

2015 LSA Annual Meeting Special Session on the Publishing Process

Jointly sponsored by the Committee on Student Issues, and the Committee of Editors of Linguistics Journals

Welcome. Troy Messick (UConn) LSA Bloch Fellow

Introduction of Panel Members: Greg Carlson (Rochester) Editor, *Language*

Brief presentations:

Brian Joseph (Ohio State). Former Editor, *Language*, and present editor, *Journal of Greek Linguistics*

From thesis (or term paper) to submission: I discuss the differences between a piece of work prepared as part of a student's requirements, e.g. a thesis or term paper, and a journal article, and how to navigate from the former to the latter. I concentrate on matters of audience, deciding what part(s) of the work to focus on in the article, and general stylistic/organizational issues.

Kai von Fintel (MIT). Co-editor, *Semantics and Pragmatics*

Open Access : I discuss options for ensuring that your work is as appropriately placed and widely accessible as possible (open access repositories, open access journals, etc.).

Keren Rice (Toronto). Former Editor, *International Journal of American Linguistics*

What is peer review: Peer review is considered the 'gold star' in publication. In this short presentation, I discuss what peer review is, how reviewers are chosen, the notion of double blind, and the value of peer review to authors.

Joseph Salmons (Wisconsin – Madison). Editor, *Diachronica*

The review process: What happens after you submit a paper to a journal until you get an editorial decision? I sketch the stages of the editorial process typical for linguistics journals.

Jeffrey Lidz (Maryland). Editor, *Language Acquisition*

Revise & Resubmit: Revising an article for resubmission requires careful attention to the comments of reviewers and the guidance of the editor. Here I discuss the importance of being responsive to reviews and learning to incorporate suggestions effectively. I also discuss strategies for disagreeing with reviewers and for writing an effective revision and response letter.

Open Question period

From thesis (or term paper) to submission

Brian D. Joseph

(Former editor of *Language* and of *Diachronica*, current editor of *Journal of Greek Linguistics*)

The Ohio State University

Special Session on the Publishing Process

LSA Annual Meeting

Portland — 8 January 2014

First key point:

- **Term paper / MA Thesis / PhD Dissertation \neq journal article**
- **Different purposes — Different audiences**

Thus (for instance):

- **a long literature review to show that you know the literature is generally unnecessary in a journal article**
- **you can assume your audience will know enough about the topic you are writing on that they won't need a "Topic X for Dummies" section**

Preliminary:

- **Do I have something publishable?**
- **Talk to your professor or advisor about it (a prof who is on the ball should say something to you about it if s/he thinks it's suitable but don't be afraid to ask)**

More on Planning (on your own but preferably also in consultation with advisor or favorite professor):

- **Consider trying to publish just a piece of a term paper; with a thesis, you are likely to be able to come up with a couple of publishable pieces, and maybe several from a dissertation**
- **cf. “least publishable units” (= [least [publishable units]] / ≠ [[least publishable] units])**

NB: the decision as to whether to slice up a dissertation into several smaller papers or to try to publish it as a whole (as a book-length work, presumably revised and reworked, maybe elaborated somewhat) is one you should not take lightly — it may depend on your circumstances: what tenure expectations are (if an assistant professor).

Note that the ethical norms in our field are such that you can publish an article or two and **then publish the whole as a book but not vice-versa.**

- **Know the journal(s) you're aiming at, as to:**
 - ♦ **content (so that your piece will “fit” well with the journal’s ambit)**
 - ♦ **article-type (do they accept short pieces (“squibs”)? Do they accept purely descriptive pieces? Etc.)**
 - ♦ **submission format (so you will know how to submit it and so that it won’t be rejected out of hand)**

An important middle step:

- **run drafts by professors, fellow students, ... (parents, friends, anyone who will read it??)**
- **yes, advisors have unique insights (and parents contribute support in various ways) but sharing work with fellow students is especially important:**
 - ◆ **the ideal is to develop into part of a community of scholars, with common interests and common goals; your peers play a role in this regard, particularly ones who are closer to finishing or who have just finished**

A critical final step:

- **when you have a manuscript ready to send off,
PROOFREAD IT CAREFULLY to make sure there are:**

- **no typos**
- **no sentence fragments**
- **no missing references**
- **no "notes to self" about stuff to fill in, etc.**

as these make a **bad**** impression on editors and reviewers**

- **if you are not a native speaker of English, have a native speaker look over the paper for diction, grammar, etc.**

(note what editors say about language/writing problems being a basis for a desk rejection!)

A word about professional ethics:

- **multiple submission of the same paper to different outlets AT THE SAME TIME is a serious violation of the norms in our field (sequential submission once a paper is rejected is OK, but two or more simultaneously is not and is considered by some editors to be a very serious offense)**

And while we are at it

- **on your CV, I personally would recommend that a section labeled “Publications” be reserved just for actually published papers and accepted papers (= real publications-to-be); submissions still in the process of being adjudicated should be listed under a separate category labeled “Submitted Papers” or “Work in Progress”**

Thank you, and Good luck!

Kai von Fintel (MIT) Co-editor Semantics and
Pragmatics

Open Access

Choice of publication venue

But before that ...

- share early, often, and relentlessly
 - advisors, mentors, colleagues, friends
 - reading/work-in-progress groups
 - workshops, conferences
 - your website
 - LingBuzz/ROA/Semantics Archive
 - mailing lists
 - reddit, twitter, facebook, whatever

- why?
 - feedback
 - connections
 - exposure

Where to submit

Question: journal or edited book?

Where to submit

Question: journal or edited book?

Answer: \Rightarrow journal!

- find candidate journals
 - where has similar work been published?
 - ask for advice

- how to choose
 - reputation/exposure/impact
 - selectivity
 - speediness of the review and decision process
 - quality of feedback (do editors craft decisions with positive guidance?)
 - respect for authors' rights (open access friendliness)
 - quality (and existence) of copy-editing
 - quality (and existence) of professional typesetting
 - speediness of publication

Protect your rights

- your best interest in your work being widely and openly available
- carefully read the publication agreement
- make sure to be aware of your rights
- Sherpa/RoMEO website is a useful source of information:
<http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo/>

Green OA

- allows posting to personal/institutional/disciplinary websites
 - of preprints
 - of postprints (better)
 - of the final published version (best)
- sometimes already part of journal's policies
- sometimes authors can insist on those rights (amendments to publication agreement)

Gold OA

- “author-side” fee for open access publication
 - gold OA journals (such as *Frontiers of Science*)
 - traditional toll OA journals (hybrid, OA option)
 - some institutions, grant agencies will pay or subsidize
- Don't be taken in by predatory gold OA operations!

Platinum OA

- no cost to authors or readers
- institutionally supported (perhaps NPR model)
- example: *Semantics & Pragmatics*

Understanding Peer Review

Keren Rice

Special Session on the Publishing
Process

LSA 2015, Portland

What is peer review?

- The “gold standard”
- Review of submitted papers by people considered by the editor(s) to be experts in the field
- Evaluation of quality of scholarship, relevance, reliability, appropriateness for journal, readability

How does peer review work?

- The editor determines if the paper is appropriate for the journal, and then, if it is, s/he identifies people who would be appropriate reviewers.

How are reviewers selected?

- Editors look for people who are knowledgeable about the particular topics addressed in the paper.
- A particular theoretical topic – people with expertise in that area
- A language or language family as well – someone who can evaluate the quality and appropriateness of the data
- An experimental area – someone who can evaluate the design and the statistics

How many reviewers are there?

- This depends. Some journals try to get two reviewers; some try for three.
- In general, more people than this evaluate a paper as often an associate editor is also involved.

Can I suggest reviewers?

- This depends on the journal– some welcome suggestions; others tend to disregard them.
- If there are professional conflicts, it is good to let the editor know about them when you submit.

Is the author/authors identified to the reviewers?

- There are different types of review, and different journals make different choices.
- In what is called single blind review, the author is known to the reviewers.
- In double blind review, the author and the reviewers are anonymous.
- Reviewers often try to guess who the author is.
- Sometimes a reviewer will ask to be identified even if the general journal policy is double blind.
- Sometimes an author wants to be identified.

Are the reviewers identified to the author(s)?

- In most cases, the names of the reviewers are not revealed to the author.
- Authors often spend a lot of time trying to guess who the reviewers might be!
- In single blind review, the reviewers know who the author is.
- In double blind review, the reviewers do not know the author, and the author does not know the reviewers.

Is reviewing always some version of blind?

- Some journals are open, with the names of the author(s) and reviewers both being revealed.

It's easy to identify authors in small fields and on the internet - why double blind review?

- Not officially knowing who the author is helps in evaluating the work rather than the author – it helps the reviewer keep in mind that they should act as if they don't know who the author is.

What does the editor do with the reviews?

- The editor, team of editors, or associate editor first depending on the structure of the journal reads the paper and all of the reviews. The editor or editorial team then makes a judgment on the paper (a version of accept, a version of revise and resubmit, reject), weighing the comments from the reviewers and their own evaluation in coming to a decision. The reviewers are advisory to the editorial team, but reviews are taken seriously even if the recommendation made by a reviewer or reviewers is not followed.

If I revise and resubmit the paper, what happens then?

- It is possible that when the editor writes to you with the decision about the paper, s/he will say whether a revised paper will go back to reviewers or not. Editors often try to send the paper to at least a subset of the original reviewers, although this is not always possible.

It's a lot of work! Why is peer review valuable?

- With good peer review, papers generally improve, even from very experienced authors.
- The peer review process attests to the quality of the paper in terms of content and presentation.
- Peer review is used by universities in decisions about hiring, tenure, and promotion.

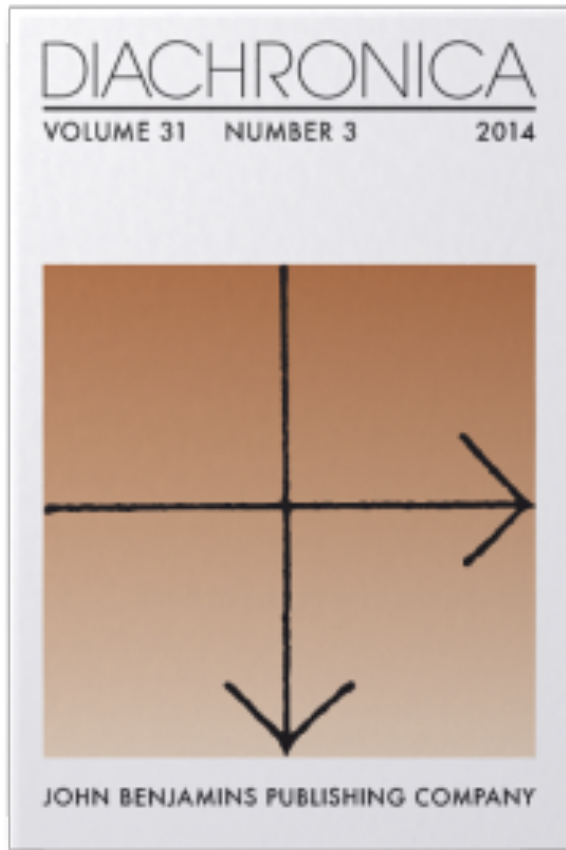
The review process

What happens from when you submit until you get a decision?

Joe Salmons, *Diachronica*

LSA special session on the publishing process

Hypothesis



- There is an **underlying abstract structure** common to the review process for linguistics journals.
- Differences are the result of **journal-specific rules, parameter settings, or constraint rankings.**

Data: Survey of editors

1. Who is involved in handling manuscripts?
2. Do you do 'desk rejections' (i.e., reject manuscripts without external review)?
3. Are reviewer guidelines available to potential authors?
4. How many reviewers typically vet a paper?
5. What is the basic timeline for the process?
6. Who is involved in writing editorial

Responses from ...

- *Australian Journal of Linguistics*
- *Biolinguistics*
- *Brain & Language*
- *Diachronica*
- *Functions of Language*
- *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication*
- *International Journal of American Linguistics*
- *Italian Journal of Linguistics*
- *Journal of Comparative Germanic Linguistics*
- *Journal of Jewish Languages*
- *Journal of Linguistics*
- *Language*
- *Language Dynamics and Change*
- *Latin American Journal of Content and Language Integrated Learning*
- *Lingua*
- *Linguistic Inquiry*
- *Linguistic Typology*
- *Semantics & Pragmatics*
- *Studia Anglica*

Who handles manuscripts?

A whole set of different people may be making key decisions and doing key work on your manuscript:

- At some journals, esp. smaller ones, the main editor does this, often alone.
- Some journals have co-editors who share the work.
- Some journals have a team that deals with this, that is, as a group.
- The role of Associate Editors varies. In some cases, AEs provide advice on reviewers and such; at others, they take the lead.
- Some journals allow you to select which editor will handle a manuscript.

Desk rejections?

- The answer from all journals was ‘yes’.
- In addition to **quality** and **fit with journal**, quality of the prose and language was mentioned.
- Many editors stressed the value of saving time for the authors and sparing reviewers manuscripts that would not be accepted.
- Some journals desk reject a majority of submissions; others only do it in clear cases.

Guidelines for reviewers

Most have guidelines and they are often available, but not all journals have them.

- A piece of advice from one editor: Guidelines or no, “young scholars should work with a mentor in preparing the paper.”
- Three editors indicated that they are going to make guidelines available to authors, so the practice is spreading.
- If guidelines are available, **you should look at them carefully and make sure your paper fits the relevant bill.**

How many reviewers

- Often two for simple cases (where two can cover the range of theory and data).
- Often three where it's more complex.
- **PLUS** input from editorial team, editor.

Timeline

- Serious mismatch between goals and reality.
- The common pattern:
 - a week or so to check the manuscript,
 - time to find readers (from a week to a couple of months),
 - readers often with a deadline of a month,
 - **then** we can **start** on a decision.
- Readers **commonly take longer than a month**, often 2–3. It then takes a week to a month to draft and revise a decision.
- Typical **GOAL** is 2–3 months and a typical **REALITY** is 4–6 months.

Who writes the decision?

- Three categories (but pretty constrained variation):
 - the editor (executive editor or ‘handling’ editor),
 - the editor does it with input from an associate editor,
 - the editor regularly works with / consults a broader team.
- Things are moving from the first toward the second or third, based on some comments.
- Even editors who write decisions alone consult other editors on difficult cases.
- It was once common for decisions to be collations of reviews. One editor said: **“Our decisions are epically detailed, typically going far far beyond a collation of the peer reviews.”**

Further points from editors, I

- The most common decision is ‘**revise and resubmit**’, which should be taken as good news: It means that the paper is publishable if the author engages seriously, scrupulously, and constructively with the reviews.

Authors can always discuss reviewers’ points, or the incompatibility between reviewers’ demands, with the handling editor, who will advise the author.

Further points from editors, II

- If you are talking to junior people, one ...potentially enlightening point might be ... how the various editorial management platforms (e.g., ScholarOne, Editorial Manager) display the status of a paper.
- ... it may seem like no action is being taken when, in fact, a lot of work is going on behind the scenes. ...
- In other cases, the messages are a bit opaque.

Further points from editors, III

- ... we consider reviews **ADVICE**; **DECISIONS** about publication or otherwise are taken by the Editorial Board in light of this advice. Thus, the Editorial Board reserves the right to overrule (positive as well as negative) reviews. In practice this doesn't happen a lot, though.

Thank you.

- celxj.org

Jeffrey Lidz (Maryland). Editor, Language
Acquisition

Revise & Resubmit

You've Submitted your Article

Now what?

Wait....

and wait some more...

and wait some more...

You can ask the editor for updates if it seems like it's taking longer than expected

(but be polite)

and wait some more...

The Reviews

2-3 reviews

Read them.

Get mad.

Wait...

Read them again with a clear head

Empathize

The Revision

Assume your reviewers are mostly right

Do what they say (with guidance from editor).

If you don't know how to respond to specific comments, get advice from...

colleagues, mentors, friends, the editor...

The Revision

Assume your reviewers are mostly right

If you disagree (in order of increasing risk)

say that you agree and do what they said

say that you agree and do something that shows that you were sensitive to their concern

say that you disagree (respectfully) and do something that shows you were sensitive to their concern

The Revision Letter

Thank the editor for their help

Thank the reviewers for their deeply insightful comments that have improved the paper substantially (often, this is even true)

State what the overall effects of the revision were and how they addressed the primary concerns of the editor & reviewers

The Revision Letter

Go through each comment of each reviewer and say

(a) what you did to address it and

(b) where they can find the change in the new manuscript

Don't forget to thank them for their hard work, insightful comments and the care they took in helping you to improve the article

Resubmit

Make sure your revision addresses all concerns and that your cover letter is complete.

Submit....

Wait....

and wait some more...

and wait some more...

You can ask the editor for updates if it seems like it's taking longer than expected

(but be polite)

and wait some more...

Repeat?

You may have to go through this more than once.

Try to keep in mind that people are trying to help you, not to stand in your way

Rejected?

Try to figure out why

Wrong journal choice

Contribution not made clear

Real problems (logic, methods, etc)

Then respond appropriately

Revise, then choose another journal

Make sure your contribution is clear

Start over and fix problems

Don't get discouraged

Publishing is hard

not everyone shares your assumptions

some people are obstructionist

reviewer choice plays a huge role

learning to respond carefully takes time

You will get better at it

Good luck!