during lunches, refreshment breaks, and post-session chitchat. You *will* be asked. Those who are prepared to give a quick outline of their current interests and areas of investigation are more likely to establish new and meaningful relations, and in doing so extend or expand their academic and professional lives.

Questions and Exercises for Chapter 2

1. Explain two ways in which can one distinguish between established academic conferences and those that aim largely for profit.
2. What are the main functional differences between a conference, a convention, and a congress?
3. Beyond giving and/or listening to CPs, list four other interactive conference features or events.
4. List three things a novice conference attendee should do in advance of the conference.
5. What are four major considerations that a prospective presenter should consider when submitting an abstract?

The TED Factor

3

Abstract

In this chapter, we will discuss the technology, entertainment, design (TED) phenomenon and consider which aspects of TED presentations are most applicable to academic conference CPs and why. We will also introduce the persuasion, information, entertainment (PIE) formula for oral presentations and consider how the balance between each of the three dimensions might change according to the speech genre.

Recently, a number of commercial books have appeared on the market claiming to provide readers with the secrets behind the very successful 'TED Talks' series. TED Curator Chris Anderson's '*TED Talks*' ranked number 2 in sales in Amazon.com category of Business Communication sales in late 2016, as well as third in the category of public speaking, while Carmine Gallo's '*Talk Like Ted,'* although published in 2014, ranked second in sales among public-speaking books at the same time. There is little doubt that the TED series has served as a successful communicative bridge between academics (although many TED speakers are not academics per se), skilled professionals, and the intelligent layman. As a result, novice academic researchers may be inclined to turn to TED as a model for honing their presentation skills.

Very few would argue that an ability to speak publicly at the level of a TED presentation would be a bad thing, but it might not, in many cases, be a realistic or even an appropriate approach. Unrealistic, in that the majority of English speakers in the world are NNESs, and non-native speakers of any language face numerous hurdles when trying to partake in prestigious discourse community events, such as academic and professional conferences. While it is true that many TED speakers are also NNESs, most have already developed an international cachet in their field, ensuring a knowledgeable and generally sympathetic audience; these are also speakers who have spent much of their professional lives working within international environments where English is used as a lingua franca (ELF).

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For the average academic/professional working in a sheltered environment and suddenly being thrust into a prestigious, pressure-filled international conference setting, the task of appealing to an audience often made up of peer specialists is inherently fraught with difficulties. These difficulties are often magnified for NNESs, who may have to deal with the added dimension of a lack of English proficiency.

These hurdles, however, are not limited to NNESs. Novice academics and young researchers from all linguistic backgrounds are often ill-equipped to deal with the linguistic expectations and standards of their particular discourse community when it comes to distinctive genres such as academic international conferences. The standards and norms of interaction at a conference are not the same as those found in the classroom, the laboratory, or the research center. The conference atmosphere can be intimidating, particularly for those who are expected by their superiors and/or advisors to take an active role in the proceedings and partake in a productive manner. All this is quite distinct from the TED approach, in which speakers are selected and coached prior to filming.

Further, adopting the TED approach might be considered inappropriate in that the environment of the standard academic/professional conference speaker giving a short free paper/parallel session presentation is far removed from the often elaborate stage prepared for the celebrated, established TED presenter. While conference plenary and keynote speeches may share both production and discourse similarities to TED presentations, the average free paper session does not. Performing a TED-styled routine at the Korean Annual Congress of Neurosurgeons, for example, would likely be viewed as incongruous as playing a tuba in an African percussion troupe. The norms of spoken interaction utilized in the genre of international academic conferences are, to some extent, codified as a distinct and identifiable genre, including multiple sub-genres, each with their own standards constraining what is said, as well as how and when it can or should be stated. As we shall see, the constraints at international academic conferences, while still allowing for the dynamic and flexible, involve greater formal constrictions. This book will explore some of those norms and constrictions and explain their purpose or role in furthering academic conference discourse in later sections.

TED's invited speakers come from all fields and are given near carte blanche to attract and appeal to their (very wide) audiences. Production values are high because performances are managed by specialists. Even with the recent expansion to more localized TED presentations, the TED presenter is still invariably already an expert in a field and/or has a story deemed significant enough to perform 'naked' (meaning he/she is not placed behind a podium or computer table) in front of an audience. While TED presentations may share with conference FP/PS CPs the quality of being extemporaneous (as opposed to impromptu or fully scripted speech), the surrounding environment and community expectations as to how these events should be managed are quite distinct.

Readers may also have noted that many TED presentations are not as dependent upon accompanying visual displays, whether they are PowerPoint, Prezi, or otherwise typical academic CPs. The TED speaker typically focuses upon the

narrative of his/her speech and utilizes visuals only as a supplementary aid to the spoken mode, most frequently in the form of charts and graphs, as opposed to standard prose text. There is a storytelling mode at the heart of most TED presentations that does not entirely mesh with the research content focus that informs most academic CPs.

Besides TED-related or TED-inspired publications, one can also easily find a large number of commercial books dedicated to improving one's English presentation skills available both online and in bookshops. So then, how are those different from this one? For one thing, our focus is placed squarely upon *academic,* particularly *academic research,* presentations. Therefore, the very lucrative 'Effective Business Presentations' and popular 'Debating Skills' fields are not within the scope of this book.

Why not? Business and commercial presentations serve largely promotional purposes and are thus distinct from academic presentations in terms of the degree to which the quality of persuasiveness is integrated into the text. Now, while it is indubitably true that even the most detached scientific 'research report' will be more effective when some triangulation of a persuasion, information, entertainment (PIE) formula is utilized, the emphasis for academic research presenters will invariably lean toward the informative dimension over the persuasive, particularly given the differing audience expectations and differing communicative goals or purposes.

Debate, or even political, speeches will lean toward the persuasive dimension, with the purpose of the genre being to score points or otherwise defeat an opponent by, presumably, employing better debating tactics. These factors mark a crucial difference from the academic CP. This book aims to be sensitive to those differences and thus addresses the specific needs of the academic, particularly the research-focused, conference attendee.

This focus also distinguishes research/academic presentations and related discourses from *instructional* presentations of the in-house, 'How to Use the University Database' variety, which tend to be overwhelmingly informational (and often accompanied by a printed version of the slides). These are often informative to the point where almost all dialogic or narrative elements are willfully omitted.

3.1 'Public Speaking' Versus Conference Presentations (CPs)

It is important to distinguish between characteristics of academic CPs and the type of public speaking that is often addressed in guidebooks and in English classrooms, the kind in which students are preparing speeches for classroom assessment, debate contests, or even competitive English-speaking contests.

The primary difference is that academic CPs involve the screen and slides as the fundamental object of the audience's attention, reducing the physical performance of the speaker to the periphery. This involves a multimodal triangulation of

interaction between the text or graphics on the slides, the speaker, and the audience, in which the speaker serves as a type of intermediary between the written content of the slides and the interpretation of the text offered to the audience.

In traditional public speaking or in recitations and English-speaking contests, it is the speech alone that is conveyed to the audience, meaning that a number of different semiotic skills will be involved. While CPs are in many ways dialogic, with the presenter attempting to draw the audience into the presentation, speech contests and recitations are more monologic, with the speaker trying to gain the judges' favor for the sake of winning a prize.

The audiences too are of an entirely different constitution. The CP audience is made up of one's academic or professional peers, and the speech contestant's primary audience consists of judges or evaluators. The former serves as a medium for dispensing knowledge or good practices with the discourse community; the latter is a competition with winners and losers. The former therefore seeks how to most effectively convey the research or theory so that it will be understood and valued by peers; the latter is less concerned with conveying content and more concerned with adhering to criteria that the judges are likely to find appealing, regardless of the novelty or gravity of the contents. These will often include evaluative categories such as 'correct diction,' eye contact, or the effective use of reinforcing gestures. While not entirely outside the scope of concern for the academic presenter, these qualities are not as of primary importance in an academic CP.

Ventola (2002) notes that while most public-speaking guides deal with tenor, the notion of suiting one's language to the target audience, such guides spend very little time actually looking at the language itself, beyond, that is, some minimal advice regarding pronunciation. Analyzing the manner in which multimodal forms can be used via linguistic realizations to produce coherent and effective presentations is only a recent, and limited, phenomenon.

Thus, popular public-speaking guides are unlikely to be helpful for most NNES and novice CP speakers, who not only have to deal with the vagaries of speaking in front of an audience of peers, but who also must consider the linguistic coding which underpins their performance. Therefore, more needs to be discussed regarding the linguistic realizations which actually occur in academic conference settings than TED guides and other public-speaking self-help books have typically dealt with.

3.2 TED and Academic Conference Presentations—Convergence and Divergence

Conference presentations have always blurred the boundaries between written and spoken modes. Given the advent of PowerPoint slides as the standard medium of conference presentations, Myers (2000) talks of the 'tyranny of bulletization,' in which the author becomes an animator, and text becomes the star, with the presenter

as a support player. An overdependency on allowing the slides to 'do the work,' particularly in data-heavy research CPs, can actually have a negative impact on performance, particularly if the CP becomes mechanized and dehumanized. To explain how this might occur, let us once again look at where the features of TED presentations converge and diverge with academic research CPs.

As mentioned earlier, TED Talks have become an international phenomenon and, in many ways, have set the modern standard for what we think of as public speaking. Not surprisingly then, many novice conference presenters look to TED as a model of an effective, impactful presentation style. As mentioned earlier, the obvious question for novice NNESs hoping to hone their presentation skills is to what extent does TED serve as a realistic and effective model for academic researchers presenting in FP/PS CPs at international conferences, as opposed to established personalities or celebrities giving a talk within their chosen field?

Wallwork (2016), who compiled a comprehensive instruction guidebook to English academic CPs for NNESs, admits that while there is much to be admired in TED presentations, and adds that several benefits may be gleaned from watching them, argues that, '…the aim of TED presentations is to primarily to convey an interesting message to your audience,' (p. 15) which is distinct from the more informative, data-heavy research presentations that constitute most academic CPs. This often results in more slides being included in the latter (Rowley-Jolivet [1999], noted that academic CPs proceeded at an average of one slide per 50 s), plus a more narrow-ranging, genre-specific focus involving related 'insider' discourse. Furthermore, even those presenting in humanist fields, Wallwork notes, are not as likely to have as 'interesting stories' as TED speakers. Nor are they as likely to have the same multimodal production facilities, overseen by experienced professionals, at hand.

Academic CPs and other academic conference discourse, rather, are, '…semiotically established in academic/scientific discourse community,' (Ventola, 2002, p. 25). This implies that speakers simply do not have the same freedom to choose the organization or structure of their talks that is the hallmark of TED presenters. Genre and register norms limit choices for academic presenters. Musician/street performer Amanda Palmer's distinctive TED Talk delivered atop stacked milk crates would not conform to the expected presentation discourse norms at, say, the Annual Forum on ASEAN Policy Research Society.

Gallo (2014) in 'Talk Like TED' outlines nine principles of public speaking that are common to TED presenters and which are subsequently suggested to the reader in order to invigorate their own presentations (Table 3.1). Although Gallo uses more commercially appealing language for each chapter title (left column), the chapter topics are basically reducible to the gloss/paraphrase in the right column:

Of those 9 items listed above, I would argue that all except nos. 6 and 9 are crucial to *any* successful conference presentation, even if the field involves the densest, most narrowly specialized aspects of academic research. I will discuss many of the other factors listed above later in this book, but for the time being allow me to point out why humor (#6) and intimacy (for lack of a better term) (#9) are not as essential for performing academic CPs.

Table 3.1 Chapter titles from Gallo's 'Talk Like Ted,' Pan Macmillan, 2014, and topical glosses

'Talk Like TED' chapter titles:	Chapter topic focus:
1. Unleash the master within	Having a passion for your topic
2. Master the art of storytelling	Storytelling, or narrative, sense
3. Have a conversation	The presentation as conversation/dialogue
4. Teach me something new	The need for novelty
5. Deliver jaw-dropping moments	Highlighting impact moments
6. Lighten up	Humor and lightheartedness
7. Stick to the 18-minute rule	Keeping within the limited time format
8. Paint a mental picture with multisensory experiences	The balanced use of multimodal forms
9. Stay in your lane	Speaking from the heart

Humor is often listed in general public-speaking guides as a staple of effective presentations, a crucial ingredient in establishing a rapport with an audience. However, the degree of informality required in order to inject humor into a present is not usually consistent with the tenor of content-heavy free paper academic presentations. Webber (2005) notes that greater degrees of humor and other markers of informality are far more common in plenary or other featured presentations, these often performed by established personalities in the field, than within the time restrictions and narrow themes typical of standard FP/PS CPs. Wallwork (2016) suggests that being entertaining need not imply making people laugh and cautions against the use of humorous slides.

This corresponds to my own experiences as a presenter, audience member, and researcher at academic conferences. On several occasions, I observed nervous novice presenters beginning with an amusing anecdote or lighthearted banter, presumably to relax and establish rapport with the audience. Except for the most skillful presenters, this often produced the opposite result—many of the attempts came across as somewhat desperate, forced, or fairly obvious attempts at masking nerves, resulting in discomfort for the audience. Subsequent discussions with audience members indicate that this approach was also viewed as inappropriate by some, as many in attendance at such sessions had attended to gain research data and insight, not to indulge the presenter's witticisms. When humor *was* used successfully in FP/PS CPs, it tended to occur not in the opening section—the result of the speaker attempting to establish rapport—but further into the body of the CP, particularly in humanities CPs. Humor, it might be argued then, is best applied after the veracity of the speaker has been established.

Heart-to-heart appeals often elicited a similar response in the FP/PS sessions. Appeals to action based on an explicit pathos generated by the speaker tend to carry more weight within the humanities, but even there it can run the risk of being viewed by the audience as an advertisement, an exercise in self-indulgence, or as a personal emotional appeal at odds with the expected degree of sobriety and objectivity assumed to underpin academic research.

However, this is not to disparage or disqualify the notion of displaying a personal interest in the uptake of the research data, much less to discourage evidence of passion on behalf of the researcher/presenter. In fact, it is more or less given that any presentation should give consideration to maintaining a balance between the three central CP dimensions of persuasion, information, entertainment (often referred to as 'PIE'; see Fig. 3.1). None of these should be excluded from consideration from an academic presentation. The question is, rather, to what degree can or should they be balanced to maximize the impact of an academic presentation?

To address this question, the field and tenor of the presentation or speech event will be the governing factors. As we noted earlier, field refers to the academic topic area or domain being addressed. Research reports in the hard sciences will almost certainly be expected to lean more heavily toward the informative dimension, whereas CPs in the humanities will tend to necessitate an increase in the persuasive dimension. The type of presentation that might be generic in a more commercial conference, such as an appeal to tourists to visit a specific locale, would tend to include a greater entertainment factor to complement the other two.

The point that needs to be made here is that even the most heavily data-driven, evidence-based academic presentations should not ignore the entertainment dimension. After all, as we shall see, the sense of maintaining a 'research narrative' involving human agents constitutes a large part of what distinguishes CPs and other academic conference speech events from the less immediate, more detached mode of written research.

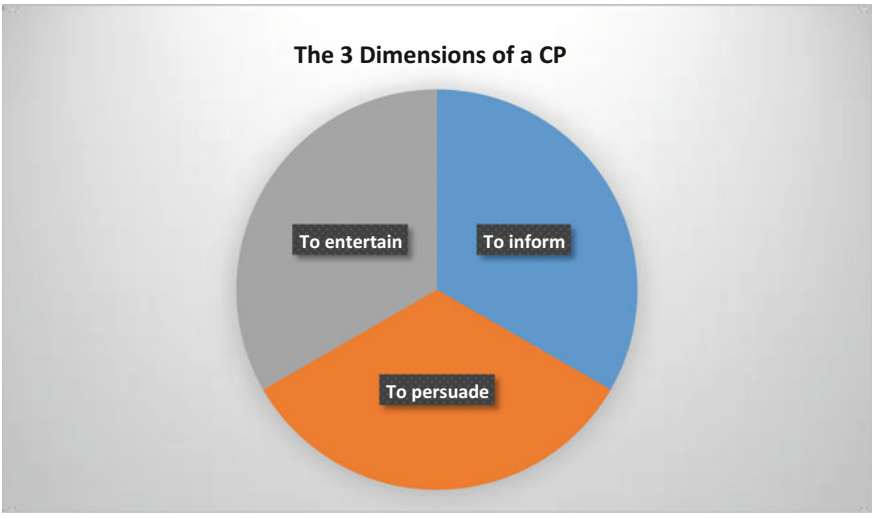

Fig. 3.1 PIE formula

In order to reinforce this point, allow me here to engage in a bit of metadiscourse. Astute readers will note that the 'voices' of this book are attempting to establish the same PIE formula. The triangulation of the three dimensions of tenor is evident even in the current paragraph. For example, opening a section with the directive phrase, 'allow me here to engage in…' as I did above, is probably not the type of discourse one would expect of a thoroughly academic research paper. However, I have used it here to add a persuasive element, further augmented by the direct appeal to the audience by the use of the term 'astute readers.'

The phrase 'the triangulation of the three dimensions of tenor,' on the other hand, is the more detached, objective voice of the academic paper, and thus represents the informative dimension. On top of that, this entire exercise in ironic metadiscourse presents a bit of a novelty item, holding some entertainment value (one would hope!). In short, this book is mirroring the dimensions one would hope for in a presentation.

Let me conclude this section with an anecdote. Recently, after performing an invited presentation about how to perform more effective English CPs to a group of Japanese obstetricians, I was mildly criticized in the follow-up discussion session on the grounds that in my presentation, I had, '*…performed with a lot of personality, mixed with anecdotes and humor, whereas we are required to do research presentations, where this is impossible*.' My response to this very valid point was that while anecdotes and more personalized voice are a part of the 'generic code' of doing a 1-hour specially invited presentation—something that I had pointed out in the presentation itself—but the same rules do not apply to the standard 10-min FP/PS session.

I added, however, that this does *not* mean that there should be *no* element of personal appeal for persuasion or nothing of entertainment value in the short FP/PS CP, leaving only the transfer of raw data. After all, since this research represents the fruits of the researchers' hard work it is presumably of some importance to the speaker, and thus it is imperative to inject some of one's self into the presentation in order to impart that research data or those findings more effectively. Tell your research story, as a narrative, like a novel, I said.

In short, although the proportions of each PIE component will almost certainly differ between my 1-hour special 'lecture' and a 10-min research FP/PS, this should never imply that the latter should be completely devoid of persuasive or entertaining elements. The trick for novice academic conference presenters, as this book will show, is to embed and maximize the impact of all three dimensions without mitigating or reducing the scientific/academic veracity or import of your data.

Questions and Exercises for Chapter 3

1. Give two reasons why the TED presentation model might not always be suitable for academic conference presentations.
2. In what ways are business, debate, and instructional presentations distinct from academic conference research presentations?

3. List five ways in which academic CPs tend to differ from standardized debate or public-speaking contests.
4. What are the three essential dimensions of a CP?
5. To what extent do you think the balance between these dimensions should be in a scientific research FP/PS CP?
6. In what types of presentations are the use of humor or personal anecdotes most effective? How do you think they can be best applied to standard FP/PS presentations if at all?

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4 Affective Factors Influencing Conference Presentation Performance

Abstract

In this chapter, we will briefly discuss some of the external factors that may affect conference performance. We will reexplore the triangulation of the persuasive, informative, entertainment dimensions in terms of static versus dynamic speech, contrasting the notion of 'reading a paper' with the broader concept of 'performing a presentation.' We will also discuss other affective factors such as the value of a CP versus that of a research paper publication and the presenter's external motives for participating in a conference.

4.1 Static Versus Dynamic English

It is usually quite evident that most novice academic conference speakers take great care to ensure both the veracity and quality of their presentation slides. But great slides are no substitute for lack of dynamics in the actual presentation. After all, slides by themselves do not constitute a presentation. Rather, it is the spoken text which accompanies, or better, actualizes, the slides that are at the center of what we mean by 'a presentation,' the slides primarily serving as a visual reference point to ground what the presenter is saying. This is why simply reading the text directly from one's slides has little or no impact upon the audience—it is not really a presentation but a matter of reading notes. Unfortunately, however, novice presenters do often render their CPs as verbatim readings of their publications—which is much the same as a writer confusing the process of writing with typing.

In order to make an impact upon the audience, the speaker has to expand and elaborate beyond the slide content (and I will offer numerous, detailed examples as to how to do this in Parts IV and V of this book). One of the main purposes of performing any type of CP should be to convey one's passion or interest in the

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topic. If the presenter is simply reading notes—reporting as opposed to presenting—that passion more easily becomes muted—imagine, for example, a potential suitor reading a marriage proposal to a partner from a prepared text! Not surprisingly, there exists a fairly widespread belief that having a written text in front of the speaker indicates that he or she has not done their CP homework.

However, that being said, I have observed some conference speakers who literally 'read' their papers from prepared notes but still managed to be very effective presenters—usually due to any of three factors. These include some combination of (1) their existing status as high-profile researchers, (2) the importance/novelty of their content, and/or (3) the sonic qualities of their voice and/or dynamic intonation. However, unless the speaker is a particularly engaging orator with compelling content, explicitly expanding one's CP beyond the notion of 'reading a paper' serves as good basic advice.

Most of the conference presenters I observed were quite competent in terms of performing static English—oral set pieces, the type of prepared texts suited for public announcements—but struggled with more dynamic, open-ended speech events. So, the central question is, how might presenters be able to better manage these dynamic skills?

First, readers should know reading from prepared scripts or directly from the slides, judiciously carried out, *can* be effective. In several CPs that I observed, the summary of findings was read precisely as it was written on the slides. If any section is to be read verbatim, the summary is often the best choice, since it reinforces the 'take-home' points of a short FP/PS. In any section of text however, when key points were stated more deliberately, and/or repeated or reinforced through a combination of spoken and written modes, the rhetorical flow of the CP as a whole could be more easily absorbed by the audience. However, if slides are read verbatim, presumably for the purpose of emphasis or to highlight key summative points, the speaker should do so slowly. Paraphrasing the written slide texts can also be particularly helpful as a means of reinforcing the audience's attention on the most significant findings.

However, largely due to a lack of confidence regarding the dynamic aspects of English performance or simple stage fright, several novice and NNES presenters I observed seemed to willfully avoid those situations in which more dynamic skills might be demanded by simply reading their prepared hand notes. These presenters appeared to be (and on some occasions, actually admitted in interviews) that they had more interest in just getting through—merely completing—their presentation than actually conveying their important, interesting, or meticulously researched data or findings. Of course, this 'let's just get through it' mentality obviates the main point of presenting at an international conference in the first place—the real purpose of which should be to inspire and enlighten, as well as to transmit and receive both ideas and knowledge. Simply finishing a speech in order to gain a presentation 'credit' will not achieve that.

Through subsequent interviews with several academic presenters, I've been able to identify four likely causes behind this phenomenon. These constitute the following four sections.

4.2 The Concept of 'Reading a Paper' Versus Employing Persuasive Rhetoric

Academic presentations are often referred to in conference Web sites and pamphlets as 'papers,' most significantly in the fact that a potential presenter invariably submits a proposal through the 'call for papers' link. This may lead one to think that the conference is primarily a venue for verbalizing in report form what one has, or hopes to be, published. And this is not entirely inaccurate, particularly in the hard sciences. However, the difference between 'reading a paper' and 'presenting' is becoming increasingly significant, especially given that the notion of a conference as being a mere assembly at which you 'report' your published paper by 'announcing' it is gradually diminishing in favor of the idea of the conference as a multimodal, socially semiotic key event for the discourse community.

As I mentioned earlier, even the densest data-based research report presentation generally should contain or assume some persuasive value, which, as a result, places more emphasis on the interaction between speaker and audience. The speaker is expected to appeal to the audience as peers within the community, particularly in the current era when extremely elaborate presentation software tools are readily available and can be readily deployed even by non-experts. Thus, the need to employ interactive and/or interpersonal skills and to use the occasion to make one's research processes and findings appeal to the audience more effectively is now paramount. But, as long as some presenters think of the presentation as a case of merely 'reading a paper,' they will likely to be inclined to also think of the opportunity as little more than a mechanical verbalization of the published version, and thus it will likely lack persuasive value.

There is also a tendency for many young academics to initially treat CPs as 'reports' inasmuch as they are indeed conveying data and/or findings. However, the connotation of the term 'reporting' is also much narrower than that of a giving a presentation. 'Reports' tend to be delivered to insiders who are familiar with the background, the audience, and the surrounding texts. Reports tend to be narrowly located within an existing discourse (as with the company financial 'report' delivered during a meeting of the board of directors). Reports tend to focus solely on conveying data and, as such, tend to eschew any interpersonal element. And while there is unquestionably a 'reporting' element in a CP, this would normally constitute only a part of the whole presentation. If other elements of a CP are absent with only the 'reporting' function emphasized, the persuasive and entertainment dimensions will be lost.

4.3 Academia Viewed as 'Non-Entertainment'

The tendency toward thinking of CPs as persuasive forms of communication, designed to make an appeal to the listener, also demands that the speaker employs some elements of entertainment value. But in the rather conservative world of

academia, particularly in certain cultural milieus, the use of flashy whistles and bells may be more redolent of crass advertising and indulgent personal showmanship, rather than serious, sober scholarship.

Here is where TED presentations may serve as an effective counterexample. The scholarship underlying the more academic TED presentations is often at an extremely high level, but the presenters are also very aware of engaging their audiences and thus make great efforts to capture their attention. This need not imply gimmickry, but it does mean paying close attention to one's more visceral presentation skills. After all, if an idea is worthy of conveyance, then it should be conveyed with convincing enthusiasm.

I do not think this virtue can be entirely disconnected from those cultures which place a high value on service, cultures in which the customer is treated as king. After all, if we think of an audience as a type of customer, then we owe them our best presentation skills and energy, as a type of professional service. Presumably, the CP is being performed primarily for the audience's benefit, and not just so that the speaker than buttress their CVs or check off a requirement to appease their superiors.

I say this because many novice presenters whom I've met, and whose presentations I observed, admitted that they really did not choose to do the presentation themselves. They were either forced to by their superiors or professors, or they felt that it is a mandatory endeavor in order to pursue their professional and/or academic careers. It is often seen as a fulfillment of an obligation, or a rite of training passage, more than as an opportunity to enlighten and inform their peers.

Fostering enthusiasm for propagating your findings, or establishing a real wish or need to convey your results, ideally *should* be the underlying motive for presenting—not merely because the department head says, 'It's your turn.' I cannot help but wonder if those academics who actually look forward to giving CPs should not be given some extra work-related credits or rewards for their efforts—benefits which might positively inspire those who would otherwise not be inclined to present.

4.4 The Academic Database Value of Publications Versus Presentations

In many academic institutions, the weighted value of a presentation on one's academic record might be only a fraction of that of a publication (often regardless of any related impact factors). In fact, in most academic communities much more time and effort are usually put into producing publications (one might note how many books, research papers, and courses have been established to teach academic writing, as opposed to CPs). As a result, the presentation is usually treated only as an afterthought, an intermediary trial stage in the process of producing the RP.

But, as many conference presenters have begun to notice, an excellent presentation can make instant connections with prominent members of the audience, leading to fruitful future contacts and collaborations. It can spark an immediate

interest and follow-up dialogue in a way that publications often cannot or will not be able to. The visceral face-to-face setting that presentations provide can make interesting or important findings hard for the audience to ignore, whereas it is easy for readers to skip over pages in a journal. Having academic institutions add more database value or impact factor weighting to presentations could help foster a better 'presentation culture' among young academics. At the very least, an expanded recognition of the practical merits of performing high-quality CPs is called for.

Questions and Exercises for Chapter 4

1. In what cases or under what limitations may it be acceptable to read directly off a CP slide or prepared hand notes?
2. What professional advantages might performing a CP have over publishing a paper?
3. What qualities distinguish CPs from 'reading a report'?
4. Which portions of a CP tend to demand dynamic, as opposed to static, forms of English?

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5 'Native' Versus Non-native English Speakers (NES/NNES) and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) at Academic Conferences

Abstract

At many academic conferences, the number of non-native English-speaking participants is greater than that of native English speakers. But is the distinction an accurate or helpful one? In this chapter, we will first look briefly at the NES-NNES distinction and discuss its relevance in terms of performing CPs. Related to this NES-NNES debate, one of the more interesting and influential trends in applied linguistics over the past several years has been the gradual emergence and acceptance of English as a lingua franca (ELF), wherein NNES non-standard English forms are viewed and used as a distinct and legitimate variety of English. Academic conferences, given their international scope, serve as an almost perfect paradigm of the phenomenon. Therefore, we will discuss some of the features of ELF, the social/psychological effects it can have upon conference participants, and its impact upon conference speech events such as CPs.

5.1 'Native' Versus Non-native English Speakers (NES/NNES) and Academic Conference Performance

With the proliferation of academic conferences throughout the world, and with English serving as the lingua franca for the vast majority of these, the question of the primacy of the NES or disadvantages faced by NNES may well weigh on the minds of many attendees. But in terms of its impact upon managing conference discourse, how legitimate is the NES-NNES divide?

For example, to what extent might citizens of the Philippines and Singapore to be considered native speakers of English? If the tongue is not spoken at home but remains the lingua franca of the workplace and or of education, does that suffice?

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What about Canadians and Australian citizens who grew up using the language but were born into a non-English linguistic milieu and/or hail from a family that speaks another language at home? What about a Korean citizen born and raised in the US who moves to Korea during adolescence and has rarely used English since? One can construct many hypothetical cases in which the boundaries of 'nativeness' are highly indistinct and must not be conflated with proficiency, let alone CP efficacy. Kirkpatrick (2007) offers several similar examples and refers to such phenomena as 'L1 shifting.'

The long-standing standard for delineating between native and non-native speakers of a given language was established by Bloomfield (1933) who claimed that the first language a human learns to speak is his or her 'native' language. In reality, such distinctions are clearly not this simple, a quality that has become magnified in an increasingly mobile and multicultural world. Much of the academic debate that has subsequently taken place involves the relative merits or demerits of NES and NNES as English teachers, an interesting discussion to be sure, but one that falls outside the scope of this book.

In fact, the once-clear-cut and widely used dichotomy of native vs. non-native speakers of a language has come under fire over the past twenty or so years. Paikeday (1985), after interviewing a number of world-renowned linguists on the matter, concluded that the notion of the native speaker as an intuitive arbiter of grammatical correctness was a shibboleth. Kramsch (1997) notes how even those falling under the general rubric of a 'native speaker' will speak differently according to class, region, generation, an occupation—in short, there is no 'unitary native speaker' (p. 359).

Davies (2003) views NS and NNS as functionally indistinguishable categories. The only distinctive quality of a native speaker, he argues, is biographical—that the speaker attained the skill as a child. In terms of developing intuitions about grammar, the ability to deploy the language in discourse to make the preferred real-time pragmatic choices, to be creative in that acquired language, is something that a NNS can achieve through contact and practice. White and Genesee (1996) report that levels of performance between NS and NNS are often indistinguishable, although Medgyes (1994), himself a proficient NNES, argues that at certain levels of interaction there will always remain a proficiency gap.

In regard to the dominant role of English, Phillipson (1992) in particular has been vocal in asserting that the notion of NESs as keepers or arbiters of English standards or norms is redolent of a colonial mentality and does not address the complex linguistic realities that mark modern societies, such as Kachru's (1986) notion of 'nativization,' in which English has been adapted and grafted onto local norms, as well as his later (Kachru, 1992) replacement of the NES-NNES dichotomy with 'English-using speech fellowships.' Phillipson writes, 'The native speaker ideal dates from a time when language teaching was indistinguishable from culture teaching' (1992, p. 13). Both Norton (1997) and Widdowson (1994) argue that English belongs to all speakers, regardless as to whether the form is standard or non-standard; it is not a commodity leased out by NESs.

The binary division of NNS-NNES is thus now widely considered an outdated notion based on the dubious premise of monolingual societies, one which ignores code-switching among multilingual speakers. Mesthrie and Bhatt (2008) notes that in fact most English speakers live in heterogeneous societies involving negotiated interactions among speakers of multiple languages, involving '…a polyphony of codes' (p. 36).

Kachru (1982) also argues that it is cultural context that constrains ways of encoding interaction, from which different discourse patterns emerge. Kachru further accused proponents of more traditionalist views of practicing 'deficit linguistics,' arguing that these approaches tended to treat difference as deficit. The use of localized resources that add flavor to English has since widely come to be seen as an authentic and appropriate type of emerging variety (Canagarajah, 1999). Bambgose (1998) describes a constant pulling between NNS and NS norms, creating a need for some sort of codification. In short, it seems that in many cases, it can be extremely difficult to clearly distinguish between the two categories.

Nonetheless, even if boundaries between the categories of NES and NNES might in many ways be blurred and indistinct, this in no way negates the fact that there are many speakers of English who are explicitly, and by any standard, considered native speakers (I would include myself in that category), as well as many competent English speakers who would consider themselves, without hesitation or qualification, to be non-native (This would include many of my Japanese colleagues, for example, regardless of their proficiency levels.).

One may well ask, however, when it comes to performance at events such as international conferences, why should there be any underlying assumption that those who would be widely considered NESs will perform better than their NNES peers? Swales (1990) once remarked that NNESs are disadvantaged at academic conferences, as English is invariably used the conference lingua franca. In one sense, this is indisputably and instinctively true. Wallwork (2016) devotes an entire section of his book on English presentations to considerations that NESs should make when engaging NNES interlocutors (the practical application of what is generally known as 'accommodation theory'). However, one claim that cannot be made with assuredness is that being a native speaker of a given language automatically bestows upon that speaker proficiency in the actual articulation or production of that language, let alone the ability to better analyze or understand its inherent qualities.

Thus, one cannot make the claim with certainty that native speakers of any given language will always be superior in terms of language performance in set speech events, such as CPs, than non-natives. Using TED Talks as an example, it is immediately obvious that one's degree of 'nativeness' in English is far from a reliable meaningful indicator of one's ability to perform an effective English CP. Nor did my academic conference observations indicate that English language 'non-nativeness' is inherently problematic when engaging others in meaningful spoken interaction during other conference speech events.

Questions and Exercises for Section 5.1

1. Given what is written in this chapter, do you think that the NNES-NES distinction is meaningful in terms of CP performance? How so?
2. What conferencing English difficulties are NES novices or young academics and NNESs likely to share?

5.2 English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and Its Role in Academic Conferences (An Overview)

There is still a popular, widespread view among the general public that English somehow inherently 'belongs to' the Anglo-American sphere and that any variations thereof are somehow insufficient, incomplete, fallible, or immature, and therefore undesirable as teaching or learning models. As a result—and despite repudiation from both linguists and educators—Filipinos and Singaporeans with English teaching qualifications may find it harder to find English teaching employment in, say, China, Thailand, South Korea, or Japan than relatively unqualified Anglo-Americans. Local English teachers (LETs) may be undervalued or considered ill-equipped to perform certain pedagogical tasks. As a result of this, if one maintains a strict, value-laden NNS-NNES distinction, it may be to the detriment of those learners who want to master English as an international academic lingua franca from fully qualified professionals.

This dubious belief may also serve as a psychological stumbling block to developing proficiency and cross-cultural competence in English. If one is not already an Anglo-American, nor intends to become a resident or citizen, it is unlikely that one can hope to attain such a standard. Nor would one, in fact, even require it.

Why? The majority of spoken English exchanges that take place now are *not* between NESs alone (however defined), and not even between NESs and NNESs, but in fact between two (or more) non-native English speakers.

When Lithuanian businessmen talk to Korean bureaucrats, they will invariably use English. When Venezuelan politicians hold discussions with Lebanese academics, one can again be almost certain that English will be the lingua franca. Let us take Europe as a microcosm of this phenomenon. The English-speaking population of the continent as of 2012 was 256,876,220 out of a total population of 500,000,000 (or about 51%). This includes 65,478,252 falling under a loosely defined rubric of 'native speakers,' the vast majority of these from Great Britain and Ireland, but also 191,397,968 people deemed non-native English speakers, *almost three times as many as the 'natives.'* Similar, or greater, percentages exist for much of Asia.

One of the most notable working usages of English being used as a multinational lingua franca is within ASEAN, wherein the working language is explicitly stated to be English (as opposed to the EU, which lists 23 official languages). In many ways then, ASEAN epitomizes a contemporary model of English, where it is used as a lingua franca across the Southeast Asian region.

The movement toward a recognition and acceptance of English used by NNESs in academic circles has been gathering momentum worldwide. Mauranen, Perez-Llantada, and Swales (2010) remark upon the exponential growth of not only scholarly journals in recent years but also the number of both international and local academic conferences in which English serves as the lingua franca.

Compiled academic speech corpora, such as the Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE) (https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/c/corpus/corpus?page=home;c=micase;cc=micase), the English as a Lingua Franca in Academic Settings (ELFA) corpus (http://www.helsinki.fi/englanti/elfa/elfacorpus), the Vienna Oxford Corpus of English (VOICE) Project (http://www.univie.ac.at/voice/page/what_is_voice), and various Asian International Corpus of English (ICE) projects compiling corpora of Philippine and Singaporean, among other spoken Asian Englishes (http://ice-corpora.net/ice/), capture forms endemic to specific academic genres which can provide guidelines or descriptive templates for academic conference presenters and participants, particularly for NNESs. As opportunities for direct academic interaction increase then so too does the importance of competency in academic English speech.

However, the production of spoken academic English need not mean mimicking or mastering the English of 'inner-circle' speakers (here referring to Kachru's [1985] grouping of inner, outer, and expanding circles of English usage). Distinctive, repeated patterns of non-standard NNES English usage have been noted in the VOICE, ELFA, and ICE corpora in particular.

This has enormous implications for the establishment of what we might call a sense of 'language ownership.' It means that Anglo-American Englishes are no longer the only standard, and thus, there is no longer any good reason to view adherence to these forms as the only meaningful measures of English competency or 'correctness.'

Over the past eight years, I have attended over sixty international academic conferences (most as an active participant, some as a researcher), 15 in Japan, just under 40 held elsewhere in Asia, plus 6 others scattered around the globe. By calculating presentation entries in 14 of those conference programs, I noted that from a total of 48 English language presentations (at the smallest conference) to over 600 (at the largest), that speakers claiming either residency or citizenship of the so-called English inner core countries accounted for *less than 5%* of total speakers. Granted, none of the events I attended were being held in the inner-circle Anglo-American sphere, so one might naturally expect a greater number of local or regional attendees, but this very diversity of conference locations also serves to

underscore the point of the increasing usage of English as an academic lingua franca. These numbers further reinforce the point that effective and/or productive interactions in English are no longer beholden to an Anglo-American model.

Academically, the movement that has established the role and functions of non-native English is known as English as a lingua franca (ELF). The fundamental argument underpinning the emergence of ELF is that *intelligibility*, not conformity to alleged native speaker standards, is the goal of English usage as it is used in dynamic, situated contexts (see Seidlhofer, 2004; Jenkins, 2007). This means that while much of the spoken language used by NNES may be considered non-canonical by traditional standards, systematic patterns do occur that indicate ELF has become a valid variety of English and is not just a malformed interlanguage or intermediate stage of 'learner English' inhibited by interference from the speaker's mother tongue.

Questions and Exercises for Section 5.2

1. The author writes that '…global or world English is no longer beholden to an Anglo-American model.' List three reasons why.
2. Name two characteristics of ELF that mark it as a variety as distinct from an intermediate stage of 'broken English.'

5.3 How ELF Forms Emerge

Mauranen (2012) describes the process of ELF development as involving a combination of microsocial, macrosocial, and cognitive factors. The microsocial dimension begins with 'approximations' of English (often based upon the speaker's mother tongue), one example of which might be the usage of '*so to say'*, as opposed to the standard, '*so to speak.'* However, such forms often eventually become fixed usages between speakers of mutually comprehensible varieties of English. As mentioned earlier, such fixed usages have been widely noted in both VOICE and ICE corpora.

At a macrosocial level, Mauranen describes these forms as 'similects' (as opposed to dialects) since they represent parallel cross-linguistic influences, which distinguishes their usage from that of a 'learner language.' Initially, the habit of approximation leads to increased variability and complexity in the use of English, as ELF forms are inherently heterogeneous, variable, diffuse, and fluid. However, once fixed, these forms can often actually display greater structural simplicity (Trudgill, 2011; Kusters, 2003), due to the deployment of features such as the use of syntactical shortcuts and the regularization of morphological forms.

Once such 'unsettling' features of language enter a linguistic system it is forced to reshuffle itself. If we accept that grammatical choices, for example, are driven by discourse needs, these emerging forms must be accepted as valid varieties. This requires all English speakers, whether 'native' or not, to accommodate the forms used by those outside of their own community. Seidlhofer (2001) refers to this phenomenon as expanding the innate capacity of the English language in order to meet the goals and purposes required by its users.

Samples of emerging ELF forms.

If spoken ELF corpora indicate that non-native or non-canonical forms have become standardized, what are some of the more common lexico-grammatical patterns that have emerged? Several have been cited by VOICE Project director Seidlhofer (2004, p. 240) and are reproduced in Table 5.1:

ELFA Corpus ELF features (as cited by Mauranen & Ranta, 2009) include those listed in Table 5.2:

In the vast majority of cases in which these ELF forms are/were used above, they in no way impeded the conveyance or comprehension of the intended message. Samples were taken from both monologic and dialogic/polylogic speech events. All the forms listed were recurring, systematic, and based on these criteria, must be considered as non-L1 variants, as opposed to being designated as 'erroneous' language (Cogo & Dewey, 2006).

Table 5.1 ELF lexico-grammatical forms from the VOICE corpus (http://www.univie.ac.at/voice/)

1. A shift in the use of articles (including some preference for zero articles): *Our countries have signed agreement about this. (standard = 'an agreement')*
2. Frequent invariant question tags: *You're very busy today, isn't it? (standard = ...aren't you?)*
3. Treating 'who' and 'which' as interchangeable relative pronouns: *The picture who,* or, *a person which*
4. A shift of patterns involving preposition use: *We have to study about X (standard = no preposition: 'We have to study X')*
5. A preference for bare and/or full infinitive usage over the use of gerunds: *I look forward to see you tomorrow (standard = ... seeing you)*
6. Extension in the collocational field of words with high semantic generality: *take an operation (standard = have or undergo an operation)*
7. Increased explicitness: *How long time?* instead of *How long?*
8. Exploited redundancy/ellipsis of the objects/complements of transitive verbs: *I wanted to go with,* or, *you can borrow (standard = ...go with you, borrow it)*

Table 5.2 ELF lexico-grammatical features noted in the ELFA corpus (http://www.helsinki.fi/englanti/elfa/elfacorpus)

1. Unmarked third-person singular verbs ('He go…')
2. An interchangeability of relative pronouns
3. The flexible use of articles
4. The treatment of uncountable nouns as plurals
5. The use of a standard, all-purpose question tag
6. The use of the demonstrative 'this' with both singular and plural nouns ('this people')
7. The varied use of prepositions
8. The overapplication of general/common verbs

5.4 ELF Versus World Englishes (Varieties)

At this point, one important distinction needs to be made. The NNES English forms noted in ELF corpora should not be conflated with the equally emerging category of World English*es* (plural). The latter, conversely, proffers legitimacy onto various local forms of English (Singaporean Singlish or Filipino English for example), but these are local *varieties*, not a 'World English' (singular) that serves as a common uniting linguistic force between NNESs.

Both Jenkins (2009) and Seidlhofer (2006) warn that ELF does not constitute a variety in the same sense that local variants of 'World Englishes' do and that the two must not be confused. ELF is a 'contact language' between two people who do not share a common mother tongue or culture and thus choose English as a means of communication. ELF is not culture-based or tied to a locality, whereas English varieties are largely products of local cultural factors (Firth, 2006). Local varieties employ culturally loaded terms from the substrate language, but, being localized, such forms do not generally appear in ELF corpora. These qualities distinguish ELF from local varietals.

Kirkpatrick (2009) notes that while varieties of non-standard English can manifest universal features and are thus not merely by-products of a local or mother tongue, they are generally marked by distinct pronunciation, not syntax. However, Kirkpatrick (2010) also makes an interesting point regarding the influence of local cultures on both pragmatics and turn-taking within ELF encounters: While ELF users will tend to edit out localized lexis (if they are users of a specific English variety), culturally influenced pragmatic norms may *not* be equally filtered within an ELF context.

For example, indirectness and hesitancy are often markers of politeness within many Asian cultures (which lends a certain cultural commonality to linguistically diverse organizations such as ASEAN), but these might be viewed very differently according to the pragmatic norms of those not from the region. Many Asian cultures, for example, place a premium upon allowing a senior speaker to complete a turn before asking a question or commenting, a quality that may not be reciprocated in some non-Asian cultures and settings. As we will see, this can have a notable

impact on the management of conference Q&A and discussion sessions, as well as affecting participant interactions during symposia and colloquia.

Within ELF research, an increasing concern for author identity (often expressed according to local cultural values) in terms of textual preferences and organization has also been noted, over conformity to standard English (Mauranen et al., 2010). A further trend noted in ELF corpora is the tendency for ELF users to coin new ad hoc terms based on the morphological resources of English at their disposal. This may include the adoption of linguistic preferences from the speaker's first language even in international encounters (Mauranen et al., 2010).

Among these are what is called 'text reflexivity' (Mauranen, 1993), which refers to the use of reflexive expressions in the 'discourse about discourse', which can aid in enhancing the interpersonal dimension of speech 'or, conversely make it appear didactic or patronizing', and an increased use of engagement markers (Martin-Martin & Burgess, 2004). Fairclough (2006) notes the phenomenon of 'interdiscursive hybridity,' in which both local *and* standard forms of English become homogenized—a manifestation of 'glocalization.' The process of Englishization among NNESs is described by Swales (2004) as being both 'centripetal' (moving toward a homogeneous standardization of discourse) and 'centrifugal' in force, heterogeneous and diverse, exhibiting both the specific textual and rhetorical preferences of the author or speaker, with the two forces working together.

Therefore, just as with the NNES-NES dichotomy, an absolute distinction between the plurality of Englishes (as in 'varieties of English') and ELF cannot always be drawn. Sometimes, the boundaries between common features of varieties and established ELF forms can be indistinct. Some of these can be noted in Kortmann's (2010) World Atlas of Morphological Variation in English (WAMVE) feature catalog. Among the most common syntactical features shared among several varieties of English ('angloversals') are those listed in Table 5.3 (taken from the same volume, p. 407):

In order to distinguish ELF from such a taxonomy of English angloversals, Mauranen (2012) has termed the usage of ELF as a type of 'multilect.' This implies that while an ELF speaker's L1 may influence their use of English, more is

Table 5.3 Angloversal top candidate features according to WAMVE (Kortmann, 2010), p. 407

1. Lack of inversion in main clause yes/no questions
2. *Me* used instead of*I*in coordinate subjects
3. *Never* used as a preverbal past tense negator
4. Adverbs used in the form as adverbials
5. Absence of plural marking after measure nouns
6. Lack of inversion and auxiliaries in *wh*-questions
7. Multiple negation/negative concord
8. Degree modifier adverbs lacking *–ly*
9. Special forms/phrases for second-person plural pronouns
10. Levelling of difference between present perfect and simple past
11. Doubled comparatives and superlatives

determined by whom they are interacting with and within what constructs or settings the interaction is taking place. For example, there is no particular 'Indonesian English' common to ELF speakers from that country. The multilect description means that any particular usage of an ELF as used by an Indonesian will be determined more by the makeup of the speech interactants rather than the influence of the mother tongue. As a further example, one might notice how a Singaporean academic interacts at a conference. He or she may use the local variety of Singaporean English (or 'Singlish') when speaking to local colleagues on personal matters but will engage others with a more international variety, generally one that falls under the rubric of an ELF. During formalized speech events, such as CPs, local varieties will almost always be eschewed in favor of a more widely intelligible ELF form.

Questions and Exercises for Sections 5.3 and 5.4

1. Summarize the three steps regarding how ELF forms emerge.
2. In what three important ways is ELF distinct from 'World Englishes'?
3. What syntactic or lexico-grammatical features tend to cross the boundaries between ELF and 'World Englishes'?

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Implications of ELF for ESP/EAP Teachers, Learners, and International Academic Conference Discourse

6

Abstract

In this chapter, we will discuss the relevance of the emergence of ELF in terms of its application to the ESP/EAP classroom, the psychological impact upon NNES for academic conference discourse, and the related issue of developing or mastering intelligible pronunciation. In this section, I will attempt to perform a bit of 'pathology'—suggesting that much of the anxiety associated with CPs is self-inflicted and preventable. I will advocate a type of cognitive therapy as a possible treatment—meaning that the way we view English, who we think allegedly 'owns' it, and what we believe the intrinsic function or purpose of a CP is—can positively or negatively influence performance. I'll suggest that certain popular preemptive remedies, such as focusing heavily upon fixing 'accents' to approximate a NES model and concentrating on attaining lexico-grammatical perfection in speech, far from being curative priorities, can actually serve as impediments to producing effective performance outcomes.

6.1 Pedagogical and Classroom Considerations for the ESP/EAP Instructor

Developing oral conference English presentation skills has become a staple of postgraduate programs worldwide. EAP programs for NNESs are now commonplace, as academics are expected not only to understand but also to actively partake in the institutional, disciplinary, linguistic, and cultural dimensions associated with academic research and practice (Hyland, 2006; Gillett, 1989). ESP courses prepare learners for the application of these skills within their relevant academic/professional fields, necessitating a productive comprehension of not only of the generic structure

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of academic oral presentations but also of the tenor and lexico-grammatical components within specific professional fields.

Eriksson and Gustafsson (2008) refer to this as part of an ESP 'intervention' for their chemistry students in Sweden, with the manner in which speech text templates or models are to be applied becoming a major concern. They argue that the transferability of templates might actually be counterproductive and instead advocate creating more genre awareness among learners. Kaur and Ali (2018) note that most previous research has focused only on parts of oral presentations, often neglecting the rhetorical structure as a totality, particularly the multimodal features that bind speech, written text, visuals, and the moves made between these. While noting that the form of an academic presentation is linear, it is not rigid—as there appear to be a variety of optional moves available to the speaker. They also argue that more research on these multimodal features needs to be conducted in order to effectively apply the teaching of CP skills within their (Malaysian) context.

Tuomainen (2016) advocates a blended learning approach, utilizing both online and onsite resources, based on his experiences teaching Finnish business and economics students. Tuomainen notes that such a blended approach particularly helped learners overcome the difficulty of adopting a suitable tenor for delivering academic oral presentations. Cai (2016) notes that the application of teaching oral presentation (and other EAP) skills to law and politics students in China has marked a positive transition from exam-oriented general English. Fellner (2011) successfully utilized experiential language learning, involving cyclical practice and teacher modeling, as a foundation for developing the English presentation skills of his low proficiency in Japanese science and engineering students. Scaffolding in this way, he argues, can help to overcome a lack of core fluency.

Wilson and Brooks (2014) applied similarly scaffolded preparation activities in teaching poster session skills, such as developing learner confidence by starting with simple self-introduction forms and then gradually moving to narrower academic content that required linguistic micro-skills. They also used videos of previous performances, to aid their Japanese learners. In Hong Kong, Bankowski (2010) also utilized a scaffolding approach to teaching oral presentations, hers involving gradual stages of training, first in research skills, that followed by analytical skill training, before embarking on actual presentation skills. In this way, the cohesion between research questions, introductions, outlines, and conclusions can be more readily maintained.

Januin and Stephen (2015) suggest that oral presentation skills should be treated as a specific element of discourse competency as a whole, with emphasis applied in particular to the public-speaking skills, oral presentation structure, and linguistic knowledge. Velikaya (2017) notes the central role that prosodic features (pitch, intensity, and duration) played in determining presentation coherence and cohesion for her Russian economics and finance students.

All the aforementioned local studies address the specific application of teaching and practicing oral presentation skills to NNESs as a central feature of ESP/EAP courses. As we have seen, without some element of scaffolding in skill development and consideration given to the textual, generic, and prosodic qualities of academic

presentations it is likely that novice NNES academics will find presenting in English to be an overwhelmingly daunting task. One emerging area of interest that may mitigate these concerns, however, comprises our next section.

Exercise for Section 6.1
Rank the following in terms of what you consider priorities in developing academic oral presentation skills for NNES: (a) the effective use of prosody, (b) an understanding of the generic structure of a CP, (c) greater linguistic skill, (d) developing multimodal skills. Give reasons for your choices.

6.2 What is the Relevance of the Legitimization of ELF for Conferencing English?

The fact that ELF has become established as a legitimate variety of English should have a positive influence among many NNESs as there is often an unnecessary psychological submission or sense of linguistic inferiority held toward the native English speaker. The implicit ELF response to this concern would be that there are ways around this issue. Many NNESs I have encountered worry about their English being 'imperfect.' Many express concern about 'making mistakes' in English and not being able to express themselves as precisely as they'd like. But, as we have noted, NNESs now represent the majority of English speakers worldwide. Belittling or criticizing an NNES for falling short of an Anglo-American model looks more and more like a relic of the nineteenth century and is almost unheard of at international conferences. In short, *one doesn't have to sound like a native-speaker to be an effective or competent English communicator, particularly in formalized international settings!*

Noting the acceptance of nonstandard forms should supply some relief to NNES academic English presenters, because the promulgation of many of these new standards may free them from the habit of concentrating too much on maintaining concordance with grammatical minutiae that often holds little communicative value. However, NNES presenters emboldened by this new acceptance of non-canonical forms must keep in mind the caveat that the new standards set by the normalization of ELF forms currently apply only to the mode of *speech*, not to written English! A failure to conform to the canonical forms of formal written English, such as RPs, may well adversely affect whether a paper is accepted for publication or not. Neither does recognition of the validity and applicability of ELF forms mean that all spoken forms and utterances made in academic forums are of equal communicative value. The acceptance of an ELF variety does not imply that concerns about unprepared and/or sloppy English are unfounded or unnecessary. To address this, both preferred and non-preferred ELF forms will be introduced throughout this book.

The point being made here is actually twofold. One is that during the CP, presenters can (perhaps better, *will*) make grammatical or lexical slips that often do not affect the semantic value or uptake of what they want to convey. These should be treated not as instances of emerging ELF forms but as simple errors in articulation. Given the real-time nature of speech, particularly when performed under the pressure of facing a live audience, even NSs of any language are prone to similar slips.

However, audience members will be unlikely to be confused if a speaker alludes to a PowerPoint slide and says, as noted in one of many similar cases of noun–verb non-agreement that I observed, '*The initial trial appear to be productive*' (versus the 'ideal' form '*The initial trial appeared to be productive*'). In real-time speech, audience comprehension converges on what they expect the speaker to say, not on the minutiae of what the speaker actually said—that is unless the uptake is semantically or pragmatically ambiguous. 'Errors' of this sort may not even be consciously processed by the audience.

The second point being made here is that conference attendees can and will often utilize English forms that may not be canonical but neither are they necessarily products of lexical or grammatical deficiency. Many are likely to be manifestations of English being used as an ELF, deployed by the speaker as determined by the real-time nature of the environment, the makeup of the listener(s) or audience, the communicative purpose, and the speaker's self-identity. Given these qualities, the English used is likely to feel less distant to the speaker—they are more likely to maintain a sense of ownership over the language they produce, as opposed to those approaching English as a type of distant 'other.'

Questions and Exercises for Section 6.2

1. Why should academic conference NNES speakers and participants not be overly concerned with grammatical minutiae in speech?
2. Why do we often overlook surface errors in speech?
3. To what degree should NNESs be highly cognizant of surface features, such as syntax and lexis, in the spoken language? List three features in particular do you think represent priorities for mastering and three that can safely be dispensed with for speech.

6.3 Removing the Psychological Burden for NNESs

For ESP/EAP teachers or readers who plan to participate in, or train young academics for, academic conferences, the most interesting product of ELF research is likely the realization that these new standards have emerged in both specific non-native English-speaking interactions worldwide *and* are utilized within specific professional discourse communities. Therefore, rather than trying to mimic a North

American standard that will be almost impossible to attain for the average NNES who has no immediate connection to that region, a more relevant, less intimidating, more internationally accepted standard can be adopted.

This should take some of the pressure off NNES academics, knowing that they are not really at a linguistic disadvantage vis-à-vis 'others' and that the standard held by the majority of the world's English speakers—that is, those who do not have English as an official language or were colonized by Anglophones—is a standard they can realistically aspire to.

In other words, the 'native' model of English is not only impossible and unreasonable for NNESs but also now *unnecessary*. After all, if over 95% of the NNES presenters at these conferences I've attended are have successfully conveyed their research in English, perhaps we should be looking at these successful and competent non-native English speakers as our role models.

Psychologically, this should unload the NNES presenter/participant of a heavy burden and thereby enhance motivation. Trying to imitate a native Californian might be an impossible goal for a hematologist from Armenia and, initially, might make giving up active involvement in international academic discourse a more attractive proposition—but developing one's English conferencing skills to participate in the international specialist discourse community, to engage with educated Korean, Polish, or Brazilian peers, and not to prove one's academic worth to Anglo-American adjudicators, now appears to be a very attainable and more essentially 'global' target.

However, some opposition has already been voiced against this position (see Jenkins [2006] for an outline some of these arguments). One of the most common is that using nonstandard forms is to practice 'deficit linguistics.' Accepting deviations from a NS norm—including code-switching and code-mixing—sets the communicative bar lower, weakens standards, and allows for linguistic sloppiness in which the median stage of interlanguage can become a learner's end goal, resulting in stunted English growth. And certainly, if a Cambodian researcher, for example, is planning to spend a long time in an Anglophone country, it may make sense to use British or American English as a learner target or model. But for only occasional usage, in limited contexts such as international conferences, where the majority of other attendees are not native English speakers, maintaining the 'inner-circle' standard as a goal is simply not realistic.

What I am suggesting is that what both ESP/EAP teachers and learners should do is instead of thinking of ELF forms as somehow 'lowering' the standard, think of them rather as (1) a more legitimate standard—given the distribution of English speakers worldwide—and, in most cases, (2) a more appropriate target variety, for the same reason. Again, this will likely have liberating psychological consequences for many NNES academics.

Let me illustrate this with an example. When I was surveying NNES doctors at my own institution about their English presentation anxieties, one survey question asked to what degree they would feel anxious according to the geographical location of the speech. The results indicated that the further one was removed from their home environment of Japan and next Asia, the more performance anxiety

grew, even if it was the same presentation being performed using the same English (Guest, 2013).

I have noticed this manifested in daily practice at my Japanese university. We currently have ongoing exchange programs with Thai, Taiwanese, Chinese, and Indonesian university medical schools, through which faculty, clinicians, researchers, and students often come to visit and carry out research or practice at our university hospital. The difference in explicit anxiety and tension when our students and staff interact with the NNES visitors, versus those cases when Western visitors appear, is immediate and palpable. Our Japanese hosts and students are far less tongue-tied and more at ease with themselves when dealing with the NNES Asian visitors, even though it is still English that is used as the lingua franca. I suspect that this occurs because there seems to be an undercurrent of consciousness that our NNES Asian partners and the Japanese hosts are in the same boat linguistically, that there is an equal starting line for both, that there is no corrupting power status, and that both should—and likely will be—accepting of each other's English 'shortcomings.'

By no longer treating English as belonging to Anglo-American or inner-circle speakers but rather seeing it as a common tool used by people similar to one's self—perhaps living in the same geographical region—interactions are more likely to become more relaxed, less imbued with debilitating tension. Consequently, as a result of being able to psychologically relax during English communication, and use the tools of language negotiation and repair, NNES speakers may actually come to improve their own English communicative skills as a by-product of engaging in these interactions.

Questions and Exercises for Section 6.3

1. Do you think the type of tension described by NNESs when addressing NESs is widely shared throughout the world? If so, what are the causes?
2. Can you explain the process by which NNESs might actually improve their English skills by interacting with fellow NNESs?

6.4 The Focus upon Spoken Discourse Syntactical Minutiae (Among NNESs)

One recurring problem I've noted among many NNES academics and professionals who self-profess to not having great confidence in their English ability is the belief that a small, technical English error renders the entire utterance unintelligible. I often get emails in English from Japanese friends, colleagues, and associates that invariably contain a few surface errors. These messages are often accompanied or followed by added notes asking some variation of the question '*Can you understand my English at all*?' or apologizing for any and all errors.

Perhaps because of the emphasis that central or national university entrance examination preparation puts upon syntactical English minutiae in many NNES countries, it appears that many NNESs tend to *overestimate* the negative impact of an error. This, of course, makes the user more conscious of error avoidance in the first place and can ultimately hinder actual performance (just as high-profile athletes are likely to perform poorly when focusing too much upon 'avoiding errors').

As a rough approximation, over 90% of the NNES presentations I observed contained spoken passages which grammarians conforming to canonical standards might categorize as 'errors,' but in fewer than 5% of these cases could I say that was I perplexed about meaning or intention myself because of the error, nor did any notable communicative breakdown occur. Rather, the propensity of some to focus upon technical minutiae at the expense of actually conveying a meaningful message, or believing that the former is necessary to achieve the latter, can negatively affect CP performance.

Perhaps the most significant and striking immediate observation I made at the conferences I attended was that there was not always a direct correlation between the speakers' apparent overall English proficiency and effective presentation performance or impact. While one might expect more competent English speakers to consistently have an advantage when presenting in that language, it was evident that many less technically 'proficient' English speakers who had developed excellent CP skills could often perform more effectively than their more viscerally 'fluent' peers. In short, proficiency in performance is not correlated to the degree of native-likeness, a quality that has been previously noted among NNES presenters by Morita (2000), one which should also hold considerable significance for motivating those NNESs who may lack confidence in their general English abilities.

Therefore, although almost all the speakers I observed would be classified as NNESs, this does not necessarily imply an automatic disadvantage in CP skill or performance vis-à-vis NES. In fact, NNES presenters may have to be even more cognizant of performance factors that NES might take for granted, as NNESs tend to actively use a greater range of interactional strategies, often to compensate for other English proficiency shortcomings (Morita, 2002).

Any NNES tendency to focus upon attaining perfect form and hence avoid errors can not only serve as a psychological and performative hindrance but also discourage one from taking a positive approach to new, and potentially challenging, situations—such as giving a CP in English. Yet, as I have noted, many very effective English CPs I observed were full of surface imperfections.

On the left side of Table 6.1 is a list of prototypical phrases I noted that were repeatedly made by effective and impactful NNES conference presenters, with the corresponding canonical or 'standard' forms written on the right. These lexicogrammatical patterns were systematic, recurring, and each was uttered by speakers of at least three different nationalities. Many of these forms might be indicative of an ELF, as they appear to indicate an underlying nonstandard varietal norm, but, more importantly for our purposes here, these NNES phrases were completely comprehensible and did not interfere with the communicated message in any way.

Table 6.1 Nonstandard NNES conference presentation utterances (adapted from 国際学会のためのサバイバル英語術, Guest, 2014)

Actual CP utterances	'Ideal' form of utterance
We placed clamp on X	We placed the clamp on the x
In the case with…	In the case of…
Three colonoscopy were performed during two separate period	Three colonoscopies were performed during two separate periods
Left side approach we will find X	Using a left side approach we will find X
We must take care of X	We must be aware of X
How to X?	How can/should we do X?
First, I present X	First, I will present X
We want to ask why is this so	We want to ask why this is so.
How should we do?	How should we do it?
We discussed to operate this case or not	We discussed whether or not to operate…
Even we had prepared thoroughly…	Even though we had prepared thoroughly
I'm going to deal with like this	I'm going to deal with it like this
We can well observe X	We can easily/clearly observe X
There was so significant difference	There was a very significant difference
Why we chose X is because	The reason we chose X is because
Because of no symptom	Because there was no symptom
May have some advantage to do by endoscope	There may be some advantage doing it…
It is not clear about the background of x	The background of X is not clear
In this technique	Using this technique

We can observe several common patterns emerging across examples here. The future 'will' is often omitted (#7, 10). The cleft or existential usages of 'There is' or 'The reason is' are ignored or used haphazardly (#16, 17, 18). Sentence heads were often chosen more for immediate emphasis than for simply obeying grammatical rules (#4, 19, 20). Embedded question rules are not strictly observed (#6, 8). Grammatical objects (especially 'it') are dropped (#9, 13). Prepositions are chosen for semantic suitability regardless as to whether they are canonically correct or not (#3). Modals, modifiers, and intensifiers (and related lexical) choices were occasionally overgeneralized (#5, 14, 15), and modifiers such as 'whether' (#11) and 'though' in 'even though' (#12) are dropped when the meaning is otherwise clear. Despite these formal variations, all of the speakers quoted from above came appeared to be highly proficient in English.

However, the fact that so-called imperfect speech forms are common to conference presenters (and not just NNESs) in no way exonerates the NNES who pays little or no attention to grammatically delicate areas, such as articles in the written or visual slide text. I noted one CP, for example, in which the nuanced usage of English articles and plurality was ignored, resulting in the written text, '*We used outpatient to test effectiveness*.' In such a case, the reader/listener has no idea if the

speaker means one or many outpatients or whether this patient is the same patient as any others mentioned earlier in the report—both of which are essential to creating or maintaining semantic cohesion.

While I do suggest that inexperienced NNES presenters have an academic peer (not necessarily an NES) check minutiae such as articles and plurals for their written texts, I would also encourage NNESs not to worry unduly about such details in the spoken mode of the CP, especially since varied intonation, supporting visuals, metadiscursive signaling, and even the dynamic speech time opportunity for repair, can serve to make any possible ambiguities clear.

I should also mention to young and novice researchers how crucial performing a visual spell-check of your slides is—and not merely running PowerPoint's built-in spell-check function. Rather, the type of checking I advocate entails going over every word on your slides and, if you have doubts about your English proficiency, doing so with a proficient English speaker, preferably someone familiar with the academic field.

Why? Because while miswriting 'staff' as 'stuff' (to note a fairly common example) might seem insignificant or even invisible to some NNESs (as well as being an item that goes undetected by PowerPoint's spell-check function), it will certainly stand out very much to viewers, who will be far more forgiving of speech errors than written text errors. The semantic difference between '*Thanks to our staff'* and '*Thanks to our stuff'* is, of course, quite significant, the textual equivalent of Romeo prosing to Juliet with a bit of lettuce prominently lodged between his teeth. While listeners may not even process minor speech transgressions, errors like these will divert the audience's attention away from what you actually want to convey.

Questions and Exercises for Section 6.4

1. Why is there a greater need for structural precision and accuracy in written over spoken CP texts?
2. At what point does the omission of articles, plurals, and grammatical features, such as verb tense agreement, become a significant factor in affecting comprehension for the listener?
3. Which of the speech examples given in this section do you think would most likely cause misunderstanding among listeners? Explain why you think so.

6.5 The Issue of NNES Conference Presentation Accents and Pronunciation

NNESs are generally very well aware that they speak English with 'an accent,' one that is often (but not always) distinct from those hailing from 'inner-circle' countries (of course, NESs have various 'accents'—one cannot, by definition, *not* have

an accent). This probably comes to the reader as no surprise. It is perfectly understandable that Thais speak English with a Thai accent, Nigerians with Nigerian, Swedes with Swedish.

Those who frequently attend international conferences will be very aware of the fact that accented English from all over the world is standard fare—and that this for many is a natural thing, as not only does it imbue an international conference with a global flavor but also serves as a snapshot of the linguistic realities underlying the academic interactions beyond one's own shores. While international conferences tend to use English as their lingua franca, the underlying demographic is polyglot.

The belief, however, occasionally enacted by a few overzealous English teachers that NNES accents and their manifestations in general English pronunciation represent a communicative infelicity and therefore must somehow be 'fixed' or 'corrected' should be viewed with some suspicion.

How so? First, it ignores the reality that English has no single, standardized 'correct' accent model. Treating such localized markings as 'wrong,' as deficit linguistics, may be considered a violation of the dignity of the NNES, particularly if these in no way impede communication.

Wallwork (2016) describes French designer Philippe Starck's TED presentation, in which the heavily accented and occasionally grammatically challenged Starck was greeted with an overwhelmingly positive response by the audience due to his engaging content. Moreover—and this is integral to those who are worried about their English accent—Wallwork notes that he spoke slowly. There is a tendency for speakers who have what they perceive as accent issues to speak quickly in order to hide or disguise alleged deficiencies, but often, in doing so, the resulting effect upon audience comprehension can be just the opposite of the intention.

This leads us to a key point: The degree of 'thickness' of an accent and the degree of intelligibility are not directly correlated, and as we have noted, with CPs, intelligibility is the goal. Recognizing this also forces us to separate the treatment of accents (which simply arises out of being a localized speaker of a given language) from those of pronunciation, which is manifested more at the morphemic or word levels (including stress). In the case of the latter, Jenkins (2000) has produced a Lingua Franca Core which covers those English pronunciation items considered indispensable for creating mutual intelligibility, not only between NNESs and NESs but also among NNESs.

In many cases, regional English accents actually *do* represent the conference norm in which case it will be the 'inner-circle' Anglophones whose accent may be considered to be on the periphery. Shared regional features of NNES pronunciation have been noted by Kirkpatrick (2010) among speakers from Southeast Asia. Therefore, at a conference hosted in that part of the world, this 'nonstandard' form of English pronunciation would likely be used by a majority of participants, in effect making it the standard.

We must differentiate, however, between having an identifiable accent and the habit of forcing English wholesale into the phonetic categories of one's mother tongue, which becomes an issue of pronunciation. Let me give, as an example, English as it is used in my adopted home of Japan. In Japan, foreign loanwords (of

which there are many) are rendered in a phonetic script known as 'katakana,' which alters the pronunciation of those foreign loanwords to suit the Japanese phonetic system, making many of them unrecognizable to non-Japanese speakers.

However, this 'katakana English' is often wrongly conflated by both language teachers and learners in Japan with having an identifiable 'Japanese accent.' While almost all Japanese presenters I observed at international conferences maintained a recognizable 'Japanese accent,' only on very, very few occasions in my conference observations did I actually sense that the Japanese speaker was falling into the realm of 'katakana' phonetics.

Yes, there are indeed NNESs who force English into the phonetic constraints of their mother tongues, rendering it undecodable to anyone unfamiliar with the shared L1, but these represent extreme cases, not the norm. Each region of the world has its own examples of local English speakers who, for various reasons, cannot or do not attempt to approximate the phonetic systems of the foreign languages they are trying to speak (often due to lack of exposure to the target language). I would argue that this forcing of L1 phonetic systems into a second language represents the threshold at which pronunciation has become an issue that needs to be coached. However, this is a phenomenon quite distinct from merely having 'an accent.' The habit of using the phonetic forms of another language to produce English *will* require the speaker to make a distinct effort to alter or modify pronunciation or demand explicit training from a teacher if the speaker wishes to participate fruitfully at international conferences. But simply having a regionally or nationally distinctive accent does not.

Pronunciation training or analysis for individual lexical items or patterns can occur on a case-by-case basis. As examples, many otherwise English-proficient Japanese pronounce the noun 'analysis' by placing the stress on the penultimate syllable and thereby render it in a manner similar to the verb. Likewise, the 'vi' combination as in 'virus' and 'vitamin' in Japan tends to be rendered in a manner closer to German (reflecting the heritage of the former lingua franca of Japanese medicine). Younger students may tend to pronounce such terms this way until otherwise exposed to a more standardized English form, but most professionals will have grasped the difference well before reaching the level of conference presenter or attendee. Individual items like these can and should be addressed in training or classrooms, as opposed to thorough pronunciation practice aiming at ESL learners to sound more 'native.'

The bottom line is that NNESs should not feel ashamed of their accents or assume that they will not be understood because of regional/national inflections in advance. Among the world community of English accents, most models are quite adequate for the purposes of interaction in the specific discourse community and are in fact indicators of the vibrancy of English being used as a lingua franca. As we have noted, at international conferences this degree of variety is expected and most attendees will adjust their listening antennae accordingly. International academic conferences are exemplary realizations of accommodation theory, part of which holds that interlocutors with different accents have a mutual responsibility to prepare for and accommodate the speech patterns of others (Cogo & Dewey, 2012).

Making adjustments to achieve convergence in communication is a central feature of negotiating meaning and, I repeat, is incumbent upon all parties involved.

As a result, I've long held the belief that any English pronunciation teaching or learning priority for NNESs should be based more on developing NNES listening, or receptive skills, as opposed to speaking (productive skills). Even then, this is often more a matter of noting stress and de-stress patterns, as well as decoding more extended prosodic features—categories that move us closer to the more pertinent CP fields of intonation and linguacultural factors as opposed to morpheme pronunciation per se.

A final consideration to keep in mind for those NNES academics researching, practicing in, or traveling to English inner-circle countries, is that most of these countries have histories of immigration from around the globe, and thus many locals will be used to dealing with those who have nonstandard accents or utilize nonstandard English forms. Only the most provincial or isolated among them would be likely to find 'foreign'-accented English particularly odd or troublesome. To be frank, many would say that that's their problem, not the NNES's and, perhaps more to the point, these would not be the type of people who would typically populate academic or professional conferences.

Questions and Exercises for Section 6.5

1. What is the difference between an accent, pronunciation, and intonation? Which do you think is most pertinent for successful conference interactions? Why?
2. Can you suggest a threshold point at which the accent and/or pronunciation of a speaker might require coaching or a special effort in order to be understood?

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Part II
The Conference and the Structure of its Core Speech Events

Check for updates

The Academic Functions of Conference Discourse

7

Abstract

In this chapter, we will examine some of the academic metafunctions of conferences. The need for the conference attendee to establish identity within the situated event of the conference, including its agnate events, and its role in reaffirming the researcher's position within the discourse community will be discussed, particularly in regard to the core phenomenon of conference discourse as being a type of 'semiotic spanning.'

7.1 Introduction

Conferences are assumed by both participants and organizers to be communicative events within which generic discourse is enacted through established sub-genres (or 'agnates') such as CPs, symposia, workshops, or poster sessions. Within the overarching academic conference genre, three discursive streams—the spoken or written texts representative of the specific academic or professional field, an academic tenor, and the generic structure of conference speech events—operate in overlapping, but mutually supportive, ways.

I noted an example of these three discursive streams working in confluence within a professional context upon a recent visit to the dentist's office. Much of what the dentists said when conferring with one another, assistants, or with office staff (generally involving conveying data or giving instructions) was delivered in an abbreviated code, not only involving the use of not only technical terms but also shorthand and acronyms. This constitutes what is known as a 'formal language' which typically marks interactions between professionals in the workplace. When such language is

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used, the ellipsis of superfluous grammatical and lexical detail is standard, a feature that marks much specific field or workplace professional-to-professional discourse.

However, when explaining diagnoses, treatments, or making suggestions to the patients, the staff not only code-switched the specialist terminology and abbreviated forms into layman's terms but also utilized more fully grammatical spoken units—no clipped heads or dropped prepositions. This represents the service encounter aspect of discourse. While both of these interactions could be considered workplace discourses, the accepted codes are shaped according to the interactants, the participants. This professional–customer service encounter thus represents a type of sub-generic speech event.

Now, let us imagine a dental (or oral surgery) conference. Due to shared specialist knowledge and experience, we would expect that CPs and other academic speech events would employ the same type of dental and oral surgery specialist terms and abbreviated codes that were noted in the workplace. But a conference also represents a type of encounter in which interactant relations extend beyond the giving and receiving of specialist data. The contents of the attendees' experiences, research, and practices have to be organized into the accepted conventions of presentations, managing poster sessions, leading workshops, attending symposia, participating in meetings and discussions (both formal and informal), networking, and socializing—the sub-generic speech events.

The vast majority of these interactions will in some sense be dialogic and thus extend beyond the expedience of reporting data or instructional forms, and yet these too must still maintain an academic tenor. The conference participant thus will not only hope to display membership in the specialist community by deploying the shorthand codes and specialist terminology associated with that community but also by presenting oneself as an educated academic situated in the formal encounter of the conference setting. Thus, the academic language of dentistry is both mitigated *and* enhanced by the many generic social and formal structures of the conference. In short, there is a distinct leap from the internalized laboratory or workplace discourse of a specific professional field to the application of this discourse within academic conference settings.

Despite its crucial function within academic discourse communities, Ventola (2002) remarks that preparatory courses for academic conference presentations are relatively rare and, even when they are carried out, tend to be taught under the more general rubric of 'public-speaking skills.' Even today, very little has been done to analyze the language used in CPs, much less the various sub-genres/agnates that make up an academic conference. This means that novices are generally left to their own devices or are forced to learn by trial and error, with the result that presentation performance and active participation in other conference genres might be inefficient, ineffective, or discouraging, and thus may actually impede the dissemination or appreciation of research, ideas, and limit networking opportunities.

After all, an academic conference is not merely a composite of the individual research presentations/reports but, as we have noted, also incorporates plenary and other invited speeches, question-and-answer/discussion sessions, workshops, poster sessions, symposia and colloquia, business meetings and related social programs, as well as chairing and other organizational/management interactions. Moreover, the casual networking and alliances developed from on-the-floor encounters are vital to the goals and purposes of conferencing. Discussion and analysis of conference English must therefore go well beyond the realm of 'public-speaking tips.'

In the popular literature on presentation skills, proficiency in English is too often assumed (Hill & Storey, 2003), with much of the advice focusing upon creating an effective balance between the visual text (slides) and the aural/paralinguistic (persuasive or entertainment value), but with little metadiscourse analysis of the subtle language choices that mark effective presentation discourse (Anthony, Gupta, Orr, & Yamazaki, 2005). In written RPs, superstructural clues to the organization of the text are explicit, but these are often ignored in spoken texts such as CPs (Thompson, 2003) and left unaddressed in the popular literature. In particular, rhetorical moves that normally serve to introduce or propel sections of a spoken text, such as openings and transition forms (segues that connect slide A to slide B), are often discarded to the periphery of presentation skills in the popular literature.

Explicit knowledge of how these various genres operate is therefore needed in order to enhance the academic performance of conference participants, particularly by NNESs who may well feel intimidated or out of place in such encounters. Conference agnates unfold as social processes, each with its own distinct synoptic structure (it should be noted though that these synoptic sequences are not fixed or static, since many are only culturally and situationally valid). Thus, the need for explicit instruction in these fields increases along with both the frequency and value of participation and performance at academic conferences.

Questions and Exercises for Section 7.1

1. What features that are central to effective conference performance tend to be ignored in popular public-speaking guides?
2. Describe the three streams of converging discourse that the author claims are often in evidence at academic conferences.

7.2 The Academic Conference and Its 'Agnates'

The conference is a key social event which offers members a momentary sense of community, in contrast to our workaday lives (Ventola, 2002). Conferences are important for enacting genre knowledge and affirming community affiliations, 'a concrete, local manifestation of the operation of a discourse community,' (Porter,

1992, p. 107). The conference '…reflects the norms and patterns which communities have evolved for the particular genre.' (Hyland, 2009, p. 80). Referencing Shalom (2002), Hyland further describes conferences as events where, '…attending sessions and giving a paper are inseparable from meeting old friends, making new contacts, the buzz of the coffee break, the book fairs, the posters, the gossip, the academic celebrities, and the general intellectual charge of the event.' (p. 79).

Hyland further describes conference speech events as multimodal events (written to be spoken), in which the research is often delivered in various stages of completion involving varying degrees of audience homogeneity, expertise, and size. CPs in particular, he notes, occupy an intermediate status between the process and collection of data and the production of research knowledge (actual research vs. the research publication). As such, CPs offer glimpses of the unsanitized process before the work goes to publication, in a face-to-face setting (Rowley-Jolivet, 2002). The CP thus makes clearer both the various restraints inherent in the research process *and* the concrete work invested in the research.

However, conflating the entire discourse of academic conferences with the core speech event of CPs alone would be both insufficient and inaccurate. Ventola (2002) and Hyland (2009) take particular notice of discourse-based agnates, or sub-genres, that operate within a conference setting.

Among the CP sub-genres for example, there are, as we have noted previously, marked distinctions between plenary or keynote speeches and standard FP/PSs. Special teaching seminars and workshops are distinct from colloquia and symposia. Invited speeches differ from the standard 'reading of' RPs. It is evident that establishing, analyzing, or employing a standard, generic 'presentation' form across all the agnate genres will not do them all justice. Beyond these speech events, there are also poster sessions, meetings, networking, chairing and management, and social gatherings (both formal and informal) of special interest groups emanating from the conference setting. Many of these too display generically significant discourse structures.

While conferences establish and maintain academic networks, they also serve as a forum for the output of the laboratory through CPs, posters, and more extended cognitive output through participation as an attendee and informal discussions, as well as providing input for producing proceedings papers. Contacts established also influence and advance the relationships between field professionals, related industry personnel, funding, and international collaborative research (Fig. 7.1).

Questions and Exercises for Section 7.2

1. Identify as many academic conference agnate speech events as you can.
2. In what ways can an academic conference be said to be more than a mere sum of the displays and/or presentations?

Fig. 7.1 Plenary speeches are markedly distinct from standard free paper presentations

7.3 Semiotic Spanning

Ventola (2002) notes that much less research work has been done on academic spoken genres than written due to the more inherently dynamic nature of the former. As we have noted, the type of language deployed in read-out-loud papers or formalized speeches is distinct from the type of speech used in face-to-face interactions. This means that conference novices must be prepared for dynamic variation as well as register variation when moving between written and spoken modes.

This dynamic relationship between the RP, CP slides, and both prior and subsequent related discussions is part of what Ventola refers to as 'semiotic spanning' (p. 16). Unlike RPs, academic conferences are multifaceted speech events. CPs, in particular, are generally unfinished products born of a series of preparations completed via literature, data collection, laboratory analysis, and within the confines of the conference event, this semiotic spanning can even extend to open discussion during coffee time chats. Conferences are thus multisemiotic events in which oral/visual, formal/informal, prepared and impromptu discourses all co-occur. Copresence, interaction, and risk reside as part of a holistic 'rhetorical accomplishment' involving the real-time processing and interactional needs of a live or face-to-face, real-time audience (Hyland, 2010).

This semiotic spanning also links to both the past and the future of related papers, speeches, and research, serving to build connections between different semiotic worlds. Because CPs employ various modal realizations for their talks, Ventola (2002) describes these connections as a type of 'intertextuality.' For example, the semiotic structure of a CP constantly fluctuates because they are essentially multimodal, with some texts rendered as spoken and some as written. As Charles and Ventola (2002) note, 'If we wish to describe and train novices in the constraints and resources operating in our academic discourse communities, we need to move beyond teaching them academic text production in their instantiation in presentations and in academic articles,' (p. 171).

Further augmenting the notion of conferences as arenas for semiotic spanning is the understanding that any construction of knowledge is a complex, gradual, multistaged process in which various discourse genres have a role to play (Rowley-Jolivet, 2002). Research activity and related research journal articles are not dichotomous worlds but rather represent positions on a cline, part of a multi-staged process. Discourse norms regarding the degree of monologic vs. dialogic values in each agnate, as well as differing norms related to the choices of openings, making transitions, and closing various speech events therein, mark all of these interactions.

Carter-Thomas and Rowley-Jolivet (2003) see multimodal analysis as involving three streams of discourse in a series of concentric parameters (see Fig. 7.2), with semiotics forming the outermost circle and genre the innermost:

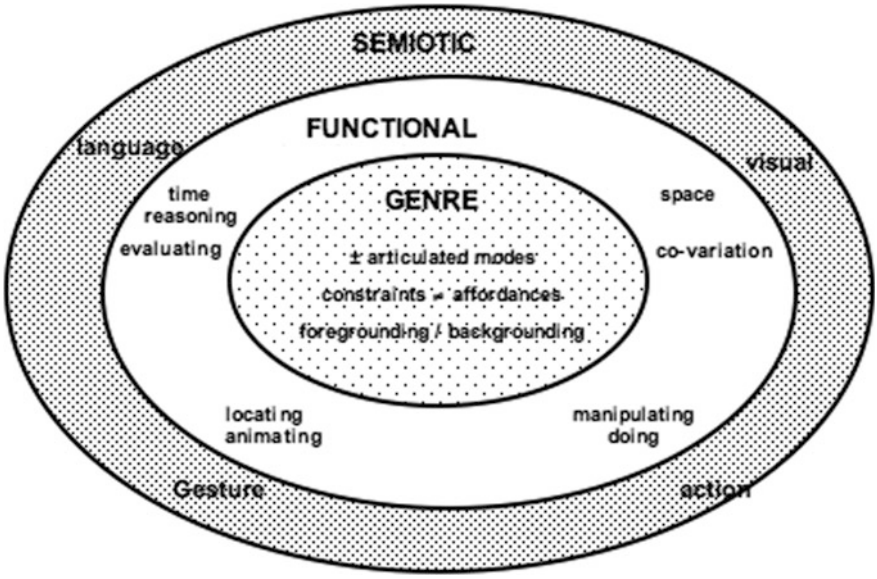

Fig. 7.2 Parameters involved in multimodal analysis (taken from Carter-Thomas & Rowley-Jolivet, 2003, p. 32, reproduced with the permission of Asp journal)

While RPs utilize only the linguistic mode, CPs integrate a spatiotemporal semiotic into the event, most importantly, the visuals. In scientific CPs in particular, the visual element serves a cohesion function, as much of the verbal information can be interpreted only by reference to the visuals (Carter-Thomas & Rowley-Jolivet, 2003).

The CP thus makes a synthesis of multitextual modes, process and product, monologue and dialogue, presenter and audience, and in doing so marks itself as a distinct conference speech genre. The CP, by reporting both concrete and theoretical contents, fleshes out our understanding of the process of scientific reasoning. And although this book will attempt to address most of these speech events, it is the standard parallel or 'FP/PS' session that we will be primarily concerned with.

Questions and Exercises for Section 7.3

1. Describe the semiotic spanning of an academic research project in terms of its development from pre-conference to post-conference.
2. Describe how conference agnate events serve to enhance semiotic spanning.

7.4 The Discourse Community

Applied linguists are very aware of discourse communities. Discourse here does not refer merely to conversation but rather to the manner in which participants coconstruct and negotiate linguistic interactions. In short, if one wants to engage in academic exchanges, to feel a part of an international academic or professional community, then it is essential to understand how discourse communities operate.

The increasing influence of English as a lingua franca and the increasing global requirement of research collaborations have led to an upsurge in spoken academic exchanges, particularly through conferences and research visits. The image of the ivory tower academic or library carrel PhD student has now been displaced by discourse communities (Mauranen, Perez-Llantada, & Swales, 2010).

Membership in a given academic discourse community can be marked in several ways as noted in Table 7.1:

Bartholomae (1986) was among the earliest researchers to examine how specific discourses emerge among particular social groups, each with their own sets of categorizations, conventions, and norms. However, the concept of distinct, specialized discourse community, which has been around for centuries, gained particular traction in the field of applied linguistics after Swales' (1990) pioneering work in genre analysis.

Swales distinguished a discourse community from a speech community by arguing that discourse skills are attained through persuasion, training, and qualifications (Swales describes these as 'centripetal' forces), whereas a speech community is determined by birth, accident, or adoption ('centrifugal forces'). Thus,

Table 7.1 Features of membership in a discourse community

1. Shared unwritten protocols regarding the manner and constraints of member interaction (these become established as rhetorical conventions)
2. The utilization of accepted generic codes marking membership, the sociolinguistic equivalent of the insider's 'secret handshake'
3. Written and speech modes sharing features of register, particularly tenor
4. Specific forms and generic codes being enacted in situated events, particularly academic/professional conferences
5. Those forms and discourse 'codes' being realized in various conference sub-genre speech events (most notably CPs and poster sessions)

while a speech community might be said to be a sociolinguistic entity, the discourse community is sociorhetorical—the latter being more functional, having objectives beyond social solidarity. Swales lists six defining features of a discourse community (Table 7.2):

Across a discourse community, there exists a general agreement of goals as well as mechanisms of participation. Instances may vary in prototypicality, but each of these in turn imposes constraints on content, positioning, and form. The discourse community thus uses its discoursal conventions to initiate members and reify particular values or beliefs.

Ventola (2002) has argued that genre and register variables restrict choice in mode, tenor, and field and thus mark the rhetoric of particular discourse communities. However, this in no way implies that these are static categories. Using contrastive rhetoric, Conrad and Mauranen (2003) have noted that differences in methods, research protocols, and rhetorical styles emerge from different academic traditions. These too can mark the dynamic interactive norms of a particular discourse community.

Discourse communities share certain communicative events with shared communicative purposes, recognized and maintained by expert members within that community. Hyland (2009) summarizes the concept of an academic discourse community as follows:

Table 7.2 Swales' (1990) defining features of a discourse community

1. A broadly agreed set of public goals
2. Mechanisms of intercommunication among members
3. Participatory mechanisms used to provide information and feedback
4. Possessing one or more genres to communicate its aims
5. A specific lexis
6. A threshold level of members with discoursal expertise and a suitable degree of relevant content

> "…academic cultures, disciplinary ideologies and academic discourses are inseparably entwined and so one can only be understood by reference to the others. This, in turn, means looking to the idea of community as a framework for conceptualizing the expectations and practices which influence academic communication." (p. 65), and, "…the idea of a discourse community…provides a principled way of understanding how meaning is produced *in interaction* and proves useful in identifying how [users'] rhetorical choices depend upon purposes, settings, and audience." (p. 66).

Swales (1990) also emphasizes the interwoven relationship between communicative form, communicative purpose, and 'genre users' (the latter term effectively referring to the specific discourse community). Cutting (2002) outlines three aspects of context that underscore a community's production of both written and spoken discourses. These include (1) situational contexts: the immediate visible environment, (2) background knowledge context: existing knowledge of the world or of other members, and (3) cotextual context: knowledge about what people typically say or have said within a community. This builds upon Bakhtin, M. M., Holquist, M., & Emerson, C. (1986) foundational notion that all communication, whether spoken or written, exists within a confluence of background knowledge and/or texts while also anticipating future responses to the current or existing text.

Johns (1997) proposed a more flexible definition of a discourse community, focusing more upon shared interests in a community, which stands in contrast to Swales' focus upon a community's communicative goals or purposes. Barton (1994) narrows this focus even further, describing discourse communities as associations of people involved in the reception and/or production of specific texts. Swales (1998) later reformulated his earlier notion of discourse community, adding greater emphasis to its heterogeneously sociorhetorical nature, in which genres are adopted in order to express the particular goals and interests of members. Belcher and Trowler (2001) describe these in academic terms as 'discipline-specific tribes,' with separate norms and practices observed.

Shalom (2002) argues that the pedagogical practice of conference English can be better informed by a focus upon 'situatedness.' She describes conferences as macro-generic events containing many interlinked genres, demanding both discourse community and genre knowledge. Bhatia (1993) similarly notes that situational choices made within a discourse community constrain allowable contributions in terms of intent, positioning, and functional value.

It makes sense then that one of the academic English trainer's key functions should be to help novices become participants in their field's discourse community (Christie & Rothery, 1989). Students and novices need to gradually acquire the discourse competencies necessary to engage as a member in such a discourse community.

Confusion can arise however when we adopt the notion of a discourse community as localized phenomena while at the same time recognize normative usages across specific global communities. For example, the language of aviation is not a type of discourse that the general public can or does regularly engage in. It is localized, not by geography, but by profession. Thus, aviators the world over will subscribe to common discourse practices that mark their specialized community.

Gee (2004) describes these discourse arenas as 'affinity spaces' rather than using the more geographically connotative notion of 'community,' while Porter (1992) sees such discourse as primarily manifested in localized 'forums,' such as journals, conferences, and meetings. Killingsworth and Gilbertson (1992) view the notion of 'global communities' as being governed by discourse-related criteria, while local communities are more defined by 'shared practices.'

Hyland (2009) describes academic discourse as '…a reservoir of meanings that give identity to a culture' (p. 46), including the culture embodied in an academic discourse community. But he cautions that we should also be cognizant of the fact that academic discourse must also appeal to non-academic bodies. The requirements of teaching students, obtaining resources for funding, etc., should also be included in the concept of the discourse community as they influence, mark, and constrain the nature of the discourse.

Interestingly, if used in the sense described above, one could well argue that participation within a discipline-specific 'global community' now dominates the discourse of academics, marking a move away from the more static notion of the discourse community as corresponding to established and centralized core concepts, a development which addresses criticisms raised by Pennycook (1994) and Canagarajah (2002), who claimed that the globalization of English was implicitly reinforcing imperialistic approaches and practices.

Questions and Exercises for Section 7.4

1. Why and how have discourse communities developed as central components of academia as compared to the lone laboratory scholar of previous generations?
2. Name four identifying features of an academic discourse community.
3. What features distinguish discourse communities from local or geographical communities?
4. Whose description of an academic discourse community do you feel is most compelling, Swales', Johns', or Barton's?
5. In what way does the discourse community place constraints on the use of rhetoric within a given community? Provide an example.

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Genre and Mode in the Academic Discourse Community

8

Abstract

In this chapter, we will examine the socially semiotic nature of the academic conference as it is manifested in terms of genre analysis and mode. This will be examined particularly through the binary relationships of spoken vs. written modes, science vs. the humanities, and dialogue vs. monologue.

8.1 A Brief Overview of Genre

Most of the early work on genre analysis was focused upon written academic texts, such as published RPs. Various discourse communities have long-established norms or expectations regarding how written texts should be managed within their particular field.

Most widely known among these is the canonical IMRD (Introduction-Methods/Materials-Results-Discussion/Conclusion) RP structure, well-known to almost every novice involved in publishing academic research, arguably to the extent where it has come to serve as a de facto generic template of research writing. However, until recently, much less scholarship had focused upon spoken research genres, although as of the writing of this book in 2017, older models of academic discourse, which subordinated speech to writing, seem to have largely disappeared.

Research focus upon differences between written and spoken forms of English gained particular credence after the publication of Hymes' (1966) focus upon communicative competence, with the multimodal approach becoming more firmly established in the late 1970s to the early 1990s (particularly with the publication of Halliday's (1985) 'Introduction to Functional Grammar,' and a number of works highlighting the distinctive qualities of the spoken language popularized throughout the 1990s by Michael McCarthy and Ronald Carter).

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Early research into spoken forms tended to focus heavily on features of register, particularly if and when genre analysis was applied. Until the turn of the millennium though, little was noted regarding how spoken forms were managed in specific genres, such as academic conferences.

This area has become a source of interest for applied linguists because genre and specific speech events tend to coincide (Hymes, 1971), as generic norms depend upon a shared set of speech event communicative purposes. Genre knowledge thus equals a type of communicative competence. Discourse communities that share communicative purposes usually share genres (Hyland, 2001), meaning that the conference attendee should, ideally, understand what genre knowledge entails within their given discourse community. Fairclough (1992) further remarks that genres are not static or fixed and that within a given discourse community, there are any number or recognized genres and that these are mutually influential and make discourse community interactions systematic. This also underscores the need for consciously situating one's CP appropriately because, as we have noted, academic conferences involve semiotic spanning, the multimodal realization of communication among a wide variety of members and participants.

Genre is described as a social construct that regulates communication, interaction, and relations within the discourse community (Bazerman, 1988). However, it is Swales (1990) who is generally credited with establishing the prototype for analyzing the manner in which specific genres of English can or should marked within particular discourse communities, particularly in terms of analyzing the rhetorical moves within the text. Bhatia (2004) eventually expanded this view of genre analysis to include text-external factors, such as sociopragmatic, sociocognitive, critical, and ethnographic features. Genres have beginning, middles, endings, and also mark how a culture is realized in language. Genre analysis accounts for the textual features utilized therein, with reference to the purpose that it serves to the discourse community.

Lu and Corbett (2012) argue that novice practitioners need knowledge of content and conventions, as well as an understanding as to how these features can be realized in narrative form, such as in medical case presentations and studies. Lu and Corbett also argue that context-specific registers (such as topic/domain, mode, plus the relationship between producer and processor) need to be established first, only after which genres can be specifically described. In fact, any multidimensional genre analysis must take into account numerous situational factors, including what Biber and Conrad (2001) refer to as the 'degree of involvement' between the producer of the text and the content of the text itself.

Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995) list five principles for genre knowledge (see Table 8.1), which they view not so much as a textual product but as a product of unfolding social processes. These are:

Some of the factors that affect or define genre knowledge will be discussed in the next few sections.

Table 8.1 Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995): Five principles for genre knowledge

1. Dynamism—Genres change with time as users need change. For example, the suitability of deploying the standard IMRD research formula in a CP will depend on the vagaries of the CPs purpose and goals.
2. Situatedness—Genre knowledge as learned through participation within the routines or conventions of the community. This is particularly marked in understanding the roles of presenter and discussant in Q&A or discussion sessions.
3. Form and content—Knowledge thereof, as well as knowing when to utilize forms and content that are codified within the genre.
4. Duality of structure—As users utilize generic structures, they also reconstitute those structures, acting as a scaffold to develop further genre knowledge.
5. Community Ownership—The epistemology, social oncology, and ideology of a discourse community are realized in its generic conventions.

Questions and Exercises for Section 8.1

1. Explain how Hymes' notion of communicative competence is integrally connected with genre knowledge.
2. Explain how genre might be best understood through the concept of 'situatedness.' Give an example.
3. What was Swales' primary contribution to the understanding of genre analysis? How did Bhatia expand upon this?
4. Before a given genre can be adequately described or analyzed, which macro-features need to be known?

8.2 Written Versus Spoken Academic English (with Reference to CPs)

Most previous textual analyses of the manner in which 'moves' in academic English discourse are managed have tended to focus upon academic writing in general and academic RPs in particular. In contrast, it appears that relatively little attention has been paid as to how spoken academic texts are managed (Mauranen, 2001; Liu, 2008). Yet, as we have seen, academic CPs in particular are widely considered vital indicators of active participation in a given professional discourse community (Ventola, 2002), and as such, the manner in which such oral texts are arranged and delivered deserves our attention.

Expectations and norms of academic conference discourse will of course vary according to the academic domain, with one primary factor therein being the epistemological continuum of knowledge between the 'hard sciences' and the

Table 8.2 A continuum of academic knowledge (from Hyland, 2009, p. 63)

Sciences	Humanities
Empirical/objective	Explicitly interpretive
Linear growth of knowledge	Dispersed knowledge
Experimental methods	Discursive argument
Quantitative	Qualitative
Concentrated readership	Varied audience
Highly structured genres	More fluid discourses

humanities. Although variations and overlapping are inherent qualities of a continuum, Hyland (2009) sums up these divisions in binary form (Table 8.2):

According to Rowley-Jolivet (2002), among the hard sciences, physics CPs require the most tinkering since these are more laboratory-controlled and, typically, have all variables accounted for. Geology requires the most observation, as samples may be scant or in poor condition, while medicine produces a greater number of unpleasant or surprising results. Medical research involves humans and thus includes lengthy randomized trials with which follow-up is necessary. As a result, medical (excepting experimental medicine) CPs tend to be presented at a more finalized stage, especially when the potential public impact is considered. Medical results are also often uncertain due to numerous unquantifiable, (human) variables, leading to greater degrees of hedging.

Cases in which these domains diverge in terms of genre-based discourse management will be noted throughout the book. As we have seen, the discourse of CPs and many other conference speech events occupies a midway point between the informal, speculative laboratory discussions and the conventionalized claims of the RP (Rowley-Jolivet, 2002). This type of midway claims are known as 'proto-claims,' and these are considered allowable in the ephemeral oral discourse of conference genre. For example, when contextual contingencies impinge on the research process, CPs can depict those features. The complex decision-making process behind the research also becomes a key part of the CP, even though it might be considered as, 'unsanitized discourse' (Rowley-Jolivet, 2002, p. 116). Admission of weaknesses in the CP narrative can also be seen as an insider or interactive strategy of the shared culture of conference participants.

This 'testing' function of CPs might particularly be welcomed by those looking to benefit from others' insights and suggestions regarding their research. But this is also why CPs tend to carry less academic weight than publications. Conference English is ephemeral and non-citable, which tends to lead to more openness and frankness than in writing. Related to this is the fact that, at a conference, one is also more open to immediate public criticism. All of these factors distinguish conference spoken discourse from that of RPs.

Novelty is also a standard feature of conference discourse (Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995). Conference presentations focus upon recent results, whereas producing RPs can take months or years. Thus, the dissemination of preliminary, unfinished, ongoing research is prevalent at conferences, as conferences aid in

developing the RP for eventual publication. This connection between CP and the related journal publication demonstrates yet another feature of semiotic spanning.

RPs are, at the most fundamental level of description, constructed through the conventional positioning and conjoining of sentences and paragraphs—which typically involves the writer using a detached, impersonal tone. Three structural features contribute greatly to the establishment of this objective positioning: the use of complex nominal forms (complex noun groups), the passive voice, and extraposition (Carter-Thomas & Rowley-Jolivet, 2003).

However, this is much less true for CP slides, which utilize a greater number of bullets, headers, and non-sentential descriptors, in short, metadiscourse forms. The CP presenter often further eschews the sentence–paragraph format (it may be argued that sentences do not really exist in speech) and, in speech, instead utilizes long, elaborate turns marked by indeterminate linguistic boundaries, leading to an increased reliance upon intonation or other paralinguistic features such as gestures, physical posture, and explicit discourse markers/signals to convey shifts or moves in the rhetoric.

We also need to consider Hyland's (2010) claim that there is a great need for an interactive voice in research writing and that, in fact, there is a greater 'orthodoxy of interactivity' today, replacing the primacy of objective or detached academic writing that previously held sway. This interactive voice is used to persuade or produce agreement between the writer/speaker and the audience. Although this voice is required in RPs, much more so is it needed in the CP. If the voice of the CP is too detached, the interpersonal dimension, necessitated by the real-time audience, is weakened. A more directed, less-distant approach is needed, utilizing the active voice and personal pronouns. As we will see, syntactical forms such as the use of pseudo-clefts, inversion, and existential forms help to realize the multimodal communicative function of CPs more effectively.

The need to use both interactive metadiscourse and syntactical forms that add a dialogical element to the CP was particularly pronounced when some conference presenters I observed were attempting to close slides or sections within the CP. The sudden switch from verbalizing sentential written text to elaborating or expanding upon bullet points as displayed on the slides left many such presenters floundering when trying to add a definitive ending to the bulleted items, resulting instead in a series of indeterminate or disconnected approximations (or what I will refer to as 'throwaway endings').

The small percentage of presenters I observed who read sentential text directly from the slides or from an accompanying sheet of notes tended to use less of these extralinguistic, metadiscoursal features, perhaps relying on the RP-styled syntax alone to convey the intended content. This effectively ignored the inherent multimodal nature of the CP, and therefore often failed to supply the viewers/listeners with hints about the modality being employed or the intended direction of the rhetoric. In short, such CPs lacked the persuasive dimension.

This was also evident in those CPs where the speaker was actually seated throughout the entire CP (although these accounted for only 8 of the 293 total CPs I observed). Since the audience's focus was wholly upon the slides and screen, with the speaker's voice effectively providing little more than a voiceover function, the requirements of pacing, using explicit discourse markers, and employing more dynamic intonation in order to convey the narrative became even more paramount. Being seated during a CP might seem like a salve to the nervous presenter, but without additional prosodic detail to compensate for the decreased role of the speaker, the intended overall impact of the CP is more liable to fall flat.

Questions and Exercises for Section 8.2

1. Explain what the term 'proto-claims' means and why these are particularly common to conference CPs.
2. In what ways do the physical construction of presentation slides differ from the structure of discourse as found in written research papers?
3. List four basic differences between research CPs in the hard sciences and those of the humanities.

8.3 The Dialogic Dimension of Conference Presentations

One of the most interesting observations I made at humanities conferences was the high number of CPs that were performed as if they were multimodal defenses of Ph.D. theses, as if the presenter were a graduate student was appealing to a senior adjudicator. Such cases were certainly more frequent in comparison to the norm I encountered when I first began attending applied linguistics conferences about 20 years ago.

Related to this recent development is the lack of sense of narrative in many recent humanities CPs I've observed; that is a description of the speaker's progress or trials, failures, and revisions—the *process* of research. This would typically include an account of false turns, missteps, and problems encountered when performed in speech. It is therefore arguable that while the hard sciences are increasingly using an audience-inclusive narrative approach in their CPs, the same is slowly being ignored in or dropped from humanities' presentations—perhaps to instill a greater veneer of credibility by using the supposedly more detached, objective voice.

Written texts tend to carry a higher academic load (or density) than spoken texts (Coxhead, 2000), which increases the need for the academic speaker to express the same content in a succinct manner, but without the associated RP lexical density. In conference speech events, due to the emphasis on real-time exigencies and the dynamics of face-to-face interactions, the tenor typically associated with written research is often augmented by the inclusion of interpersonal markers. Among these metadiscourse features that tend to be more frequent in spoken modes, particularly in research CPs, are:

- *Attitude markers*: These are forms which allow a speaker to take a stand, or adopt a value position
- *Self-mention*: Hyland (2010) notes that the soft sciences in particular are saturated by first-person references
- *Engagement features*: These include the notions of stance and persuasion, particularly as evidenced in the use of both hedges and boosters
- *Reader pronouns*: The practice of bringing the audience into the discourse using the pronouns, *you, your,* and *we*
- *Directives*: These consist of three types—(a) textual (particularly procedures/instructions), (b) physical, *'Open the lid,'* and (c) cognitive acts, '*Note X. Consider Y'*
- *Personal asides*: For example, *'Next—and I think this is something relevant to most of you—we looked at…'*
- *Appeals to shared knowledge*: For example, '*Of course, as we know…*'
- *Rhetorical questions*: For example, '*But we might ask ourselves, is it necessary to separate X and Y?'*

Much of what can be categorized as 'interpersonal text' in CPs are types of metadiscourse, the language that surrounds or helps to organize the core research text. Validity-oriented markers (such as approximators, hedges, or emphatics) were the most common types of metadiscourse noted in CPs (Heino, Tervonen, & Tommola, 2002). These were typically either self-, audience-, or community-oriented and indicate the speaker's attitude toward the content, particularly in the use of evaluative and saliency (importance) markers and especially in the discussion and conclusion sections of the CP.

Context-oriented markers (references to situations or materials) were also significantly common in Heino et al's study. These refer to the wider conference situation, and serve semiotic spanning or intertextual functions. Typically, these involved referring to other speakers and conference themes, as well as research materials.

Dudley-Evans (1994) was among the first scholars to distinguish the purely 'reader-style' CPs from more conversational (informal) or performer-styled forms, with the latter two approaches better capturing the sense of immediacy of an audience. Since that time, there has been a gradual move toward a more interactive focus in scientific CPs marked by the greater use of subject + active verbs and less use of the passive voice than found in RPs (Carter-Thomas & Rowley-Jolivet, 2003, and Rowley-Jolivet, 2012), more discussion of failures (Thompson, 2002), more informal boundary markers, such as '*Ok*,' (Webber, 2005), greater imprecision in numerating results (Dubois, 1987), more humor and self-irony (although my own observations would suggest this is largely limited to plenary and keynote speeches), less use of extraposition (i.e., '*it is clear/possible that…*'), which is more indicative of the impersonal RP tone, and far more use of existential forms (*'there is/are'*) (Carter-Thomas & Rowley-Jolivet, 2001).

The metadiscourse of academic/scientific CPs is also marked frequently by hedging and other academic face-saving devices typical of an interactive setting, another feature that is distinct from the written mode (Heino et al., 2002). All these qualities point to the provisional and emergent nature of what is being presented.

However, the need for novelty (new information or data) in a scientific CP is not mitigated by this lowered degree of formalism. Scientific CPs tend to situate knowledge claims closer to their source (the researcher/speaker) than do RPs, which also adds to sense of communal participation and integration. Readers should note though that this is less common in humanities CPs, where handouts are more frequently provided and exemplar sentences are more likely to be accompanied by references.

Questions and Exercises for Section 8.3

1. Give three examples of how discourse may be managed in a 'reader-style' CP.
2. In what ways are CPs more provisional and ephemeral than written papers?
3. Explain the difference between reporting the research process versus the research 'product.'

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Engagement and Narrative

9

Abstract

In this chapter, we will examine the relationship between presenter and audience by considering the use of stance and engagement, as well as noting the pivotal role that the use of narrative plays in conference presentations.

9.1 The Notions of Stance, Persuasion, and Engagement

Both RPs and CPs require that the writer/speaker negotiate a type of agreement with their readers or listeners. In order to do so, the writer/speaker first needs to establish rapport with the discipline's audience. Hyland (2005) sees this as involving the use of three interpersonal categories: stance, persuasion, and engagement.

Stance primarily involves the use of evidentiality—specifically the application of (1) hedges (particularly involving the use of epistemic modals such as, *'It seems' 'It appears that'*) and boosters (*'extremely' 'unbelievably'*), (2) affect—realized in attitudinal markers, and (3) presence—particularly in terms of self-mention. These three attributes create persuasion by bringing the reader/viewer into the text.

These can be augmented for the purpose of engagement by the use of second-person pronouns (particularly the inclusive '*we*' over the exclusive '*you*'), rhetorical questions, explicit inclusion of shared knowledge between researcher and audience, the use of directives (such as obligations or instructions), and the insertion of personal asides such as arguments or anecdotes. All these aid in establishing what Hyland refers to as 'intersubjective positioning' wherein a CP speaker has to tread a fine balance between self-assertion and self-effacement.

As we noted earlier, Hyland claims while the use of explicit stance and engagement markers are apparently dropping in the humanities (perhaps in an attempt to establish more appeal as being objective and 'scientific'), they are increasing or holding steady in scientific written research.

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Hyland notes that epistemic marking and self-mention too are decreasing in some humanities disciplines. For example, he states that the use of directives has changed—with the appearance of modals decreasing considerably over the past twenty years or so while imperatives have increased Hyland arguing that these changes indicate a less intrusive approach to stance. (Readers should keep in mind that the changes that have been noted are longitudinal in nature—the claim being made is *not* that stance and engagement markers are used more in the sciences than in the humanities.)

But while these may be true of written academic texts, we must keep in mind once again that the discourse of CPs and other conference speech events is multimodal. The RP is not simply read aloud (as in the antiquated notion of a presentation equaling 'reading one's paper'). Rather, it must be adapted into slides, and these slides once again must be interpreted or adapted into speech by the presenter faced with a real-time audience of viewers, as opposed to readers. The CP is thus more explicitly dialogic than the written RP, even as written research has moved to adopting a more inclusive or interactive voice.

The upshot of this is that academic conference participants, particularly those performing CPs, displaying posters, or involved in symposia, need to use stance and interactive, engagement markers in order to persuade their audiences. Such considerations are no longer the province of the salesman or the debater alone. Nor do their usage detract from the gravity or objectivity of the research methods and findings being disseminated.

Engagement features include what is called self-positioning' in academic discourse. Great importance should be placed upon explicit self-positioning in the discourse community in both written RPs and CPs. Self-positioning to an audience in both written and spoken modes has most notably been modeled through 'Appraisal Theory', which focuses upon evaluative language, particularly through three categories distinguished therein: a) *attitude*: affect, appreciation, judgment b) *gradation*: force, focus, and, c) *engagement*: mitigation, amplification, and emphasis (see White, 2002, and Martin & White, 2005).

This has also been described as 'sensory language' and applies not only to formal, written RPs, in which the writer needs to engage the readership in order to interject an element of persuasion above and beyond the presentation of research data, but also in real-time speech, wherein the need to make such an appeal is strengthened due to the immediacy of researcher with his or her audience.

Questions for Section 9.1

1. What are the three main examples of evidentiality in a CP, according to Hyland?
2. Explain the relationship between stance, persuasion, and engagement. Provide CP discourse examples indicating each of these.
3. Why is 'self-positioning' important when giving a CP?

9.2 Presenter-Audience Dynamics

Since CPs are performed in real time, research presenters have to adapt highly dense subject matter in a manner that will best create a positive impact upon the audience. The dynamic relationship resulting from the real-time management of a combination of both visual and aural text, as well as the ongoing interaction between presenter and audience, are representative of the fundamental differences in approach between the academic research writer and the academic presenter.

Carter-Thomas and Rowley-Jolivet (2005) describe academic conference presentations as necessitating an interpersonal dimension beyond mere textual discourse. They argue that the blending of textual and visual content calls for a different epistemological structure from that found in written research. For example, they note that in CPs, the use of the first person, as opposed to the typical detached and impersonal third-person voice of written academic research, predominates, drawing the audience into the identity or persona of the speaker, establishing a rapport with the audience, augmented by the considered use of spoken frame markers and tense shifters.

Neither are CPs mono-directional speech events. The relationship between an expectant, attentive academic audience and the manner in which the spoken content is orientated by the CP speaker has been expressed as a mutually constructed narrative, or what Morita (2000) refers to as a 'collaborative epistemic construction'. Rendle-Short (2006) views CPs as involving a recognition/response relation with the professional discourse community (the presumed audience) in producing a cohesive whole, noting that, 'It is only by taking an interactive approach to the speakers' talk and actions that it is possible to see the structure of the talk emerging,' (p. 9).

This co-constructed relationship between the audience and the CP speaker demands that presentation openings and closings, internal rhetorical moves or thematic shifts, and related discourse markers should be managed in a manner distinct from those found in written research papers. A failure to do so may easily result in the dry approach of literally 'reading ones' paper,' a scenario in which both the spoken text and slides simply verbalize an existing publication. Ineffective presentations are often the result of written text being misapplied wholesale into the realm of real-time speech (Weissberg, 1993).

Further, since the difference between academic written texts and CPs is based upon the interactive relationship between a live audience and the speaker, appropriate discourse markers become an essential part of the constructed dialogue (Webber, 2002), with the relationship between extralingual features and the written slide contents duly impacting the structure of the speech (Ventola, 2002), thus marking the CP as a distinct communicative event.

RPs, on the other hand, are typically detached from the speech events and episodes in which the development of the academic text is immersed. Therefore, increased coherence and cohesion between texts is necessary in order to build common ground between the two modes. However, it should be noted that plenary

speeches tend to be based upon already published work—and thus serve more as post hoc celebratory overviews rather than forums for introducing cutting-edge work. This further distinguishes them from parallel session/free paper CPs.

Question for Section 9.2

1. Explain how a CP is considered a dialogic and co-constructed discourse between presenter and audience.

9.3 The Conference Presentation as Narrative

Spoken academic English as carried out in conference settings is a socially constructed rhetorical artifact of overlapping communicative goals serving to transmit new disciplinary knowledge and to persuade an audience. Thus, evaluative, interpersonal, and interactive features, or what we might refer to as 'dialogic' features, of discourse, increase (Mauranen, Perez-Llantada, & Swales, 2010). This process has been described by Swales (1990) as involving the steps of (1) Introduction: listener orientation/content orientation, (2) Body: background situating, event, commentary, and (3) Termination: content orientation/listener orientation.

As a member (or aspiring member) of a given academic discourse community, one central CP goal will be to persuade the audience of the status, relevance, and value of the research (Hunston, 1993) as well as the validation the speaker him/herself. Doing so will involve what Tannen (1989) refers to as 'involvement strategies'. One means of doing this involves the use of narrative, which offers a resource for assessing and confirming affiliations with others, thereby drawing in the reader/listener (Eggins & Slade, 1997).

Speech narrative involves a balance of textual and interpersonal functions of discourse, which are particularly marked in CPs while they are generally absent in RPs (Webber, 2005), and are most prominently used in multimodal settings (Rowley-Jolivet, 2012). CP narrative forms that serve to 'tell the story' of the research tend to add a further interpersonal dimension (Thompson, 2002), with successful CPs being products of situationally appropriate complex pragmatic choices, (Shalom, 2002), yet another quality that distinguishes them from written RPs.

Dubois (1980) noted that biomedical presentations regularly contained narrative features, although her findings are somewhat distinct from Myers' (1990) description of the 'narrative of science' in which the author is absent. It is true that non-narrative types of CP do exist—so why opt for one style over the other? After all, the vast majority of RPs are non-narrative in both the hard sciences and the humanities.

In research CPs, speakers typically present a chronicle of what happened in the laboratory rather than the more delicately edited version meant for publication. These are more strongly narrative, and thus more personalized, in focus (Dubois,

1980). These personalizing features involve considerable style shifting from the more formalized openings/closings utilized in written texts to more informal commentary on slides, with occasional highly colloquial supporting anecdotes. Of particular note in Dubois' (1987) research was her finding that in spoken narratives, numerical imprecision was more common in CPs than in publications, with approximators being regularly employed in speech.

In short, the novice research presenter cannot just rely on using reapplying the RP formula as a CP model; they must utilize specific dialogic practices, organizational patterns, and linguistic repertoires, which will generally be tempered by discipline-related factors considered appropriate by specific academic discourse communities (Thompson, 2002). Taking a semiotic macro-focus based on the experiences of the researcher(s) prior to the CP event, presenters must also choose that which is considered 'relevant knowledge,' before this becomes linked into text (Charles & Ventola, 2002). Finally, the CP narrative style/content must be tailored to fit the pragmatic demands of the genre by involving audience in the CP.

The argument being made here is that a chronological narrative in particular tells the research story, going far beyond the rhetorical parameters of the IMRD style endemic to the written mode. This includes a mixing both narrative and non-narrative styles. What features does this involve? Among the factors that have been noted are

a. When switching between modes, presenters will change to the expository mode, for example, by using present tense when explaining graphic features (Thompson, 2002).
b. Rather than using only temporal shifts ('*then' 'next'*), matching relations ("*So what did we do?* We did X.") will be more frequently employed, along with an increased usage of conjunctives such as '*but*' and '*so*' (Thompson, 2002 also see, Hoey, 1983).
c. Greater frequency of the active voice, interactive pronouns ('*you*'), asking Q's to the audience (which, of course, is explicitly dialogic), and the use of the non-exclusive '*we*,' which thereby treats the audience as participants in a process. Informal lexis, such as '*Ok*' and '*oops*' are also used more frequently (Thompson, 2002).
d. The reporting of results is more often carried out in the present tense, emphasizing 'general truth' or established fact, indicating a strong commitment on the part of the speaker/writer. This strategy is also used in the interpretation of findings section(s) (Thompson, 2002).
e. Failures and problems of research are openly addressed in CP narratives. This is often achieved by using direct speech, colloquialisms, and idiomatic expressions. Failures tend to be spoken of in the past tense; successes in the present (Thompson, 2002).
f. Anecdotes including humor and irony are rare—and thus are not to be considered a key generic feature. However, they are used on occasion (Plum, 1988) and can serve as yet another means of realizing the interpersonal dimension of the CP.
g. The presenter prioritizes interaction/involvement with audience over the minutiae of research methods/results (Carter-Thomas & Rowley-Jolivet, 2005).

h. Science presenters told more stories of the research processes, including failures, than did humanities' presenters. Science presenters also used more audience-inclusive pronoun choices, thereby involving the audience in hypotheticals and/or in the research process (Thompson, 2002). Scientific research presenters also take stances much closer to actual process of research than is done in RPs (Schiffrin, 1994).
i. Humanities presenters used more questions, dialogic phrases, and interruptions to involve the audience in the presentation itself (Carter-Thomas & Rowley-Jolivet, 2005).
j. If the presentation precedes the publication, the inherently interactive quality of CPs allows the researcher to address potentially problematic areas in advance (Myers, 1994). This is often performed in narrative form so that viewers are fully familiarized with the process of the research.

Questions and Exercises for Section 9.3

1. Why are interpersonal features a necessity in CPs whereas they tend to absent from written academic papers?
2. Beyond the basic expression of the research question, methods, results, and discussion, what features of narrative tend to appear in CPs? List three.
3. Give three examples of how discourse choices might change if a CP is hoped to be presented with a strong narrative element.

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Part III
Academic Conference Discourse: The Research Background

Investigation Process and Research Focus

10

Abstract

In this chapter, I will outline the process by which I obtained and analyzed the academic conference data that will be discussed in the following sections of the book. This will include an outline of the nature of the events attended, methods of analysis used, means of evaluation, and a short discussion on the application of grounded theory.

10.1 Analyzing the Discourse of Conference Presentations: An Overview

There is a natural tendency to associate the term ESP with specific fields, such as the language of medicine, aviation, tourism, or law. When discussing the language of conferencing, however, we are dealing with not only multidisciplinary texts in terms of field or domain but also with a very event-specific type of 'situated' discourse. In this way, the language of conferencing might be seen as closer to the study of EAP, with its emphasis upon what we might refer to as a 'situated' form of writing. But, as we have mentioned, although the textual analysis of academic writing is well established in ESP/EAP literature and research, much less has been studied regarding the manner in which texts are managed in academic speech, specifically in academic CPs. Swales' (1990) Create a Research Space (*CARS)* model has long served as a well-established synopsis for establishing rhetorical moves in RPs, but, as we have seen, written academic articles vary considerably in style from their spoken CP counterparts. Simple templates cannot be applied across the domain of academic conference presentations.

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Advice on improving presentation skills has long been the province of popular literature but, as such, has rarely been backed up by textual or metadiscourse analysis, particularly in terms of the performance of novice academic research presenters and/or NNESs. Due to the influence of popular Anglo-American guidebooks on developing presentation skills, the emphasis of much CP skills teaching is placed upon creating attractive written/visual texts and incorporating paralinguistic features that may be ill-suited to the cultural and/or academic environment of many free paper/parallel session CPs.

While such general or popular advice on effective presentation skills is widespread and easily obtainable, practical advice supported by research, particularly focusing upon how the discourse can be managed to produce better outcomes, is less common. In the following sections, however, I wish to emphasize its crucial role in creating a cohesive flow in CPs. Greater consideration of the role and function of opening gambits, subsequent transitional moves and discourse markers, plus the management of discussion sessions within academic free paper/parallel session CPs would appear to have an enormously positive impact upon performance success, particularly for NNESs.

In order to research the following sections of this book, I thus noted and analyzed the opening gambits, transitional 'moves', and closing strategies (both qualitatively and quantitatively) of 293 academic research CPS performed in English at 6 international medical conferences and 10 applied linguistics/English education conferences which I attended over the course of 2013–2017. Most of the sessions attended were of 7–20 min in length for medicine and of 15–45 min' length for applied linguistics/English education.

About 85% of the presentations observed fell under the 'research report' category. Other noted categories included expository presentations offering overviews or opinions of current issues, reports on local activities and/or conditions, and blends of categories (true of plenary and keynote speeches in particular). 'Hard science' conferences tended to be dominated by the research report category, with under 10% labelled as other categories, whereas just over 20% of those in the humanities were primarily expository or explanations of programs/policies.

Initially, my research focus at the academic conferences was upon the factors governing effective CP performance alone. These CPs included keynote and plenaries, as well as those performed within symposia and other specialized thematically based events, but my attention was largely concentrated upon standard FP/PSs. These sessions tended to be grouped such that four or five thematically connected presentations were presented back-to-back in the same meeting room (as opposed to a larger auditorium), with little or no transition time between them. At 14 of the 16 conferences I attended, over 90% of *all* presentations fell into the parallel or FP/PS category.

My initial research locus in this study was East Asia, and most specifically Japan. In order to offer Japanese and other Asian NNES medical professionals effective and meaningful models for CP competency, as my initial research project specified, I initially attended six Asian International Medical Conferences (three

held in Japan, one in South Korea, one in Thailand, and one in Singapore) where I attended and observed a total of 170 academic presentations performed by medical professionals, primarily from six East Asian nations (Japan, China-Taiwan, South Korea, Vietnam, Thailand, and Indonesia). I also attended (and participated in) 10 applied linguistics/English education conferences over the same period, these held in 6 different countries, in which I observed and analyzed the discourse structure of 123 more CPs delivered by presenters from 18 countries, 90% of whom would fall under the general classification of NNES. During this time, I also observed several more applied linguistics CPs both as an active and interested participant or as a casual observer, not as a researcher.).

The process used for the analysis of the data is described in Fig. 10.1:

As the above description indicates, my initial purpose when observing CPs was to develop a synoptic understanding of their generic structures, as opposed to creating a taxonomy of specific utterances. As a result, once rhetorical sections and standardized 'moves' were located and defined, at subsequent conferences I was able to concentrate on the specific codes and texts that marked the moves, noting in particular commonly used discourse forms (see Fig. 10.1, above for a general outline of the process). Finally, I began to search for any correlation between the moves, forms, and recurring patterns utilized by presenters and the relative effectiveness or non-effectiveness of the presentation as a whole. Which characteristics tended to result in a CP in which the audience were fully engaged and segued into a robust post-CP discussion session? Conversely, what were the common characteristics that marked those resulting in a muted response or an apparent lack of interest from the viewers?

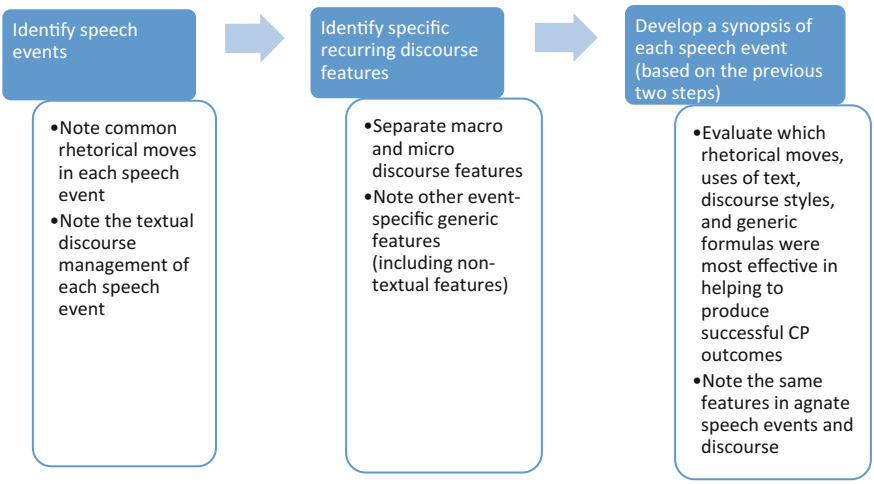

Fig. 10.1 Outline of the author's conference and genre discourse analysis process

Once a synoptic structure was identified, each presentation attended was subsequently notated for the manner in which specific rhetorical moves were carried out, with a particular focus upon opening gambits and subsequent thematic transitions. My focus on such moves are loosely based on the type of genre analysis models pioneered by Swales (1990) and also utilized by Carter-Thomas and Rowley-Jolivet (2005) in their analysis of CP introductions, in which rhetorical and lexical devices (discourse markers) used to connect slides or introduce new sections were noted regarding their efficacy in generating a successful presentation narrative. Interestingly, these features are often considered peripheral or ignored in popular 'guidebook' literature on the topic.

Because CPs are multimodal events spanning a number of semiotic fields, there are several possible means of analyzing the discourse (Carter-Thomas & Rowley-Jolivet, 2003). One is to take a microscopic approach to the syntactical forms noted in the discourse and address how the syntax choices made by the speakers helps to establish an interpersonal dimension with the audience and realize the immediate multimodal nature of the talk. Another is to take a rhetorical approach and observe any series of recurring rhetorical moves made by the speakers (while recognizing that such generic structures are rarely, if ever, fixed—categorically separating obligatory from optional CP moves is a near impossible task). This model illuminates the higher-level structure of the discourse. In my analyses, both these top-down and bottom-up approaches were utilized.

In short, once genre analysis was applied, discourse analysis followed. At this point, more of the discrete syntactical micro-features of CP discourse were noted. Q&A/Discussion sessions were also closely observed as a separate, dialogic, speech event, which demanded a rather different analytical approach, as these events involve heightened interpersonal, real-time dynamics.

Observation and analyses of the structure and spoken discourse marking other 'agnate' conference speech events were carried out at the later conferences I attended, at which the discourse features of symposia/colloquia, workshops, chairing, poster sessions, and, to some extent, extraneous social chat came under examination, albeit with a less 'evaluative' focus.

10.2 Evaluating Conference Presentation Performance

When observing CPs, I gave an immediate and thoroughly subjective 'rating' to the performance of each presenter. A number of factors were considered in determining this rating, both external and internal. Among the external factors were the following:

(1) Did the CP hold the audience's attention? Or were many viewers talking, texting, napping, or perusing the conference program?
(2) Did it lead to a robust response in the follow-up Q&A session or was the follow-up reaction muted?

Among the internal factors considered were

(1) Could I, even when attending as a non-specialist, grasp the general ebb, flow, and direction of the presentation, even if/though I was not knowledgeable regarding the contents?
(2) Did the presenter employ any notable discursive techniques to hold or enhance the audience's attention?
(3) Did the combination of visual (slides) and spoken texts serve to enhance meaning or communication? Or did the verbal text simply reiterate that which was written on the slides?

One crucial element to note here is that the actual quality, novelty, or scientific importance of the research itself was *not* a factor in my determining the effectiveness of the CP, not only because I was not in a position to make such a judgment for scientific presentations, but also because these qualities lie outside the intended scope of this research. A poorly delivered CP could still capture audience interest and result in a robust discussion if the content was considered novel or of particular import. Likewise, well-presented CPs that are lacking in novelty or meaningful application to the field might produce a muted response. In short, good presentation skills do not necessarily make for memorable or academically significant CPs, although they will almost certainly enhance it.

Regardless, it should be emphasized that my ratings were in no way intended to represent any type of objective 'outcome' of my observations, nor were they analyzed in any complex statistical manner. The ratings ascribed I applied to the CPs were not meant to serve as analytical tools in and of themselves. Rather, they merely served as guideposts that allowed me to more readily distinguish the common generic and discursive features of the more viscerally effective presentations from those having a lesser impact, regardless of the quality and/or integrity of the actual research underlying the presentation. My primary research focus was thus based more upon qualitative, rather than quantitative, observations.

10.3 The Use of Grounded Theory for Analysis

The contents of the research-based portion of this book are constructed largely on the concept of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), with the attendant coding method based upon the post-objectivist school of analysis (see Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Grounded theory involves *not* the typical positing of a research question, about which research data is collected and then analyzed step-by-step, in accordance with established or existing theories. Although grounded theory requires a 'research question' in order to identify the area of interest, the theory ultimately *emerges from* the data—there is no hypothesis testing in the traditional sense; the process is inductive rather than deductive.

Data collection simply represents the start of the analytical process (in grounded theory, data collection and the analysis thereof become merged). Anchor categories are first noted in the data. From these categories, further sub-categories may also emerge. Elements within these categories are further codified, which represents the descriptive stage of grounded theory. By repeatedly analyzing the relationship between the categories and codes, including outlying data, the researcher may now posit a new theory or schema based on the emerging data. Thus, grounded theory implies a constant process of reviewing earlier data, often involving annotated memos detailing the newly emerging results. This dynamic process represents the analytical dimension of grounded theory.

As mentioned earlier, my research objective initially consisted of codifying discourse categories emerging from the various academic conference speech events. These served as discursive 'anchors' before subsequently attempting to connect the various discourses and/or determining the significance of particular generic moves. This approach can be contrasted with the process of starting the inquiry by employing a set, overarching theory from which the data could be deductively analyzed. In practice, this implied a lot of initial 'memoing'—handwritten notes from which recurring discourse categories and patterns could be noted. Finally, these conferencing English 'concepts' were refined and connected, not into an abstract theory, but into categorical suggestions for practical application, as presented in the remainder of this book.

Underscoring this grounded theory approach was a primary concern with the purpose or aims of the conferences and the participants therein (the dissemination of practices and knowledge within a field) and how the participants went about managing discourses to meet these aims. Once I determined the most common conference speech events (CPs, poster sessions, symposia, post-session chat), the management of interactions in these speech events were observed and noted. Gradually, a synopsis of each speech event could be constructed from which codifiable 'moves', or what some call a 'generic code' could be loosely determined. This involved noting not only how the discourse was constructed internally but also how each discourse type was connected rhetorically or semiotically to other speech events and to the academic conference genre as a whole.

However, I should emphasize again, that this book is not intended to be written for applied linguists (although I hope and expect that it may hold areas of appeal to those in the field). My aim was not primarily to construct a comprehensive description of conference English alone but also to consider its application for the novice academic researcher, the graduate student, and/or ESP teacher. While descriptive analysis can tell us how conferences typically inform and help to construct various discourses and interactions, the question as to whether a participant *would* want to or *should* model their own discourse based upon these forms is a separate consideration.

While accurate descriptions may help us understand the playing field or the rules of a particular discourse game better, it should not compel the player to make a prescribed move during an event that is fundamentally dynamic. To do so would merely serve to perpetuate orthodoxy rather than to guide the novice into making sound discursive decisions.

Therefore, my aim in the remainder of this book is to offer some evaluation of the various genre-based discourse moves noted at conferences such that readers may be able to consider their own preferred or alternate courses of discursive action.

Questions and Exercises for Chapter 10

1. What are some of the fundamental precepts of grounded theory and how can they be best applied to an analysis of the type described in this chapter above?
2. In what order do you think the noting, identification, and analyses of speech events, spoken discourse markers, generic forms, and rhetorical moves should be carried out?

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Social and Environmental Factors 11

Abstract

In this chapter, we will briefly discuss some of the external factors that affect or influence the analysis of conference spoken discourse. These include constraints based upon the social and physical environment of FP/PSs, immediate/environmental sociocultural factors, and the use (or non-use) of supplementary handouts.

11.1 Parallel Session and Free Paper Environments: An Overview

FP/PS presentations are distinct in both form and style from plenary, keynote, or specially invited speeches in that the former largely consist of narrow-focus research 'reports' from rank and file members of the discourse community whereas the latter usually address wider-ranging topics and are given by prominent figures in the field.

As we noted in the chapter comparing TED presentations with academic CPs, FP/PSs are not primarily intended to entertain, perhaps not even to be explicitly persuasive, but largely serve to report research processes and (tentative) findings. Since these are the types of presentations that most novice academics and professionals will be performing and attending, they therefore warrant special consideration in terms of understanding how the discourse is typically, and most effectively, managed. Understanding how the discourse is managed by effective practitioners is foundational to becoming a competent presenter oneself.

It is incumbent upon CP trainers then to emphasize the difference between managing a one-hour workshop, delivering an invited TED-styled speech, and giving a 10-minute FP/PS academic research presentation. In short, mastery of FP/PS discourse features should precede the acquisition of more kinetic or visceral

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'presentation skills,' not the other way round. FP/PSs should *not* be particularly concerned with grand gestures and kinetic bling, as the primary purpose is to inform, rather than to entertain or persuade.

Audiences too differ according to CP type. As the conferences I attended were generally large and international in scope, with several FP/PSs running simultaneously, thematic FP/PSs tended to cover very narrow areas of highly specialized research interest. Audience members were largely made up of researchers in the same field and thus familiar with the academic content.

In my own observations and research, I was always careful to clearly categorize and mark the different CP categories. Also, beyond the initial CP categorization, local factors, such as the particular academic/professional discourse community's expectations (which notably affects the balance between the dimensions of entertainment, persuasion, and information), as well as the immediate physical and social environmental factors that may affect both the parameters of CP performance and the expected role of the audience, were also taken into consideration. These factors constitute the following sections.

11.2 Sociocultural Factors

While the establishment of an interpersonal dimension between presenter and audience in the CP may be viewed as a necessity, the manner and/or degree to which this is established may be tempered by the cultural milieu. In presentations openings in particular, certain common metadiscursive choices may clash with local norms or sensibilities, particularly if Anglo-American norms and standards are assumed to represent the prescribed model (Carter-Thomas & Rowley-Jolivet, 2005). For example, the move from the non-personal to a personal voice typifying the difference between RPs and CPs has been noted as a major cultural adjustment for Taiwanese presenters (Yang, 2014). Cultural factors can be particularly pronounced in the summary and conclusion sections, where alternating degrees of hedging and assertion need to be delicately balanced (Fig. 11.1).

The difficulty in developing English CP coping models for presenters from China and Japan in particular has been noted by Zappa-Hollman (2007). The Japanese have been described as the least aggressive and least direct participants in the more interactive sessions (Rowley-Jolivet, 2002). Furthermore, in the same region, reading from a prepared script can often meet the local expectations of an academic CP. Zappa-Hollman (2007) notes that, as a result of these factors, presenters from such cultures may be, '…viewing their L2 academic discourse socialization as a complex process … even by students with advanced language proficiency,' adding that including dynamic elements of persuasive and/or entertainment value '…may be resisted by students whose home academic discourse values contrast with those in their new contexts' (p. 455).

Fig. 11.1 In East Asia, gestures and body movement are generally less flamboyant during free paper presentations (Photograph by author, with permission from Takayuki Oshimi)

Research report CPs are generally expected to adhere to a fairly rigid format paralleling the Introduction–Methods–Results-–Discussion (IMRD) structure common to written RPs, since there exists a very strong discourse structure expectation in scientific CPs (Green, DeCherrie, Fagan, Sharpe, & Hershman, 2011), and thus there is little expectation of levity and humor. This factor was magnified by the fact that presenters I noted often were not speaking in their L1 and thus often opted for a safer, more familiar structure. Also, many hailed from regions in which a Confucian academic cultures dominate, and these are cultures in which more flamboyant types of presentations might not be considered suitably academic (Yang, 2014). The tone for most such CPs was, for the most part, somber and sober (Fig. 11.1).

These socioenvironmental factors have the uptake of placing even greater importance upon the internal organization of the text and how this becomes represented in the presenter's speech. Since the impact of gestures and physical movement in FP/PSs will necessarily be limited, the audience will depend more on the spoken text and intonation alone to guide them to recognize opening strategies, transitions, and other rhetorical moves.

Readers might also want to ask themselves whether pitching a product or method, that is, using the language and demeanor of the salesman in a session where field and tenor are traditionally focused upon the relatively detached presentation of research data, is likely to backfire. One lasting impression from my observations was that the type of presentation which served largely to promote or propagate the institutions or activities of the speaker/researcher (what might best be described as 'About my university/institution/program program' CPs) were generally less well-received, particularly at scientific conferences, and appear to be decreasing in number in the humanities. One reason for this may be that background data for local studies were often too specific, relevant only to a single institution or geographical location, and/or too obvious in their attempts to appeal, lacking applicable scope, and also lacking a novelty factor that could be considered useful to their peers in the audience.

11.3 Physical Environment Factors

Almost without exception, the FP/PS presentations I attended took place in meeting rooms seating less than 100 people. In over 70% of CPs, I observed there was no defined 'stage' and lighting was subdued, with the presentation area dominated by the screen and the presenter standing off to one side, either behind or next to a podium or small table or desk supporting the computer equipment (Fig. 11.2).

Fig. 11.2 A standard free paper/parallel session presentation room

This physical environment immediately restricts the kinetic possibilities for most presenters. Movement is restricted, with the audience's focus expected to be upon the visual texts and the screen, not upon the presenter. This reduces the importance and effectiveness of larger physical gestures and traditional presentation staples such as eye contact. As discussed earlier, the entertainment and persuasive properties of a highly interactive TED lecture are not viable in such an environment. This should not, however, be construed as demanding excessive formality or dryness. Rather, it puts the onus upon the novelty value of the content in that a '… focus on novelty, combined with the often stringent time constraints imposed on speakers, will have a significant influence on the choice and organization of the scientific content.' (Carter-Thomas & Rowley-Jolivet, 2005, p. 50).

11.4 The Use of Conference Presentation Handouts

The practice of providing handouts to accompany CP slides is becoming less common in both hard and soft science CPs, especially given the increasingly frequent habit of audience members taking photographs of slides using cellphones or of slides being made available online. In a handful of cases, however, handouts were made available at the end of the CP for those who wished to take a copy. These were often placed at the entrance/exit to the presentation room.

However, if the presenter wishes to support their presentation with handouts, the following guidelines, based on my experience and observations, are suggested below:

1. Do not distribute the handouts at the beginning of the presentation (activity-based workshops in which detailed instructions must be followed would be the main exception to this rule). This will only encourage audience members to read the printed text and ignore the actual CP.
2. Keynote and plenary speakers used supporting handouts in about 20% of all such presentations that I attended. These were, in almost all cases, prose summaries of the presentation content, not printed slides.
3. Do not construct the handout exactly as your slides. Edit to focus primarily on key take-home points or specific data that the recipient might be able to refer to later. Remember that the additive or surprise value of using animation in a CP does not have the same effect in printed versions of slides.
4. If you print your slides, six to a page, pure black and white is the most convenient form, but do realize that the intricacies of charts and graphs may then become illegible.
5. If possible, distribute handouts at the end of a presentation (this can be more easily carried out with the help of presentation room staff). This allows only those who want a copy to take one.

6. Inform audience members that a handout will be made available at the end of the presentation. This will allow the audience to concentrate on what you are conveying in real time as opposed to taking hurried notes and falling behind.
7. Keep some handout copies for attendees who wanted to attend your presentation but didn't or couldn't. Often, I've met both interested, and interesting, attendees after my own presentation has finished. By giving them a handout, they can gain the gist of the CP and, if they are truly interested, can contact you after.

Questions and Exercises for Chapter 11

1. Why is the use of flamboyant visuals and powerful gestures less suited to free paper CPs than other types of conference presentations? Give two reasons.
2. Why might a typical TED-style presentation be unsuited to certain cultural milieus? Give two reasons.
3. List 2 physical factors that distinguish most free paper CPs from keynote or plenary CPs.
4. In what cases would you offer a handout with your CP? What factors might determine whether you distribute it before, during, or after the presentation?

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Part IV
Practical Ideas and Suggestions for Effective Conference Performance

Academic Tenor and Formulaic Academic Phrases

12

Abstract

This chapter introduces the central role that formulaic academic phrases play not only in research papers (as is well known) but also due to their frequency and import as used in conference speech events of all types. Maintaining an academic tenor is a central part of marking one's membership within an academic discourse community, particularly at core events such as academic conferences. These often overlooked items need to be mastered by novice members of the community in order to participate and engage others fully.

As we noted earlier, at academic conferences, several differing streams of discourse typically occur. The first of these falls within the specific language domain, or field of discourse (e.g., medicine, aviation, tourism etc.) or even specialist sub-domains therein. These will be marked by the use of specialized terminology, abbreviations, ellipsis, and other 'insider talk,' often not known or used outside of immediate domain circles.

Another stream is that of language that is academic, but not specialist. Academics are expected to interact in a manner that is befitting of their academic stations, maintaining an academic tenor consistent with the norms of the discourse community. In this section, I will introduce and analyze some of the key factors of maintaining this academic tenor.

Some, not only laymen but also in-service professionals and even language teachers, tend to think of 'insider' language as basically consisting of the knowledge of single-item technical terms. When I was interviewing doctors at my own hospital about CP performance, I asked them how they had come to master the technical terms in their fields. Only one of the nine doctors interviewed said that she had acquired most specialist terms from memorizing lists while she was a medical student. Every other doctor interviewed mentioned how these terms became part of their active lexicons only when they were directly related to usage in their workplace. Some remarked how certain English technical-medical words had more or

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less become extensions of their mother tongue, incorporated into the L1 specialist lexicon.

Take, for example, the specialist items 'phthisis' and 'astigmatism.' These are not known to your average native speaker of English, and in fact, even some medical practitioners might not recognize them. However, if one is in the field of ophthalmology, even as a NNES, these words will seem rather commonplace—practitioners typically append them to non-English field discourses (without any explicit surrounding code-switching). In short, mastery of terminology comes quite naturally with necessity—with being actively engaged in a specialist field. What I am suggesting here is that such items need not be an ESP teaching focus or priority.

However, participating as a fully ensconsed member of an academic discourse community involves using a much wider range of academic discourse skills and conventions. Therefore, what *should* be a pedagogical and practical focus for young academics is the use of formulaic academic, set phrase, or multiword forms that mark one as a member of *any*, as opposed to *a particular*, academic discourse community.

Although, as we will see, formulaic academic phrases are prominent in any type of academic discourse, they are often undervalued as learning items among both language teachers and learners. Formulaic academic phrases consist primarily of flexible lexical phrases or chunks that mark reoccurring academic discourse across various disciplines. Such phrases appear frequently in both written *and* spoken academic texts. Hyland (2000) states that many academic discourse features have cross-disciplinary application, which holds true for CPs across various academic disciplines as well, in which certain formulaic academic phrases regularly and consistently occur.

In my observations, several formulaic academic phrases occasionally appeared in succession in longer texts.

One such example that I noted occurred at a medical conference poster session in which the host was explaining an aspect of the poster—related to the field of hematology—to a visitor. One part of the explanation was expressed as follows:

> *The most significant finding was the elevated level of carboxyhemoglobin, which excluded any other diagnoses.*

In this spoken text, the formulaic academic phrases are '*significant finding*', '*elevated level*', and '*excluded*' (or 'ruled out') '*any other diagnoses'*.

These expressions express a degree of detached formality, typical of academic discourse, and are characteristic of many spoken interactions during conferences settings. Even if we remove the specialist term 'carboxyhemoglobin' and change 'diagnoses' from the above text to a semantically equivalent term (such as 'results') that does not imply a medical field, the tenor remains academic, as we can see:

> *The most significant finding was the elevated level of X, which excluded/ruled out any other possibilities/results.*

Compare that with the tenor expressed when the formulaic academic phrases are replaced by 'general English' terms, which remove it from the field of academia and mark the type of everyday conversation that could be applied to any topic:

The most important thing we found was a lot of X, which meant that nothing else was possible.

Perhaps paradoxically, given the nomenclature, formulaic academic phrases can be anchored in single lexical items as well as phrases. For example a common single-word formulaic academic anchor that appeared regularly in CPs I observed was 'obtain,' ("*We managed to obtain three clear images*"), used in place of the general English 'get.'

Among the formulaic academic phrases connected to methods, materials, and procedures that I noted in scientific conference CPs, are those listed in Table 12.1. X and Y refer to variables that can be used flexibly in the environment of the phrase:

Table 12.1 Formulaic academic phrases connected to CP methods, materials, and procedures

In the initial trials, we investigated X.
In order to determine X, we carried out/conducted a Y.
We performed a comparative analysis.
To implement real-time detection…
To prevent X from occurring, …
By reducing the pressure on X, …
X is characteristic of Y
Considering/given the complex state of (the patient), …
The aim of the study was to…
To establish primary and secondary endpoints…
Key objectives of this analysis included…
These, then, are the baseline characteristics of X
Using a multivarietal analysis…
X here is defined as within a statistical range of…
Based on X, we assessed Y, using a standardized instrument
At the time of X, …
Z consists of X factors and Y factors
This is the most important factor in determining X
The visual disturbance was localized
Usually, we expose the tumor within a range of X
X was inserted to achieve a high-level density
Through composite analysis, …
We performed a comparative analysis
…induced by the distribution of Y
Considering/given the complex state of X…
According to a number of risk factors, …
This pie chart/graph/diagram demonstrates that…
The mechanism occurs as follows…

Table 12.2 Formulaic academic phrases connected to CP conclusions, discussions, and summaries (some of the items listed above were originally compiled in 国際学会のためのサバイバル英語術, Guest, 2014)

According to a number of risk factors, …
The mechanism occurs as follows…
There is a significant/slight correlation between X and Y
(Radiological) reports indicated X
Statistically significant outcomes included…
Our data also indicates the probability of X
Perhaps the most important/significant factor is X
Through this approach, X was successfully removed.
From this relationship, it can be estimated that…
They were equally distributed between X and Y/among all groups
We found that those who displayed X were associated with Y
Evidence suggests that there is an association between X and Y
The mechanism causing X was not clear
The prevalence of types A and B indicated…
Statistical analysis shows that there was a significant effect upon…
X confirmed that there was a significant correlation between X and Y
X proved to be the strongest associative factor
X was present in Y
These results suggest that there are some statistically significant differences which serve as evidence that…
We achieved a desirable outcome
Since this was a retrospective study, …
Our database also indicates the probability/likelihood of X
Essentially, there is no difference between these two groups in terms of outcomes
There is insufficient evidence to say X, so more experimentation is needed
X produced no statistically significant difference
Y is (not) a major determinant of X
…due to the prevalence of Y
A similar finding was observed in X
X is associated with Y, particularly when Z occurs
We found that X was inversely correlated to Y
These findings suggest (that) X
So X should be considered indispensable when carrying out Y in the future
The data generated by X indicates a high intake/incidence of Y
To prevent the recurrence of X, Y is effective
X inhibited the production of Y
More research is necessary to conclude X

(continued)

Table 12.2 (continued)

According to a number of risk factors, …
Long-/short-term/positive outcomes included…
If we follow-up long-term, the chances of recurrence…
Post-operative findings showed X
X remains unclear, so the future aim of this study is to investigate Y
A substantial number of Xs were located next to Y
The presence of X suggests Y

Examples of formulaic academic phrases connected to discussions, conclusions, and summaries that recurred in scientific CPs are included in Table 12.2:

From the examples noted above, we might conclude that formulaic academic phrases display the attributes listed below. They:

- Occupy a mid-point between 'general English' and specialist terminology
- Contain constituents that are flexible (i.e., *excluded vs. ruled out, possibilities vs. results*)
- Have cross-disciplinary academic application
- Are utilized in both written and spoken modes
- Hold long-term (intrinsic) value for academics/professionals
- Mark entry or membership into academic discourse community

Given these attributes, it would seem fair then to argue that formulaic academic phrases serve as building blocks of academic discourse. Since academic conferences are platforms for the dissemination of knowledge and ideas by means of employing the norms of academic discourse, and since speech events such as CPs and poster sessions represent a core element of conferencing, the mastery of formulaic academic phrases should therefore be treated as a central feature of any discussion about academic conference discourse.

However, again it is important to clearly distinguish formulaic academic phrases from more localized, specialist terminology. Formulaic academic phrases might appear to fall into the broader circle of 'general English' in that any proficient English speaker will grasp the meaning of the terms, but will still maintain an academic tenor (meaning that these terms would not usually be applied in informal or non-academic settings). A visual representation of the location of formulaic academic phrases within conference discourse is indicated in Fig. 12.1:

Another defining feature of formulaic academic phrases is the prevalence of abstract nouns. The following observed utterance serves as an exemplar of this quality:

> *The presence of anomalies in these findings may be a product of some degree of subjectivity in the calculations.*

The abstract nouns have been underlined above. This is an area that is ripe for further research, as the frequency with which they were noted suggests that novice presenters may well want to develop mastery of these items, particularly the ability

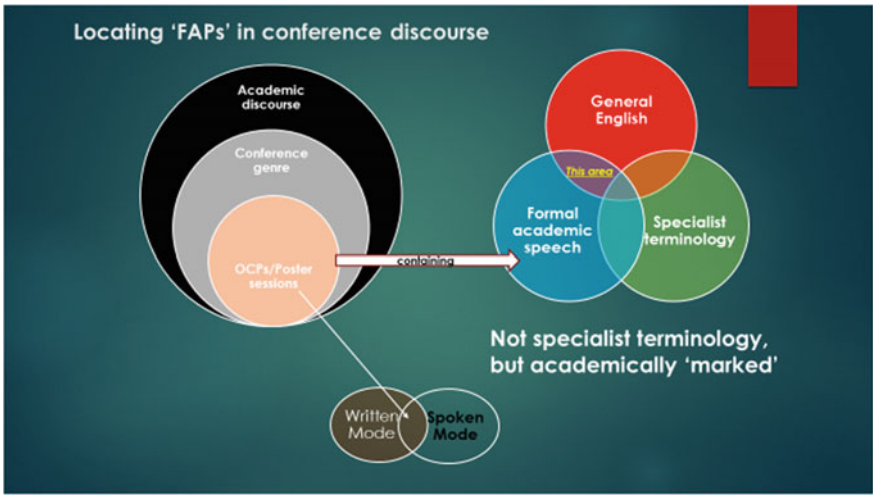

Fig. 12.1 Locating formulaic academic phrases (FAPs) in conference discourse

to retrieve and deploy them in real-time speech. These, too, appear to mark the speech forms of the academic discourse community.

It seems then that formulaic academic phrases occupy a central role in determining effective and fruitful participation and performance at academic conferences and, as a result, enable or enhance learner entry into a variety of professional/academic discourse communities—fostering a sense of 'belonging'—and therefore should be a focal point in any academic writing practice, CP training, or preparation for academic conferences.

Since formulaic academic phrases have immense value in identifying the speaker as a competent member of the professional or academic discourse community, novice academics should have a sufficient number of these recurring phrases securely embedded in their conference English repertoire for quick retrieval and should become not only familiar with, but proficient in using, most of the sample items listed earlier. This involves not merely understanding the dictionary meaning of each term within the phrase (the semantic value of the phrase is not a mere composite of its constituents), but rather to become sensitized as to how they are used as set constructions in the academic discourse community, particularly in RPs, CP slides, and in the accompanying CP spoken texts.

Productive usage of these forms should become instinctive to young academics, with NNESs in particular treating them as if they were new extensions of their L1. I suggest highlighting such items when reading academic journals and later consciously employing them not only in RPs, but also to the point of developing a level of comfort using them in their own CPs or other conference speech events. Knowing how to use these forms is perhaps *the* strongest indicator as to who belongs to a specific academic discourse community and who does not.

Questions and Exercises for Chapter 12

1. In the following (authentic) speech sample, taken from the field of ophthalmology, which terms/phrases/words represent (a) formulaic academic phrases, (b) specialist terminology, and (c) 'general' English?

   Myopic astigmatism is widely recognized as the most common form of non-strabismic diplopia and is marked by an inability to focus clearly. Visual acuity is subsequently reduced due to persistent interocular macularization.
2. What three qualities distinguish formulaic academic phrases from specialist terminology?
3. Take a short academic article from any specialist journal. Underline or otherwise highlight any formulaic academic phrases you encounter. Rank them on a scale of 1 to 5 based upon your familiarity with them ranging from *well-understood; often used' to 'not well-understood; not often used.*

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Conference Presentation Introductions and Openings

13

Abstract

In this chapter, we will discuss how to give effective openings in a CP. It is in the opening where the speaker can establish rapport with an audience, develop an interpersonal dimension, create a 'voice' for him or herself, ground the tenor, and provide the audience with the rhetorical structure of the CP. Therefore, effective openings are essential in determining effective CP performance. But which discursive, rhetorical, and linguistic choices are most frequent? And which would be most effective according to the presentation type and content? The generic, linguistic, and rhetorical features of introductions and opening CP moves might initially seem peripheral when the presenter naturally wishes to focus upon the research content, but the choice of opening gambit must be given thorough consideration by those presuming to teach CP skills to novice researchers and academics, as well as novice researchers who hope to successfully present at international academic conferences, as the explicit use of rhetorical moves and discourse markers in introductory sections will serve to both guide and engage the audience as well as to 'position' the speaker. Based on my observations, the most salient opening gambits included: opening directly into the research content, using rhetorical questions, shared research/academic knowledge, providing background information, and avoiding unnecessary self-introduction data, minimizing anecdotes, and limiting personal appeals to the audience. We will also look briefly at body language and posture concerns, followed by a short overview of how openings might best be managed in agnate conference speech events.

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13.1 Information Structure in the Opening Gambit(s)

Presentation introductions and openings represent perhaps the greatest departure from the fundamentally multimodal nature of the CP genre. Openings are often performed independently of any accompanying written text and require the speaker to establish rapport with the audience in an unscripted form, which is why they tend to cause many problems for NNSs (Carter-Thomas & Rowley-Jolivet, 2003) and novice presenters (Shalom, 2002), the latter who notes that the opening is not usually as codified as other sections of the CP, perhaps increasing the anxiety of such speakers.

Yet, interestingly, opening strategies were not selected as a primary anxiety-causing aspect of English presentations by the doctors I surveyed at my own university. However, as I attended research-based conferences I began to notice that opening gambits did constitute a problematic area for many presenters, both NNESs and NESs, novices and veterans, leading me to believe that this area needs to be addressed in greater detail.

The introduction or opening of a CP has been described as a 'situated event' which calls for 'situationally appropriate' choices and responses from the speaker (Shalom, 2002). As such, the opening of a plenary or keynote CP will differ greatly from the form of a FP/PS presentation. As Carter-Thomas and Rowley-Jolivet (2005) suggest, 'The role of the introduction in setting up a rhetorically appropriate framework in response to the contextual and epistemological requirements of the genre is … crucial.' (p. 65). For example, Sanderson (2008) notes how a more personal voice, usually manifested in the CP opening, is associated with higher status researchers, such as plenary speakers and other academic celebrities. Carter-Thomas and Rowley-Jolivet (2003) provide a rhetorical move-based framework for openings that includes three central moves:

(a) *Setting up the framework*—a step that includes both the interpersonal and discursive frames, providing the audience with a sense as to how the topic is organized
(b) *Contextualizing*—a step which situates the talk within the conference setting by giving reference to conference themes or other speakers
(c) *Research rationale*—a step that focuses on outlining the importance of the research and the reasons for which it was carried out.

Some of these moves can be noted in the examples that follow.

13.1.1 Opening Samples

In the CPs that I observed, after thanking the chair for the introduction and/or the audience for their attendance, the initial gambit for 128 FP/PS presenters I observed was divided as follows:

- Reading the title of the paper and/or giving a self-introduction (name and affiliation) n = 53
- Immediately explaining the research framework (e.g., '*For the past two years we have been observing…*') n = 27
- Providing an outline of presentation contents ("*Today I'll be talking about…*") n = 23
- Making a lighthearted comment to the audience, often anecdotal, and/or commenting on the conference/location/other speakers in general ("*This is my first time to visit Seoul and I'm very happy to be here…*") n = 17
- Dealing with technical or audio problems ("*Can you hear my voice?*") n = 8 (*In 27 cases, some combination of the above gambits was employed. In such cases, only the initial gambit is listed as an 'n' above*).

The most striking feature among the numbers above is that 53 out of the 128 presenters (over 40%) opted to state the title of the presentation or personal data as an opening move even though, in *every* case observed, this information was not only written on the first displayed slide but was also included in the chairperson's introduction, as well as being included in the conference program and, in most cases, on the presentation room door.

An opening or closing that carries impact can certainly go a long way toward making an effective or influential presentation. But the widespread habit of beginning with repeating the presentation title, one's name or affiliation did not help in achieving that aim, particularly so for the short FP/PS presentations. Why?

As mentioned, the presenter's name, position, affiliation, and presentation title is generally displayed prominently in a large font on the speaker's first slide. Explicitly announcing that which is already clearly visible on the slide or is otherwise well known to the audience is tantamount to treating the audience not as interlocutors in a dialogic event but as non-sentient objects. It might be assumed that the speaker has not credited their audience with the intelligence or given knowledge one might expect in an academic setting. Perhaps unsurprisingly, when this gambit was chosen, several audience members quickly began scanning their programs.

Utilizing such a gambit may also have given many audience members the impression that the speaker was going to simply read aloud the entire contents of their slides and, thus, that the speaker might be insensitive to the real-time interactive environment, the interpersonal element that captures an audience. Such behavior, it might be argued, violates the interpersonal dimension of the presentation, since members of the audience may feel that the speaker is wasting their time by repeating known information.

Given the rapid-fire nature of FP/PS presentations, elaborate self-introductions not only can be time-consuming but may come off as being slightly self-absorbed or pretentious, while plenary speakers, being academic celebrities, often require no self-introduction. Therefore, the type of speaker that would most likely benefit from an explicit self-introduction would likely be those who cover a middle ground, those invited speakers who are not renowned but have been slotted into a 'special'

presentation category, generally one that is longer than the times afforded to FP/PS speakers.

Below are several opening gambits that did not appear to be effective and I thus recommend avoiding. The first four connote the stilted discourses of secondary school classrooms:

My name is X, and my presentation is entitled Y.
Hello everyone.
My topic today is X.
Today I'm going to present about X.

Audience members might well be put off by the register of the openings above—they are redolent of a scripted self-introduction of 'the English class English' type'. The habit of practicing self-introductions of this sort in EFL classes is already dubious in that it is questionable whether this is a function that interactants use in actual English speech events—it seems to be prevalent mostly in EFL classrooms—and should not be applied wholesale to academic presentations.

The following three samples, on the other hand, would appear to express *too* much casual familiarity with the audience or, perhaps, lack of concern for the gravitas of the event, displaying an overapplication of the interpersonal dimension:

I'll present on X, OK?
OK, so, I've just changed the title to show… X.
I'm gonna talk about something that is very hot 'n sexy…

Although Carter-Thomas and Rowley-Jolivet (2005) argue that explicit self-introductions do maintain some background-setting value that can aids the audience, it should be emphasized that most of my own observations on opening gambits were limited to FP/PS presentations, where, unlike plenary and keynote speeches, time is limited and the audience is attending primarily to listen to research content rather than to acknowledge the complex background and/or affiliations of a specific speaker.

In my own observations, those speakers who opted for a personal comment or social utterance as an opening gambit in the FP/PSs did not always fare well. Remarks about visiting the locale for the first time or regaling the wonderful facilities and hosts often seemed somewhat out of place, forced attempts at creating a note of familiarity or encroaching upon the discourse domain of the celebrity plenary speaker.

FP/PS presenters who opened by admitting to nervousness or other personal and/or peripheral issues (observed on 15 occasions) were also generally met with a stony or awkward silence from the audience, which is even more likely to magnify the speaker's anxiety and sense of displacement. It appeared that speakers who were trying to appease the audience or apologize for shortcomings in advance did not succeed in establishing a felicitous interpersonal dimension. However, while it may well be argued that apologizing in the opening of a CP can serve as a type of

self-effacing positioning—marking one's humble place within the discourse community—the upshot is that the audience may also view the tactic as time-wasting, might actually serve to heighten the audience's discomfort, or it might lead the audience to note some fault or shortcoming they would otherwise not have been aware of.

Interestingly, admitting one's nerves is described as an empathy-creating factor in Anderson's (2016) 'Ted Talks,' in which the author encourages anxious speakers to explicitly do so. And an empathetic connection may indeed occur when the speaker is clearly not an experienced orator but has cachet that the audience recognizes, for example, a with victim of a traumatic experience speaking about their troubled past. But such speeches are far removed from the situational factors that govern and mark international academic conferences, where, in my observations, explicit responses to admissions of stage fright were *not* met with any palpable empathy. The FP/PS audience does not seem interested in, or overtly sympathetic to, confessions about the mental state of the speaker. Further, since most speakers will be equally nervous, there seems to be little reason to exempt a particular speaker on these grounds or assume that the attempt at appeasement will work.

Lighthearted opening gambits (typically involving anecdotes and humor) were widely used by plenary and featured speakers—who are given longer and less content-specific sessions, and these usually helped to establish an interpersonal platform that had the effect of relaxing and drawing in the audience.

Judging by audience reactions, the preferred approach in more effective FP/PSs was opening with a variation on the CP title, one which segued more naturally with the outline (e.g., '*So, as you can see, I'll be discussing the treatment of rhinitis, with a special focus upon asthma-related rhinitis, first in children, and then in adolescents*'). This technique has been noted as being particularly effective due to the fact that some reformulation of the topic title tends to heighten interest value (Carter-Thomas & Rowley-Jolivet, 2005).

Another effective opening gambit, noted on 17 occasions, was to mention research affiliations and roles/positions (also known as 'self-mention'), not as an introduction move per se but as the immediate gateway into the presentation content itself (e.g., '*At the X clinic, I have been working with Dr. Y's team over the past two years observing Z*').

These opening gambits serve the valuable role of setting up the CP framework and placing the topic within a specific research context (Thompson, 1994). References to other speakers or conference themes as a means of backgrounding the presentation not only distinguish the CP from the written research mode but also help to establish recognition of the audience as peers (Shalom, 2002).

The strongest opening impact on the CPs I observed was from those presenters who gave credit to the audience by assuming that their peers were familiar with the topic, or at least grasped the purpose or topic area suggested in the CP title, and could therefore confidently delve into the presentation body, and quickly establishing a rhetorical flow. This was particularly notable in the case of short, rapid-fire

FP/PS CPs—plenaries or longer invited speeches generally require more foregrounding—and appears to be particularly effective for those NNES speakers who are not particularly confident about their English skills.

13.1.2 Eight Further Effective Opening Gambits

Eight other prominent and effective openings and introductions were noted in my observations and are described below.

1. The first of these gambits involves the standard opening move of responding to the chair and/or greeting the audience:

   It is my pleasure to speak/be here today.
   Thank you, Mr./Ms. Chairperson, for your kind introduction.
   Thank you Mr./Ms Chairperson, and good morning/afternoon/evening colleagues.

Responding to the chair is a widely accepted and recommended courtesy but, unlike prominent award ceremony recipients, explicit acknowledgments and thanks should be kept to a minimum. While acknowledgments can serve as a form of politeness (Carter-Thomas & Rowley-Jolivet, 2005), they are extraneous information for most of the audience and can be placed on the slide for view without being verbalized.

2. Establishing rapport with appeals to shared knowledge of a discourse community was also effective:

   As you know/As you can see/As we all know…

Here, the presenter is opening with shared or established knowledge, which recognizes the audience as peers sharing in the narrative before moving on to the body of the CP. Using these forms also signals an imminent rhetorical move from the known to the unknown, or novel, content. The audience will then begin to anticipate the introduction of this new content.

3. Another effective approach involved questioning the established academic canon, one that anticipated counterintuitive or surprising findings:

   It is often believed that…
   While prior studies on X have shown…

This strategy was effective because it immediately informed the viewer or listener that the speaker is going to take a contrarian or contrastive position. In what way will popular or accepted wisdom be challenged? The audience may well be

stimulated by the possibility of their, or widely accepted, perceptions or beliefs being examined or questioned.

4. Rhetorical or research questions that anticipated question-to-answer structures were also frequent and effective:

   What are the mechanisms that underlie incidences of X?
   What is the difference between X and Y? More to the point, why are they different?
   How should we approach the problem of X?

This question-to-answer model is effective as an opening strategy because the audience will naturally await the answer to the question (presuming that the question is one that the audience will consider relevant). This not only indicates a clear purpose or movement in the CP—from question to answer—but firmly underscores the notion that the speaker will be providing some novel and/or helpful information, as opposed to simply reporting data.

Another effective tactic was to accompany the opening gambit (particularly those that began with rhetorical questions or a surprise/challenge to orthodoxy) with a slide containing an unlabeled or mysterious visual—a baiting strategy that captured audiences by requiring further contextualization or response.

Presenters should, however, be careful to clearly distinguish the use of research and/or rhetorical questions from those questions directed at the audience which appear to demand an explicit response. These latter types of questions are fine within classroom settings or when leading a workshop or tutorial with a small number of participants as these are both highly interactive events. However, such moves can leave a CP audience perplexed. Does the speaker really expect an answer from someone present? Does he/she want some kind of consensus choral response? CP audiences will generally not offer a response or feedback to classroom-styled questions, which can lead to an awkward silence—and might possibly give audience members reason to feel that the academic presenter–audience space and peer-to-peer relationship have somehow been violated.

5. Another effective approach was to offer background information which helped situate the presenter and thus better allowed the audience to anticipate current findings:

   In 2013 we began observation on 12 patients who presented with…
   Over the past three years at X hospital, we have been observing…
   Recently, our institution introduced…

In the above examples, a situating frame of the research is contained in one clear, compact utterance, moving directly into the background of the topic, much like a movie that starts with an action sequence. When the presenter has under 15 min to speak, proceeding as quickly as possible into the content is generally an effective strategy.

6. Opening by introducing a rationale or purpose provided a strong orientation anchor point for those research CPs which followed a traditional structure:

   I'd like to start my presentation by explaining the rationale for the program.
   The data I'm going to present today is based upon…
   In our study, we wanted to determine the correlation between X and Y.

These forms also provide backgrounding, often added in extemporaneous speech, with only a single word heading (e.g., '*Rationale,' 'Background'*) or the CP title appearing on the accompanying slide.

7. Opening with a conclusion and then working backward to the research question and methods can also be a very powerful approach:

   The main cause of X, is not Y but in fact Z.
   We have discovered a new relationship between X and Y.
   There is increasing evidence that…

This approach might be more common in political or debate speeches, but the initial impact in a research CP can help to hold the audience's attention as the presenter unlocks the process of research inquiry and findings—much like the climactic resolve-the-crime scene in an Agatha Christie mystery.

8. Often, presenters chose to emphasize either the novelty or newness of the contents in the opening:

   This is a simple but alarming topic regarding…
   Recently, X has been reported in relation to X.
   I'm here today to share with you some recent data on…
   For decades there has been broad interest in X.

Note in particular the enticing usage of the evaluative term 'alarming' in the second example, the use of the term 'recent' to establish the currency of the research in the second and third examples, and the hint of a solution (based on a problem–solution model) or long-awaited answer promised in the last example.

The CPs utilizing each of the opening gambits presented above were generally of a very high standard, even though many of the speakers might not otherwise be considered fluent English speakers. In short, it appears that quickly moving into presentation content without an explicit introductory preamble meets both the expectations and wishes of a FP/PS audience, allowing the speaker to establish the flow by immediately signaling the type of presentation structure (unknown-to-known, shared background knowledge to new information, questioning of established viewpoints, problem–solution, etc.). Novice presenters should always give due consideration as to which opening gambit best suits their research CP goals or purposes.

(*Some of the samples listed in this chapter were originally compiled in* 国際学会のためのサバイバル英語術, Guest, 2014.)

Questions and Exercises for Section 13.1

1. Why is stating one's name and presentation title often ineffective as a CP opening?
2. In what cases are jokes, anecdotes, and stories most suitable as CP openings?
3. Think of an academic topic with which you are familiar enough to give a short presentation. Start the presentation five times using five different strategies: Jumping directly into the research background, using a research or rhetorical question, challenging accepted positions or wisdom, starting from shared or known content, and starting with a conclusion.
   Which did you feel most comfortable with and why?
4. How might you change your opening gambit according to differing content type, audiences, or speaking environments?

13.2 Opening Paralinguistic Features and Conference Presentation Image Projection

We have already mentioned the importance of self-positioning a speaker in a CP and how this might be realized by making certain interpersonal and textual language choices. But what about the physical and visual image that the presenter gives off even before a slide is shown or a word uttered? Although I have stated that the opening section of a CP is highly unimodal (speech alone), the image that the speaker is projecting will precede the first utterance and thereby influence audience responses (Fig. 13.1).

Fig. 13.1 If an open posture is maintained, handheld notes need not be a distraction (photograph courtesy of EALTHY, www.ealthy.com)

Business Insider magazine has reported (see http://www.businessinsider.com/things-people-decide-about-you-in-seconds-2016-11/#-1) that people usually decide whether to like or trust another person, and make evaluations of their status and intelligence, within the first few seconds of contact. An academic CP audience is likely making similar assumptions about the speaker, including the quality and veracity of their research or academic standing, even as the speaker approaches the podium. In this way, it could be argued that a CP is a little like speed dating, a scenario in which an equal number of men and women are gathered hoping to find a suitable partner. Seated at tables but constantly rotating, prospective partners have one minute to size each other up and make tentative judgments before moving on to the next potential suitor.

To some extent, exuding an air of trustworthiness, comfort, self-control, and thereby eliciting empathy or validation from the audience will be determined by the speaker's initial body language and intonation, both of which are visceral markers of confidence and control. The means of establishing and/or developing such skills largely fall outside the scope of this book, although a considerable amount of information and advice on presentation body language can be found in commercial presentation guides.

Without using an actual physical demonstration it can be difficult to convey effective or questionable physical CP mannerisms—both the do's and the don'ts—in written mode. Nevertheless, there are a few basic mannerisms I have observed that should be considered by novice presenters, some of which may deviate from that advice found in popular guidebooks.

One of these regards the use of prepared and/or practiced gestures—something of a staple of public-speaking contest preparation and performance (Fig. 13.2). However, overt gestures in academic CPs are much less of a factor in determining effectiveness than the linguistic choices or visual modes that they seek to support, and in most CPs that I observed were used mainly for the purposes of pointing at the screen and controlling the visual display. Some other physical considerations are dealt below.

13.2.1 Should the Presenter Make Eye Contact with the Audience?

Strong, direct eye contact is not a norm in many—perhaps even most—cultures. Thus, many presenters, particularly those unused to performing a CP in *any* language, have some difficulty with maintaining eye contact. However, this need not be construed as a problem. In my observations, while almost no effective conference presenters kept their heads down, looking only at notes or their own computer screens, when addressing the audience they also tended not to focus upon any one member but rather shifted their upper torso positions from time to time, orienting their bodies to focus on one side of the room and, when the rhetoric naturally shifted, moved to face the other direction, before returning to the center only at the end of a unit (former US President Obama was particularly fond of doing this).

Fig. 13.2 Most common CP gesture: screen side hand extended with an open palm (photograph courtesy of EALTHY, www.ealthy.com)

A brief visual scan across the audience from time to time also has the effect of being both physically and mentally liberating for the speaker—physically in that it loosens both the head and neck and thereby allows for a stronger speaking voice to emerge, mentally in that the change of visual field more readily enables one to change topics or establish other textual orientations (Fig. 13.3). It should be noted that in workshops—and in CPs with very small audiences—the necessity of making some direct visual contact with the audience increases.

Fig. 13.3 Surveying the audience prior to beginning the CP can help prepare the speaker

13.2.2 Should the Presenter Look at the Big Screen?

Some commentators are adamant that presenters should never do this. My observations beg to differ. Occasionally, reorienting your own face toward the big screen can create a connection between the speaker, the audience, and the written text, allowing the audience to follow the presenter's orientation toward any written text that demands greater focus. The caveats would be to avoid looking at the screen for more than 15 or 20 s and to also avoid the temptation to repeatedly shine the laser in circles all over the screen, creating the CP equivalent of a psychedelic light show.

13.2.3 To What Degree Should the Presenter Adopt Casual or Formal Posture?

In many cultures, out of consideration of formality and related to concepts of propriety, those speaking in front of an audience are expected to keep a fairly rigid posture for the duration of the talk. This is a feature of politeness, indicating a certain respect for the sobriety and/or gravity of the academic forum. However, most of the effective presenters, originating from a variety of different ethnic/cultural backgrounds, that I observed shifted their physical position—hips, feet, hands—about every 30 seconds to one minute, simply to keep their body loose and relaxed, but without appearing excessively nonchalant or disrespectful of the occasion. Often, such moves were performed very subtly so as not to appear overly flamboyant. Usually, the audience will appreciate this shift in physical orientation since, as mentioned earlier, it can actually enhance the force of verbal signals and transitions, reinforce rhetorical moves, and allow for more dynamic intonation.

13.2.4 Nervous Tics

While it is natural for most speakers, particularly novices, to feel nervous when delivering a CP, certain postures and movements can have a particularly negative impact upon the audience. Even though most CP audience members are focusing upon the screen, habitual touching of the face and hair can draw attention away from the written or spoken texts.

Uneasy and crooked, deer-in-the-headlights postures, with the speaker's upper torso bent toward the podium or desktop—perhaps in anticipation of advancing a slide but lacking the ease of transition to return to a more natural position—are uncomfortable to hold for more than a minute and can be even more uncomfortable for the audience to observe. This position, located somewhere in an indeterminate space between the casualness of resting an arm on the podium and staying in a rigidly stiff and formal posture, can negatively affect voice projection and discourage regular breathing. Often related to this is the phenomenon of dry throat—ubiquitous nervous gulping—which is why many veteran speakers not only take a drink before presenting but also have a glass or bottle made available on the podium.

13.2.5 'Borrowed' Texts

CP introductions I observed often involved expressions of thanks, acknowledgment, and statements of gratitude. Often, these require a certain level of sobriety and formality in order to be effectively conveyed. When doing so as a non-native speaker of the CP language, many choose to use highly formalized, established phrases that are often not in accordance with the natural 'voice' of the speaker—terms or phrases that are outside the speaker's linguistic comfort zone. Such scripted formalities are often 'borrowed' forms—often solicited as advice from native speakers of the CP language or adopted wholesale from written texts.

However, when performed under duress, such forms can appear to both speaker and audience to be artificial and stilted, occasionally to the point where it can adversely affect the subsequent body of the CP, causing the speaker to lose confidence and possibly even alienating an audience. The dynamic with the audience can be negatively impacted particularly in cases when presenters appear to be mouthing platitudes of syllables rather than engaging in an interactive enterprise with the audience. In such cases, speakers should consider choosing to open only with phrases that they are comfortable with or familiarize themselves with the more formalized foreign language phrases until these become second nature, in concord with their 'own voice.'

Questions and Exercises for Section 13.2

1. Although traditional presentation advice tells us to 'make eye contact with the audience,' why is this less of a factor in an academic CP?
2. In what situations do you think it is acceptable for the presenter to turn and look at the large screen?
3. What is the connection between nervousness and the role of water on the podium?
4. Suggest three ways in which a speaker can overcome nervousness that might be distracting to the audience.

13.3 Openings in Agnate Speech Events

How does one manage the opening of a symposium or a workshop? Because both of these events are more open-ended and dynamic than found in standard CPs, it can be difficult to give specific advice. But based on the openings I observed for these events, I would suggest the following considerations:

13.3.1 Symposia/Colloquia

Symposium/colloquium speech rarely begins in situ. Rather, the moderator will tend to begin proceedings by stating the nature or current status of the content or topic being discussed, the scope of discussion, interactional ground rules, justification for hosting the topic as a symposium (often entailing some background information or rationale demonstrating the gravity of the topic or issue), and introductions of the individual speakers.

After the moderator's introduction of the first speaker, thanking the moderator and an initial greeting to the audience is in order:

Thank you Mr./Ms. Moderator. Good Afternoon

Subsequent consecutive speakers will generally begin by building upon the existing topic, often as a response to a previous speaker. Among those I regularly noted were:

(a) *Let me begin this symposium by outlining the basis of/my position on X.*
(b) *I'd like to add a new perspective/some new data to what Dr. X has already said.*
(c) *Earlier, Professor X referred to…*

13.3.2 Workshops

Workshops are far more common at conferences where skills, as opposed to data, are being disseminated and therefore tend to be more instructional and procedural in form than standard CPs. While workshops were held at a 1 to 10 ratio (vis-à-vis standard CPs) at the applied linguistics conferences I attended, there were comparatively few workshops (closer to 1 to 50) held at the medical conferences. Medical (and other scientific) workshops tended to be conducted as a part of special seminars sponsored by research societies or commercial interests, often conducted outside the regular conference milieu.

While many presenters in the language education fields felt confident enough to conduct conference workshops (most are, after all, teachers by profession), those conducted at medical conferences tended to be limited entry sessions managed by highly specialized professionals or commercial sponsors.

At workshops, one expects some type of personalized, hands-on practical training to occur, typically involving management approximating a 'classroom' mode—pair work, teamwork, group work, or interactive discussion. As a result of the pedagogical purpose underscoring workshops, leading a workshop demands the deployment of more interactive skills, in particular so-called classroom management skills such as giving concise instructions, managing activity times and

personnel, changing physical locations, of participants controlling the timing and distribution of handouts or other sorts of realia, as well as dealing with more discursive breakdowns, interruptions, and comments from participants.

In short, workshops are more dialogic, dynamic, and open-ended than CPs. Workshops participants should be aware of this too—active participation with peers and feedback/response to the instructor/presenter is considered imperative. Because of the inherently open-ended and interactive nature of workshops, it is harder to identify specific moves or generic discourse patterns common to the event, as the personality of the instructor/presenter will play a larger role in determining effective or appropriate language choices than is the case for CPs.

Below is a generic workshop opening sample made up of composite openings noted in conference workshops:

Good afternoon. Thank you for choosing to attend this workshop. As you can see/know, today I'll be demonstrating X. First, I'd like you to get into pairs/find a partner.

These forms could be restated as the following synoptic formulae:

Greeting, thanks, stating focus/goal/purpose of workshop, initiating management of participants.

Questions and Exercises for Section 13.3

1. What factors tend to distinguish opening gambits used in symposium CPs and workshops as opposed to FP/PS presentations?
2. In opening a symposium, specific reference should be made to whom or what?
3. In opening a workshop, what features of tenor might the leader wish to adopt that distinguishes it from a CP?

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The Management of Outline Slides

14

Abstract

Explicit, detailed outlines are standard fare in RPs and, as a result, are often incorporated into CPs as a core presentation 'move.' But does the multimodal, real-time nature of the CP demand such an approach, particularly when it comes to FP/PSs? This chapter questions the role and function of explicit CP outlines. My observations suggest that effective CP presenters often minimize or completely bypass the use of explicit verbal outlines and instead either incorporate the outline into an extension or paraphrase of the title slide or by reformulating (usually through reduction) the presentation outline information that is visible to the audience as written slide text.

14.1 Are Explicit Conference Presentation Outline Slides Really Necessary?

As mentioned in the preceding section on opening gambits, giving a paraphrase or general statement regarding one's general topical focus while displaying the title slide appeared to be an effective means of establishing an initial rhetorical flow in the CP. Perhaps then, a pertinent question is whether an explicit CP outline, whether visual or spoken, is necessary to anchor the various research questions, methods, and findings that follow. Given the need to develop an interpersonal dialogue in order to establish rapport with the audience, but also taking into consideration the expectation of epistemological over interpersonal contents in FP/PSs, along with the brief time allotted for such presentations, one might well question if explaining a lengthy or complex outline runs the risk of taking up too much time and thereby inhibit the flow of more paramount research content.

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In fact, I observed presenters on several occasions spending more time explaining what they were going to talk about—based on an outline slide or slides—than they did on any subsequent individual content slide. Moreover, in several such cases, the speaker was explaining a discourse structure that would be considered standard formulae to an audience of peers ('*First I will begin with the background of the experiment, then I'll explain the methods we used…*'). By stating that which would be already known or otherwise obvious to the audience, they were violating the norms of the interpersonal dimension between presenter and audience. As Carter-Thomas and Rowley-Jolivet (2005) observe, 'It is worth noting … that indications of structure and scope tend to be brief in the CP, as the peer audience would no doubt perceive speakers who labor these points as adopting a 'lecturer' style more suited to didactic discourse' (p. 55), and, as Heino et al. (2002) observe, '… speakers addressing an experienced audience also take it for granted that the listeners are fully aware of the canonical composition of research reports, and therefore want to save time by ignoring the explicit signals of the superstructure.' (p. 131).

More effective presenters thus often bypassed showing any explicit outline slide and simply delved into the research narrative, confident that the direction and movement of the presentation could be conveyed by other means than an explicit visual outline slide—such as the use of transitional discourse markers (as will be discussed in detail in Chap. 16).

In fact, an argument could be made that explicit and detailed verbal outlines actually *discouraged* the later usage of explicit transitional discourse markers. In many such cases, it appeared as if the RP formula had been supplanted fully into the spoken dimension without due consideration to the differing modes of speech and the vagaries of conference speech events, imbuing the CP more with an aura of a PhD defense than interaction with peers in the discourse community.

In 13 cases I observed, while the outline slide consisted of some type of visual geometric model of the CP flow and direction, the accompanying spoken text was summarized in just a few short utterances. Prominent among these were the following forms:

Today I'll just focus upon X.
Let me talk mainly about X.

Such 'reduced speech' outlines managed to offer the audience a rhetorical guidepost without inhibiting the flow of the presentation or further prolonging the transition to the actual research narrative. In such cases, the presenter was able to effectively maintain the flow of the presentation.

Many of the opening gambits mentioned in the previous chapter, if used effectively, would in fact render the outline redundant, as the format/flow/direction/scope of the CP has already been implied in the opening gambit. Moreover, in a short FP/PS presentation, there often simply isn't enough time to provide a thorough outline. For a more in-depth, lengthy CP—such as keynote/invited

speeches and plenaries or particularly complex specialized sessions, this would be fitting, but not for the standard under 20-min FP/PS presentation.

In cases where the speaker *did* need to explicitly clarify sections or categories, the more effective speakers tended to do so by highlighting explicit headings at the top or beginning of each transitional slide. For example:

1. *Early manifestations*
2. *Mid-term manifestations*
3. *Late manifestations.*

I would recommend, however, that novice presenters *not* place these headings on an 'outline' slide per se and then explain that one will cover them later in the CP. Rather, it would be preferable for the speaker to just 'do it'—meaning the speaker should actually *talk about* the highlighted content as they naturally occur within the CP narrative. Thus, when the speaker arrives at the slide about 'Manifestations,' this category already appears as a header on the slide and the speaker can therefore proceed directly into the discussion without explicit outlining or introduction. In the example in which 'Early Manifestations' was visible as a slide header, the speaker did not explicitly use either of these terms but instead said: *'Ok. Early in the process we can expect to see…'*

Other general discourse markers also served to replace formal outlines. Prominent among these were:

I'm going to start with X. (note that this generally followed immediately after the opening gambit)
I'd like to go over X and Y. (often used when explaining research backgrounds)
Today I'd like to focus upon X. (used to emphasize a specific research area or scope)
Let me talk about (some specific area or point*).*
This is how I will be proceeding today. (while gesturing to the screen and following with a short silence to allow the audience to absorb the accompanying graphic)

The last item listed above was particularly effective when accompanied by some type of physical outline or frame on the presentation slide. Since less visual clutter in a short presentation is generally better, a simple flowchart often worked well here —negating the need for the speaker to repeat every item appearing on the slide.

Even if the speaker does not choose to present a detailed, formal outline, the need to explain hypotheses, methods, or various protocols and exigencies connected to the research remains. Often, when outlines were omitted, these moves were paraphrased in the CP narrative. Among the most frequent and effective of these that I observed were:

First, let me go over our research methods.
The purpose of this study was to…
Let me explain our methods. First we did X followed by Y

First of all we have/had to consider X
In order to find out why X, we…
We'll focus on the question why.
Because it is important to identify X., we…

14.2 Outlines and Pacing

There is a famous scene in the 2014 movie 'Whiplash' in which an ambitious jazz drummer student is asked by his intimidating and sadistic teacher to take over the kit for the first time during a full band rehearsal. He is told to just play along, with 'no pressure,' but almost immediately the teacher stops the piece to tell the drummer that he's 'rushing it.' A few moments after adjusting the tempo and restarting the tune, the teacher stops it again, and this time claiming that the drummer is 'dragging it.' Becoming increasingly exacerbated in subsequent attempts to get the tempo right, the teacher alternately shouts out 'rushing' and 'dragging' until the scene explodes into a violent fury.

Presenters can easily fall into the trap of alternately rushing and dragging a CP, and in doing so exacerbate an audience. Opening nerves can easily lead to rushing background information or research questions. This is particularly pronounced when the speaker is attempting to establish some kind of interpersonal rapport or other form of stage-setting but speeds through the process.

A particularly common example of CP dragging occurs when an item has already been revealed on the slide so that it is visible to the audience, but the presenter insists upon giving it a lengthy preamble, as if new information is just about to be revealed, upending the natural order of the discourse and frustrating the audience: 'We know, we know! Get on with it!'

However, in most cases I observed, dragging was due to an overelaborate opening, often detailing already well-established background information or verbalizing outlines by stating the obvious. Both of these habits also had a 'dragging' effect on the audience. Often, this caused the presenter to fall behind time, and then, when suddenly realizing that they had only 2 min left to discuss the remaining fifteen slides, moved into 'rushing' mode.

Inevitably, such presenters, after expressing surprise at how they had fallen behind time, proceeded to fly through the remainder of the CP, including the crucial results, discussion, and conclusion sections, giving only fleeting moments of attention to the most significant findings. This effectively negated the entire impact of their research presentation since little of substance would have been absorbed by the audience.

Another characteristic of dragging is the tendency for some presenters to verbalize all the written data appearing on the slide rather than prioritizing the key items. Not only does this waste time, but it can also have a negative impact on audience comprehension, with equal weight given to data that has little or no importance in terms of advancing the narrative.

One way of addressing this habit of being 'comprehensive to the point of incomprehensibility' that I have used successfully with learners is to bring up the case of pilot airplane announcements. How does this work? Typically, a pilot's address to passengers includes (1) a welcome or greeting, (2) current height of the flight, (3) expected flight conditions, (4) wind speeds and/or outside temperature, (5) type of aircraft, (6) expected arrival time at the destination, (7) temperature and weather conditions at the destination, and 8) an invitation to 'relax and enjoy the flight' as a closing. However, which of these items of information are of real concern or interest to passengers? Responses will vary, but I would suggest that items 2, 4, and 5 are only of interest to aviation personnel or aficionados. These could be easily dropped from the pilot's monologue in terms of maintaining helpful passenger service. The same principles can be applied to academic presentations.

The unfortunate propensity of many young academics to treat CPs as if they were Ph.D. theses dissertations or oral defenses was also most apparent in the outline section. Novice presenters often backgrounded research with numerous topical mini-histories, fully accredited quotes, and APA-styled references that served little purpose in advancing the oral narrative, as they too closely emulated the mode of the written RP (where such data is crucial in establishing the veracity of the research).

In many CPs, this type of academic 'proof-texting' simply interrupted the flow of findings or narratives of the research process—the very content that a conference audience is likely to be paying most attention to. This occurs because a CP has a different epistemological function than an RP. With CPs, the audience wants to hear results and interpretations, the impact upon and applicability to the field in question, and therefore, there must be some novelty value expressed. As a result, most effective CP speakers limited the amount of background knowledge.

While some presenters insist upon completing their CP exactly as previously planned and practiced, not wanting to omit any item that might be considered at all pertinent (as they plan to include in the RP version), readers of this book might want to consider that overelaborate outlines may be the most common cause of that perennial CP scourge: going overtime. If one section of a CP can be cut to maintain pace, establish flow, and keep within one's time limit (and the presenter's allotted time should always be treated as sacrosanct), it is likely the outline section.

Often included in outlines, and frequently displayed immediately after the title slide, are COI 'disclosure' slides, which are particularly common in medical CPs. These need not be verbalized or explained, as they can momentarily impede the flow of the CP. Such slides tend to function best when displayed only for formality's sake —for about one second—and without any accompanying spoken commentary.

Questions and Exercises for Chapter 14

1. In what cases might an explicit outline be beneficial for a CP and in what cases might it be a hindrance?
2. Give three examples of what a presenter can say or do rather than simply read the same outline text exactly as it is presented on the slide.
3. How might the inclusion of an outline slide or slides negatively affect the pacing of a CP?

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Effective Conference Presentation Summaries, Conclusions, and Closings

15

Abstract

This chapter looks at the discourse and metadiscourse choices that allow for more impactful CP summaries, conclusions, and closings. Based on observations made at academic conferences, both effective and ineffective strategies will be discussed, with authentic CP examples used to illustrate the key points.

During interviews with clinicians at my own university, a number of senior doctors and professors told me that one disappointing feature they had noted in many of their underlings' CPs, whether performed in their mother tongue or in English, was that their conclusions tended to lack impact.

Sometimes, culture might be suspected of being the culprit here. For example, in many parts of Asia, a sense of performance modesty permeates the presentation session and an ingrained habit of not wishing to appear too certain or confrontational is prevalent. The stereotype works both ways—there is a widespread corresponding belief that Westerners are inherently prone to binary yes/no formulas and are thus more readily able to add an air of certainty to their conclusions—but the stereotype has some grounding in reality.

Many readers will be aware that the findings of scientific research are not as foolproof and absolute as popular opinion would have it, which is why English RPs tend to employ hedging phrases such as 'indicates that' or 'appears to show' in the summary and conclusion sections. This applies even more so to scientific CPs given that they often represent research in progress and the fact that face can be more easily threatened in a CP. Therefore, researchers do not want to be guilty of overstatement, although some research indicated that the academic papers of medical graduate students demonstrated that many novice Japanese researchers had actually not hedged enough and often seemed too certain of their conclusions (Yokoyama et al. 2012).

As we learned earlier, hedging involves softening the force of a statement. For example, saying, '*Our research proves that increased leisure time causes obesity*' is a rather bold claim, almost combative in its directness. Most researchers, even

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when they are confident of their results, would render the same text in a form closer to one example I noted in a medical CP:

"Our research appears to indicate that increased leisure time may be a primary cause of obesity."

On the other hand, too much hedging can weaken the impact of the summary or conclusion. Phrases frequently noted in CPs that significantly weakened the concluding impact included the following:

(a) '*I think'*—especially when used as an appendage to an utterance:
This should lead to an increase in the use of X. I think.
(b) '*Maybe,*' when used in a summary or concluding point:
So maybe the reason for the complication was the presence of Y.

In example (b) above, 'maybe' has more of the illocutionary force of a hypothesis about to be tested. As a result, it does serve well as not a summary point, and most definitely not as a conclusion.

NNES readers should also realize that 'maybe' and 'probably' are not equivalents in English. 'Probably' indicates a much stronger belief in or attachment to the proposition. 'Maybe' often also contains the dismissive connotation of 'Who cares?' or 'I don't really want to tell you.' Much more accurate, and academically suited to CP summaries and conclusions, were the phrases, 'appears to/that' or 'seems to/that':

Based on our research, X seems to be the leading cause of Y.
It appears that using treatment X leads to a reduction in the frequency of Y.

Another common weakness I noted involved introducing summary or conclusions sections simply by reading the headings as written on the slides, as if they were RPs. Using the headword alone as the transition imbued the CP with the force of an official report and did little to enhance a sense of narrative flow.

Much more effective was creating a bridge to the summary or conclusion by using alternate transition phrases. As we will see in the next section on transitions, doing so has the effect of not only enhancing the narrative flow but also creating more dynamic, compelling speech intonation. Simply reading headings tends to keep the intonation flat and monotone—and, as a result, the text conveyed often ends up not really sounding like a summary or conclusion at all.

In comparison to their representation in RPs, CP speakers tended to introduce their evaluative comments with explicit discourse markers. Some of the more effective summary and conclusion introductory phrases noted at international academic conferences include the following:

So, in summary… (*not*, 'My summary is…')
Ok. So, what have we discovered/learned?
So, what we can conclude is…

In conclusion, we feel/believe…
These outcomes/objectives… (here the speaker is using a category term other than 'summary' or 'conclusion')
So here's a summary of our findings.
What I can say from my study is… (so-called *wh*-clefts were frequently used in this section of the CP)
And we know that quite well. (this item appeals to the audience-as-peer relationship)
As expected, the results were well distributed in terms of X.
So this is why we have a small interval here.
We don't know why, but one possibility is…
These findings provide us with some clues as to why X…
(This finding) was consistent with previous studies.
Therefore, more evidence-based X is needed.
So, the take home message is…

In most of the samples listed above, presenters avoided reading exactly what was written on the slide; after all, the audience members are quite capable of reading this by themselves. Instead, the presenters chose to paraphrase the move to summary/conclusion by using alternate phrases. This obviously demands a little more speech preparation but, in being less literal and mechanical, it leaves a much more positive closing impact upon the audience.

The latter two items listed above deserve some special attention as they have become somewhat formulaic as a closer among many NNES and novice presenters. While a final summary of main findings or teaching points may be welcomed by viewers, speakers should be wary of using this opportunity to engage in moral finger-wagging, deploy vague or insubstantial commentary ('*We need to think about this more and more*'), or offer glib all-purpose solutions to complex problems—a habit noted more frequently in humanities CPs.

Speakers can better leave a more positive impression upon the audience by using some of these effective closers observed in effective NNES presentations:

- *I'd like to conclude by saying/noting…*
- *Before ending my presentation, I'd like to…*
- *This is the last slide so I'd like to conclude my talk by…*
- *So, the lesson we learned from this is…*

On more than a few occasions, I observed presenters using phrases such as '*Now I'd like to stop/Now I think I'll stop*' (without any accompanying resolving tone to accentuate the move). This seemed to indicate that the speaker was making a sudden, immediate decision regarding the CP content and was more redolent of a debate turn than the closing of a research CP. Furthermore, on several occasions, key conclusions and summary points were concluded with indeterminate phrases such as '*Yeah, you know,*'—more nervous filler than substance.

One such memorable example was: '… *So this method was slightly more proficient, y'know, OK*?' In such instances, listeners may be unsettled by the contrast between the higher-register terms 'slightly' and 'proficient' with the tenor of the informal, dialogic baggage that follows. This pattern was far from unusual in the CPs I observed and had the upshot of mitigating the intended or hoped-for impact. This occurred not only in the concluding sections but also in opening sections, where an overload of, '*Ok, like, so… y'know*' approximant utterances served not to establish a dialogic, interpersonal connection with the audience as perhaps was the intention, but rather served to distance the speaker from the academic forum.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, another common factor I noted in many ineffective CPs was poor pacing, the habit of belaboring minor points earlier in the presentation (especially during outlines and background information), then rushing through the all-important summary and conclusion, often because the presenter has not been conscious of effective time management. Indicative of sloppy preparation and/or time management was the frequently used phrase, '*Ok, just a few more slides left*,' which seemed to serve as an apology or admission that the final section was in fact belaboring the audience and perhaps that the upcoming content was not worthy of emphasis.

Further, the final line of a CP should not include the terms '*finished*' or '*that's all*' in any form, a temptation for many NNESs. And just as I advise all novice speakers to not use the slide headwords 'summary' and 'conclusion' in speech when introducing these sections, I would similarly recommend never saying '*The end'* or '*That's the end of my speech*' as a final utterance. Instead, the standard '*Thanks for your attention*' or '*Thanks for listening*' is preferred.

Closing the CP with a slide listing the researcher's references is also rather ineffective. Earlier, we discussed the pitfalls of turning a presentation into a mere aural version of a publication, and this is perhaps the most telling example of the 'Here is my published paper reproduced on the big screen' phenomenon. Most reference lists that presenters displayed appeared on screen for less than two seconds, which obviates the point of compiling and showing a comprehensive set of references, even if done so for the sake of academic propriety. Doing this may be suitable for a thesis defense, wherein one has to prove the veracity of the research cited through more formal means, but serves less meaningful purpose to an audience who is not proffering a degree or some qualification to the speaker.

And once again, presenters should do their utmost to never allow their CPs to go overtime. Using more than one's allotted time shows disregard for the following speakers and inconveniences both the chairperson and members of the audience, who may well be trying to balance time to allow visits to various other presentation rooms. Aim to finish a few minutes early. When practicing your CP, time yourself and, if you are running over, keep cutting items until you are 10% inside your allotted time limit. Adding verbiage to fill up every available moment of one's slot will almost never result in a successful presentation but will more likely hinder the audience's ability to absorb the intended data or message adequately. And remember, that closing statement is also likely to provide the best opportunity to smile at, and make eye contact with, the audience

Questions and Exercises for Chapter 15

1. Which features typical of written research and/or PhD defenses should be avoided when delivering research CPs?
2. What kind of text is best included on the last slide of a CP?
3. Why are 'I think' and 'maybe' considered ineffective hedges in a CP conclusion?
4. Think of two phrases that you would use to indicate each of (a) a summary of your main points and (b) a series of three conclusion points.

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Transition Phrases in the Conference Presentation

16

Abstract

In this chapter, we will discuss one of the core elements of successful CPs, the use of considered transition phrases. In order to establish a coherent narrative flow in a CP, no element is more important than the use of explicit transitional discourse signals or markers. Their use in CPs and other formalized spoken texts had a notably positive effect upon enhancing the cohesion and holistic comprehensibility of the CP and subsequently had a more powerful impact upon the audience. These metadiscursive choices stand in sharp contrast to the often non-considered deployment of repeated, but semantically meaningless, connectives, or the mere verbalization of section headwords. These carry little pragmatic or semantic impact and thus did not offer any anchors or arrows, guideposts indicating developments or direction to listeners/viewers. Such speakers were apparently relying on the written text alone to carry the full communicative load. As a result of, or in combination with, the explicit use of transition discourse markers, the value of enhanced prosody, particularly intonation and the pacing of speech, were readily apparent. Since FP/PSs often do not allow for much kinetic flamboyance from the presenter, the onus is upon the intonation of the speaker to more explicitly indicate the rhetorical flow of the research.

16.1 The Application of Transition Phrases to Conference Presentations

As we noted in the preceding section on summaries, conclusions, and closings, a common phenomenon in CPs involved novice presenters verbalizing the slide heading alone as the transition marker (e.g., *'Summary,' 'Methods,' 'Conclusion'*), which merely reiterated that which was already obvious from the visual text. Without a more explicit marking of the shift in discourse, a lack of support from

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any further transitional signal, closing sections often lacked the impact of an actual summary or conclusion.

A failure to use transitional phrases effectively can thus have dire consequences for the impact of the CP. One NNES presenter told me how she had memorized her English slides to the point where they had become second nature, but during the actual presentation, she realized that she was lost for words at the transition points between different slides and sections and had little idea on how to connect them effectively. This, in her opinion, negatively affected the flow of the entire presentation. Each brick in the house was well-constructed, but there was no mortar to create true cohesion.

In some cases, interviewees told me that they addressed this by trying to advance their CPs by summarizing or re-formulating what they had just said (and/or the text on their slides), but felt they had ended up just stumbling awkwardly on to the next slide. This often leads to ubiquitous cases of what I refer to as 'throwaway endings', where the utterance is 'completed' by fading out into meaningless repetition or babble. One poignant example I noted was, *'...which required an endoscopy. Endoscopy. Yes. So, yes, we... did... one. Endoscopy. Mmm.'*). If a speaker is well-prepared with effective transitional discourse markers at his or her disposal, there should be no need to re-formulate any text that has already written on the slides (except, perhaps, to willfully emphasize a key or unclear point).

In summary (note the use of my own transitional phrase here), the considered use of transitional phrases or signals is a skill often utilized by successful presenters but one that may go unnoticed by novice presenters. The utilization of such explicit transition markers and signals provided a deeper sense of flow and cohesion for CP speakers.

Although it might be argued that the successful deployment of such strategies is simply the result of greater overall English proficiency, this was not supported by my observations. Rather, there were a number of presenters who employed such devices to positive CP effect, who might not be otherwise considered particularly proficient in English. On the other hand, some presenters, who used no or minimal transitional strategies—dulling the impact of their CP—were otherwise quite proficient as English speakers. In short, the considered use of transition markers had a profound impact on the overall communicative effectiveness of the CP.

16.2 Overused Transitional Conference Presentation Phrases

While many conference presenters give due consideration to the visual quality and contents of each individual slide, considerations as to how to merge these into a holistic narrative may well be overlooked and noted only when words fail the speaker in the middle of the CP. In fact, several popular presentation guides (available both in print and online) that I perused made absolutely no mention of these essential discourse markers. As a result, often there is too much focus placed by presenters upon the text in, or related to, the visible self-contained slide, meaning that less attention is paid to how the speaker will actually connect these slides in speech.

Presenters I interviewed regarding their CP anxieties, however, often made mention of the awkward and jarring effect of moving from slide to slide without deploying an adequate bridge between them. Among the comments noted were:

"I'm not worried about basic grammatical mistakes but rather by (transitional phrases or markers). I overuse 'so', 'next', 'then' and 'but'. However, these sound too basic when compared to more proficient speakers. These terms lack the impact I want to express."

Another NNES said, *"I know of common (English discourse markers) like, 'Given X…' or 'Due to Y…', but I lack the skill in using them properly. Therefore, I end up using simpler phrases like 'then' or 'next', which means that my presentation appears a little less… well… scientific."*

Of the total number of FP/PS presenters I observed, almost 40% performed CPs in which some combination of '*and, then, next, so*,' or '*also*' served as the *only* transition marker(s) used between sections or slides. This paucity of forms contrasts strongly with Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, and Finegan (1999) comprehensive taxonomy of linking adverbials used in oral transitions. The biggest problem, however, was that these connectors were often used haphazardly and indiscriminately, without any real meaning, function, or regard for the semantic, pragmatic, or rhetorical properties normally attributed to their usage. Rather, they were often used only as acoustic fillers between sections or slides and not as a meaningful discourse signal or rhetorical device. Similar findings have been noted in Japanese presentations (Anthony, Orr, & Yamazaki, 2007), who noted that in some cases the speaker employed no transitional markers at all.

In my own observations, I observed some presenters marking the transition for each and every transition with '*then*', which, in most cases, has a temporal or logical connotation, or *'so*', which generally connotes a cause–effect or process-result process, when there was in fact no such logical or semantic connection intended. These ill-considered usages made the slides seem more like a compilation of disjointed utterances laid upon one another, as opposed to the type of coherent flow from say, hypothesis to result or from premise to conclusion, that one would normally expect from academic researchers.

'*Next'* was the most common—and, perhaps, the least cohesive—of these sole transitional items. On some occasions, it was used in a manner that was completely bereft of any semantically meaningful impact, (although among the more proficient presenters it was used only to indicate a major sequential move in the CP, e.g., '*Next, I'd like to go over some of the new methods that we used).*'

'Next' should *not* be used to indicate every sequence or to connect every slide in the CP. For example, if the context makes it obvious that the speaker is indicating a sequence, saying '*next*' is unnecessary. The audience knows that when the speaker advances their slides the new one will be the 'next' one. If a section heading appears on the slide the audience knows that it follows the previous item. In such cases, the term '*next*' is rendered redundant.

Employing these overused, and often cohesion-challenged, transition terms also had an unfortunate side effect—that being they served to mute or inhibit effective pacing and intonation (more on this will be discussed in later sections). When the

often intricate cohesive relationship between slides or sections of the CP is not adequately conveyed to the audience, the flow of the CP runs the risk of being lost. After all, the impact of a CP is not merely the sum of the quality of the individual slides. In more direct terms, it means that such a presenter is likely to bore or confuse the audience. This consideration alone should be sufficient reason to pay more attention to how one uses transitions.

Novice presenter overuse of result/inference adverbials such as 'then' or the causative/temporal 'so' has also been noted by Zareva (2009), who declares these to be a sign of 'inappropriate register,' (p. 59). Not surprisingly, it was difficult for many in the audience that I observed to connect the different rhetorical sections of CPs in which 'then' and 'so' were deployed only as acoustic filler. Was the sequence being described chronological? Causative? Adversative? Additive?

As a result of the failure to consider or adequately employ transition strategies, such presentations lose cohesion, resulting in a lack of attention from the audience or requests for clarification on basic points during the follow-up discussion session. As Zareva (2011) suggests, the effective usage of appropriate 'linking adverbials' '…allows presenters to inject themselves into their work and helps them walk the audience smoothly through the complexity of their arguments' (p. 7).

In short, when the audience is not adequately guided by familiar signposts, they can easily become lost, having no rhetorical framework significant enough to offer questions or develop further commentary. In my observations, presenters who appeared to not give due consideration to their use of transition forms tended to have lower-impact CPs.

16.3 Micro- and Macro/Superstructural and Macrostructural Markers

An important distinction has been made between micro- and macromarkers by Andeweg (2009), who suggests that 'Micro-markers are small cues that indicate relation between sentences or pause-fillers (e.g., '*and, but, so, well'*). Macro-markers, rather, signal the relation between whole text segments. Macro-markers instruct the listener to comprehend the following discourse in a special way.' (p. 3) Andeweg further noted that the position of the transition marker was crucial, as his study's survey respondents claimed that the insertion of a transition marker just before clicking the next slide was perceived as a better structured and more coherent presentation.

Carter-Thomas and Rowley-Jolivet (2003) noted that *WH*-cleft structures and existential constructions (e.g., '*What I'm going to talk about today is/There are three elements I want to discuss.*') were commonly employed as signal markers in CPs, as they serve a discourse framing function by both reviewing and previewing information by packaging and signaling.

In Heino, Tervonen, and Tommola′s (2002) study, Andeweg's micro-markers and macro-markers are conflated under the broader category of 'metadiscourse′. According to Heino et al., CP listeners/viewers have the dual burden of grasping

essential information while following and decoding the superimposed metadiscourse. Since '…spoken discourse is evanescent and must be processed by the listener in a single pass. Listeners will therefore benefit from signals that guide the construction of content and the speakers' attitudes' (p. 127). According to Heino et al., metadiscourse constituted over one-third of *all* presentation vocabulary items. It is these items that allow listeners to activate organizational frames.

The term 'metadiscourse' here also includes forms that go by various other names, including discourse markers, structural markers, organizing and evaluative bracketing (Schiffrin, 1994), informative and attitudinal markers (Vande Kopple, 1995), plus textual and interpersonal discourse (Luukka, 1992).

Heino et al. (2002) noted four distinctive metadiscourse types in CPs. These were categorized as follows: structure-oriented, validity-oriented (the most common form), interaction-oriented, and context-oriented. In their study, macrostructure markers were used more frequently than superstructural markers

Structural-oriented aspects of CP metadiscourse identified by Heino et al. include the following two categories:

1. Superstructural markers. These include opening and closing signals, 'announcers' (ubiquitous in Swales (1990) highly influential CARS model), section shifts, and reminders. These need to be included in CPs because spoken research is not organized the same as written RPs, since, as we have noted, CP speech is deployed more as narrative (Thompson, 1998). The CP audience generally knows the canonical form of a research presentation, so the speaker can save time by ignoring the explicit signals of any RP superstructure.

   Instead, the CP speaker may utilize:
2. Macrostructural markers. These include sub-topical transition indicators, such as new episode flags or 'attention getters' ('*now, well'*). Heino et al noted that such sub-topic organizers occurred every 45 s. These are described as 'habitual fillers' in instructional monologues—semiotically empty but useful for tying bits of spoken text together (Schiffrin, 1994). Macrostructural markers also include sequencers ('*first, second…*'), section internal reminders, clarifiers, elaborators, and justifiers.
   Presenters, however, should be aware that overuse of these markers may also make the audience feel like their comprehension skills and/or intellect is being underestimated.

Questions and Exercises for Sections 16.1–16.3

1. Explain the difference between micro- and macro-(or superstructural and macrostructural) discourse markers.
2. Give two reasons why the effective use of transition markers is a key feature of performing an effective CP.

3. What is the problem with reading slide or text headers alone as a means of marking a transition in spoken discourse?
4. Write an example in which the linking adverbial 'so' is used correctly and effectively, and one case in which it is being used only as 'acoustic filler'.

16.4 Transition Phrase Samples and Descriptions

Those conference speakers who explicitly utilized transitional expressions as discourse signals regularly displayed, and created, greater cohesion between the slides and the various sections of the presentation, generating a flow conducive to a greater understanding of the contents, and thus invariably managed to draw in or sustain the attention of their audience.

It may appear at first glance that I am advocating that CP speakers use more elaborate terms simply for the sake of appearing more eloquent, but in fact all the authentic phrases listed hereafter added a great deal of value in terms of successfully conveying moves, relationships, section markings, and rhetorical flow in academic CPs. Most prominent among these were variations on the six following forms and patterns:

- *Following this/that…* (explicit time sequencing)

'So' and 'then' both have logical, as well as temporal, connotations. Therefore, if trying to emphasize a sequence of events '*Following this/that…*' will not only signal the sequence function more clearly but will also force a break in speech that allows the speaker to breathe and inject intonation more suited to expressing a process.

e.g., 'First we injected the mice with X. Following that, we extracted tissue samples…'

- *It is important to note…* (highlighting)

This highlighting phrase should only be used one or two times during the presentation or else its overall impact may be weakened. For example, it was used very effectively in one CP summary: *'It is important to note that these were the first such trials conducted under these conditions.'*

Emphasizing the importance of a certain section or feature of the CP should precede the point being emphasized. Adding, '*This is important*' *after* the statement has been made is anti-climactic. The speaker wants to prepare the audience for the key point in the same way that a road sign tells you of an approaching sharp curve before, and not after, you have passed the section in question.

The phrase, '*This is really important!'* was also noted as a post-textual emphatic on a handful of occasions. However, this may well come across to an academic audience more as a personalized, emotional plea than as a rhetorical signal of emphasis.

- *Let me expand on that…*
- *Looking at this in more detail…* (expansion/extension)

There will be several points in any presentation in which the presenter wishes to explain some feature in more detail. In order to indicate this transition, as we have seen, the consecutive usage of '*and*' '*so,*' etc., will often not do the trick. On the other hand I have noticed numerous competent CP speakers using the phrase above, and it indeed exudes an educated and erudite tenor. The second phrase is similar in function but appears to be slightly more common when the speaker is referring to charts, photos, diagrams, and the analysis of statistical results.

- *Getting back to our main point…* (an anaphoric—going back — reference), and
- *I'll come back to that, the reason as to why X occurred* (a cataphoric—forward looking—reference)

After presenters had entered into some expansive detail or a topical tangent, they often wished to draw audience back to the main frame of the CP. A frequent and effective way to guide the audience back to the flow or a main theme was simply to employ the former phrase. '*I'll come back to that later'* performs a similar function in the opposite direction, indicating the future addressing of a theme or point that has just been raised.

- *OK, so where does that leave us?* (summarization)

The above phrase marks a successful transition from the discussion to results, summaries, or even conclusions. Rhetorical questions such as this tend to stimulate the audience's interest. This phrase often provides an effective framing of, and entrance into, the closing sections of the CP.

- *What we learned/discovered/found/don't understand is…* (pseudo-cleft structure)

Cleft structures such as these are often used by proficient English speakers as signals of summaries and results. Using such transition forms appeared far more effective than simply saying '*Summary*' because it added both an epistemological frame and an evaluative, interpersonal note to the CP. In other words, rather than stating the data resulting from research, the speaker states the summary in terms of how knowledge has been (or might be) expanded and/or what questions remain.

16.4.1 CP Transition Phrases Commonly Used for Elaborating and Emphasizing

Besides the six core examples presented above, a number of other effective transitional phrases were used by competent and effective presenters in the CPs I observed, all of which succeeded in aiding the flow of the presentation. These include six further following speech act categories, all accompanied by authentic examples taken from CPs.

Among the most common transitional phrases used by proficient presenters to emphasize an important point, were:

- *It is important to take note of/consider X,*
- *The most important point to consider is…*
- *What's more interesting is that…*
- *What I'd especially like to point out/emphasize is,*
- *Let me elaborate on X a little further*

The latter two items are particularly interesting in that they serve as direct speech acts, cases in which the speaker explicitly uses a performative verb to state what they are doing.

16.4.2 CP Transition Phrases Commonly Used for Clarifying and Defining

If a speaker has to clarify or define a term or concept using a transition phrase, the following phrases might be considered:

- *that is, which means,* (for clarifying or elaborating upon implications)
- *such as x,* (for conveying a more academic tenor than '*like*' or the overused, '*for example'*)
- *in brief,* (for introducing a quick summary)
- *Interestingly,* (this evaluative adverb tends to catch the audience's attention and also helps to foster a dynamic change of intonation)
- *So, what is 'X' then?* (the presenter gives particular emphasis when intoning the word '*X*' in order to mark his intention to define the term)
- *Who is familiar with these terms?* (this is an example of a dialogic element in a CP—one in which the presenter is engaging in—albeit brief—a discussion with the audience)
- *So, reading serves here as input and writing as output* (repeating key concepts as a summative phrase enables clarification)

16.4.3 CP Transition Phrases Commonly Used When Explaining Research Methods

- *While exposing X to Y, during exposure to Y…* (NNESs should remember that '*while*' is followed by a verb phrase, and '*during*' by a noun. Both present effective alternatives to *'so', 'then', 'as'*, or *'when*)
- *For this reason*, (this phrase is more explicit and academically situated than '*so*' or '*because'*)
- *The question here is X.* (an effective way to express a research or hypothetical question along with, *'We hypothesized that…')*
- *Initially*, (a more academic alternative to '*first*' or '*at first'*)
- *By/in doing so*, (effective in creating narratives that express goals or purposes)
- *Therefore, our aim was to X.* ('*aim*' is more product-oriented than '*plan*' and expresses a research purpose more precisely than '*goal*,' which tends to be more results-focused.)
- *We have followed this protocol.* ('*protocol*' is often a more accurate and precise term than '*method*,' particularly when it refers to a prescribed form of research inquiry)
- *I don't have to explain this, do I?* (an effective example of both recognizing and affirming the knowledge level of peers in the audience. This phrase can also offer a welcome, lighthearted touch)
- *We explored the X hypothesis. What is the X hypothesis?* (the use of a rhetorical question to precede an explanation. Note also the cohesion established by repeating the term '*hypothesis*')
- *So, how did we start?/So, how do we actually measure X?* (rhetorical questions explicitly marking methods)
- *We focused on the four following parameters.* (marking the beginning of an explanatory sequence)
- *Using the X classification system*, (connecting research categories to research practices or activities)

16.4.4 CP Transition Phrases Connected to Introducing Results

- *Basically*, (this item was, unsurprisingly perhaps, used widely and repeatedly. Many NNES presenters preferred to use the term '*anyway*,' but this could imbue the subsequent text with a throwaway character or unintentionally mark a return to a previous theme, both of which are quite distinct from the reductive or narrowing function of the term, '*basically*').
- *Despite, unless* (these terms might be thought of as 'general English,' but in fact they were underused in many CPs. These are often preferable to using multiple prepositions to make the same point)
- *To our surprise*, (an evaluative term working as an attention grabber)

- *As a result*, (this phrase shows cause/effect, before/after relationships much more succinctly than connectors and prepositions such as, '*for, so,'* and *'and'*)
- *Here are the indicators of X* (explicit references to visible lists, data, or statistics were generally effective)
- *So what is the mechanism?*(rhetorical questions such as this were also very effectively used in the results section)
- *The first possible reason is x. ('Possible'* serves as a more academic hedge in terms of tenor than do '*maybe*' or '*probably*')
- *When it came down to X, however, there was a significant difference. Let's compare the two*. (a combination of research strategies preceding a comparison of results. The word '*was*' was emphasized by the speaker through stronger intonation to indicate the significant result)
- *But those studies contrasted sharply, while this study…* (the deictic terms, '*those*' and '*this*' were emphasized through stronger intonation to make the subsequent contrast explicit)
- *If + will/then + results* (using If-then If-will forms when expressing results or methods allowed intricate causal relationships to be more readily grasped by the audience)

16.4.5 CP Transition Phrases Connected to Referencing

As noted earlier, sometimes the speaker will want to refer back to an earlier section of the CP. In such cases, I can suggest the following authentic and recurring examples.

- *As I said/mentioned earlier, As shown previously* (anaphoric—backwards-looking—references)
- *If you recall, I earlier noted/said that…* (this anaphoric reference appeals because of the explicit connection made to the audience, as well as the speaker's text)
- *I'll discuss/explain this a little later on.* (a cataphoric—forward-looking—reference)

16.4.6 CP Transition Phrases Connected to Advancing the Narrative

- *OK, let's move on to X/So, where are we going next?* (explicitly signifying a major shift)
- *Consequently,* (indicating a cause/effect relationship with a greater academic tenor than '*so*')
- *Subsequently (*indicating before-and-after or other temporal relationships)
- *The second category I have identified is…* (a sequencing cleft to delineate categories)

16.5 Cautions Related to Using Transition Phrases

To end this section, a few cautionary notes regarding ineffective or misused transitional phrases have been added in order to steer the novice presenter and NNES speaker away from some common 'bad practices'.

'Especially' is a booster/intensifier that is often overused, thus reducing the intended boosting impact. It was occasionally rendered among NNES presenters as the rare, and somewhat awkward, adjective 'especial'. '*In particular'* retains a slightly stronger academic tenor.

Two other commonly used transitional phrases that readers might also want to be wary of are: (1) *Next I'm going to talk about/go into X* and (2) '*Another point is…*,' both of which can make it appear as if the presenter is merely progressing through a list or sequence. If the speaker is in fact doing so, their usage is perfectly viable but novice presenters should keep in mind that effective CPs will very rarely, if ever, consist of lists or sequences alone—and over-dependency upon these can bolster the impression that the CP is nothing more than an accumulation of discrete item points.

As mentioned above, another transitional expression to be careful with is, '*Anyway…*'. The canonical English function of 'anyway' is to diminish the value of what the speaker has previously said or to mark a section of text as topically parenthetical. Therefore, if used as a transitional phrase, the term might be misinterpreted as being dismissive. '*Getting back to (my main point)*' or '*Regardless…*' can provide a similar function without the dismissive connotation.

NNES presenters should also beware of using the following phrases:

a. *From the viewpoint of X.*

'Viewpoint' here usually refers to someone's opinion and thus is not normally used as a categorizer. *'As far as X is concerned'* would be preferable.

b. *In the therapeutic options…X*

If the speaker is selecting certain items for emphasis and expositional discussion, *'Among X'* or *'As for X'* would be preferred.

c. *As for/In regards to X/Additionally/Furthermore…*

All of these four phrases are well-established and widely used among presenters of all stripes. However, they deserve a special mention here because in my observations, other, less felicitous, choices were often considered functional equivalents and used in their place.

For example, standard itemizers in many NNESs' L1 lexicons often become rendered as '*About X'* in English. However, '*about*' does not serve an initial topic introduction function in English and is also typically used in more informal settings.

'*As for'* and '*In regards to/Regarding'* carry out the function of introducing new topics, items, and categories with a more appropriate academic tenor.

'*Moreover*' is an item that tends to be both overused *and* misused—it typically indicates additional logical and/or philosophical connotations, as when the speaker is expanding upon a conceptual basis—than do '*additionally/furthermore*', which simply signal the introduction of further data or detail.

Among humanities CPs in particular, I also noted a number of cases in which the speaker completed a section of text by using a very abrupt summative phrases such as:

...And that's that. So now let's look at...
Yeah, so what I mean is...

These serve as flawed examples of what I have mentioned earlier regarding CPs being expressed in the manner of a dialogue in order to establish rapport or an interpersonal dimension with the audience. Readers might want to consider whether the above forms actually help to impart the interpersonal function of a CP or simply serve as inarticulate acoustic filler, lacking definition or purpose, with the possible uptake of disengaging an academic audience.

Questions and Exercises for Sections 16.4 and 16.5

1. Think of effective transition phrases for each of the following CP cases:
   a. Marking an abrupt change of topic
   b. Introducing a second item or turn when outlining a procedure
   c. Moving from explaining effect to explaining causes
   d. Shifting from explaining methods to discussing results
   e. Indicating temporal markers when shifting from background information to procedures
   f. Shifting from an opening or outline to the main body of the CP
2. Why does the author warn readers about using 'anyway' and 'moreover' as transition markers?
3. Explain a common procedure that you carry out every day (such as the activities you typically carry out at home before leaving for work or school) as a speech activity, record your speech, and then note which transition markers you used most. Next, tell a funny or interesting story, record it, and again note the transition markers used. Which transition markers did you find most effective and/or appropriate according to your speaking purpose?
4. Think of two transitional phrases that can be useful for each of the following functions:
   (a) elaborating/emphasizing (b) explaining research results (c) introducing research results

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Managing Discussion Sessions (Q&A) 17

Abstract

The Q&A or discussion session (hereafter 'DS') is considered to be a quintessential feature of not only the CP itself but one of the key events of the academic conference in general. The DS is where research hypotheses are truly tested—by the judgment of one's peers. As a result, given the combination of the open-ended, unpredictable nature of these sessions along with the heightened possibility of facing criticism, DSs can be the most stressful part of the entire conference experience, particularly for NNES and novice presenters. In this chapter, we will discuss the academic foundations underlying DS discourse, some of the common DS coping strategies used by effective presenters, the expected role of discussants in DSs, and some of the vagaries associated with this distinctive conference speech event.

17.1 The Academic Dimension

It is interesting to note that applied linguists do not refer to what are popularly known as 'Q&A sessions' as such but rather as 'discussion sessions' (hereafter abbreviated to DSs), with the participating audience member(s)—or, on occasion, the chairperson—referred to as the 'discussant(s).' I will use these terms for two good reasons.

The first is that calling this event, or sub-genre, a 'discussion' is in fact a much more accurate description. In my observations of DSs, comments were as common as questions, and in fact expository comments typically precede questions in the discussant's turn. The number of cases in which the discussant asked only a question, without additional commentary, backgrounding, or other parenthetical device, accounted for less than 5% of all discussant talk. Often, the question element was appended to the comment more as a means of indicating that the discussant's turn was coming to a conclusion than as any self-contained query.

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Secondly, referring to the event as a '*Q&A'* session imbues the interaction with the qualities of a test, an interview, or even an inquisition, which does not do justice to the actual nature of the event, which typically involves much negotiation and a focus on turn-taking and politeness strategies that go well beyond the type of simple adjacency pair relationship that 'Q&A' implies. So, although DSs *could* be described or analyzed as a series of synoptic adjacency pair sequences, the reality is often much more dynamic, unpredictable, and open-ended. Approaching the DS primarily as a 'Q&A session' might thereby serve to heighten the dread and anxiety that many presenters, particularly NNES, claim to experience.

The ability to manage textual organization and social relations is particularly heightened in DSs, as the speaker holds 'speaking time' rights, and both the presenter and the discussant must keep in mind that the main purpose of the discussion session is to gain feedback from the audience for research work still in progress or in its preliminary stages.

According to Webber (2002), presentation DSs constitute a distinct sub-genre of the CP, partly governed by unwritten rules and maintained as an accepted code by members of the discourse community. Academic DSs differ from similar discourse found in legal or political debates in that they generally involve more linguistic realizations of politeness and solidarity as opposed to competition and disputes. In discussion sessions, participants tend to use more informal language, politeness devices, and pay close attention to address forms, all of which help to decrease interpersonal distance. DSs involve mediated negotiation; they are jointly constructed ventures between the presenter and the discussant.

DSs can be particularly difficult and stressful for NNESs to manage because the interaction is unpredictable and also as disputes may become open, where face-saving and face-threatening acts might be both perceived and managed in different ways by participants coming from different cultures. Often, too, the DS focus is on as yet unclear or unknown phenomena. All of these factors can lead to a greater degree of tentativeness and duly affect the linguistic behavior of participants. For example, evaluative discourse markers more typical of casual conversation, such as *'I just can't understand why…,'* become more pronounced within discussion discourse (Webber, p. 244).

Despite their open-ended and unpredictable nature, DSs are nonetheless goal-oriented discourses and thus warrant taking a discourse analysis approach. Based on the analysis of medical conference DSs, Webber argued that one of the DSs main purposes is to probe—to compare the presenter's work to the discussant's own. This involved two categories of questions: information-eliciting and action-eliciting (such as asking for repetition of a point or to view a slide or presented data again), with the former type predominating. Question types identified by Webber (p. 231) included the following:

Information about facts = 32%
Information about opinions = 17%

Criticism or attack = 30%
Suggestions = 9%
Comments = 3%
Mixed comment and information question = 9%

Among the discourse features that Webber analyzed in DSs were exchange structures, choice of discourse markers, and politeness devices/interpersonal distance—with the choice of response being realized by the interactants' pragmatic intentions.

The chair or moderator-led turn-taking procedure marks most DSs as distinct from casual spontaneous discussions and thus inhibits what we might call true conversation. Sometimes, DSs are unresolvable given constraining factors such as the time allotted or the need to fairly distribute discussion time among different audience members. Thus, DSs are often fragmentary interactions, largely due to the constant change of discussants. As a result, DSs often skip over topics, do not really cover specific areas in-depth, and most often do not lead to conclusions (Webber, 2002, p. 247)

Hedges and approximators are commonly used as face-saving devices in DSs. Subjective modalism and higher incidences of personal reference are also widely utilized in conference DSs (Webber, 1997), and thus more modalization and hedging are required in DSs in order to disassociate the writer/speaker from too strong a commitment (Skelton, 2007). This includes the use of increased vague language, such as the ubiquitous (in my observations) '*sort of.*'

Adjacency pairs, in which comments precede questions, are very common in DSs, and often there is no explicit question asked per se. Webber (2002) notes that suggestions were particularly common among discussants. But while adjacency pair discourse often compels the speaker to address the comment, in reality DS discourse analysis indicates that comments and suggestions do not always require an 'answer' as such—a simple '*Thank you for your comment'* is often sufficient as an acknowledgment of the speaker's contribution and can produce the desired sense of solidarity.

17.2 The Discussion Session as Negotiated Dialogue

In late 2012, I conducted a survey among doctors at my home institution regarding their English presentation anxieties (Guest, 2013). One question asked them to rate which aspect of CPs (in both English and Japanese) created the greatest amount of anxiety.

I eventually received 52 responses, and in 49 out of the 52, 'Q&A sessions' were selected as the most anxiety-inducing, with over forty respondents claiming that it made them feel 'extremely anxious.' In further interviews and discussions, it became apparent that, for most, the general anxiety associated with CPs was almost wholly focused upon facing the dreaded DS element. This reality is underscored

whenever I am asked to assist healthcare professionals with their conference presentations—often what they really want help with is managing DSs.

What I really wanted to know in these interviews, however, was *why*? Since anxiety appears to be a common factor in DSs, it is important to understand the environmental and/or attitudinal factors behind it. Of course, to some degree, the answer is rather obvious—set or static monologic speech, particularly when performed in a foreign language, has a built-in comfort zone since it can be prepared and manipulated, but in cases of dynamic interaction content has to be conveyed unpredictably and in real time. Yet, while most people would naturally feel less at ease being under fire in a foreign tongue, I was rather struck by the extreme degree to which it inflicted many of my Japanese colleagues. Are there helpful linguistic treatments to remove or stabilize this anxiety?

According to the responses from the survey of the medical faculty at my own university, it appeared that the likelihood of being doubted or criticized in Q&A is *not* a worry for most. The doctors I interviewed post-survey all expressed confidence in the veracity of their research. Instead, what they feared most was looking foolish. To be more precise, they feared looking unprofessional and non-academic by not being able to understand the question posed or by being unable to think on their feet quickly enough to respond adequately in English. Causes of breakdown, however, need not be due to only linguistic misunderstandings, other DS problems, as noted by Webber (2002), include apparent differences in agendas, points of view, as well as negotiating from differing schools of thought, and these can occur between native speakers of the same language.

However, many of my interviewees also worried that negotiating meaning with the discussant might not be considered polite, or that the discussant and/or the audience in general would get fed up with time-wasting meaning negotiation tactics, and that the gulf between the high-quality English in the prepared portion of the CP and the inability to improvise a response during DSs might somehow expose them as academic or linguistic 'frauds.' Yet, regardless of the underlying English proficiency (here speaking in terms of grammatical and/or lexical accuracy), several NNES academics I observed appeared to manage dynamic and open-ended interactions more efficiently than more English-proficient peers.

Interviewees also admitted that, on occasion, their anxiety was also due to the 'English complex' that I discussed in Chap. 5, of this book. After conducting post-Q&A interviews with NNES presenters, it became apparent that this perception led some NNES academic presenters to blame DS breakdowns upon themselves, even when there was no good reason for them to do so. A noted recurring pattern went as follows:

1. *A question/comment is asked in English after a presentation.*
2. *The NNES presenter cannot fully understand the question/comment.*
3. *The NNES presenter feels as if they've somehow failed or fallen short.*
4. *The NNES speaker says nothing or starts talking aimlessly, deflecting the discourse to avoid losing face.*

It is in the third step above where the problem is occurring. Presenters can break this unfortunate cycle by reformulating the third step as follows:

3. *NNES presenter thinks, 'OK, breakdowns happen. Let's negotiate this breakdown together.'*
4. *NNES presenter utilizes some type of coping or repair strategy.*

Many of these DS coping and repair strategies observed in conference DSs will be outlined in the next section.

Questions and Exercises for Sections 17.1 and 17.2

1. What two features of DSs make them more anxiety-inducing for many speakers than the actual body of the CP?
2. What type of DS questions/comments did Webber find were most common?
3. Explain how DSs work as a negotiated dialogue and how this might affect the management of communicative breakdown in the DS.

17.3 Coping Strategies for Discussion Sessions

The key item in the heading above is '*strategies,*' a term which most accurately reflects the linguistic choices we make regarding spoken discourse, particularly when under pressure. In applied linguistics, this skill is known as 'strategic competence' and developing skills in this often neglected area can go a long way toward removing DS anxiety. Since the samples presented in this section are *strategies*, they should be treated as distinct from the type of set stock phrases that might be memorized as sentential formulas. Strategies involve real-time cognitive and interactive shifts. Let us look at some authentic, recurring, conference DS-based examples.

17.3.1 Clarification

Even the most proficient of English speakers can experience trouble understanding what the discussant in a DS actually wishes to say or ask. One reason may be that the speaker's accent is rather thick. Another may be that some discussants speak very quickly and, on occasion, rather incoherently. This can occur regardless of the discussant's mother tongue.

At larger conferences, audiences will typically be very diverse, meaning that a greater variety of knowledge/experience levels and question or comment types are likely to arise, making predictions regarding the type or focus of a comment or question more difficult.

And, as is well known to both moderators and DS chairs, some discussants do not actually have a question to ask at all. They simply want the microphone and the floor because they enjoy either the attention and/or the opportunity to give a testimony regarding their opinion or their own research. Some discussants can also be frustratingly unclear and unfocused in their comments and, in some cases, may be speaking merely because they feel compelled to say something, anything.

In such cases, I noted that effective presenters successfully respond by asking:

So what exactly is your question?
So your question is…?
Could you summarize your point/question, please?

These clarification requests are not rude. After all, it is the discussant who has the responsibility to make himself/herself understood, since it is they who are opening the particular turn in this dialogue—it is not *only* the presenter's responsibility to maintain a productive dialogue asking for clarification can put pressure on the discussant to carry out their role in a felicitous way. This is a central feature of what we mean by 'negotiating meaning'.

This point deserves emphasis. As I mentioned earlier, some NNS presenters are prone to thinking that any communicative breakdown must be entirely their fault. It is not. I've often seen NES discussants fail to modify their English in the slightest even though it was obvious that English was not the speaker's L1 and given that the conference was taking place in a region where the majority of attendees were NNESs.

The onus to make oneself understood, therefore, is upon the discussant. One widely noted phenomenon was the frequent use of colloquialisms or idioms in NES discussant speech, both inside and outside of set speech events, when engaging with NNES interlocutors. Most notable were those idiomatic phrases that have become default terms in NES speech which are, as a result, used without hesitation by NESs but are often outside the comprehension fields of many or most NNESs.

In one case at an education conference, I noticed an NES discussant uses the idiomatic phrases, 'jump through hoops,' 'get the ball rolling,' and 'pull it off' all within a 15-s utterance made to a largely NNES audience. Such phrases have become such a normal feature of daily NES parlance that speakers often do not realize that these terms might not be part of their interlocutors' lexicons and, as a result, fail to modify their speech accordingly to accommodate their audiences.

However, it must also be stated that modifying one's speech does not mean speaking to an NNES in broken or childlike English, which may be interpreted as insulting or belittling, but *does* mean adjusting one's speech to accommodate the other, given that modification is a part of the negotiation of meaning. However, suffice to say that some discussants, especially English native speakers who have little experience outside English settings, may be oblivious to linguistic accomodation (see the section on the expectations and roles of discussants later in this chapter).

Many presenters, however, seemed to be particularly adept at dealing with such situations. Although some NNES presenters struggled with comprehending the

English question/comment on several occasions, I noted them taking control by responding with directness regarding their lack of comprehension:

Sorry. I don't understand what you said.
Sorry. You spoke too fast for me to understand.

In some settings, these bold responses may come off as rather blunt, but there is no denying that on several occasions they were effective. First, they forced the discussant to adjust their speed, lexis, or phrasing, allowing the dialogue to advance and ultimately benefiting everyone in attendance—many of whom had also probably failed to understand the question/comment.

If the presenter is an NNES, there should also be no shame in admitting that one is not a native speaker of English. Among such responses noted were:

Sorry. I'm not a native speaker of English. I didn't quite understand.
Sorry. English isn't my first language so…

I have used this strategy myself occasionally when speaking Japanese in Japan (a language of which I am an NNS) after which Japanese discussants invariably responded *not* with impatience or frustration but rather by making helpful adjustments and modifications to their own speech in order to achieve the goal of mutual understanding.

Clarification strategies like those mentioned above are also commonly used to buy the speaker time, to allow the speaker another chance to catch a difficult or obtuse phrase, or simply to allow for an appropriate response. The worst thing a speaker can do in such a case, in any DS scenario in fact, is to remain silent (although they might look to the chairman with a confused expression). The old escape standby, '*I agree with you*,' will often not work either, since the perplexed speaker might not be sure what exactly he or she is 'agreeing' with.

17.3.2 The Uncertain Keyword

Many of the doctors who took part in my interviews made mention of DS cases where the discussant used a word that they had not heard clearly or could not quite remember the meaning or usage of. Naturally, the presenter does not want to engage in a mini-English lesson during the discussion, so asking '*What does X mean*?' would not be effective. Rather, the standard response in such cases was: *'What exactly do you mean by X?'*

This implies that the speaker knows the canonical meaning of the word (even if they cannot actually retrieve it at the time), but they are not sure of the nuanced usage as it appears in the question/comment. This strategy, used widely by English speakers of all levels of proficiency, will usually require the discussant to explain or rephrase the key term in a way that is more understandable to the speaker. This too can benefit others in attendance.

Sometimes, it might be just one word or phrase that is confusing the speaker, a phenomenon that occurs widely even in NES-NES contexts. I observed one case in which the discussant said, *'Have you considered the possibility of sbtmwprfk?'* The presenter clearly had no idea what that last item was (nor did I, and I might assume, neither did many other members of the audience). It may be due to the presenter's miscomprehension, and it may be that the speaker slurred or enunciated their question in an unusual manner, but there is a simple and obvious strategy for such cases:

Sorry, have I considered the possibility of WHAT?

Or, similarly:

Q: *Why did nmsszvt occur*?—Response: *Sorry, why did WHAT occur?*
Q: *Did you place the tubes in the vtrllmk?*—Response: *Sorry, did we place them WHERE?*

I also observed cases in which an entire phrase was not quite grasped by the speaker. In several such cases, the speakers, NNESs in particular, responded by simply saying: '*What?'* Unfortunately, this often has the unintended uptake of having the discussant repeat the entire comment again, wrongly assuming that the speaker has almost no English comprehension. The bold directness of '*What* might even be taken as a face-threatening challenge.

The most common response used by competent and effective CP speakers in these situations was simply *'Sorry?'* However, it must be emphasized that this should not be used employing an apologetic but rather a questioning tone. This was often accompanied by other paralinguistic features: a turn of the head and, frequently, the furrowed brow that typically denotes confusion or incomprehension. Without exception, discussants, regardless of cultural background, recognized this as a cue to clarify, slow down, or otherwise reformulate their comment.

17.3.3 Convoluted and/or Vague Comments

One salient feature of DSs that I observed was that both highly proficient non-native *and* native English discussants regularly engaged in self-repair. This typically involves repetition, reformulations, and false starts which lead to the construction of lengthy, unfocused, convoluted questions or comments. Presenters can safely ignore much of the spoken text if it is suspected that this is happening. For example, one discussant I observed began his comment as follows:

You mentioned X in your presentation, umm, so I was wondering, well not wondering, but what should I say, I felt myself criticizing, or at least questioning… well, I suppose my experience is different. What I mean is…

In such cases, if the presenter remains passive in posture the discussant may extend their comment infinitely, believing that the presenter has not yet grasped the discussant's point and that even more verbiage is required. Once a certain point was reached, however, experienced presenters tended to raise their hands and nodded slightly, a gesture with the (polite) uptake of, '*Ok. Enough. I get it*.' Although this might appear to violate standards of politeness within some cultures, it did serve as a clear signal to the discussant to allow for the speaker's response turn.

Similarly, the degree to which very complex cleft structures were asked in DSs was notable. These indirect forms can be particularly problematic for NNES to process and decode. Below is a verbatim example noted at an obstetrics and gynecology conference:

> Discussant: *Ok, the thing I'd like to ask first, and the item that I really think we should focus upon because it is the most relevant to our field, is whether or not procedure X should be our first choice of treatment. I mean, I'm not saying that there is anything wrong with the procedure itself but what I think I'm trying to say is that there are better options, so I guess my question is, have you considered other procedural options?*

This is quite a cognitive load for any listener, let alone an NNES, to process. And yet this type of multiclausal, meandering, heavily clefted question appeared quite frequently (I have been on the receiving end of many such comments as a speaker myself). The grammatical subjects tend to be extremely long, interspersed with stance-establishing interpersonal metadiscourse (*What I want to say, I think, I guess*), with much of the text unfocused and lacking coherence, and in some cases amounting to little more than discursive window-dressing. It can be hard for NNESs to recognize what can safely be ignored.

I suggest that while developing sensitivity to decoding typical cleft structure constructions (e.g., *The reason I'm asking this is…, What I would mainly like to clarify is…)*, as well as learning to recognize false starts and self-repair, are both important (and often overlooked) listening comprehension skills, it is perfectly within your right here to ask for specific clarification. Among such examples noted were:

> *So could you state your main point or question in one short sentence, please? So, in short…* (this phrase might be used *if* the speaker believes they have grasped the gist of the comment).

Finally, a speaker may also want to check whether or not the discussant has understood or accepts the response. On occasion, I noted colloquialisms such as, *'Yeah? Is it OK?'* used as a checking response, but readers might want to consider whether this meets the standards of academic conference tenor, as it can sound somewhat rough and unprofessional. Instead, *'Have I answered your question?'* can serve as a near-default phrase to address such situations.

17.3.4 Avoidance/Evasion

Sometimes, the discussant appears to be arguing with or challenging the speaker—putting the speaker on the spot. In fact, even neutrality can be perceived as criticism in such face-threatening scenarios.

In such cases, the speaker might be experiencing a combination of both a personal challenge *and* a lack of aural comprehension. Often, attempts to clarify and then justify certain aspects of the research presented will take longer than the standard DS allows. In such cases, I observed speakers occasionally successfully utilize evasion or avoidance strategies.

Evasiveness should not be thought of as a cop-out or as being devious, but rather as a legitimate strategy. However, speakers must construct the response in such a way that it is still seen as a response. Although the lack of a direct response is a rare DS strategy, it *will* be seen as significant in terms of maintaining or threatening face (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Not *directly* acknowledging the question or comment is, however, an option (Webber, 2002, p. 231), particularly if the speaker is not in a position to give an adequate response.

Webber notes that evasion strategies were frequently used when discussants addressed issues outside the scope of the paper presented. Normally, it is the chair's responsibility to guide the discussion, but in many cases this duty may fall upon the presenter. After all, the presenter may be in a more appropriate position to judge the relevance of a question.

Further, if the discussion appears to be unproductive, going round in circles, the speaker may also choose to move on to the next question, particularly if an aimless or drawn-out discussion is not addressed adequately by the chair. Among the forms I noted to achieve this, were:

So, can we move on to the next question?
Let's/can we return to the main point/topic of discussion?

Other avoidance strategies noted were:

If you contact me after I can give you more information.
If you'd like more detail I'd be happy to talk with you later.

These types of responses serve two purposes. One is that does not allow one discussant to dominate the proceedings, particularly if the presenter judges that other issues may be more pertinent and thereby wishes to reopen the floor. Such responses also put the onus on the discussant to initiate follow-up. Are they *really* interested in discussing the issue? If so, one might expect to receive their email or approach sometime after the DS. If not, perhaps the discussant was just being aggressive or opinionated for the sake of argument, which is not the speaker's concern.

Another occasionally noted avoidance strategy was to refer the question to a more experienced, senior colleague in the audience:

Perhaps Professor Mouret can say something more about this.

Many senior professors, who are generally more knowledgeable about the research content (and, among NNESs, also often more proficient in English), are happy to help out and/or defend an underling in such cases. It also gives the senior member a chance to add their stamp on the proceedings, while the junior presenter effectively gets off the hook. However, the speaker's relationship to the senior researcher as well as that researcher's personality, his or her willingness to be actively engaged in this discussion, will be paramount in choosing whether to use this strategy or not.

Planted questions, in which the speaker and a member in the audience have pre-arranged the latter to ask a 'friendly' question, are another form of evasion. This may help relieve anxieties for a speaker but also does nothing to hone one's DS management skills. Further, if the DS is being managed by the chairperson, it is very possible that other raised hands may be selected first, scuttling the speaker's planned attempt at evasion.

Yet another strategy is to *return* the question to the discussant, a tactic that was rare but noted on several occasions.

Well, what do you think?

Do you have any ideas about that?

Webber notes a case in which the speaker responded to a discussant by saying, '*What do you think*?' followed by the first name of the discussant—a highly marked interpersonal response (Webber, 2002, p. 241, p. 241). This can be an effective response because many discussants are simply looking for an opportunity to offer their own opinions and will be delighted to have the chance to sum up their views. They may well feel very magnanimous toward the speaker for having given them the chance.

17.3.5 Thanking and Appeasement

When the speaker faces a critique or challenges occur, there is one crucial strategy that must always be considered, that of *thanking* the discussant for their contribution.

Once, when I was performing a presentation for language educators on alternative methods of language testing, an audience member came to the microphone during the DS and told me in no uncertain terms that he 'objected to' my presentation. I admit that I was rather taken aback by his aggressive comments. However, rather than challenging his statements—which, incidentally, I thought ridiculous as well as discourteous for a conference setting—I thanked him for his criticism and asked him what he would have done regarding the issues he raised, which he proceeded to do with great enthusiasm. Thankfully, this defused the

situation and helped avoid escalating into becoming an unpleasant confrontation. This, then, might be categorized as a type of appeasement strategy.

Since that time, I have seen competent presenters often use thanking as a tactic to defuse potential criticism or to avoid unnecessary conflict. Webber (2002) estimates that about one-third of all discussion questions and comments are critical. But even if or when the speaker has not fully accepted the criticism, thanking strategies are regularly used. Recurring forms that I noted included:

Thank you for your comment. We'll certainly take that into consideration.
Thank you for your suggestion. I really appreciate it.
That's a very interesting point. Thank you.
As you suggest…

In short, even if the speaker thinks the comment or suggestion to be utterly daft, such responses should be more than enough to mollify most discussants. For the purpose of both appeasing the aggressor and allowing oneself time to think of a substantial answer, common responses were:

'That's a good question.' Or *'I'm glad you asked that question.'*

Arguments from authority, such as references to other speakers or authorities on the topic, were also often used as a means to diffuse criticism. Suffice to say that speakers should have key references and authoritative quotes to back up potentially contentious aspects of their CP readily retrievable.

A discussant simply asking the presenter to 'comment a little more' about something is also a common occurrence. This may serve to clarify, or it may serve as a prelude to criticism—as more insidious questions can be disguised as information-eliciting questions. Generally, however, when criticism in DSs does occur, it usually follows a pattern of going from confrontation to convergence or some type of submission on behalf of one party.

Finally, if the speaker believes their initial explanation to have been insufficient, one might employ an elaboration or reformulation strategy. The examples noted below were all uttered frequently by competent presenters in DS sessions:

I mean (used as an elaborator).
What I am saying is x.
Let me explain this another way…
Let me rephrase that…
Perhaps I didn't express myself clearly…

17.3.6 Admission

Another very effective way of deflecting potential DS criticism was for speakers to directly acknowledge that they were not aware of, or did not consider in their research, some factor pointed out by a discussant. And, after all, if the discussant has a valid point, why try to deny it? On several such occasions, presenters also responded with frankness: '*I don't know'* or '*The question is still open.'*

Other successful responses that I observed being used on several occasions were:

Sorry, we didn't research that.
That wasn't included in the scope of our study.
That's interesting. We haven't thought of that.

Webber (2002) also noted several examples of admission (p. 240). Among these, '*I don't know*,' constituted 18% of the total responses. Other responses included outright rejections or denials of the line of inquiry ('*It was not one of the aims of the study,*' '*We did not test brain cells*,' p. 240).

There should be no shame in admitting possible research shortcomings, and in fact, '*More research needs to be carried out'* is something of a paradigmatic phrase, widely used in both written and spoken academic discourses. If anything, admission of a weakness or shortcoming often pleases the discussant because it makes him or her feel justified or validated that their comment has been accepted as beneficial to the speaker or audience. Admission can save face for the presenter in the eyes of the audience as well. Novice presenters should remember once again that the event is just a discussion, and it is not the defense of a Ph.D. thesis.

Often, gratitude for the discussant's insights was indicated explicitly:

True. We didn't consider that. Thank you.

Such admission strategies can benefit the research presenter in another way: If the presenter had truly overlooked an essential point, the discussant has now provided an opportunity to revise and/or solidify the research—which is one of the central purposes for attending conferences and presenting one's research in the first place.

Another common question from discussants often involved describing their own research or outcomes and then asking, '*Have you had any such experience*?' If the discussant's case does not match the speaker's experience, or if the speaker has never tried to use such a method or procedure, they should readily admit so: *'No. We've never tried/noticed/done that.'* Note, however, that effective presenters avoided responding to such questions with, '*No. I have no (such) experience,*' as this might be misinterpreted as meaning that the speaker is admitting to a general lack of experience.

Another admission phrase, often employed by NNES presenters, that should be avoided as a strategy is *'We have to think about X more and more.'* This set phrase might be interpreted as having the connotation of fobbing off the discussant by

appearing willfully vague and uncommitted. Readers may remember that when we discussed evasion earlier we noted that avoidance strategies are often legitimate. The above phrase on the other hand, while serving an evasion function, is both semantically and pragmatically empty.

17.4 Improving Listening Comprehension for Discussion Sessions

Up to this point, most of the suggestions made have been about how to manage interactions with the discussant, as opposed to dealing directly with the question itself. However, the biggest glitch in managing DSs for many NNES presenters is in fact, simply put, listening comprehension. Certainly, NNES readers do not need to be told that in order to remove a lot of anxiety from DSs they should try to improve their listening comprehension skills. But there were a few salient points gleaned from observations that might help reduce NNES presenter anxieties.

Let me explain this first by taking a bit of a digression. One unfortunate English teaching habit prevalent in many secondary schools in regions in which English is not an official (or formerly colonial) language is the teaching of the pronunciation and intonation of individual English words as discrete units. This may be fine for dense, concrete terms, such as specialist terminology, but it can cause particular difficulties for NNES listeners if this habit equally applied to prepositions, pronouns, modal and 'be' verbs, interjections, connectors, determiners, and other so-called grammar or function words. Unlike some languages, which tend to have fairly consistent word intonation and stress, or those for which tone is the key determiner of semantic value (e.g., Chinese, Vietnamese, and Thai), spoken English phrases will regularly de-stress certain items.

For example, in an utterance such as '*Did you catch the one that I put on the top of the slide?*' (uttered by a workshop presenter at an education conference in Singapore) *'Did,' 'you,' 'that,'* and *'of'* were de-stressed (almost to the point of inaudibility for many NNESs). So, for many, that utterance will sound something like an acoustic blur: '*Didja catch the one thadai pudon toppa the slide*?'

Many NNES listeners, however, having studied the canonical pronunciation of individual English lexical items, will likely be wondering about the meaning of the apparent subject or head of the utterance—'*Didja*?' Is this a personal pronoun of sorts or is it a new lexical item that they were not taught in school? As they are working this conundrum out, the remainder of the comment has faded beyond comprehension.

This is the blending habit found in English supra-segmental forms. Above, you will note how 'Did you' in common or casual speech may often be reduced to 'Didja.' If the listener has no expectation as to where or when supra-segmental tends to occur in English, the utterance might remain undecoded and unprocessed, received, and retained merely as an acoustic blur.

For example, a blend used in the utterance, '*Is there any reason why…*' (as noted during a medical keynote speech in Thailand), might be perceived by many NNESs as '*Zereny reason why...*' in which '*Is*,' '*there*,' and '*any*' have been conjoined into a blurred single item. Unfortunately, some NNESs will get flummoxed upon hearing '*Zereny*,' perhaps again believing that this is a word they do not have in their English lexicon. The listener, however, may not realize that this supra-segmental blend actually represents the default phonetic form when used as the subject/head of this type of utterance. Likewise, many proficient English speakers believe that this supra-segmental utterance will be processed by NNES listeners precisely the same as the written text would: '*Is there any*?' and fail to adjust their speech accordingly.

In all languages, items that are deemed to be semantically superfluous are regularly dropped from informal speech. For example, following a CP by a Japanese presenter, a British commenter responded in the DS by saying, '*Sounds like it was effective*.' It was immediately apparent that the Japanese interlocutor was thrown off for a moment upon hearing this construction, almost certainly because the implicit subject '*It/this*' had been elided.

This tends to happen more frequently in high-intensity, low-formality conversational interactions than it does in more formalized settings—such as presentation DSs. Therefore, it is important for NNESs to realize that many such speech items will tend to be de-stressed or elided, just as it is equally important for more proficient English speakers to be cognizant of how problematic such utterances might be for NNESs to receive or decode.

So, what to do? Telling NNES presenters that they need to improve their English listening skills is rather facile and obvious. What I suggest for both NNESs and their teachers/trainers, however, is this: While watching English movies, videos, and/or TV, take note of in what situations which types of English words/phrases are regularly reduced, contracted, blended, or dropped. After an extended study of this type, one can usually better anticipate them.

Another point to be made here is that the gist of what the other interactant is conveying can usually be deduced by context—listeners do not really have to process every word. However, if a significant portion of the utterance becomes a blur to the presenter, one should simply ask for clarification, as suggested earlier:

Sorry, what was that first part?
Sorry. I didn't quite catch the last part.

There should be absolutely no shame in asking this whether proficient in English or not. Confirmation strategies can also be used to clarify:

If I understand your question correctly…

Finally, the novice presenter might wish to practice an English DS with colleagues. Have colleagues and peers initially come up with typical or standardized (in short, predictable) questions so that presenters can grow accustomed to giving

formalized answers. After that, have them also construct a few 'left-field' questions to keep you on your toes and to help you get used to employing some of the strategies we've mentioned.

17.5 Roles and Expectations of Discussants

Given the pressures that presenters are under during DSs it is crucial for discussants to adhere to the following protocols, all of which are mandated by the academic discourse community in general and the conference genre in particular:

- *Never* put a speaker on the spot or use the occasion to try and show off superior knowledge. This is not in keeping with the expected conduct of academics nor is it an accepted form of behavior within most discourse communities.
- Modify your English to make it comprehensible to speakers who do not speak English as a first language. However, this does *not* imply deliberately using broken English or avoiding academic or specialist terminology. It does, however, mean framing your comment in a way that it can readily be processed and easily decoded by others. Keep nonessential verbiage to a minimum.
- Make your question felicitous. That is, it should be succinct and concise, have a clear rhetorical purpose, and be within the scope of the CP.
- Many conference chairs require that you state your name and affiliation before commenting in the DS. Be prepared to do so.
- Do not feel the need to comment after every presentation, and if/when you do comment, do not act as a CP evaluator!
- Unless the presenter explicitly states otherwise, do not interrupt the body of the CP in order to raise a point or ask a question. Wait until the floor is opened by the chairperson or the presenter.

Finally, keep in mind that if a NES discussant appears to have trouble coping with the fact that many others in the world do not work within English-speaking cultures, and are using English at this conference as a lingua franca, that the onus is upon the NES, not the NNES, to adapt, adjust, or improve their intercultural and/or interpersonal communication skills.

17.6 A Confession

In closing this section, I should confess that I am not a big fan of post-presentation DSs, both as a presenter and as a member of the audience. This has nothing to do with personal anxieties, and in fact as a presenter in English, I feel almost no

anxiety during DSs (although I will admit a slight degree of apprehension when managing DSs in Japanese).

While it is often claimed that DSs may offer up fruitful discourse that has not been addressed in the CP itself (which is often cited as a justification for making the DS include up to 50% of the allotted length of the entire CP), both as an active participant and as an observer conducting research, I have felt that the vast majority of DSs tend to be little more than formalized time fillers, cluttered with either indulgent or mundane commentary. This observation is underscored by the frequency with which non-participating audience members check cell phones, programs or start to pack papers and bags—hoping to depart as soon as possible—during DSs.

Often, this problem occurs because the discussants' comments are connected only to their own specific research interests or concerns—they are unshared by other audience members. In other cases, questions or comments can come across as forced or artificial, particularly when habitual discussants feel obligated to maintain or initiate discourse even when there is in fact little to drive it. In many such cases, the chair might intervene with a manufactured question, asked largely in order to fulfill the obligation of carrying out the DS, rather than due to any pressing issues connected to the contents of the CP (it should be noted that the chair tends to give 'friendly' questions).

As a presenter myself, I have rarely noted questions or comments from the audience that I felt served to illuminate some point of import for the majority of the participants. And while some beneficial or uplifting discussion may, and does, occasionally occur, the DS, it seems to me, fulfills more of a post-CP ceremonial function than a deeper exploration of academic value. Even occasional strands of potentially stirring debates tend to be truncated by considerations of time, and face-saving politeness strategies and are often more robust and interesting when held outside the presentation room or during breaks.

Having said that, however, DSs still remain a quintessential sub-genre of academic conferences, and for that reason alone both presenters and audience participants should develop an understanding as to how to maintain and carry out such interactions.

Questions and Exercises for Sections 17.3–17.6

1. Give one example of each of the following DS response strategies: a. Appeasement, b. avoidance, c. admission, d. returning the question, e. clarifying a vague comment, f. clarifying a misheard word/phrase
2. What are two politeness protocols that discussants should be aware of when giving a question or comment?
3. How can you indicate to a discussant that a) you have understood the question and no more need be said, and b) you do not understand the question/comment?

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18 Intonation, Visuals, Text, and Narrative

Abstract

It is precisely because academic CPs tend to be heavily tilted toward the informative dimension that dynamic intonation becomes an increasingly important factor in performing an effective CP. A speaker's consideration for intonation allows the audience to better grasp rhetorical moves and linguistic relationships, serving as a conductor to explicate the notes of the narrative. Visual displays, beyond the text written on CP slides, also often serve as a semiotic focal point, especially in scientific CPs. Visuals need not only to be comprehensible to the viewers in order to justify their appearance in the research narrative, but will often require some type of spoken metadiscourse to accompany them. This short chapter looks at some problems and suggestions regarding the importance of intonation and the narration of visual elements.

18.1 Intonation—The Use (or Non-use) of Enhanced Prosody

Intonation is a highly specific subfield of linguistics, and any in-depth discussion of the nuances of intonation is beyond the scope of this book. However, I would like to impress upon the reader the central role that intonation does play in conveying the 'narrative' element of the CP.

Hyland (2010) noted that in scientific CPs in particular, non-verbal communication carries even more weight as it helps to structure the discourse. In my own observations as well, immediate and visceral connections could be made between those presenters deploying explicit transitional markers and their enhanced use of prosody, particularly the employment of a more dynamic intonation. The crucial role that intonation plays in conveying semantic and pragmatic intentions,

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particularly within Asian academic conference settings—where indirectness might often be a more prevalent discourse strategy—was further explored by Cheng (2004) to analyze a post-presentation DS.

Cheng noted that it appears that the use of considered transition phrases allows the presenter to intone more fully, to offer a hint to the audience as to what type of rhetorical move the speaker is making. On the other hand, those presenters who used (semantically infelicitous) acoustic filler transition forms or simply read headword to signal every change rarely altered their pace, took little or no time to breathe fully, nor otherwise displayed any physical or audible manifestations hinting at the transition. The signal went largely unnoticed.

In my own CP observations, I could not help but notice an uncanny correspondence between the explicit use of considered transitional discourse markers and the utilization of other prosodic/paralinguistic features, such as regulated breathing, more dynamic pacing, the shifting of one's body position, and increased variations in pitch and tone, all of which served to further mark the transition and thus enhance the narrative. Although the relationship of the causal mechanisms is intricate, there is to be a visceral correlation between them, one immediately noticeable to any CP audience.

In such cases, the lack of an explicit transitional phrase allowed the speaker to more easily avoid or ignore the need to alter the pace and adjust the dynamics. When this happens, no deep breath is taken, and no suggestive spaces are created—resulting in flatness and a consequent lack of impact. This had the effect of minimizing or negating any transitional impact the speaker had wished to convey. Such speakers appeared to rely on the text alone to carry the narrative force, but while this may be a necessity for RPs, it is anathema for CPs.

There are perfectly logical reasons for this. Think of the four bars of the song, 'Happy Birthday to You.' The first bar sets a tonal root that allows for elevation or lift, the second bar provides that lift, the third bar reaches the climax, and the fourth bar resolves. Now, imagine 'Happy Birthday to You' sung in a monotone. The first thing one would notice is that it certainly does not sound very joyful or congratulatory. More importantly, if the final bar does not resolve musically, listeners may not even realize that the tune has ended.

The same elements hold true in CPs. Monotone, accompanied by a lack of change in speed or dynamics, makes it hard for listeners to decode or interpret any element of the speaker's stance or engagement. A CP without metadiscourse markers of some sort, unaided by prosody, will simply make most viewers drowsy. Whatever the research content being conveyed may be, much of it will be rendered moot if there is no tonal variation.

While the semantic value of tones can vary from language to language (with Chinese, Thai, and Vietnamese being obvious examples), the prosodic uptake of tones does not vary much. Surprise, anger, and worry tend to be expressed using the same tonal patterns regardless of the language that they are being expressed in. Thus, for NNESs, the same intonation patterns found in L1 can easily be applied to English. Contrary to certain popular beliefs, most intonation patterns are not language-specific. A good number of speech 'moves' share the same tonal structure

across languages—invective, doubt, urgency, all are generally identifiable regardless of the source language. This is what allows us to often accurately guess what, for example, a Korean actor or actress in a TV drama is expressing even if one does not know a single word of that language.

In short, concentrating on using appropriate and considered English transition phrases also allows speakers to more deeply consider effective changes in tone or speed—or at least exhorts the speaker to take a breath, a quality which audiences uniformly welcome (the speaker's pause for breathing is often accompanied by collective pauses for breathing from the audience).

In short, there is nothing exotic about English intonation—there is no magical formula involved in mastering it. NNESs need to simply recognize that most L1 intonation can be transferred into English and remember that it is the transition forms which tend to carry the intonation power in English CPs. And novice researchers should note once again that a CP is not just a matter of 'reading a report.' Reading your script or your slides will not likely be sufficient for the purpose of communicating your research contents. This relationship between considered transitional phrases, its effect upon intonation, and the utilization of more dynamic prosody is an area in which further research may is very much be warranted.

Questions and Exercises for Section 18.1

1. Watch a short segment of a CP or a TV drama in a language that you do not understand. Based on the intonation alone, what do you think the speaker or speakers were conveying?
2. At which points during a CP do we have to mark our intonation most distinctly?
3. What is the relationship between the use of dynamic intonation and (a) breathing, (b) audience comprehension of the content, and (c) CP pacing?

18.2 Visuals, Text, and Narrative

As Carter-Thomas and Rowley-Jolivet (2003, p. 37) note, 'Visual communication in science is… universal, and communication via this mode is thus likely to be more effective for such audiences.' Thus, visuals, including photographs, animations, videos, and even laptop-run 'virtual experiments' take up a large proportion of many academic CPs, particularly in the hard sciences and, based on my observations, seem to be particularly effective in attracting and maintaining the attention of the audience.

In scientific CPs in particular, visuals serve to give the viewer immediate access to data, thereby reinforcing the novelty and immediacy of the content presented. Visuals can allow audience members to process information more quickly than text, particularly when mathematical or spatial information is being displayed. This is

because visuals aid in cognitive processing—although I would argue that some presentations (particularly in the field of medicine) can suffer from visual overload.

However, the types of intricate charts, graphs, and statistical analysis that are necessary in an RP can be rather unsettling and disorienting when shown only for ten seconds during a CP. After all, while the researcher is well aware of the minutiae of the data and has likely given great care to detail in the construction of the visual display, the audience seeing it for the first time will take some time—more time than is usually allowed—to absorb it. Even though scientific conference audiences tend to be very visually literate (at least when viewing visuals related to their specific fields), cognitive and sensory overload are ever-present dangers.

A CP, as I have repeatedly stated, should not just be a visual reproduction of a published paper but serve to draw attention to aspects of the research that lies outside the confines of the RP text. Visuals are thus a central part of the multimodal semiotic spanning nature of the CP, but they have to be integrated into the spoken text.

However, what about the language used to narrate or explain visuals? Indeed, a sloppy narration can undercut the audience's natural interest in the visuals. In my observations, the introduction of visuals was often rather weak. For example, I often noticed presenters' using the following type of narrative *as* the video started playing:

- *Here is our endoscopy… we enter like this…*

This form is not 'wrong' per se, but it lacks any anticipatory impact. To properly background the content of the video before playing it, to allow audiences to activate a cognitive schema, used more effectively were the following forms:

- *Now/next, I'd like to show you…*
- *Ok. Let's look at…*

During the narration of the video, novice and ineffective presenters often interjected their narratives every few seconds with filler such as, '*Like this, then like this,*' forms more suited to hands-on physical instructions. Narrating a video, however, requires more parenthetical 'framing' forms. The following phrases served powerfully and effectively as narrative signals for the audience:

- *As you can see here,*
- *This shows how/that…*
- *As the video shows…*

Of course, visuals are not limited to videos. Charts, graphs, and other statistical displays, as well as detailed panels, are extremely common in scientific presentations, particularly in the findings/results sections, to indicate relationships and

trends. First, let us look at a list of some more of the most effective phrases recurring at scientific conferences used to point out visual details:

- *So here are the steps that we took.* (indicating a flow chart or sequence)
- *Here you can see X.* (often said while using the laser)
- *As you can see here (in the left/right panel),…*
- *Here is an illustrative case*
- *As you can see in this chart/graph,*
- *Ok, I'm going to show you two pictures of…* (preceding the visual)

Many of the above are examples of inversion ('*Here is…*'), an effective means by which visuals can be introduced. Often, no verbalization at all was necessary in order to draw the audience's attention to the visual, but once attention had been gained, inversion forms were a common choice to maintain and orient interest.

Other phrases noted that were effective in helping to orient viewers to visuals included the following:

- *…which include A, B, C, and D* (this form was often used while the speaker indicates a series of bulleted texts)
- *If you just look at X, you can see Y, ok?* (note the interpersonal qualities of 'just' and 'ok' in this sample, which represent a rhetorical departure from the greater body of the research data and thus helped distinguish the visual narrative from the written text)
- *X* (a term expressed in its full form) *which is also known as (*acronym/abbreviation*).* (This form was used to help orient viewers on slides containing numerous abbreviated forms or acronyms.)
- *We can see the meta-analysis and systemic review highlights here.* (followed by an animation highlighting the features being discussed circled in red)
- *So this is from a paper published last year.* (followed by a lengthy written quote).

What, then, are some of the phrases or habits readers might want to avoid when introducing or explaining visuals? Six examples based upon my observations follow:

1. *Please pay attention to X.*

As a directive, the phrase *'Pay attention (to)'* was overused by many NNES presenters. This form sounds more as if the speaker is scolding the audience than appealing to them. Better would be, '*In particular, I'd like to point out…'* or *'Please note/look at X.'*

2. *...like this picture.*

This example of right dislocation (adding an explanatory clause at the end of an utterance) runs the risk of shifting the tenor from academia to that of casual chat. Better would be, '*…as this picture shows…'*

3. *Next I will show…/This is…* (when repeated for each point).

When proceeding through a sequence, readers might consider not explicitly introducing the following item but simply show it. However, when serving as a cataphoric (forward-looking) signal, '*This is…*' can be effective.

4. *Here are my acknowledgements/references.*

Once again, do you really need an annotated acknowledgment or detailed reference slide? A CP is not a publication and the content will not be displayed long enough to be of value to your audience. As we have mentioned, thanks or acknowledgments can be displayed on the final slide for all to see without being explicitly verbalized.

5. *Too much data or information on one slide.*

In the name of thoroughness or full disclosure, many scientific presenters in particular are prone to filling slides with enormous amounts of data. Can a presenter really expect the audience to process it all within the few seconds that it is displayed? Moreover, cluttered slides written in a second language can increase the mental baggage for NNES presenters (not to mention NNESs in the audience). Simplification of such slides can relieve pressure upon oneself as a speaker as well as resulting in greater comprehensibility for the audience. One way to achieve this may be to highlight the key features with a distinct color or some other eye-catching visual motif. The use of bullet points can be particularly helpful here. Gradually increasing the complexity of the slide through the use of animation is another viable option.

6. *This slide shows…*

This is perhaps the most paradigmatic spoken accompaniment to a slide visual. Charles and Ventola (2002) refer to the multimodal interaction taking place here as one of repeated identification and contextualization. Readers should also note that this form was occasionally used with the speaker looking at their notes while introducing or narrating the slides. To maintain the notion of a CP as a type of dialogue, presenters should look at the visuals together with the audience!

There are two points regarding visuals that remain to be discussed. The first is that the use of complex visuals (graphs, charts, etc.) in particular demands the use of dynamic intonation to help orient the viewers. Besides accompanying transitional phrases, it is by using visual accompaniment that dynamic intonation can best breathe life and energy into a presenter's static research data.

The second point is as we have mentioned earlier that when presenters use a laser, they should use it only when necessary—such as when pinpointing a specific item in an illustration or chart, or to highlight a single item among complex text. Many otherwise proficient, even celebrated, speakers tended to use the laser like a karaoke bouncing ball, apparently to 'highlight' standard text that the audience can already read clearly. Most of all, presenters should refrain from the habit of twirling the laser around the whole slide for no particular reason. Doing so is disturbing for most viewers, renders the purpose of the laser meaningless, and, rather than underscoring the academic tenor of the CP, instead imbues it with the appearance of a nightclub.

Questions and Exercises from Section 18.2

1. What skills can a speaker use to help navigate viewers through complex slides?
2. With a partner serving as an audience, show and narrate a short 1-min video. Record the activity. Note in particular how you or your partner introduce the video and highlight any key points. Is there any excess verbiage that interferes with the audience understanding or comprehension of the video? Does your narration augment or hinder the intended effect upon the viewer?

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19 Managing Conference Presentation and Discussion Session Breakdown (Repair)

Abstract

Everybody makes mistakes in speech, particularly when under pressure and experiencing nerves, exponentially so when trying to maintain an academic posture in front of an audience of peers. Consequently, many presenters suffer some type of breakdown, especially when performing a CP in one's second or third language. But there are ways to deal with these problems gracefully and constructively. In this short chapter, I will outline a few common, helpful strategies for such cases.

19.1 Error Self-repair

One CP speaker I noted made a reference to a previous paper by 'Kawayama,' while the slide indicated '*Yamakawa*.' Suddenly becoming aware of the error, the presenter smiled and said, '*Sorry, Yamakawa*' and continued without a hitch. The error was noted, admitted, quickly fixed, and it had no lasting impact upon the speaker's performance.

On the other hand, some novice speakers displayed overt embarrassment, such as covering their mouth or face or developing physical twitches. These responses served not only magnify the mistake but also tended to make the audience feel uncomfortable, creating the sense of communal embarrassment that tends to arise from common gaffes.

Displaying too much of a reaction to an error also often led to a series of similar mistakes simply because the speaker has become acutely aware that they have lost concentration and can now only think in terms of 'Error! Error!'

Several speakers I observed tried to cover lexico-grammatical slips by speaking more and increasing their speaking speed, but increased verbosity or speaking pace in fact tended to exaggerate, rather than mask, the problems. Once an error in a CP

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is made, it can be very difficult to talk one's way out of it. A quick admission and/or immediate correction is generally the best policy. Adding a quick 'It was nothing' smile to this response was also an effective treatment.

On some occasions, when a minor breakdown occurred, often an error or problem not obvious or having any impact upon the audience, presenters reacted with a startled (or frustrated) '*Ah!*' This often had the unintended upshot of drawing the audience's attention to a mistake or problem which might otherwise have gone unnoticed.

In the earlier chapter on discussion sessions, we noted the strategy of *reformulation* and the use of the following phrases:

Let me rephrase that.
Perhaps I didn't express that well/clearly.

For the purpose of repair, we could add the following:

Let me start over.
Sorry. I didn't/haven't express(ed) myself well.

All of the above phrases were helpful strategies when the speaker believed their original explanation or exposition had been insufficient. Moreover, if an interlocutor or audience seems confused by what has been said, these forms can all help to initiate the repair process.

19.2 Renegotiation

When the speaker believes that the breakdown is mutual (as commonly occurs in DSs in particular) it is perfectly acceptable to do what most would do if, for example, their computer suddenly froze—restart it. Presenters can 'shutdown' the dialogue temporarily by using one of the phrases shown below, which can be followed by attempts to 'reboot' the conversation:

We seem to be confusing each other
I think we're getting lost here
Sorry. I think we're misunderstanding each other
Maybe we should start over

Most importantly, I would advise novice presenters not to try to hide from the breakdown or to show overt shame or embarrassment. We must accept that breakdowns are a natural part of human communication, particularly for second-language speakers, and interactants should focus instead upon a mutually negotiated recovery rather than exaggerate the original error.

Readers might, however, wish to consider at what point the breakdown might negatively affect the flow of the narrative and ask what they can do to avoid unnecessary self-inflicted presentation wounds. One negative threshold may be those speaker monologues that involve internal deliberations over presentation details. Speech vacillation over minor details often indicates that the speaker is unprepared, uncertain of their own data, or is not considerate of the audience's presence, and thus may detract from the authority they wish to convey.

On one occasion, I observed a presenter enter into a protracted discussion with a copresenter about the current status of a certain collaboration that had little to do with advancing the narrative and in no way influenced the veracity of the data. It was as if the audience were privy to a private conversation that had interrupted the dialogue between presenter and audience. This type of 'breakdown' can be prevented simply by considering the presence and position of the audience.

19.3 Time or Equipment Issues

Earlier I discussed the problems of poor CP time management, often as a result of overextending the background or outline sections. This led to the presenter rushing through the remaining slides, often glossing over the most important data in the process. On several occasions, the speakers became apologetic ('*Sorry, just a few more slides!*'). Unfortunately, this reveals a lack of preparation and/or poor management on behalf of the presenter. If the presenter's slides are treated as if they are an imposition upon the audience, a violation of the implicit contract between presenter and audience has occurred.

Technical or audience issues are also often the sources of interruption or loss of concentration. As a result, all presenters should carry a plan B. If they fall behind time due to mismanagement, equipment issues, or room/audience management by the chair, they should keep in mind which items or slides can be quickly dispensed with and which remaining items are essential. On one occasion, due to a delayed start of her presentation, a presenter simply forwarded her presentation over three slides while stating, '*I will jump over some of the slides that illustrate* (some data/results) *in more detail and move on to the discussion.*' This was an effective well-planned move that avoided the presenter resorting to panic.

Although presenters may have a set script that they feel duty bound to follow, if time constraints force their hands, they should be able to provide a concise summary of the contents using only a fraction of the script and focusing upon only the key features—particularly toward the closing of a CP.

Equipment issues can present numerous problems that are not due to time mismanagement but nonetheless lead to narrative breakdown. In my observations, these tended to occur in two cases, (1) at the outset, where faulty equipment means that the presenter cannot get their slides to appear on the projector, and (2) when about to apply a stream/video or to use online functions. It goes without saying that the presenter should do anything within reason to ensure that these functions are

ready and working properly, but local factors outside of their control can waylay these intentions.

Two presenters I observed suffered these problems, and both managed the situation extremely well. One explained the contents of the video as room technicians adjusted the computer settings ('*What I hope to show you here is…*') without any great loss of time or interruption to the narrative. The other managed an introduction without the use of accompanying slides until the problem was fixed. Preparing an introduction that is not fully dependent upon accompanying slides or being able to narrate the video contents independently of the actual visuals are skills that can come in handy when such problems do occur.

Questions and Exercises for Chapter 19

1. Which language forms would you most likely use to reformulate or self-correct your own speech error? Which forms would you use to renegotiate in a discussion?
2. Have a partner provide a distraction during a CP practice session. Later, note (using a video recording) how you responded to it.
3. Practice performing an introduction to your CP without reference to any slides, and/or explain the contents of any accompanying video to a partner without running the video

Part V
Academic Conference Agnates and Extra-Textual Considerations

Poster Sessions

20

Abstract

At international academic conferences, it is likely that attendees will also be engaging in events outside of the role of being a presenter. In this section, I will address some of the significant discourse features that were noted in these 'agnate' speech events, headed by the first chapter on poster sessions. Next to CPs, poster sessions are the most likely conference event in which novice academics will find themselves involved—indeed, hosting a poster can serve as an intermediary step before giving a fully fledged CP. At each conference I attended, I visited the poster area on at least two occasions. At about 50% of these sessions, the researchers were present and, in a handful of cases, I actively engaged them about their research and poster content. In other cases, I eavesdropped on other interactions and conversations. In yet other cases where the researcher was not present, I simply perused or read a total of 36 posters. The following chapter is based on observations and inquiries made at these poster sessions.

20.1 Overview

Scientific conferences tend to promote poster sessions far more than do humanities' conferences. Interestingly, this is often connected to saving face. Before a scientist builds up a sufficient academic background to perform a CP, the poster can serve as a less-threatening intermediate step. Within the humanities however, the novice academic may start giving CPs at a much earlier stage in their careers as the veracity and minutiae of the research are often less likely to come under immediate scrutiny.

At many conferences, researchers who suffer from stage fright or lack of confidence in performing CPs will often opt to present a poster. In fact, at some of the medical conferences I attended, researchers were not even present in the poster area

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M. Guest, *Conferencing and Presentation English for Young Academics*,
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and, in many cases, were not required to be. Conversely, at applied linguistics/English education conferences there was always a set time at which the researcher was required to be present to interact with visitors. And while it may seem initially that one-on-one discussion with interested visitors will be less threatening than a large, fixed CP audience, managing posters can be made complex by the fact that they usually involve features of both free paper CPs *and* discussion sessions.

How so? Since the content of the poster is static, visitors are able to concentrate more upon those details which may not be absorbed in a CP. This can lead to more acute criticism or pointed questions by those who would not take the time to do so in a standard presentation discussion session. And while the poster session researcher is freed from the duty of preparing a thorough spoken explanation of the research process and contents that define most CPs, interactions are inherently more dynamic and open-ended. The aspect of the poster that a visitor asks you to elaborate upon or challenges will be unpredictable. Further, such interactions demand less formalized interactive protocol on behalf of the visitor than is typically expected in the more public setting of a CP discussion session.

It is noteworthy, however, that posters often depart from the textual formulas of CPs in that they typically minimize the introduction and methods/materials sections and tend to focus more on conveying new information in the results/discussion sections. Methods and materials are usually listed in point form or via other discrete visual units. Any written discussion section usually revolves around the data, and particularly its significance and/or applications within the field, rather than the minutiae of the research process. In this sense, the poster is often serving less as a written version of the published or soon-to-be published material but more as a forum for promoting or even advertising (not surprising given that the medium is more thoroughly visual than other conference events) one's research endeavors—in which case it is the results and discussion that are likely to have a more lasting impact on the visitor.

20.2 Poster Session Suggestions and Hints: Opening the Poster Discussion

Opening a poster session discussion is not always incumbent upon the host. As a conference attendee, you might well be perusing a poster as a visitor when the researcher is nearby, perhaps even making eye contact with you. If you do not have anything in particular to ask, simply smiling back is a sufficient form of politeness. However, if you do not actually have a comment or question then visitors would do well not to employ the type of body language that says, 'Excuse me! Can you come here and help me?'.

However, when it is clear that the visitor wishes to engage (Fig. 20.1), variations of the following were all frequent openers I observed from attendees:

Good morning. I see you did/researched X.
Hi. I'm very interested in X too.
Interesting. I've been researching X as well.

Fig. 20.1 Students/trainees can perform in-house poster sessions with peers as preparation for actual academic conference performance

These forms all worked well to establish discourse ground. One reason might be the explicit use of the term 'research' to create an immediate connection with the researcher. The evaluative term 'interesting'—or similar phrases—helped to establish an interpersonal tone. Readers should also note that '*Hello*' was *not* used very frequently as an opener.

If the host seems slightly busy, perhaps finishing another conversation, '*Sorry for bothering you.*' can serve as suitable opener, after which you can pose your actual question or comment (if you have one). The most frequently noted forms were:

Can I ask you about X?
Can you explain a little more about this part?
I don't quite understand (this section).

Obviously, once you have started the discussion you will have to manage or extend it by yourself (this book has no intention of teaching readers how to actually manage conversations). But how might such interactions close? What is an effective breakaway or finishing line? The most common and popular forms I heard were the

standard: '*I see. Thanks.*' But when lengthier conversations had taken place this was often extended with phrases like:

See you around the conference.
Can I give you my/get your business card/contact information?
Is it all right if I contact you?

Or even, '*Good luck in your research*,' particularly if the hosting researcher seems like a novice or newcomer to the field.

On just over half of the occasions I observed, the host initiated the discussion (another quality distinguishing poster sessions from CPs). Effective poster discussion openers from the host/researchers included the following:

If you have any questions, feel free to ask.
So, are you interested in (topic/product)?

Another opening tactic used by several host researchers was to elaborate upon a feature that the visitor seems interested in. For example, the following opening gambit was overheard when a visitor was looking at some statistical data on a poster:

We collected this data just over a year ago. We'll have new data available soon.

Yet another frequently noted opening gambit was:

Are you familiar with (the specialized area of research)?

This question appeared to be particularly effective in gauging the knowledge level of the interlocutor and thus aided the researcher in knowing how to pitch the tenor and level of the discourse.

As for closing moves from the researcher/host, the following were noted regularly:

Thanks for dropping by.
If you have any questions or comments, feel free to ask/email me.

This latter strategy allows the visitor to peruse the posters by themselves, as many wish to do, without completely being ignored. Accommodating the visitor by allowing them to read at will without any interference serves as a form of negative politeness.

20.3 The Combined e-Poster/Presentation

A newly emerging academic conference speech category, particularly within the hard sciences, is that of an e-poster being supplemented by a short presentation (generally under 10 min). In such cases, the e-poster has been submitted for display and is available online for other conference attendees to peruse, but a standard presentation slot is also allotted for those who submitted e-posters (supplementing the e-poster with an actual CP can bolster ones' academic record).

The greatest difficulty in adapting an e-poster to the verbal presentation format is the conflict or tension between the norms of the written mode and those of real-time speech. This is compounded by the fact that in such presentation sessions, standard PowerPoint slides are not displayed, which means that there may be a less visceral sense of narrative development. Only the e-poster itself is displayed to the audience on the large screen, making the use of animation in order to help direct or signal the audience's focus, to highlight features of order, and to establish clear rhetorical progression, nearly impossible.

This presents a major dilemma for e-poster presenters, and in the few (less than five) poster presentations I attended, the presenter, predictably, simply reread key points already contained in the poster text—these often already fully visible to the audience. Since the entire e-poster text is visible, and also as e-posters are written in such a way as to fully describe the minutiae of methods and results, the need for the contents to be 'presented' or otherwise verbalized is largely obviated. What to do then?

Some of the more successful e-poster presenters I observed altered the written text into more suitably audience-directed speech forms, rephrasing significant written texts by using some of the opening gambits and transitional forms we have covered in earlier in this book. Since using slides and animations was impossible, and knowing that audience members could see the entire text and thus may well be reading at their own pace regardless of the spoken text, more effective presenters focused particularly only on a few salient highlights in the each of the methods, results, and discussions sections, while typically paraphrasing the background/introduction and summary/conclusion segments.

This was invariably carried out with the help of a laser, focusing the audience's attention on what the speaker considered to be anchor spots in the text or sections otherwise considered to be of particular interest or significance. I would suggest that the role of the laser is more central to this type of combined presentation than it is for standard CPs.

More importantly, the combined poster/presentation format forces the speaker to consider which items in the written text are most representative of the whole research study. Which selected points help direct and expand the rhetoric? What written text can be safely omitted in the spoken mode? The poster presenter must also keep in mind that the allotted speaking period is even shorter than that found in standard FP/PSs. The resulting tendency might be to rush through all the written text verbatim, but this will likely become an acoustic blur to all but the most attentive audience members or be meaningful only those with an extremely specialized interest in the speaker's topic.

In order to allow both the speaker to breathe and focus, as well as the audience to adequately digest the content, it is advised that poster/presenters heavily edit the poster contents for speech mode, using paraphrase and focusing on rhetorical anchor points. As an example, let us look at the written text (with various visual images, data, and tables/charts removed) of an original, authentic e-poster presentation (Fig. 20.2) and compare/contrast this text with that of the presenter's oral rendition (see Fig. 20.3).

Epstein-Barr virus associated lymphoproliferative disorders complicated in adult T-cell leukemia/lymphoma

Dr. _____ et al, *(Department, Faculty, University)*

COI Disclosure

Regarding this presentation, I declare that there are no conflicts of interest

Introduction

Adult T-cell leukemia/lymphoma (ATLL) is a human T-lymphotropic virus type-1 (HTLV-1) associated T-cell malignancy and the prognosis for most patients is quite poor. It is endemic in south-west Japan and the Caribbean basin. ATLL is classified into clinical subtypes based on the following clinical manifestations: acute, lymphoma, chronic and smoldering. Reports on the simultaneous development of ATLL and Epstein-Barr virus-associated lymphoproliferative disorders (EBV-LPD) are quite rare. Here, We'll report on the rare morphologic variant of ATLL: ATLL complicated by EBV-LPD.

Case Report

A 75-year-old Japanese woman presented with a 3-month history of indurated erythematous plaques and nodules in the right femoral region and right precordium. Her general condition was good. She was found to have lymphadenopathy in the cervical and subclavicular regions. Serum anti-HTLV-1 antibody was positive. Laboratory examination demonstrated normal white blood cell counts with no atypical lymphocytes. Serum lactate dehydrogenase (LDH) and calcium levels were normal. Soluble interleukin-2 receptor (sIL-2R) level was 789U/ml (normal range, 145-519). A 18F-fluorodeoxyglucose positron emission tomography scan showed abnormal uptake at the skin and lymph nodes.

(Photo accompaniment)

Skin biopsy showed abnormal small to medium-sized lymphoid cells with irregularly shaped nuclei proliferating diffusely from epidermis to subcutis.

Fig. 20.2 Original e-poster text (Reproduced with permission from Dr. Ryoko Sasaki of Miyazaki University Hospital, Japan)

Immunohistochemically, abnormal lymphoid cells were positive diffusely for cCD3 and CD4, while they were negative for CD8, CD20. Southern blotting of biopsy obtained DNA and hybridization with a HTLV-1 provirus.

Lymph node biopsy showed involvement by ATLL cells with scattered EBV-positive cells, some of which resembled Hodgkin cells that had a B-cell phenotype, consistent with EBV-LPD.

Under immunohistological analysis the Hodgkin-like giant cells were positive for CD30, CD15 and negative for CD20, CD3, CCR4. Integrated proviral HTLV-1 was demonstrated in this lesion. In situ hybridization for EBV

Clinical diagnosis: Lymphoma type ATLL complicated by EBV-LPD

Histological diagnosis: Hodgkin-like ATLL

Discussion

Ohshima et al. in Japan, described four cases of ATLL with Hodgkin-like cells in lymph nodes. Later on, they reported on 18 cases of early ATLL with the Hodgkin-like cells, and demonstrated that these cells were reactive and not infected by HTLV-1.

The Hodgkin-like cells with a CD30+/CD15+ phenotype were EBV-infected in at least half of the cases and single cell PCR showed oligoclonal/polygonal IgH rearrangements. The infiltrating lymphocytes in the background had either no or minimal nuclear abnormalities with a CD4+ T-cell phenotype (Hodgkin-like ATLL, new WHO classification). Hodgkin-like ATLL were very frequently infected by EBV. They were noted to have an improved survival rate compared with other ATLL variants.

(Chart)

EBV-LPD has only rarely been reported in patients with ATLL. The frequency of coinfection with HTLV-1 and EBV in ATLL has been reported as 17%[6]. Coinfection with HTLV-1 and EBV may be associated with a greater likelihood of organ involvement and a more aggressive course. In a previous case report, we showed an EBV-associated primary central nervous system lymphoma with a smoldering-type ATLL patient. The patient was treated with chemotherapy but continued to deteriorate and died. This might be, at least in

Fig. 20.2 (continued)

part, due to immune deficiency of ATLL patients[7].

Bittencourt et al. reported a chronic ATLL as the first manifestation of Hodgkin-like ATLL. Their case was treated with chemotherapy but later progressed to acute type ATLL and the patient ultimately died. Our present case showed an indolent clinical course and a relatively good survival as long as 1.5 years. However, careful observation is important due to the risk of progression.

Conclusion

We recommend that clinicians confirm HTLV-1 infection before treatment, especially in HTLV-1 endemic areas. Moreover, dermatologists should be more aware of the morphologic variants, Hodgkin-like ATLL and EBV-LPD.

References omitted

Fig. 20.2 (continued)

Good morning and thank you for coming to this presentation.

As you probably know, Adult T-cell leukemia/lymphoma (or ATLL) is a human T-lymphotropic virus type-1 (HTLV-1) associated T-cell malignancy and the prognosis for most patients is quite poor. *Interestingly*, it is endemic to south-west Japan, *where I live and work.*

ATLL is classified into four clinical subtypes based on clinical manifestations: 1. acute 2. lymphoma, 3. chronic and 4. smoldering. *Until recently,* reports on the simultaneous development of ATLL and Epstein-Barr virus-associated lymphoproliferative disorders (EBV-LPD) have been quite rare. *As a result, today, I'll report* our recent case of the rare morphologic variant of ATLL: ATLL complicated by EBV-LPD.

So let's look at the case profile. A 75-year-old Japanese woman presented with a 3-month history of indurated erythematous plaques and nodules in the right femoral region and right precordium. Her general condition was good.

Fig. 20.3 How the presenter adjusted the above poster content into speech mode: e-poster adapted for speech mode

On examination, she was found to have lymphadenopathy in the cervical and subclavicular regions. The serum anti-HTLV-1 antibody was positive. We carried out laboratory examinations which revealed normal white blood cell counts with no atypical lymphocytes. Serum lactate dehydrogenase (LDH) and calcium levels were also normal. *However,* the sIL-2R level was high, 789U/ml (while the normal range is, 145-519). *Moreover,* an 18F-fluorodeoxyglucose positron emission tomography scan showed abnormal uptake at the skin and lymph nodes.

So what did we do? We performed a skin biopsy which showed abnormal small to medium-sized lymphoid cells with irregularly shaped nuclei proliferating diffusely from epidermis to subcutis.

We found that the immunohistochemically, abnormal lymphoid cells were positive diffusely for cCD3 and CD4, while they were negative for CD8, CD20. *We then carried out* a Southern blotting of biopsy DNA and hybridization with a HTLV-1 provirus.

The lymph node biopsy showed involvement by ATLL cells with scattered EBV-positive cells, some of which resembled Hodgkin cells that had a B-cell phenotype. *This is consistent with* EBV-LPD.

After the immunohistological analysis, as you can see (data on slide) the Hodgkin-like giant cells were found to be positive for CD30, CD15 and negative for CD20, CD3, CCR4. Integrated proviral HTLV-1 was revealed in the lesion.

As a result, we made the following diagnosis. (while using animation) The clinical diagnosis was Lymphoma type ATLL complicated by EBV-LPD, while the histological diagnosis was Hodgkin-like ATLL.

Why were able to make this diagnosis? Well, let me answer this by looking at some related studies. In 2014, Ohshima (while showing data on slide) reported on 18 cases of early ATLL with the Hodgkin-like cells, and demonstrated that these cells were reactive and not infected by HTLV-1.

What we found in our case though, was that the Hodgkin-like cells with a CD30+/CD15+ phenotype were EBV-infected in at least half of the cases and single cell

Fig. 20.3 (continued)

PCRs showed these (while using photo) rearrangements. The infiltrating lymphocytes in the background had either no or minimal nuclear abnormalities with a CD4+ T-cell phenotype.

In short, Hodgkin-like ATLL were very frequently infected by EBV. *We also noticed that they* have an improved survival rate when compared with other ATLL variants.

(While showing chart) This chart shows rates of coinfection. Until the present, EBV-LPD has only rarely been reported in patients with ATLL. The frequency of coinfection with HTLV-1 and EBV in ATLL has been reported as 17%[6]. Coinfection with HTLV-1 and EBV might be associated with a greater likelihood of organ involvement and a more aggressive course.

A previous case report (while referring to data on slide) showed an EBV-associated primary central nervous system lymphoma with a smoldering-type ATLL patient. The patient was treated with chemotherapy but continued to deteriorate and died. This might be, at least in part, due to immune deficiency of ATLL patients[7].

Some researchers have reported a chronic ATLL as the first manifestation of Hodgkin-like ATLL and these cases were treated with chemotherapy but later progressed to acute type ATLL and the patient ultimately died.

Our present case, on the other hand, was an indolent clinical course and indicated a relatively good survival period -- as long as 1.5 years. *However*, careful observation is always important due to the risk of progression.

Therefore, we recommend that clinicians confirm HTLV-1 infection before treatment, especially in HTLV-1 endemic areas. *Moreover, we believe that dermatologists should become more aware of* the morphologic variants Hodgkin-like ATLL and EBV-LPD.

Thank you.

Fig. 20.3 (continued)

Portions of the spoken mode of this poster that are discursively distinct from the written form, and thus illustrate the multimodal nature of CPs, are indicated in Fig. 20.3 in *italics*. As the observant reader will note, most of these alterations conform to the various strategies and rhetorical forms used in managing multimodal discourse that we noted earlier in this book on transitions.

In my limited experience thus far observing e-poster presentations, there have been no explicit follow-up discussion sessions (as they are not feasible for sessions which are often only 5 min in length), but potential discussants are invited to contact the presenter elsewhere at the conference or via email. This, at least, removes one anxiety-inducing aspect associated with standard CPs.

Questions and Exercises for Chapter 20

1. If one is giving an e-poster presentation, what are some techniques that can be used to avoid simply reading the poster contents verbatim?
2. In what three ways are poster texts structured differently than slide texts in CPs?
3. If a visitor was looking over your poster, what would be your preferred opening gambit in order to try and engage them?
4. The CP vs. the poster: Which do you consider more challenging and why?
5. Look at the speech script based on the sample e-poster content. Which sections underlined in italics can you connect to specific recommendations made elsewhere in this book?

Check for updates

Symposia, Colloquia, and Workshops

21

Abstract

Symposia/colloquia, discussions, presentations, and workshops are all very distinct entities. Yet at many international conferences I attended the internal structure of symposia presentations and parallel session/free paper presentations was conflated—and might be described as a series of connected presentation sessions sharing a common theme. So then, how can we best understand the basic differences between these various speech events? This chapter aims to answer that question, offer some suggestions on preferred forms and moves frequently noted in such events, and, in particular, provide advice about managing workshops.

21.1 Symposia/Colloquia

Both symposia/colloquia and workshops are expected to be more interactive than standard CPs, which implies greater prevalence of what I will refer to as a more horizontal dialogue rather than the vertical dimension of rank-and-file FP/PSs. What do I mean by this? A symposium implies a dynamic discussion of some sort, often between peers selected to be on a panel. This discussion could be a type of debate or an open discussion following the 'presentation' portion of the symposium. The central point is that in symposia/colloquia, the speakers have a chance to address each other, as well as have the audience address them, regarding the issues at hand (Fig. 21.1).

In my observations, symposium speeches were generally not used as opportunities for the speakers to introduce their research (as is the case in a standard CP) but used rather to erect a rhetorical platform that enabled further discussion on a set

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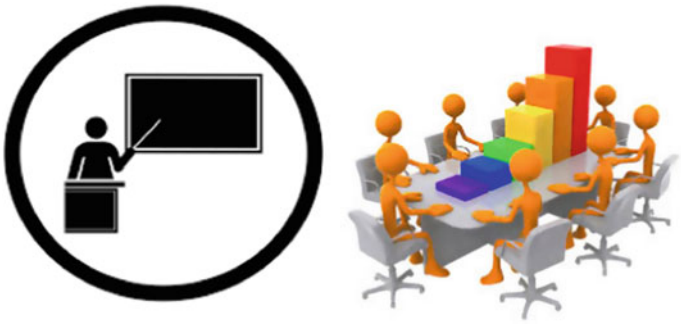

Fig. 21.1 The physical environments of presentations and workshops are distinct—and thus lend themselves toward different communicative goals and modes of interaction

theme (what might be best described as a 'position' paper). This implies that the symposia speeches should be topically balanced and sequenced, not delivered as independent unconnected presentations. It is expected that there will be some flow, cohesion, and continuity between the presentations, with the participants usually conferring well in advance to make certain that all participants are on-topic, do not repeat or cover the same ground, and are sequenced in such a way that best addresses the pertinence of the issue or topic.

21.2 Effective Workshop Leadership Practices

Table 21.1 displays a list of what I will call 'good practices' for workshop leaders based on my own experiences as a leader, as well as the cobbling together of effective practices noted at numerous workshops attended over my 30 years' experience of teaching, teacher training, and participating in seminars and workshops. I have included this outline because, while specially invited independent seminars tend to be conducted by acknowledged experts in the specific topic/skill area who also have developed workshop leadership skills, steering committee vetted workshops held at conferences are not always led by skilled, veteran workshop managers and are occasionally conducted instead by young or novice academics/professionals (Fig. 21.2).

Recently, there has been a notable increase in the number of workshops and seminars that conclude with an open discussion, not those of the typical CP Q&A variety, but more of a roundtable in which participants are typically seated in a circle or semicircle. While this may, on the one hand, indicate an attempt to democratize the event, such environments can also be uncomfortable for

Table 21.1 Twenty hints for leading an effective conference workshop or discussion

Twenty good practices for workshop leaders
1. Choose a topic or skill that you have researched or hold expertise in such that you will be able to convey something new and of value to participants—with authority.
2. Remember the basic goal: to make others more interested in and/or knowledgeable about the topic or skill.
3. Do not hand out a paper/summary at the beginning unless your workshop requires the participants to follow active instructions (otherwise, many participants will just read the handout and ignore what you say). Distribute any such papers in the middle or at the end of the session.
4. Choose only a few central teaching/learning points, something participants are unlikely to already know and will be likely to retain.
5. Try to find out the participants' familiarity and knowledge of the topic, or skill level, at the beginning of the workshop (or even in advance, if possible).
6. Try to create a personal atmosphere. Move among participants (note that participants are not an 'audience' when at a workshop), shift speaking areas, use names, and use more direct questions/comments than you would in a seminar or presentation.
7. Think very closely about how to open the session—do not start your topic directly with 'Today's workshop is about…' (as per advice given earlier regarding CPs).
8. Think how to clearly and effectively close the session. Do not suddenly end with, 'That's all' or 'We're finished.'
9. Give participants time to respond (and encourage responses that are more than just one word). Respond in turn to participants. Create multi-directional dialogues.
10. Elicit content from participants (after which the workshop leader can add or modify as necessary). Do not just tell.
11. Try to include every participant at some point in discussion, demonstration, or practice.
12. Teach/introduce only a few, new, key specialist vocabulary items when necessary. For prioritizing new or specialist vocabulary, consider whether these have long-term (intrinsic) or short-term (instrumental) value.
13. Try to use realia or physical props if possible—make your workshop as visual or tactile as you can.
14. Consider including a short quiz, summative task, and/or elicit a summary of key points from participants at or near the end.
15. Do not talk for too long. Allow members to participate, speak, or carry out an activity.
16. Do not read from a script or paper for more than 15 s or about 30 words.
17. Use a white board or tablet if necessary, rather than the full overhead screen.
18. If you use a paper handout, bullet or point form is more effective than paragraph form. Use carefully constructed visual cues on any such materials.
19. Try to anticipate the areas in which difficulties, disagreements, questions, or misunderstandings are most likely to occur and be prepared to address them.
20. Allow time for questions, feedback, and/or comments at the end (if not during the session)

Fig. 21.2 Students can lead small-scale academic workshops as a part of their professional training

participants who prefer not to be asked questions or forced to comment. Workshop or discussion leaders might want to take this into consideration based on the makeup of the participants. Another factor in making these types of discussions successful will be the number of participants—more than a half dozen, and it is highly unlikely that the desired equal opportunity for sharing viewpoints will occur.

Questions and Exercises for Chapter 21

1. Why is it not a good idea to distribute a copy of slides or content in advance of a workshop? On what occasions might it be justified?
2. If you were conducting a workshop, how might you (a) measure, and (b) elicit participant knowledge and experience of the topic?
3. Explain one way in which the discourse of symposia/colloquia is different from each of (a) standard CPs and (b) workshops.

Check for updates

The Attendee as a Conference Participant

22

Abstract

Fully participating in a conference implies not merely acquiring a conference badge and program, but also initiating interactions, starting discussions, involving oneself in friendly conversations, and asking questions—both formal and informal. Benefitting from participation in conferences is a product of a two-way communication street. Of course, it is not the role of this book to teach readers how to carry out casual conversations, even if they occur within the conference milieu, let alone engage in deeper conversational analysis. However, although to some extent individual personality will be a deciding factor in terms of success in opening less formalized dialogues or interactions, this chapter aims to highlight some common discourse strategies, phrases, and interactive techniques observed and noted at academic conferences—many not highlighted in popular or commercial books—which readers may find useful.

22.1 Questions and Comments During Discussion Sessions

Many novice conference attendees hesitate to ask questions in a formal setting for all the anxiety-heightening, face-threatening reasons mentioned in the section on discussion sessions (Fig. 22.1). But sometimes, there is something you really want, or need, to ask—so what principles should readers consider in terms of managing their inquiry?

You may remember my earlier criticism of lengthy, unfocused CP discussant questions, which often seem to be little more than attempts by the discussant to take over the stage, rather than means of legitimately advancing discussion. I strongly

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Fig. 22.1 Conference free paper session participants' perspective

recommend that you have a clear, concise point, comment or question to communicate.

Interestingly, however, most of the compelling and stimulating questions that I noted at conferences did *not* start with the standard interrogative pronouns (who, what, where, when, why, and how) but involved some sort of general commentary, evaluative response, or conceptual framing. Some commonly observed examples of this were:

In your presentation/On your last slide/In your methods section you said…
I'm particularly interested in/confused by/impressed with your X/what you said about Y.
*According to (*another researcher/study*)…*

These forms served as parenthetical frames and were followed later by the actual question. Many such questions were prefaced with defining cleft phrases and speech act directives such as:

So what I'd like to ask is…

So what I'd like to do is just clarify/confirm X.

Appeals for clarification or extension often followed these parenthetical frames:

So could you explain in more detail how/why (etc.)?
Could you show me the slide/part about X again?

It was rare to hear a discussant begin a turn by directly using a question form, such as, '*Why did you not use the X approach*?' Instead, the preface usually marked a transition to the explicit question:

I was interested that you said that you used the Y approach. So, I'm wondering why you didn't use the X approach?

Once the discussant has delivered, their actual question they should stop talking. If the speaker does not understand the question, the discussant should wait for a signal of either confirmation of non-comprehension, and if the latter is forthcoming, only then start to negotiate or reformulate. If the presenter does indicate understanding, give them the opportunity to respond rather than continually reformulating the comment/question until an interruption is forced. Thereafter, if you are satisfied with the response you can simply say 'Thank you' and sit down, but if you do not feel your question has been answered or properly addressed you might want to re-phrase it, in which case:

What I (actually) wanted to/meant to say was……served as a frequent repair/reformulation form.

Finally, must you state your name and affiliation before you ask a question? If the chair/moderator demands it, please do so:

John Lee, from National University Hospital, Singapore.

However, if there is no stated requirement do so, and if you notice that there is no such pattern being observed, then there is social no requirement to do so. Simply go ahead with your question. The same goes for thanking the presenter. If one discussant has already said, '*First, thank you for your very informative presentation*,' the following discussants do not need to say something similar (although if you truly thought the presentation was excellent or helpful, I'm sure the presenter will be happy to hear you say so). But again, this is far from a requirement.

22.2 Questions/Comments for Presenters—Post-session or During Breaks

I have previously mentioned that is not considered good form to raise a question during the actual CP, the exception being in cases where the speaker has explicitly asked or allowed for it. This is quite distinct from workshops and tutorials/seminars where spontaneous questions are less likely to violate the norms of interaction and are thus often encouraged. The post-presentation discussion session is the normal place for CP questions.

However, one may not have the chance or the inclination to ask a question of a speaker during the official DS. Fortunately, there are plenty more opportunities to ask and discuss post-session, often just outside the CP venue itself, in the exhibition or snack/rest areas, or during evening social events (preferably before participants start eating and drinking and might want to avoid weighty research or work-related topics). These will, naturally, require different opening strategies than you would use during the standard DS. One thing I've learned after almost thirty years' living, working, and teaching in Asia is that those who have a good sense as to how to manage a conversation in their L1 (and indeed many L1 speakers do not) tend to be more skilled at managing them in a foreign tongue. In short, being an NNES is not really a handicap when it comes to establishing one-to-one relations using the English language.

In practice, when initiating extra-sessional discussions with presenters, discussants may need to give their interlocutor a frame by letting the presenter know that they actually attended their session. In most cases, it would be considered more polite to use the speaker's name to start. And if the participant truly believed it was an excellent and helpful CP, one could use a form I noted on several occasions:

Dr. Kozlov, thank you for your presentation earlier/the other day. It was very helpful/interesting.
I was at your presentation today/just now. Thank you. I found it very helpful.
(followed by some extended commentary)

Perhaps the presentation was not so interesting or helpful. A simple '*Thank you for your presentation today/earlier,'* will suffice, after which the attendee can preface the question using any of the following widely used forms:

Actually, I wanted to ask you something about…
I was hoping to ask you about…
Is it ok if I ask you something about…?
Do you have a few seconds/minutes?

In most such cases, the initiating speaker should not feel obligated to carry out any extended self-introduction, unless, of course, one expects to enter into some type of deeper relationship or prolonged discussion, in which case the standard, '*By the way, I'm (name) from (country or affiliation)*,' template will usually suffice.

Perhaps, it is not a question that the discussant have in mind, but a comment or suggestion. The following forms were all noted as non-face-threatening ways of doing so.

I was wondering if you've tried/considered X?
I wanted to mention/let you know…
After/when I heard your presentation, I was thinking…

In closing this chapter, it must be stated again the fundamental reason for attending a conference is to interact: to build and develop fruitful academic or professional relationships with others. This means breaking out of any self-imposed shells, actively cultivating new relationships, and expanding knowledge through interactions with those outside our linguistic or cultural comfort circles. Initiating discussions and then extending them long-term plays an enormous role in this process. Widely used phrases that can set these wheels in motion include:

I'd like to keep in touch.
Is it ok if I contact you (again) by email?

Most paramount, if an NNES lacks confidence in their English, they should not let their imperfect English ability hold them back from initiating the dialogue. Remember that the majority of delegates at international academic conferences (especially if held outside the core English speaking countries) will also be non-native English speakers. They will usually understanding of and empathetic to with your linguistic status. Most should be patient with, and accommodating of, your imperfections, because they will be cognizant of their own. Moreover, they too will likely be interested in the bigger, wider world of their respective academic fields and will also be looking for insights, knowledge, and relationships extending beyond their own environments. The accommodation game, therefore, is mutual.

Questions and Exercises for Chapter 22

1. You want to ask a speaker the reason why they chose research method A over method B. Think of three ways to a) frame that question b) ask indirectly.
2. You wish to make a critical comment regarding what you consider to be a flaw in a speaker's research while in private discussion. How would you construct the criticism so as to not make the speaker lose face?

Chairing Discourse

23

Abstract

This chapter provides us with an overview of the role and function of the chairperson, at both CPs and other, agnate, conference speech events. Advice regarding preferred approaches to chair discourse, as well potential problems areas, will be discussed.

23.1 Overview

In one of the few published works focusing upon the roles and functions of the conference free paper/parallel session chairperson, Langham (2007) lists a number of chair speech functions. These are paraphrased and listed in Table 23.1:

Generally, the CP chairperson's duties are handled by experienced senior members of the discourse community, who are usually accomplished English speakers or otherwise prominent in the academic field. As such, most are international conferencing veterans, familiar with the accepted discourse norms associated with their role. While the above-listed items all represent speech-act eventualities that might concern the chair, they do not amount to a canonical or synoptic overview of a typical chairperson's role.

In my observations, the most typical functions of the chair included many listed in Table 23.1 but the most common among these were:

(1) welcoming the audience to the session and introducing the speakers
(2) keeping time and warning or interrupting if the speaker's allotted CP time is not being maintained
(3) thanking the presenter(s) upon the completion of the CP
(4) marking the transition into the DS

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Table 23.1 Speech functions of a presentation session chairperson (adapted from Langham, 2007)

Opening a session
Introducing yourself as chair
Stating the title of the session
Stating time limits
Asking audience to switch off their mobile phones
Introducing a speaker
Asking a presenter to conclude a presentation
Stopping a presentation
Thanking a speaker
Inviting questions immediately after the presentation
Inviting more questions midway through the Q&A session
Nominating questioners
Controlling difficult or awkward situations (technical, temporal, or social)
Aiding a presenter who cannot answer a question
Asking a questioner to speak more loudly or clearly
Stopping questions/answers that are too long when there is little or no time for Q&A
Asking questions (from the chair) when there are no more questions from the audience
Transitioning to the next presentation
Announcing cancellations or organizational/managerial information
Closing a session

(5) indicating DS procedures including requests to state one's name/affiliation, whether it is necessary for the discussants to move to an open microphone, and keeping questions succinct and to the point
(6) when questions or comments were not forthcoming from the audience, the chair often provided a question, usually a soft one (which requires the chairperson to pay close attention to the content during the CP)
(7) cutting off overly lengthy comments from the floor as well as helping to clarify comments for presenters uncertain about some aspect of the comment (a common occurrence for NNES presenters)
(8) formally closing the DS and the session(s) as a whole, and thanking both presenters and participants.

However, it is often the case that relatively new members to the community are asked to take the role of the chair, and occasionally those who have some reservations about their English abilities are given the honors. In such cases, the chairperson may employ English that is either awkward or unsuited to the situation, a phenomenon that might be magnified due to the visibility and status associated with the chairperson's role.

The following sections include some of the problematic areas I have noted that such prospective chairpersons may want to consider.

23.2 Overelaborate Introductions and Closings

Terms like 'wonderful' or 'outstanding' should not be used lightly in English. These forms of praise are quite intense and, if used too readily or bunched together, the uptake might not be one of admiration or respect but could actually come across as forced praise at best, mockery at worst One example:

Thank you, Professor Wu for your brilliant, wonderful presentation.

Unless Prof. Wu's presentation was indeed one of the very best the chairperson has ever seen, this may be interpreted more as sarcasm than as praise. Another overelaborate introduction I noted (all names have been changed) was:

Dr. Patel is one of most brilliant doctors in his field, a world-class surgeon, and a truly magnificent colleague.

The above utterance sounds more like a teary award speech or a dramatic testimonial rather than an introduction at an academic conference—although it might be appropriate for introducing esteemed celebrity academics. Otherwise, it may seem as if the speaker is trying too hard to convince the audience of Dr. Patel's greatness. Less effusive praise might be preferred:

Pre-presentation: *As you may know, Dr. Patel is one of the leading researchers in the field of...*
Post-presentation: *Thank you for that very interesting presentation, Professor Wu.*

Based on the synoptic formulae, I observed in 44 FP/PSs, chairperson introductions could be reduced to a generic template, the following of which might be considered a canonical structure:

Ladies and gentlemen, colleagues, welcome to _____ session. My name is _____. I'll be serving as the chair for this session (along .....) with [cochair's name]. I'd like to introduce our first speaker Professor X from (affiliation). His/her talk/lecture/presentation is entitled X.

It might be noted here that a title (*Dr., Professor*) might be preferable to using *'he/his/her.*' Also, in some cases, the presentation title need not be stated, particularly if the presenter is an invited or keynote speech and or the title is prominently displayed on the screen. Chairs should also note that lengthy biographies or lists of

achievements should accompany only the most celebrated speakers. Some presenters I spoke with expressed annoyance at the chair explicitly detailing their (often modest) academic achievements and, on some occasions, claimed that the chairperson actually 'stole the thunder' of the speaker by stating data that the presenter wanted to address by him or herself. In very short FP/PSs, lengthy chair introductions can also take up the speaker's valuable time.

23.3 Violations of Tenor by the Chair

In several cases I observed, the chairperson fluctuated between using both formal and familiar language, with rather jarring results. One example (again with the names changed) occurred as follows:

> *Our next speaker is Dr. Kim Kyung-Sun from Seoul National University's department of Obstetrics and Gynecology who will talk about* (presentation title). *Dr. Sun, start your lecture.*

Shifting from the formalized introduction to the imperious, '*Start your lecture*' (or, likewise, ending with '*Now we'll stop*'—which was observed on three occasions) is a major chairing faux pas indeed—a rather blunt example of tenor code-switching. Telling the presenter to '*start,*' in the imperative voice, is more redolent of a workplace superior or a parent talking to a child. Instead, the most effective way of signaling a speaker to start would be, after providing the required introductory information, to simply say, '*Dr. Kim…*' and gesture with an open hand for Dr. Kim to start. Once again, less is better.

Further, prospective chairs should note that a presentation does not equal a 'lecture.' The term 'lecture' often carries a negative connotation in English, the image associated is that of a speaker reciting a monologue from a position of power or superiority. A lecture is not thought to be interactive nor presumed to be a meeting of equals.

Finally, moderators and/or chairs should be hesitant to cause any interruption to the presenter. Suddenly adjusting lights, the microphone volume or position, or moving around the room for any purpose is very distracting for speakers, and often interferes with audience enjoyment and comprehension as well. Unless the problem is indeed weighty (which would include addressing speakers who have gone overtime), a 'less is more' rule would again apply.

23.4 Using Address Forms

Readers may have noticed that I have written '*Dr. Kim*' in the example above, which is different from the questionable introduction made in the negative example that preceded it. I have deliberately done so in order to help bring to light another point of concern, using appropriate address forms.

Which is the presenter's family name and which is their first, or given, name (or even middle name)? The chair or other host speaker should generally refer to the family name alone in a formal introduction. If one is not sure which is the family name and which is the first or middle name (in many languages and cultures, this distinction is not always clear), it is incumbent upon the host to ask the guest in advance. Could you imagine introducing Stephen Hawking as Dr. Stephen?

Readers should also note that many programs will list the presenter's names in the formal written order, which is often distinct from the standard spoken order. This can be perplexing for delegates from East Asia in particular (as well as their international counterparts interacting with them).

For example, my formal written name (as on my passport) is Guest, Michael Robert. Guest is my family name. Ideally, I should be called Professor Guest in an introduction, not Professor Michael or, even worse, Mr. Robert (my middle name.) Korean and Chinese names are almost always written in this order, so a Dr. Kim Kyung-Sun should be duly referred to as Dr. Kim.

If in doubt, the chairperson should always ask the presenters for accurate name pronunciation and/or preferred address forms in advance of the session. Personally, I am not very fond of being addressed as 'Ass. Professor Guest,' as has occasionally occurred.

23.5 The Role of the Chair in Symposia/Colloquia

The role of the chairperson in symposia will tend to be slightly more elaborate than that employed for standard CPs. A synoptic example opening of a symposium from the chair typically included the following elements:

1. *Greeting*
2. *Welcome*
3. *Introduction of topic/themes and participant*
4. *Explanation of format or procedures*
5. *Introducing the first speaker.*

The following is a symposia/colloquia chair template based on several examples that I observed and noted:

> *Good afternoon and welcome to the seminar, entitled X. Our four speakers on the topic today are Dr. X from Y* (etc.) *First, each of the four invited speakers*

will address the topic of X for ten minutes, after which there will be open discussion between the four speakers. Following that, we'll take questions and comments from the audience, and finish with a final short comment from each of the speakers. So first, I'd like Dr. X to open the proceedings. Dr.?

On several occasions, the chairperson also outlined the seminar theme in the introduction, largely to establish its relevance, novelty, or scope. In just under half of the cases observed, the chair also introduced him/herself. Below are five other notable moves based on my observations involving recurring patterns of speech made by the chair in symposia/colloquia, which can be summarized synoptically as follows:

1. Indicating a transition of speakers/participants:

   Thank you Dr. X. Now I'd like to ask Dr. Y to take the platform/stage/podium/mic. Dr.?
2. Switching modes to a more open discussion among symposium/colloquium participants:
   Thank you. Next, I'd like to invite open discussion between the four panel members. Dr. X, would you like to address any of the points made by the other panel members?
3. Switching modes to open discussion from the floor:
   Thank you for your comments and thoughts, Professors. Next I'd like to open the discussion to the floor, so if any audience members have a question or comment please feel to free to stand up and ask.
4. Offering thanks and salutations:
   I'd like to thank everyone for taking part in this symposium, particularly the four panel members who gave their time to share their thoughts with us today. Let's give them a round of applause.
5. Official closing:
   And with that, I'd like to close the symposium. Thank you for attending.

23.6 Introducing a Workshop

A workshop might be described as a 'horizontal' speech event in that the accepted mode is more interactive, with the audience expecting to participate actively. Workshops usually involve a demonstration or hands-on practice, often by utilizing pair or group work, or some other interactive format offering practical skill development or contents holding immediate pedagogical value. Workshops rarely involve elaborate introductions, and the tenor is generally more informal than in CPS or seminars. In most cases, the workshop is not managed by a chairperson but

by the workshop leader him/herself (invited seminars covering the same field will tend to employ a chairperson).

One of the very few introductions made by the chair to introduce a workshop leader that I observed took place as follows and might serve as a suitable template for workshop openings:

> *Thank you for choosing to attend this workshop. Leading the workshop today, entitled X, is Dr. X from Y. So, doctor, I'll turn it over to you.*

The explicit use of 'turn(ing) over' the room to the workshop leader served as a very succinct and effective transition of turn-taking and power sharing.

Questions and Exercises for Chapter 23

1. What are the five typical steps included in the chairperson's managing of a symposium or colloquium?
2. If a presenter's listed name is Badr al din Abboud, how should the chair introduce the speaker? What precautionary steps can be taken to avoid any embarrassment or address form misunderstanding?
3. In what situations do you think it is acceptable for the chair to interrupt a speaker?
4. What amount of detail should be included when introducing FP/PS presenters? How will this be different from the introduction of keynote or plenary speakers?
5. What responsibilities does the chair have when managing CP discussion sessions?

Reference

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The Academic Conference Social Dimension

24

Abstract

The social side of conferencing eludes simple discourse or genre analysis. However, members of the discourse community will typically make use of these occasions to establish or cement relations. Networking is considered by many to be the primary reason for conference attendance, but the nature and content of the spoken discourse employed will depend upon the varied goals, relationships, and immediate environment of the participants. In this short chapter, a few central features of this dimension, particularly the triangulation of extemporaneous conference talk alternating between 'general English', formulaic academic phrases, and specialist terminology, will be discussed.

A few years ago, I was helping one of my Japanese medical colleagues to prepare for an upcoming research sabbatical in the USA when I asked him what his greatest concern or worry was. Would it be his ability to keep pace in English in the fast-paced world of the clinician, I wondered? Would it be his ability to keep abreast of clinical developments at meeting and in-house conferences? Or might it even be the daily stresses of operating with his family in tow in a foreign milieu? Answer: None of the above. The doctor told me that his biggest fear was the welcome party scheduled for soon after his arrival (Fig. 24.1).

He was petrified of not giving a proper self-introduction, and particularly of saying something unseemly or culturally inappropriate. '*I don't know what to say to the other doctors at the party,*' summarized his fear. Lack of confidence in his interpersonal competence (or, possibly, cross-cultural competence) was paramount in his mind.

Since such parties are generally expected to be informal affairs, I was surprised at the gravity with which he was treating this seemingly (to me) minor event. I told him that self-introductions of the 'let me tell you all about myself' variety are largely English classroom exercises and that English actually had very few set formal phrases established for such occasions (unlike his L1, Japanese). As such, it would actually be hard to say the 'wrong' thing. His greatest enemy in this case

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Fig. 24.1 Conference social events are difficult to codify, yet they are essential arenas for interaction

would probably be giving too much forethought, overplanning what to say—with the result that it might come across as mechanically scripted. I told him that after a standard 'thanks,' an opening such as:

> *I'd like to thank Dr. X for inviting me/for this party/for his kind words and I look forward to…*

Anything beyond this should be improvised and natural because sentiments coming from the heart, even if delivered in flawed English, would be considered more suitable than a fully prepared, scripted response—particularly if the speaker is using a second language where they may feel uncomfortable establishing an appropriate level of formality. Having said that, there are several gambits that I overheard being used effectively while starting or managing conversations around conference banquet tables, product displays, or while attendees viewed posters—as well as an equal number that did not seem to be as effective.

Not surprisingly, the largest chunk of academic conference discourse takes place away from the CPs, plenaries and keynote speeches, poster sessions, and symposia. I am referring to the bonding, cementing, networking, discussion, conjecture, consultations, and simple 'shop talk' that mark the many real-time, unscripted interactions between attendees before or after sessions, during coffee and snack

times, or over lunch, the type of discourse that Swales (1990) categorizes as a 'pre-genre'.

Many of these interactions are between colleagues, old friends and acquaintances, or other familiar faces. In such cases, rhetorical moves and discourse patterns can vary to the point where little or no generic code can be identified, as they depend upon the exigencies of the type and length of relationship. Where existing relations inform the interactions, explicit topic markers are often dropped, discourse purposes may be unclear (such interaction being more a matter of personal communion than of goal-directed academic discussion), and shifts in the discourse will usually be more subtly marked.

On the other hand, many interactions involve new relations, speakers hitherto unknown to one another: presenters with audience members, spontaneous talk arising from peer proximity, audience members keen to discuss the field with those who attended the same session. When interactants are unfamiliar with each other, or at least not on fully collegial terms, certain patterns do emerge from the spoken texts.

One aspect of the function of new introductions involves giving one's name. Surprisingly, this can easily become an area of confusion if not managed well. Unless one has a generic name that would readily be grasped by any listener with a fundamental grasp of English, one would do well to clearly separate and enunciate their names, or indicate how they wish to be addressed, and this spoken form can be reinforced by indicating the written form as business cards are exchanged (very common in many Asian cultures). Names in 'unfamiliar' languages can all too often become an acoustic blur to interactants, resulting in occasional awkward or potentially embarrassing encounters using inappropriate or grossly mispronounced address forms.

Helpful touchstones in understanding this dimension are Halliday's (1985) three metafunctions of language: the textual, the ideational, and the interpersonal. The textual function language refers to the grammatical forms that create cohesion between clauses in discourse and is closely aligned with mode. The ideational function refers to the experience in which the grammatical choices allow interactants to construe meaning or the logic which connects semantic units, and is related to the concept of field. The interpersonal function includes those forms used to mark relationships between the speakers and is closely connected to mood. These include fleeting micro-encounters, as well as the more complex semiotic relationships and more highly structured institutionalized interactions. The various types of extemporaneous spoken interactions at academic conferences see a constant shifting between the prioritization of these metafunctions (although Halliday's claim is that all three metafunctions are extant in all language use).

Particularly notable in my observations of these pre-genre interactions was a shift within the ideational metafunction, particularly as manifested in that triangulation of specialist terminology, formulaic academic phrases, and general English that we discussed earlier. Whereas the spoken mode of CPs tended to balance these three metafunctions, and the written slide CP texts largely reduces; instances of general English (except to retain grammatical functions), impromptu discussion among conference attendees tended to accentuate the use of 'general English'—although specialist terms that mark insider discourse were still being widely deployed.

Much of this can be chalked up to the difficulty of maintaining an academic register in unplanned face-to-face real-time interactions. The demands of immediacy give rise to the increased use of approximants ('*sort of, like*'), lower-register terms ('*We noticed it was really high*', as opposed to '*We observed elevated outcomes'*), and vague, reformulated, and/or incomplete phrases ('*So, it was yeah, we were happy, satisfied, you could say*'. '*Well that's a little hmm Ok…*'). A greater number of discourse organizers ('*Know what I mean?*' '*Ok, so we're talking about…*') and explicit stance markers ('*I have no idea about…*' '*We've got to find out…*') were also commonly used markers of these highly interactive social sessions.

These forms were used without the same sense of violating the expected standards of the academic discourse community that they would have if they had been used during a CP. This is because prepared speech demands greater precision in terms of lexical choices, while unprepared spontaneous, real-time speech allows for these to be substituted by more imprecise forms, forms that can be negotiated in real time or interpreted indirectly through more prosodic or paralingustic interactive features.

However, it must be noted that even in these spontaneous unscripted interactions most interactants still tried to maintain an academic tenor. Formulaic academic phrases and specialist terms still tended to be deployed, even outside of the formalized academic speech events, within the wider conference social environment. In such interactions, there remained a greater usage of academic lexis than one would expect to hear outside the conference venue, as participants strove to mark themselves, and maintain their identities, as members of the academic community.

Questions and Exercises for Chapter 24

1. What are the social or environmental factors that might influence a speaker's choice regarding the degree of academic English used in extemporaneous conference discourse?
2. If required to provide some type of self-introduction during impromptu conference conversations, what information would you include? What factors would influence or alter your choice of introduction form or content?

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Part VI
Practical Preparations for the Conference Presentation

Check for updates

Final-Stage Tips

25

Abstract

The final section of this book discusses some recommended behaviors and practices for prospective presenters as the day and time of the CP approach. This final chapter is followed by two appendices. The first is a list of conference presentation guidelines as collected from academic conference organizers. The second appendix includes two author-developed self-review and peer-reviewed checklists, aimed at orienting the novice presenter toward key areas of concern and providing them with helpful, focused feedback during practice.

Readers have now (hopefully) gleaned a few more insights into performing successful academic CPs in English. However, you have a conference presentation coming up soon. As a newcomer to the arena, what can or should you do to best prepare yourself for the big day? Of course, I can assume that novice academics will practice going over their scripts until they become second nature, but are there any other preparation tips that might give it that extra boost? Based on my own experience, observations, and interviews, here are my suggestions:

25.1 Breathing

Many presenters forget or ignore this most basic physical activity when they get in front of an audience. I'm talking about consciously taking deep, full breaths. The benefits are many:

1. Breathing reduces anxiety. You can think better when oxygen intake is more naturally regulated.
2. Deep breathing allows for greater vocal projection. Reedy, nervous, voices tend not to project confidence or authority.

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3. Deep breathing allows you to collect or gather your thoughts under pressure. What is more, the audience will not only wait for you but also appreciate it themselves as the audience generally tries to adapt themselves to the rhythms of the 'performer.' By giving them absorption time and allowing them to relax, they will be able to take in more of what you want to convey.
4. Breathing frees up to head and body to move, which in turn allows you to use your body more effectively as a means of emphasizing or embellishing some points of your presentation. It also serves to reduce muscle tension.
5. Remember—Breathing is one of the most important factors in making effective transitions!
6. When you are rehearsing your CP, make sure to include your deep breathing time—taking long, conscious, deep, relaxing breaths—within your time limit.

25.2 Simulation of Discussion Sessions to Practice Response Strategies

Your colleagues need not be a passive target audience for your CP practice sessions. Have them confront you with your darkest fears too! Remember how in the chapter of managing Q&A we talked about strategies? Deflecting questions, asking for elaboration, asking for clarification, negotiating understanding, admitting a lack of knowledge or experience, thanking, returning questions to the speaker, and delaying/evading responses? Well, you can have your colleagues prepare tough sample questions and then actively practice deciding which strategies to employ. For example:

> *Discussant: Why didn't you do (procedure A) instead of (procedure B)?*
> *Presenter: We weren't familiar with procedure A* (admission). *Thank you for your suggestion.* (Thanking) *Can you outline what you mean by procedure B for me in more detail*? (returning the question—clarification—elaboration).

25.3 Using an Native English Speaker (NES) for Checking and Preparation of NNES Presentations

This oft-given piece of advice can easily become a problematic area. Many native English-speaking teachers, especially of the on-campus English professor variety, can be very helpful in preparing NNES academics for English CPs, but are not always used wisely (I can speak from experience in this regard).

When many NNES academics ask for 'native speaker checks' what they really want is to have grammatical minutiae sorted out—prepositions, articles, and the like. But, as I've argued earlier, these surface features rarely constitute the make or break features of a successful CP (and would be much better suited to checking drafts of about-to-be-published research papers). While it will be cosmetically satisfactory to make sure there are no errors in your slides, focusing upon the absence of mistakes is a somewhat negative approach to presentation success. I suggest then that not only NESs but any qualified proficient English teacher, NES or NNES, can be better utilized as follows:

1. Practice your full presentation in front of *any* proficient English speaker. This will resemble your target audience.
2. Have him or her note any sections that they feel are awkward or clumsy. You might want to ask them to specifically focus upon openings, transitions, and closings here (many less-experienced English teachers tend to notice or fix only surface errors).
3. Ask them if any section was logically or rhetorically unclear or confusing. If their confusion is a matter of simply not knowing the content well, this will at least provide you with an opportunity to express that section in English in a dynamic, realistic situation—mirroring what often happens in actual CP discussion sessions. But if their confusion is a result of sloppy intonation, the imprecise use of transitional phrases, or other qualities that a non-specialist outsider would note, then you will have gained a specific target for further practice.

NNES academics should also note though that campus-based English teachers (whether NES or NNES) may not very knowledgeable about the norms and expectations of a conference presentation in your specialized field, and will rarely be familiar with the intricate details of your specific research area.

25.4 Pre-presentation Rehearsal

In this section, I want to address some helpful practices to consider for either the day of the presentation or the night before.

For fairly obvious reasons, I recommend practicing your opening until you can recite it in your sleep. What I would emphasize more though is rigorously practicing the slide or section that you dislike most. There are usually a few slides in any presentation that the speaker is uncomfortable with, for one reason or another. Perhaps the content is extremely detailed, and perhaps it is a bit mundane. Perhaps it covers some necessary but unexciting foregrounding of your main thesis. Perhaps the English you've chosen to use here is far from your comfort zone—it does not roll off your tongue easily, or you are using unfamiliar terms. This is the slide where you are thinking: If anything is going to go wrong, it is likely to happen here.

My advice is not to avoid practicing this unpleasant slide—far from it. Rather, I am suggesting that you work on this particular slide until you feel comfortable with it, until it does roll off your tongue—and possibly even change the content or arrangement of the slide itself to make it more palatable. The goal should be that the listener, your audience, never gets a sense that this is an area you've been struggling with.

This is likely a strategy that you've used in your past, particularly on important examinations—working on your weak points and not those areas that you are already comfortable with and confident in. It can be applied to conference presentations too.

25.5 Getting Used to the Physical Dimension of Your Presentation Area

Let us face it—you're nervous. Almost everybody in the same situation is. Two ways to minimize any negative impact of nerves are as follows:

a. *Make sure you know exactly when and where in your CP you will touch the computer and/or laser.*
b. *Get used to moving, at least to a small degree, within your 'presentation space.'*

Let us look at these two points in order.

Jerky, hesitant physical movements can not only cause your audience to lose a sense of the CP's flow and focus but also mess up the speech rhythms that you've already developed subconsciously. Having to move desktop items around, look at computer keys, or deal with other tools, can clutter your mental script—much as positioning yourself poorly to receive a simple pass in soccer can scuttle an entire offensive attack. You should know exactly where each item you need is and precisely at what point, and in what way, you plan to use it. Not having one's physical/environmental dimension adequately prepared for was one of the most common causes of subsequent CP breakdowns that I observed. Figure 25.1 shows a standard FP presentation space with an effective, recommended spacing plan.

Note that in Fig. 25.1, the speaker's seat (#2) is adjustable and should be moved, or even discarded with, in advance, according to the speaker's preference. The area marked #11 represents the ideal area of speaker movement, neither forcing the speaker into the narrow confines behind the podium nor blocking the audience's view of the screen. Moving in front of the podium from space #11 further allows the speaker to address the audience in a more direct manner. This, of course, may also require carrying the laser. Note that the seat marked #10 is referred to as the speaker's 'audience seat.' I suggest that, if possible, the speaker leave his or her baggage here, 'claiming' the seat, assuring not only that no one's view will be blocked but also that this most potential disruptive of seating locations remains open.

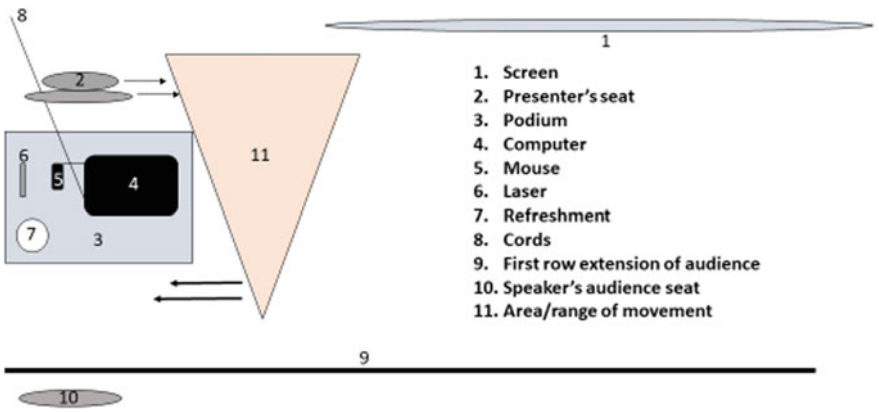

Fig. 25.1 An ideal free paper presentation physical environment

As for using up your 'presentation space,' adopting an overformalized newsreader posture may be effective in some regions of the world, where this style may be associated with politeness and propriety, but to many attendees in a fully international audience, it may appear more that the speaker is a shell-shocked novice if one does not adjust their posture at least somewhat during the CP. Keeping the same, rigid posture for 10 minutes or more is a further recipe leading to flat intonation, a lack of proper pacing, and generally putting your audience to sleep (or, conversely, making them feel just as tense as you are).

Instead, as we have mentioned several times, speakers should be sure to adopt a posture that allows them to speak with some power and authority (breathing again!) and choose adjustment areas within the CP where it seems natural, and physically comforting, to make a small physical adjustment. The impact that even slight movements can have on the efficacy of your overall message *and* maintaining the audience's attention is subtle, but very powerful. Don't underestimate them!

25.6 Clothing, Exercise, and Hydration

Generally, presenters—indeed most conference attendees, whether presenting or not—will be dressed rather formally (the continuum ranging from very formal to somewhat casual tends to run along the two axes of sciences vs. humanities and Northeast Asia vs. North America). The danger of presenting in new or highly restrictive clothing, however, is that it can inhibit movement or otherwise lead to physical awkwardness and/or discomfort.

My advice would be to not wear any item for the first time when performing a CP. I would also advise novice presenters to practice their CPs in their hotel rooms *not* wearing their pajamas or underwear, but in the exact attire they will be dressed in for the CP, including (crucially!) any jewelry, necktie, and shoes. Readers may be surprised how familiarity and comfort in wearing these items can positively affect CP performance. When it comes to dress rehearsals, the more realistic the better.

As we have noted, nerves can also lead to overly protective, restricted physical postures, which can easily carry over into performance. If there is a chance, I strongly suggest carrying out a loosen-the-muscles routine, wherever it might be possible to do so, ideally a few minutes before the CP. Even while seated before the CP begins, a presenter can stretch, tighten, and flex their muscles—long-haul airplane style. Readers will not want to endure the terrible calf cramp I once suffered in the middle of one of my earliest CPs, in which I had to hide my body awkwardly behind the podium and shake my right leg until the pain subsided.

Related to this is proper hydration. Nerves mean dry throats which further lead to creaky voices and ubiquitous onstage swallowing and gulping. Drinking about a half liter of water a few minutes before your CP should refresh your body and help get your throat and mouth into proper speaking condition. In longer presentations, it is also acceptable to drink during the presentation, especially if a water bottle or glass has been placed there by the hosts. A quick drink is most commonly and easily carried out while the audience is viewing a video or slide content that does not require the presenter's narration.

25.7 At the Last Minute

I have noticed many presenters cramming their CP notes right up until their name is called by the chairperson. I generally advise against this because it can lead to cognitive muddling and confusion. In order to be clear-headed when your CP turn comes, I would advise presenters to *not* go over any written scripted notes within 30 min of their presentation time (and certainly not while another presenter is speaking), but rather to use that time to hydrate and move their body to unload nervous baggage.

I also advise presenters *not* to make last-moment changes to their slides or 'scripts' unless a major problem has been noted. Last-minute additions and subtractions can throw off order, timing, and generally undermine the confidence of novice presenters.

Table 25.1 shows a summary of pre-presentation suggestions for readers:

Table 25.1 Pre-presentation suggestions

Practice twice in your presentation clothes while standing (in the hotel room)
Focus on those slides you enjoy the least when you practice
Listen to a recording or watch a video you have made of your own presentation
Keep strict time when practicing
Visit the presentation room and check the computer setup, screen, podium, and mic in advance (before any facility activities begin)
Do not make last-minute changes, unless absolutely necessary
Do not cram at the last minute, especially during other peoples' presentations
Drink some water, breathe deeply and slowly, and move your body a few minutes before you present

Questions and Exercises for Chapter 25

1. List three of your current pre-presentation habits, both good and bad.
2. List any three pre-presentation practices listed in this section that would be of most value for you to adopt before delivering a CP.
3. Are there any good or bad pre-presentation practices that you would add to this list?

Appendix A: Advice from the Source: A Sample of Conference Presentation Guidelines

Table A.1 provides a number of general guidelines for presentations as presented in an email circular sent to all presenters for the 2017 European Association of Language Teachers of Healthcare (EALTHY) Conference, held in Bern, Switzerland, October 2017. I have reprinted the circular because I believe it succinctly encapsulates the main points that most academic conferences expect from their presenters and thus serves as a suitable epilogue for the contents of this book:

While many of the points mentioned in Table A.1 may be found in other conference guidelines, the above serves as the most comprehensive checklist for novice presenters that I have come across. If a prospective speaker can confidently say 'yes' to all the points made above, he or she is already halfway to the goal of performing an effective academic conference presentation.

Table A.1 The 2017 EALTHY Conference's suggested presentation guidelines (reproduced courtesy of EALTHY, www.ealthy.com)

In order for the audience to benefit fully from your session, we would ask you to consider the following when preparing your presentation:
• We would encourage you to use a font size of at least 20 points to ensure your slides are legible.
• We would discourage you from including overcomplex and heavily detailed slides (graphs, statistics, etc.), which may be difficult for the delegates to read.
• We would discourage you from being overreliant on your slides.
• We should advise you that conference delegates tend to be more receptive to speakers who do not read from pre-prepared notes.
• Your talk should match the abstract you submitted.
• Your chosen topic is in the area [as proscribed by the original call for papers and/or conference theme].
• You have catered for the level of knowledge of your audience.
• Your session is of practical use for the delegates.
• Your session, if theoretical, considers the practical issues and implications that it raises.
• Your audience can apply your experience to their own contexts.
• Your session, if based on research, reports on a completed study or a significant phase.
• Your session, if on behalf of a publisher, is not purely an advertisement for your product.

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Appendix B: Suggestions for Classroom Practice Activities

The second appendix offers samples of classroom exercises and handouts that can be copied and used by teachers or students to develop effective presentation practice classes or practice sessions. The first (Fig. A.1) is for self-evaluation, the second (Fig. A.2) is for peer evaluation, and the third (Fig. A.3) is for the practice of managing discussion session scenarios. All these figures/materials were created and piloted by the author.

The Q&A management strategies described earlier in this book include *admission, appeasement, avoidance/evasion, clarification, conformation, elaboration, reformulation, renegotiation, and returning the question.* In the following practice activity, colleagues or classmates of the presenter can deliberately present 'difficult' questions in order to help the speaker to adopt an appropriate response strategy. 'Discussants' can choose (by choice or at random) any of the question/comment types contained in Fig. A.3 in order to put the speaker 'on the spot':

Closing Notes

The goal in producing this book is to provide a practical aid for young, novice, and NNES academics when participating in international academic conferences. Since conferences are, by nature, dynamic and unpredictable, the suggestions and examples contained in this book can only go part of the way to producing top-notch presentations, having a more rewarding participation experience, and most importantly, to actually make academic conferences enjoyable and fruitful. I understand that not all the sections contained in this book will be relevant to every reader but I am confident that you will have found something that might improve your conference enjoyment, understanding, or performance.

Further Suggested Reading

For readers who wish to delve a little further into the topics discussed in this book, I would make the following suggestions, all of which are fully referenced at some point in the text.

The most comprehensive practical guide to giving academic conference presentations on the market is Adrian Wallwork's 'English for Presentations at International Conferences.' The finest academic compendium of CP English is 'The

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Presentation self-evaluation check sheet

1. Pre-Presentation

☐ My speaking space is clear and well-defined
☐ I am aware as to how much I can walk or move my body for this presentation
☐ I am aware of the audience number, who they are, and where they will be seated
☐ I have placed any tools (lasers, notes, water, mic etc.) in a convenient location
☐ I am in a comfortable position in relation to both the computer and the screen
☐ I know where I will be placing my hands and I am comfortable in using my hands
☐ My voice is ready to speak
☐ I have adopted a comfortable but confident speaking posture
☐ My slides (including videos, online content, animations) are prepared for display
☐ I am familiar with the order of all slides in the presentation
☐ I am familiar with the placing of all animations in the presentation
☐ I am familiar with all the written text appearing on the slides
☐ I am confident in using any specialist terms, unusual phrases, or acronyms

2. Opening section

☐ I have a clear and specific opening line prepared
☐ I am not repeating information about myself or the presentation that is already well-known to the audience
☐ I will include an outline only if is informative and helpful for the audience
☐ I will enter into the body of the presentation quickly, sustaining audience interest

3. Presentation Body

☐ I have considered how to manage transitions from section to section and slide to slide
☐ I will paraphrase, and not merely read, most of the text appearing on the slides
☐ I will not use section headings as my sole transition marker
☐ I have considered where to alter my pace, where to pause, and where to add emphatic intonation in order to best convey my intentions to the audience
☐ There are no more than three key points presented on any one slide
☐ All my text is easily readable to the audience
☐ All charts, graphs, statistical data is easily readable to the audience

4. Closings

☐ I know how to finish any sentence, section, or utterance in a concise, clear manner
☐ I will highlight the most important points made in the presentation
☐ My ending carries impact
☐ I have conveyed something new and meaningful to my audience

Fig. A.1 Conference presentation self-evaluation check sheet

Peer Presentation Evaluation Form

Presenter's name:

Topic and/or title:

Rank the speaker's performance from 1 (poor) to 10 (excellent) on the matrix below:

The speaker held my interest throughout the presentation
1----2----3----4----5----6----7----8----9----10
Comments:

The topic choice was novel and interesting
1----2----3----4----5----6----7----8----9----10
Comments:

The flow of the presentation was easy to grasp
1----2----3----4----5----6----7----8----9----10
Comments:

The speaker's voice was clear, understandable and added to the effectiveness of the presentation
1----2----3----4----5----6----7----8----9----10

Comments:

The speaker's slides were easy to read and/or comprehend
1----2----3----4----5----6----7----8----9----10
Comments:

The speaker's physical manner enhanced the presentation
1----2----3----4----5----6----7----8----9----10
Comments:

The speaker used a suitable register
1----2----3----4----5----6----7----8----9----10
Comments:

The speaker provided the audience with memorable or useful content
1----2----3----4----5----6----7----8----9----10
Comments:

Fig. A.2 Peer presentation evaluation form

The speaker highlighted key points clearly
1----2----3----4----5----6----7----8----9----10
Comments:

The presentation had persuasive, informative, and entertainment value
1----2----3----4----5----6----7----8----9----10
Comments:

The speaker kept a reasonable pace and finished within the allotted time
1----2----3----4----5----6----7----8----9----10
Comments:

The speaker's use of graphics, design, and any multimedia was effective
1----2----3----4----5----6----7----8----9----10
Comments:

General comments:

Fig. A.2 (continued)

Discussion Session Practice Activities

1. **The discussant makes a comment that lasts several minutes, ending with a question that is unclear.**
2. **The discussant asks, "Professor, when did you establish your vfggrkt?"**
3. **The discussant asks about topic X, although the speaker discussed topic Y.**
4. **The discussant uses a vague term: e.g., "What is the exact value of your study?"**
5. **The discussant makes a helpful point.**
6. **The discussant asks, "Professor, how would you compare your results to the Logan report findings?" (the speaker has no idea about these 'Logan report findings')**
7. **The discussant asks, "Can you give me the references of the studies you used?"**
8. **The discussant says, "I have some very different views about (the topic)."**
9. **The discussant speaks far too quickly.**
10. **The discussant corrects an (alleged) error in the presentation.**

Fig. A.3 Discussion practice activities/scenarios

Language of Conferencing' (edited by Ventola, Shalom, and Thompson). Elizabeth Rowley-Jolivet has also published numerous interesting and informative research articles regarding CP discourse. Those who wish to explore the very fertile field of ELF and English varieties further should seek out Barbara Seidlhofer's VOICE, Anna Mauranen's ELFA, John Swales' MICASE, or Andy Kirkpatrick's various ICE corpus projects. For academic discourse in general, and academic writing in particular, Ken Hyland's work is the logical place to start. Likewise, for those with an interest in genre analysis, John Swales is the obvious starting point although V. K. Bhatia's work in the same field is also highly recommended.

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