

2015 Spokane Region ESL Conference Reflection

The Spokane Regional ESL Conference was the first conference I had presented at. The topic of my 45-minute discussion was that of my research, entitled, *Academic Writing: University Expectations and TESOL*. Just days before my presentation, I finally finished my research paper. Having all of the data and findings fresh in my mind was quite advantageous, giving me assurance, confidence, and reducing my anxiety. Although I was secure in my ability to deliver the information, I still held certain reservations in regards to my potential audience. Despite being told several times that my research sparks interest and provides useful information, I feared that some would not find it useful at all; that they would tell me I am not presenting anything new and they have all tried it before. I feared the possibility of presenting fruitless data and irrelevant conclusions.

Aside from finally finishing the daunting, near 12-month task of writing my research paper, I also found creating the PowerPoint to be a bit of a challenge. I had initially figured the PowerPoint would be the easiest of all because I had already written the paper, and I could simply cut and paste certain sections from the paper into the presentation. How wrong I was. I must have spent at least three hours putting the slides together, trying to decide what information to keep, and then how to type it in shorthand. I also tend to be a bit of a perfectionist, which contributes to the amount of time I usually spend on projects. Thankfully, the handout I constructed for my audience was pretty easy to do. I simply inserted the table of definitions from my paper into the document, with a space for notes on one side, and a summary of my findings in bullet points on the other side.

The presentation itself was a lot easier than I anticipated. Since my presentation was during the last session of the day, I was not expecting a large crowd. About twelve people attended my presentation, and all of them seemed to be intrigued by the topic. When I first began, I introduced myself and gave them a little background about my academic profile and how I arrived at this point in my research. My introduction may have taken more time than needed, and I definitely gave more than enough time to the literature review portion. The literature review was the most difficult section for me. I wasn't sure how much I should share, or even how concise I should be. I felt like I needed to map out the literature review in order to justify my findings and conclusions. I'm sure I covered as much as necessary for the literature review, but I still believe there is a way to make the literature review more concise (which is actually quite ironic considering that the research showed that this is one of the qualities teacher's expect from students in their writing, and need to improve). The findings and conclusions section were the easiest. They were still fresh in my mind from finishing the paper and I had put a lot of thought into how this can be incorporated into the classroom. However, by the end of the 45 minutes, I was rushing to finish my final comments, which is also an indication of my need to be more concise.

Presenting at this conference was a great experience for me. Much to my surprise, the audience warmly received my research. One woman came up to me afterwards and suggested I submit a proposal for the 2016 TESOL Conference. Their comments and positive reception validated my passion for this topic and encouraged me to pursue further research. More importantly, I am looking forward to applying my conclusions to my own classroom, continuing action-research, and including the results in a future presentation –

hopefully at TESOL if I am accepted. On April 11th I will be presenting my research again at the Palouse Language & Culture Symposium in Moscow, Idaho. From this experience, I now know what to expect and feel more confident. I will look back over my PowerPoint and make a few changes to the literature review, or rehearse better ways to deliver that section. I truly enjoy the research I have done and am looking forward to continuing it in the future. As I begin my teaching career, I plan to conduct more action-research in the classroom, regarding the topic of academic writing, and present my findings at several more conferences.