



Webinar for Early Career Researchers, December 9, 2022

121 participants signed up for the first Webinar of the current series of ECR webinars, 2022-23, hosted by the European Second Language Association (EuroSLA). Led by Clare Wright (President), with Matthew Pattenmore (Executive Committee ECR representative), Jonas Granfeldt and Simone Pfenninger (Vice-Presidents), and Roger Gilabert (former Vice-President), the webinar aimed to cover key advice on writing a good abstract and understanding what reviewers look for.

1. Top tips include focusing on:

- Quality of content (theoretical underpinning, methodological rigour and feasibility of study design)
- Contribution to the field (originality of research question, significance for informing current debates)
- Clear rationale, clarity in writing, logical flow and overall impression of a coherent “story”.

2. When abstract length is short, use every word wisely.

- Start off with the research context and gap, but don't spend too long on literature citations - no more than 2 or 3 citations should be enough. State your research questions clearly.
- Be clear in describing your methodology to show you were rigorous in your design, provide as much detail as you can so reviewers have a clear picture of what you are aiming to do.
- Be brief about data analysis techniques, and only if they are relevant (new uses of statistical modelling, or particularly deep and careful qualitative analysis)
- But list results in as much detail as you can – submitting abstracts if you don't yet have data, or clear plans of data coming in is generally to be avoided.
- Finish with a concrete summary of your contribution relating back to your research context. Avoid vague phrases like “results will be discussed”

3. Get someone to read your abstract – your supervisor, or a friendly academic who can check for logic and clarity.

4. Check the abstract fits the conference requirements.

- For doctoral-specific submissions such as EuroSLA's doctoral workshop, check additional factors, e.g. that data do not need to be collected yet; that questions for a discussant should be added.

6. Reviewer comments were also discussed on sample abstracts as examples of bad and good practice. Abstracts were usually rejected if:

- Style was difficult to follow, or writing was vague or “woolly”
- Rationale seemed very similar to existing research, not novel enough
- Concepts were undefined; study was not clearly grounded in relevant theory
- Information was missing on methodology – e.g. tests or measures
- It was unclear how the research methods linked up to the research questions
- The study overall was too ambitious or over-promised too much data

7. The best abstracts made it really clear:

- What are you going to do?
- To whom? With what?
- Why – what prior research (and gap) makes you think this will be interesting?
- And for EuroSLA doctoral workshops, didn't worry about not having data yet.

(Thanks to Matthew and Anastasia Pattemore and to Aline Godfroid for these tips)

EuroSLA supports ECRs throughout the year and welcomes applicants to conferences at every stage of the doctoral and post-doctoral journey.

ECRs do not have to be EuroSLA members to join our Webinar Series.

Our next Webinar is planned for late February on post-doc employment opportunities, and then our third is planned for early summer (April/May) in publishing in EuroSLA's dedicated members' journal - JESLA.

Look out for further announcements!

Keep in touch via Matthew Pattemore matthew.pattemore@ub.edu

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See you next time!

Clare and Matthew