SLATE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP – PUBLISHING IN SLA

Silvina Montrul, Co-editor, Second Language Research
Tania Ionin, Associate editor, Language Acquisition

February 19, 2013
OUTLINE

- Turning research into publications
- The journal submission process
- The peer review process

- Question-and-answer session
FROM RESEARCH TO PUBLICATION:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=twogpmM-SfY
TURNING RESEARCH INTO PUBLICATIONS

- Term paper / Qualifying paper / MA thesis ≠ journal paper
  - Some papers need more data, more analysis, more theoretical development before you can even begin thinking of publishing
  - Other papers are fairly complete, but still need to be revised and reorganized (and probably shortened) before they are suitable for publication
- Get at least two opinions (from professors and/or fellow students) about whether your paper is ready for submission!
TURNING RESEARCH INTO PUBLICATIONS

- Make sure the paper is organized according to the standard in the field:
  - E.g., an experimental paper should have Introduction, Background, Methodology, Results, Discussion, Conclusion
  - Read other papers in the journal that you are submitting to, and study their organization carefully

- **Do not plagiarize:**
  - Doing so will not only get your paper automatically rejected, but can lead to suspension from your graduate program!
  - Always cite all prior findings and claims that are not your own
  - Do not copy chunks of literature review from published papers (yes, we’ve seen this done!)
Why do the extra work?

- I’ll just submit my term paper / qualifying paper / MA thesis in its current form, get feedback from the reviewers, and then revise...
- **BAD IDEA!**
- A paper that does not fall in the scope of the journal and/or does not follow the formatting guidelines is likely to be rejected immediately
- Reviewers will be annoyed at having to read an unrevised student paper, and will be more disposed to reject the paper
- **Respect the reviewers, and do your best **before submitting**
JOURNALS VS. OTHER TYPES OF PUBLICATIONS

○ Working papers and conference proceedings
  • Typically shorter than a journal publication
  • Most are not peer-reviewed (but some are)
  • In most cases, you retain the copyright: you can still publish the same work (completed, expanded) elsewhere

○ Book chapters and papers in journal special issues:
  • Most are by invitation only
  • Peer-reviewed, but rejection is less likely than with regular journal submission
  • You do not retain the copyright: you can’t publish the same work elsewhere

○ Journal papers:
  • Most prestigious publication type
  • Peer-reviewed, selective (level of selectivity depends on the journal)
  • You do not retain the copyright: you can’t publish the same work elsewhere
DECIDING WHERE TO SUBMIT

- Carefully study the statements explaining the scope of the journal
- Check where authors that work on related topics (e.g., the authors you are citing!) typically publish their work
- Find out how selective different journals are
- Read several papers from the most recent volumes of the journals that you are considering
- Ask faculty for advice
SAMPLE STATEMENT OF JOURNAL AIMS & SCOPE

- **Second Language Research** is an international peer-reviewed, quarterly journal, publishing original theory-driven research concerned with second language acquisition and second language performance. This includes both experimental studies and contributions aimed at exploring conceptual issues. In addition to providing a forum for investigators in the field of non-native language learning, it seeks to promote interdisciplinary research which links acquisition studies to related non-applied fields such as: neurolinguistics; psycholinguistics; theoretical linguistics; bilingualism; first language developmental psycholinguistics.

Note that studies of foreign language teaching and learning are outside the scope of **Second Language Research**, unless they make a substantial contribution to understanding the process and nature of second language acquisition. Types of publications include full-length research articles (about 10,000 words), research notes (about 4,000 words), review articles of recent books or timely topics (about 5,000 words), and guest edited, thematic issues.

[http://www.sagepub.com/journals/Journal201828/aimsAndScope](http://www.sagepub.com/journals/Journal201828/aimsAndScope)
SAMPLE STATEMENT OF JOURNAL AIMS & SCOPE

Language Acquisition: A Journal of Developmental Linguistics aims to be the premier journal in the fields of first and second language acquisition. Research published in the journal addresses the theory of language and its development by considering theoretical, experimental and computational perspectives. Coverage includes solutions to the logical problem of language acquisition, as it arises for particular grammatical proposals; the character of children's grammatical representations; the contributions of on-line processing and explicit learning mechanisms to linguistic development; and perspectives derived from theory-driven studies of second language acquisition, language-impaired speakers, and other domains of cognition. Types of articles the journal publishes include: i) full-length research articles; ii) brief research reports, which report original empirical findings, major theoretical advances or crucial developments that warrant rapid communication to the developmental linguistics community; iii) review articles, which provide an original and synthetic perspective on a focused subarea of developmental linguistics; iv) dissertation synopses.

In addition, Language Acquisition awards an annual prize for the best original research article written by an untenured scientist. Any paper whose first author is an untenured scientist (faculty or student) is eligible for this prize. The prize carries an award of $500. Winners will be determined by the Editorial Team, consisting of the Editor in Chief, Brief Articles Editors, Associate Editors and Managing Editor. The winner of each year's competition will be announced in the first issue of the following year. Inquiries about the prize should be directed to the Managing Editor.

HOW SELECTIVE IS A JOURNAL?

- **Acceptance rates:** percentage of papers that get published out of the total amount of submissions received a year.
- E.g., if a journal receives 300 submissions a year and 15 are ultimately published, that would be a 5% acceptance rate
- Selective journals publish between 5% and 20% of submissions
- A journal with a 70% acceptance rate is not very selective
IMPACT FACTOR

A measure of the frequency with which the "average article" in a journal has been cited in a particular year or period.

The annual impact factor of a journal is calculated by dividing the number of current year citations to the source items published in that journal during the previous two years.

- \( A = \) total cites in 1992
- \( B = \) 1992 cites to articles published in 1990-91 (this is a subset of \( A \))
- \( C = \) number of articles published in 1990-91
- \( D = \frac{B}{C} = 1992 \) impact factor
Submit to only one journal!

- Submitting to two or more journals at once is disrespectful: it wastes the editors’ and the reviewers’ time.
- If the editors/reviewers become aware of your double submission, your paper will be automatically rejected.
- But if you get a rejection in one journal, it is fine to submit to a different one: but do revise the paper first!
LIST OF JOURNALS

- On SLA / bilingualism:
  - *Bilingualism, Language and Cognition*
  - *International Journal of Bilingualism*
  - *Linguistic Approaches to Bilingualism*
  - *Second Language Research*
  - *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*

- Journals with a broader focus where SLA work is often published:
  - *Applied Psycholinguistics*
  - *Language Acquisition*
  - *Language Learning*
  - *Lingua*
LIST OF JOURNALS

More Teaching-oriented/Applied Journals

- *Applied Linguistics*
- *The Modern Language Journal*
- *The Canadian Modern Language Review*
- *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*
- *International Review of Applied Linguistics*
- *Language Awareness*
- *Language Learning & Technology* (open access online: http://llt.msu.edu/)
- *Language Teaching Research*
- *System*
- *TESOL Quarterly*

In-depth reviews

- *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*
- *Language Teaching*
TYPES OF AUTHORSHIP

- **Single-authored papers**
  - Most likely if you are turning your thesis or qualifying paper into a publication

- **Multi-authored papers**
  - Standard for collaborative research, very common in experimental settings

- **Decide in advance on the order of authors:**
  - Alphabetical?
  - Reflecting the size of the contribution?
  - The first author is usually (but not necessarily) the corresponding author for the journal

- **Always make sure your co-authors know that you are submitting your joint paper!**
Publishing a large project or a dissertation

Most dissertations can yield two or more journal papers, such as:

- two experimental papers on two different studies
- a theoretical paper and an experimental paper
- an experimental paper and a pedagogically-oriented paper

Some overlap between the papers derived from a single dissertation (or other large project) is ok, but the papers need to be very clearly distinct:

- The same experimental task, but different learner populations tested on it
- The same learner populations, but tested in different experiments / on different tasks
AN EXAMPLE: OUR GENERICS PROJECT

- A big project with multiple sub-projects
- Two study phases:
  - Study 1: plural generics (TVJT) & inalienable possession (PMT)
  - Study 2: singular and plural generics (context-based AJT)
- Three languages of testing
  - English and Spanish (both studies 1 and 2)
  - Brazilian Portuguese (study 2 only)
- Multiple learner L1s:
  - For L2-English: L1-Spanish/Russian/Korean/Brazilian Portuguese
  - For L2-Spanish: L1-English
  - For L2/L3-Brazilian Portuguese: L1-English/Spanish
- For publication, we broke up the project in various ways
AN EXAMPLE: OUR GENERICS PROJECT
The submission process

- Most journals now use manuscript central for electronic submission
- Follow the guidelines on the website carefully, and respond to all items
- Do not expect a response very quickly: understand the timeline of the submission process:
  1. You submit to manuscript central or to managing editor
  2. The paper arrives in the inbox of the editor (and depending on the journal, is then assigned to an associate editor)
  3. The (associate) editor selects reviewers for the paper; some reviewers do not agree to review, so the editor has to find new reviewers
  4. The reviewers read the paper and submit their reviews
  5. The editor makes a decision based on the reviews
  6. The decision is conveyed (via manuscript central, or the managing editor) back to the author
Co-Editors

Mike Sharwood Smith
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Edinburgh, UK
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Silvina Montrul, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Urbana, IL USA
Since 2011
Review Editor

Margaret Thomas
Boston College

Editor Assistant

Alice Foucart
Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona
THE SUBMISSION PROCESS AT SECOND LANGUAGE RESEARCH

- Manuscript is submitted through Manuscript Central
- Editorial Assistant checks format and other features (a week)
- Manuscript moves for approval/rejection by Editors (2 weeks)
- The two editors look at each manuscript and discuss whether the manuscript is within scope and suitable to send to reviewers.
- We ask ourselves: Does this manuscript have a chance to survive the review process?
THE SUBMISSION PROCESS AT SECOND LANGUAGE RESEARCH

- If both Editors decide the paper is out of scope or not suitable, it is rejected immediately and the author receives an automatic message.
- If you do not hear from the editors within 2-3 weeks of submission, THIS IS GOOD NEWS in SLR, as it means that your paper was sent or will be sent to review.
- If we decide that the paper goes to review, the editors split the assignments and decide who will be managing each paper that passes the first in-house review.
- Each paper is assigned to one of the two co-editors.
CO-EDITOR’S JOB AT SECOND LANGUAGE RESEARCH (SILVINA)

- Read the paper and think of the best reviewers for the paper.
- Reviewers are chosen based on expertise.
- The bibliography you cite is also a place where we look for reviewers.
- Some of the reviewers are the authors you cite.
- But, many reviewers decline our invitation to review.
- We need to keep inviting reviewers until we find 3.
- We strive to get the best reviewers but sometimes we end up with the three reviewers who accepted to review the paper.
Then we wait . . .

- Once they accept the assignment, reviewers are given 4 weeks to turn in their evaluations.
- But reviewers are busy people and they often take longer, and longer, and longer
- Some reviewers don’t even turn in their reviews after 6 months!
- We try to find another reviewer, or if my co-editor and I are knowledgeable in the topic we try to make a decision based on the reviews we have.
- Once the three reviews are in, I read the paper again and then I read the three reviewer reports.
- I make a decision.
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Jeffrey Lidz - University of Maryland

MANAGING EDITOR Csilla Kajta - University of Maryland

ASSOCIATE EDITORS
Heather Goad - McGill University
John Grinstead - Ohio State University
Julien Musolino - Rutgers University
Harald Clahsen - University of Potsdam
Tania Ionin - University of Illinois

BRIEF ARTICLES
Bonnie Schwartz - University of Hawaii
Kamil Ud Deen - University of Hawaii
The submission process at **Language Acquisition**

1. Completeness of submission is checked: 3 days
2. Paper assigned to Editor-in-Chief: 2 days
3. Editor-in-Chief assigns Associate Editor: 3 days
4. Associate Editor picks reviewers: 7 days
5. Associate Editor invites reviewers: 1 day
6. Associate Editor assigns reviewers: 5 days
7. Reviewers provide their reviews: 35 days
8. Associate Editor makes a recommendation on the paper: 10 days
9. Editor-in-Chief makes decision on the paper: 5 days

- Total: 71 days **minimum** for the process, if everyone meets their deadlines!
  - And that’s just the first round of review…
ASSOCIATE EDITOR’S JOB AT LANGUAGE ACQUISITION (TANIA)

- Assigned papers by the Editor-in-Chief
- Find three reviewers for each paper, aiming for:
  - At least one reviewer with expertise in the language that the study focuses on (if other than English)
  - At least one reviewer with expertise in the specific area of the study reported in the paper
  - All three reviewers with expertise in the general area of the study (e.g., SLA of syntax)
- A common way of choosing reviewers: look for which authors are cited in the bibliography of the paper!
- Keep looking for reviewers until I find 3 who are willing to do the review.
**THE REVIEWERS**

- **Who are the reviewers?**
  - **Your peers:** faculty, and sometimes advanced graduate students, with expertise in the broad research area of your paper
  - Some reviewers may work in the specific area of your paper (you may be citing them a lot!)
  - Others may have only passing acquaintance, if any, with your specific research area (do not assume that reviewers are familiar with the literature that you are citing!)

- **Reviewers are doing this for free: be respectful of their time, and submit a well-written paper!**
TYPES OF REVIEW

- Double-blind review:
  - The authors do not know who the reviewers are
  - The reviewers do not know who the authors are

- Single-blind review:
  - The authors do not know who the reviewers are
  - The reviewers **do** know who the authors are

Make sure you know which type of review the journal has!

For double-blind review, you will need to anonymize the paper:
  - Remove author names, and all references to prior work (e.g., change the citations to “Author XXXX”)
THE PEER REVIEW PROCESS: POSSIBLE RESPONSES

- Accept
- Minor revisions
- Major revisions (=Revise and resubmit)
- Reject

http://researchinprogress.tumblr.com/page/25
POSSIBLE RESPONSES: ACCEPT OR MINOR REVISIONS

- Accept: the paper is perfect!
  - This almost never happens on the very first round of review

- Minor revisions:
  - This is the best response that you can realistically expect on the very first round of review
  - It usually means that once you make the minor revisions, the paper is reviewed only by the editors, with no further external review
  - But this outcome on the first round is very unlikely!
POSSIBLE RESPONSES: REJECT

- Even if your manuscript was rejected, it was still worthwhile to submit: you got useful, detailed feedback that you can use to revise the paper and submit it elsewhere!

- Examine why the paper was rejected:
  - Was it beyond the scope of the journal?
  - Was the problem primarily with organization / presentation / exposition?
  - Does the theory / background / discussion need to be clarified, expanded, motivated more?
  - Were there flaws in the methodology?
  - Do you need to collect more data?
THE OUTCOME OF THE REVIEW AND HOW TO RESPOND

HOW TO RESPOND

- We all have feelings.
- When we get the news, there is always an emotional reaction. We all feel not smart enough.
- If the news is not good, how do we handle it?
- Calm down, and do not read the reviews for at least two weeks.
- Think why the reviewers may have recommended major revisions/reject.
- Try to think of solutions to fix the problems.
- Come back to the specific comments and your paper when your mind is clear and you have handled your feelings.
POSSIBLE RESPONSES: MAJOR REVISIONS / REVISE & RESUBMIT

- This is the most likely outcome of the first round of revisions
- The next step: address reviewer comments and resubmit the paper
- Each comment should be addressed in one of two ways:
  - by a change to the paper itself
  - by a response to reviewers indicating why the requested change is not necessary
- Include a ‘response to reviewers’ file with your resubmission, responding to each of reviewers’ comments!
IMPORTANCE OF THE RESPONSE

- Be polite and appreciative because the reviewers read what you wrote.

“We would like to thank all three reviewers for their kind and thorough evaluation of our manuscript and their suggestions for revision. We have implemented all of these suggestions and feel that the article is much stronger consequently. Below we respond to the substantial comments in detail (all minor matters, such as typos, style etc. have been carried out and will not be commented on further.)”
Sample response to reviewer: Making the requested change

Reviewer: Page 22 (the end of section 2.3): When taking stock of the section on Russian, the authors note that since singular and plural NPs are equally acceptable in both NP-level genericity and sentence-level genericity contexts, any differences in L2ers’ judgments about English could not be attributed to L1-transfer from Russian. It would make sense to have a similar (?) statement at the end of the section on Korean (although since no testing on Korean is reported such statement would be less sound).

Response: This statement has been moved to come after the discussion of both Russian and Korean. Additionally, we have included pilot data on judgments of singular vs. plural generics in Korean (we did not include these data before for space reasons).
SAMPLE RESPONSE TO REVIEWER: RESPONDING WITHOUT MAKING ANY CHANGES

**Reviewer:** Furthermore, on pp. 29-30, the authors argue that, if the Russian and Korean speakers exhibit similar performance on L2 English generics, this would provide evidence against L1 transfer and “in favor of semantic universals.” The Russian speakers appear to outperform the Korean speakers however, and it would be hard to make a case that the two groups’ performance is really “similar”, so does this undermine the claim for semantic universals?

**Response:** Our focus is on the patterns, rather than on the overall degree of accuracy – since the Russian speakers are overall more proficient, they would be expected to outperform the Korean speakers.
REVISING THE PAPER

- Some changes can be made by writing alone:
  - Expanding the background section, posing new research questions, redoing the discussion, changing the presentation, etc.

- But others require going back to the study:
  - Collecting more data and/or redoing the study design
After ‘REVISE AND RESUBMIT’

- After the paper has gone through a second round of external review, the most common outcomes are one of:
  - Acceptance with minor revisions
  - Rejection
- Both options mean no further external review

However, in some cases, the editor decides to let the paper undergo a third or even a fourth round of external review

http://researchinprogress.tumblr.com/post/38780693323/opening-the-long-awaited-editors-email-just-to-see-the
# A Year at a Glance in Second Language Research

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Manuscripts by Country

Information based on All Manuscripts with a submission date of On or after Feb 10, 2012. Grouped by Country of Submission.

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MANUSCRIPTS WITH A DECISION

Information based on all manuscripts whose submission date is on or after Feb 10, 2012 and decision date is on or after Feb 10, 2012

Grouped by: Manuscript Decision

No. of Manuscripts by Decision

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Acceptance Rates Last Year at Second Language Research

All manuscripts received: 14.3%
Only manuscripts which go out for review
  accept 24%
  major revisions 29%
  minor revisions 30%
  reject 17%

Acceptance rates are driven by the quality of the submissions.
SUMMARY: SOME DO’S AND DON’T’S

Do:
- Make an informed decision about where to submit
- Adhere to the word or page limit set by the journal
- Adhere to the journal’s style guidelines
- Get comments on the draft from at least two people before submitting the paper
- Proofread the paper for grammar and spelling prior to submission
- Carefully and politely respond to all reviewer comments
**SUMMARY: SOME DO’S AND DON’T’S**

- **Don’t:**
  - Submit to more than one journal at a time
  - Submit a paper that is disorganized, too long, not formatted according to the guidelines, or not proofread for grammar and spelling
  - Submit a paper that has a lot of overlap with another paper that you have published or submitted (but overlap with a proceedings paper or a working paper is ok)
  - Make general claims not backed up with citations (e.g., “Many researchers believe that…”)
  - Harshly critique prior studies, especially if your own study faces some of the same problems
  - Dismiss reviewer comments
AND REMEMBER…

- The purpose of submitting a paper is to get it reviewed!
- Even if the paper does not ultimately get published, you will benefit from the reviewers’ feedback
- And if it does get published, it will be significantly improved thanks to the feedback
- Plus, you may get ideas for further follow-up studies based on the feedback
QUESTIONS?