

# How to write a paper in English and present it well

excerpts from iJAWS Program Chair talk,  
29<sup>th</sup> October 2010, Furano, Hokkaido

David Kinny  
dnk @ i.kyoto-u.ac.jp

Ishida and Matsubara Laboratory  
Department of Social Informatics  
Graduate School of Informatics  
Kyoto University



# Outline

1. Why present in English?
2. International JAWS
3. International collaboration
4. How to write a good paper
  - Getting the introduction right
  - Getting the rest right
5. Where to submit it
6. How to present it well





# Why present in English?



- English is the common language of science and is becoming the language of global business, as has been recognized by Japanese companies such as *Rakuten*.
- To make interesting Japanese research accessible to the international community it should be published in English.
- Even if students do not follow a research career, they will benefit from writing and presenting their work in English.
- The Japanese National Government has made it a priority to attract international graduate students to study in Japan (Global 30 program), and many of these students can't become fluent in Japanese. At the same time, fewer Japanese students are choosing to do graduate research. So many university graduate schools are becoming more international, and English is becoming more important.



# International JAWS



- The iJAWS track at JAWS, whose papers are submitted, presented and discussed in English, allows foreign research students (and foreign professors!) in Japan who are not fluent in Japanese to benefit from participating in the JAWS community.
- International collaborations can improve Japanese research outcomes, and publishing (and communicating) in English is usually necessary to begin and build such a collaboration. Presenting at iJAWS is a good way to learn to do this well, and to practice in an “easy” environment.
- If iJAWS can grow and attract international participants (including Japanese researchers working overseas) the JAWS community will benefit from this participation.



# International Collaboration



In science and engineering, much highly cited research comes from a collaboration between researchers at different institutions around the world.

- Collaboration is a form of collective intelligence, and is usually an essential part of advanced research.
- In specialized fields, there may be few experts in one's own country, so collaboration must be international.
- International collaborations can improve Japanese research outcomes and their visibility to the world.
- Publishing and communicating in English can create opportunities to work at highly regarded foreign institutions with recognized experts, in an environment where valuable long-term collaborations may form.



# How to write a good paper



- **Most important:** choose a high quality international conference in your field and **read many good papers.**
  - Try to understand why they are considered good
  - Try to become familiar with good structure and style
- A good paper should make very clear to its readers:
  - What is the problem or topic?
  - Why is it interesting?
  - What is wrong with current approaches to it?
  - What has now been achieved to solve the problem, and why is that interesting?
  - How has this been done, and what is the motivation?
  - How does it compare to other approaches, in theory, and where appropriate, in practice?



# Getting the introduction right



- Many people start by writing the abstract and introduction of a paper before they are sure what will be in the rest.

**The introduction is the most important part!**

- It is said that by the time a reviewer has finished reading the introduction, **they have already decided** whether to accept or reject the paper, and as they read on, they are then just looking for evidence to support their decision.
- The introduction should clearly answer these questions:
  - What is the problem or topic?
  - Why is it interesting?
  - What is wrong with current approaches to it?
  - What has now been achieved to solve the problem, and why is that interesting?

It should also offer an outline of what follows in the paper.



# Getting the rest right

- Start constructing your paper with just the figures, tables, and algorithms or pseudo-code. Decide the order of these and you already have the basic structure of your paper.
- Next write the text to present and explain this content.
- Clearly express the goals, method and research results.
- Ensure important related work is suitably discussed. Make sure you are quite familiar with previous work!
- Write the abstract and the introduction last, after you already know the complete contents of the paper.
- If experimental work is included, give enough detail to allow it to be repeated, and ensure proper statistical treatment, e.g. significance tests, error bars on graphs.
- Ask native English speakers to read your draft paper and suggest how it can be improved. Discuss it with them.





# Where to submit it?

- iJAWS is a suitable place to present interesting research, even if it is at an early stage. Presenting at iJAWS is a good first step to develop a paper you plan to submit to an international conference or workshop.
- It is usually easier to have a paper accepted at a more specialized conference than a prestigious one like AAMAS, unless your results are very strong and original. But do not be afraid to submit to a 'hard' conference, as you will learn from doing this, and success will eventually come.
- Submit your work to a journal when it is completed, to create a detailed archival record. As there is no presentation, you must be prepared to work harder to bring the paper quality to a suitably high standard.



# How to present it well

- Try to speak **slowly and clearly**, even if you are anxious.
- It is **much more important to explain the key outcomes of the research**, why you did it, and **why it is interesting**, than to explain all the technical details. The technical details should be clear in the paper itself, and people who are interested in your talk will read the paper afterwards.
- **Talk to your audience**, not to the screen. Make the most of this chance to get your key messages across. Do not:
  - make too many slides, use unreadably small fonts,
  - put too much information on the slides, or
  - just read your slides to the audience (it's so boring!).
- **Practice presenting your paper** by yourself, and then in front of an audience in your laboratory. Ask that audience to suggest how to improve your presentation technique.