LSA Abstract Algorithm

There are many ways to organize an LSA abstract. This is just one plug-and-play algorithm that’s worked successfully for me. See other example approaches and model abstracts on the LSA website: [https://www.linguisticsociety.org/resource/model-abstracts](https://www.linguisticsociety.org/resource/model-abstracts).

**Paragraph 1**

**Introduction**

Quick introduction of the phenomenon.

Clear statement of research problem or question.

Think: what is the urgent knowledge gap that your abstract addresses?

Succinct description of study and main result.

**Paragraph 2**

**Specific Background**

Data & Methodology

Set up what you did here.

Usually it’s possible to do both things at once. Whatever background is needed should be integrated into serving your story, not regurgitating old info.

Specifics necessary to understand and contextualize your study and results:

Additional Background

If there is any relevant literature or issues that need to be further identified in order to contextualize your study, mention it here.

**Paragraph 3**

**Results**

Clear and concrete description of results.

Interpret the results in light of the problem presented at the beginning of the abstract.

**Paragraph 4**

**Conclusion**

Succinct (1-sentence) recap of study and results.

Quick consideration of larger theoretical implications and extensions of research.

Think: why should the general linguist care? Now that you’ve addressed this knowledge gap, what do we gain?

**Some General Tips**

- Space is tight. Readers are tired. Get to your point as soon as possible, and stay on your point as much as possible.
- Find the balance between impactful and overselling. You need the punch to get the reader’s attention, but reviewers are great at sniffing out bullshit.
- LSA reviewers tend to respond well to well-delineated problems, addressed with clear empirical data. In my experience, convoluted and subtle theoretical arguments don’t do as well in 500 words as “here’s the problem, here’s a study, here’s the result.” If you have highly theory-oriented work, frame it carefully.
- Avoid overly specialized terminology. Define your terms, if needed.