

Writing for Publication: Strategies to Get Published in Journals

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Abstract

University lecturers are required to get themselves published in peer-reviewed international journals. For some lecturers, this requirement can be a daunting task. There are many questions swirling in their heads: How do I find the right journal for my article?, What is the rejection rate of a good international journal?, How is the review process going?. These are some questions that I will try to answer in my presentation.

Keywords

publication, international, journal

There are many reasons why university lecturers would like to get their manuscripts published in international journals.

- To fulfil academic obligation
- To develop their career
- To demonstrate their knowledge
- To get some money
- To get the joy of writing and publishing their works

However writing does not always happen for some reasons. According to Taylor et al. (2005), there are several common reasons: not enough time, nothing to write about, no one to work with in writing, lack of secretarial or administrative support, lack of knowledge as to how to research information, no mentor for writing activities, no motivation, no self-confidence, no idea on how to start writing and “I hate writing”.

Step 1: Selecting a topic & relevant literature

Deciding a good topic is a tricky business. To find out the up-to-date and current topics in ELT, we need to read top journals such as ELT Journal and Language Teaching & Research. Top journals usually provide an updated list on “most cited articles” and “most read articles” which might indicate the recent development of ELT.

Once we get the writing topic, we need to do the reading. Reading theoretical, review, research, practical, interview articles and books about our topic is very important and is the very first step in writing. Many scholars suggest writers to read at least 50 articles or books to get deeper understanding of the topic.

Nowadays there are many good journals that provide open-access articles for their readers. Some of them are listed on <http://englishrep.org/free-e-journal-list-2/>. However we need to be careful in selecting open-access journals to read since there are thousand journals categorized as predatory journals (refer to <http://scholarlyoa.com> to get the complete list).

Another technique to get and read articles is to visit the experts' or the scholars' websites as listed on <http://englishrep.org/the-experts-page/>. Some scholars such as Willy Renandya, Stephen Krashen, George Jacobs, and many others have uploaded their works on their websites. These can be downloaded for free.

Google Books website also provides information and excerpts of books. Depending on the texts and permissions granted, we may be able to read excerpts or even the whole book online.

After reading those articles and books, our next task is to identify the research gaps that show the differences between our study and other people's studies. The gaps here can be in the form of different data gathering instruments, different skill areas, different context, etc.

Once the research gap is identified, we can start collecting and analyzing data. We need to use the literature reviewed to support our argument.

Step 2: Writing a manuscript

There are two common types of academic articles: research and position (thought) articles. Research articles use IMRAD format:

- Introduction: What was the research question?
- Methods: How did you try to answer it?
- Results: What did you find?
- And
- Discussion: What does it mean?

Position (thought) articles use the following format:

- Frame the issue (describe, define etc)
- Make the case (present your argument here --- please include empirical studies that support your position)
- Suggest a model for the application of your idea

A good manuscript contains clear message and conveys the author's thoughts in simple words. It presents new knowledge: research findings, theoretical developments, new insight, or new analysis. There should be no grammatical and typographical errors.

Step 3: Publishing in journals

There are some factors to consider before sending a manuscript to a journal:

- Aims and scope of the journal
- Target audience
- Access (printed and/or open access versions)
- Quality (published articles, editorial board, publisher, impact factor, index)
- Review process
- Rejection rate
- Publication time / publishing frequency & number of published articles
- Submission guideline

It is also important to notice that journal publishing timelines can vary depending on editor and reviewer. In general it will take 6-12 months to get published in a reputable international journal. Many good journals only publish once or twice per year; and they have 6-10 articles per issue. Many reputable journals do not charge any publication fee to their authors.

Recognized journals have a rejection rate of about 70%. Some especially less-well known, regional and newer journals may have a lower rejection rate (50% or 60%). According to Philips (n.a), rejection happens because of some reasons:

- The article will not appeal to a wider, international audience.
- The article is written in poor English.
- The article is too short or too long.
- The article has been submitted to the wrong journal
- Nothing new is stated or found.
- The article is under-theorized.
- The article is under-contextualized.
- It is not a journal article and would be better suited to another form of publication.

In conclusion, there is nothing impossible to achieve and there is no secret recipe in getting our work published. This is not to say that writing and getting published is a smooth-sailing process. However, with dedication and hard work, writing and publishing can become more enjoyable.

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