

Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](#)

# System

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/system](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/system)

Short communication

## How to get published in English: Advice from the outgoing Editor-in-Chief



James A. Coleman

*The Open University, UK*

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Received 2 January 2014

Received in revised form 3 January 2014

Accepted 3 January 2014

#### Keywords:

Publication

International journals

Non-native speakers

Peer review

Plagiarism

Research ethics

Open access publication

Originality

Significance

Rigour

### ABSTRACT

Language teachers and applied linguists in universities across the world are under increasing pressure to publish in prestigious international journals. This article draws on very extensive experience as author, reviewer and editor to provide practical advice to academics on how to maximise their chances of getting published in an international journal. It details how a thesis differs from a journal article, how to select target journals, and how to avoid junk journals. It explains the whole process of submission and peer review. It discusses the challenges of writing in academic English. A section on research ethics defines plagiarism, and describes why and how authors must ensure that their submissions contain no plagiarised material.

© 2014 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

## 1. Introduction

In universities across the globe, academic staff are under pressure to publish in high-status international journals. In a few countries, no research degree can be awarded until an article arising from the thesis has been published. When stakes are so high, so are authors' emotions. Some early-career academic researchers can become so anxious that they ask journal editors to fast-track their submissions. I want to counter unrealistic expectations with a fuller understanding of the submission, review and publications process.

What follows is a distillation of more than forty years' experience as a university teacher and researcher. I have just retired after 3 years as Editor-in-Chief of *System*, but I have also authored a hundred-odd publications, supervised and examined doctoral theses in several countries, and acted as reviewer for more than twenty international journals as well as for research funding bodies and book publishers. This article gives my own personal view, and does not necessarily represent the position of Elsevier, of *System*, or of its new editorial team. I concentrate on academic journals, but do not forget professional journals and less specialised media, which can have more public impact.

## 2. Why publish?

Publication makes available to interested readers the latest empirical findings and theoretical understandings, thus adding to what we know in a particular domain. For *System* the domain is language learning and teaching, and importance is attached

E-mail address: [jac672@openmail.open.ac.uk](mailto:jac672@openmail.open.ac.uk).

to the value of the research for pedagogy, in other words the way in which the teaching and learning processes are conceived and implemented. The best research can, directly or indirectly, influence actual practice and thereby help language learners.

Getting published in a respected international journal also brings prestige to authors and to their institution. National research assessment is a typical feature of state-funded education systems, while in the complex global market which higher education has become, publication and citation rates contribute to all of the national and global university rankings, advancing the authors' professional career and making their institution more attractive to students.

The worst reason for publishing is 'to qualify for a research degree', but regrettably some countries insist on publication of research findings before awarding a Masters or Doctorate. This has had at least three very negative outcomes: confusion between thesis and article, explosive growth of junk journals (see Section 11 below), and time pressures which authors seek to transfer to editors.

### 3. Thesis and article

Think about the purpose of a doctorate, and the intended readership of your thesis. Compare these with the function of an academic article and its intended readership.

People undertake postgraduate research for personal reasons including interest and accessing an academic career, as well as professional reasons such as exploring a real-world problem or unknown domain, and challenging orthodoxies. The function of the thesis is to show your ability to conceive, design, conduct and report on an original piece of research. Good supervisors will ensure that you become familiar, through your reading, with relevant current theories and the latest state of knowledge in the field, and will embed in the doctoral years a training in research ethics and in qualitative and quantitative methods of data elicitation, analysis and presentation.

The function of the thesis, which will usually be read by just a small handful of people, is to demonstrate your ability to undertake and successfully complete a study whose results will be interesting, original and significant, to show that you have knowledge and critical understanding of previous work in the area, of relevant theories, and of relevant research methods, and to show that you can report research in a professional way. A PhD is a sort of licence to undertake individual research.

Publishing an article can also be personally motivated by a desire for public recognition, reward for several years of very hard work, career promotion, and professionally motivated by a desire to inform other professionals of your findings and make a real contribution to your field of theory and practice. Your article is designed to disseminate your research findings: it has a different purpose from your thesis, and therefore a different shape and length. In adapting a thesis into one or more articles, you therefore need to rewrite and abbreviate.

Even a good thesis, especially at Masters level, may not make a good article. It will typically have a local focus, perhaps small scale, and may explore – especially if quantitative – two or more variables whose combination is dictated by the need to find a suitable Masters topic rather than by a genuine need to push back the threshold of knowledge. In a thesis, the readers (examiners) know the context and know the literature, and the author's aim is to convince them, often through an extensive essay chapter, that s/he also understands them. In an international journal, readers normally do know the literature, so they just need the study to be rapidly located within it. But they often do not know the context, which needs to be quickly described. Always explain local references like 'fifth grade' or 'K-12' or 'CET-4' or 'DAF', which are transparent to a national readership but obscure to an international one.

In a published article, the purpose of the literature review is not to show an interest in and some knowledge of the area under investigation. It is to contextualise the study in terms of both theory and the current state of knowledge. You must justify undertaking the study. Many rejected submissions seem to start from a choice of factors which can be investigated statistically using questionnaires or simple test measures, rather than from an authentic need to know. The function of the literature review is to offer a compact, critical survey of previous studies in the field that helps to show the need for the present study by identifying a real and significant gap in knowledge. There must be a clear rationale, a logical link from the review to the research questions, and from there to the methodology, the results and the conclusions.

What makes for good doctoral training in statistical methods does not necessarily make an article suitable for international publication. As an author, you need to identify a research gap. Why is the study necessary? What lack of knowledge will it address? For international publication it is not enough that you know the literature, know the research instruments and data elicitation techniques, and have explored something in a satisfactory way. You have to convince the editor and reviewers that your research questions needed to be asked.

### 4. Basics

Select your target journal(s) carefully, and aim high. Where are the key articles in your field published? Ask your supervisors and colleagues. Access the homepage and study the Aims and Scope and the journal's requirements. Skim several issues to appreciate its approach. Does it accept both quantitative and qualitative studies, theoretical and empirical articles? If you are concerned with prestige, look at citations and impact factors (<http://www.info.sciverse.com/scopus/> or <http://wokinfo.com/>) or some of the available journal lists such as ERIH or ERA (<http://www.esf.org/research-areas/humanities/erih-european-reference-index-for-the-humanities.html>; [http://www.arc.gov.au/era/era\\_journal\\_list.htm](http://www.arc.gov.au/era/era_journal_list.htm)) – but use these with caution, since journal reputation is very subjective and there are many other ways of measuring real impact. I know

some colleagues who draw up a target table of journal titles: ‘over the next five years I want to be published in A and B and C, and within ten years also in D and E’.

Be honest with yourself about the significance of your study. Are the findings really interesting enough, significant enough and generalisable to other contexts to warrant publication in an international journal? If not, aim at a local or national journal which may well offer a faster route to publication.

If you are aiming at international publication, take the time to read the extensive author guides provided by all serious publishers via the journal homepage (e.g. <http://www.journals.elsevier.com/system/>). Then write for the specific journal: read carefully the advice to authors and follow it in every detail. Typically, you will need an abstract, an introduction, a short literature review to locate the study and describe the context, followed by a short method section to show the validity and reliability of your study and allow replication. After presenting in detail the most significant results, you will discuss the implications for theory, research methods and pedagogical practice, and acknowledge the limitations. The literature review, method and references will be very condensed in comparison to a thesis. Ensure that the length, style and structure are exactly as specified, including the References: the sooner you adopt bibliographic software such as Zotero, Endnote or Ref-Works, the easier this becomes. Except on the title page, anonymise mentions of yourself, your institution and your earlier publications. Run a spell-check (for typos as much as for spelling) and find-and-replace accidental double-spaces. Expect to do a lot of rewriting, and have your article read by several critical friends (colleagues, supervisors, fellow researchers) before submitting. Reporting your results at a conference provides helpful feedback in advance of submission.

How many articles can legitimately result from a single study is a matter for judgment. A major qualitative or theoretically important study may warrant more extensive coverage than a single article allows. But if your submission is part of a larger study, whether or not other articles have already been submitted or published, always mention this in the space provided.

Avoid piecemeal or fragmented publication (sometimes called ‘salami slicing’), i.e. trying to get several thin articles published rather than a single impactful one. The temptation seems strongest where a survey has explored statistically, through a questionnaire and/or other quantitative measures, a number of variables, and authors try to submit one article comparing variable A with variable B, another comparing B and C, another A and C, and so on. A high-status journal is in any case unlikely to be interested in small-scale quantitative surveys, and still more so if the variables and instruments are already well-researched, the findings are unsurprising and/or of local interest, and the data are presented in a raw form which fails to draw out, for readers without a quantitative background, what the figures actually mean.

## 5. English is not my native language

All journal editors, especially in applied linguistics, are acutely aware of the difficulties of getting published in a language which is not your own. It is well established that university research rankings and citation indices favour English-language publication, and that non-native users of English face considerable obstacles over and above those faced by all authors in adopting the generic norms of academic writing. Among the top applied linguistics journals, *System* perhaps has the largest number of international authors, subscribers, reviewers and readers. *System* has an explicit mission to help new authors to achieve publication, and a very strong track record in publishing articles from authors whose mother tongue is not English. But the rate of submissions means that we can consider articles only if the English meets a high level of acceptability.

All of *System*’s editorial team have written and published repeatedly in another language (in French and German in my case), so we are more aware than most of the difficulties of publishing an academic article in a language which is not your own. However, we also know that

- authors want to be judged on the originality, rigour and significance of their research, and not on any issues of linguistic expression
- the reputation of the journal itself depends in part on how well our authors have reported their research
- we have a duty to our reviewers, who generously give their time and expertise to advise on the articles submitted to *System*; their job is to evaluate and provide feedback on the content and presentation, and not to proof-read and correct awkward or incorrect English. As *System*’s co-editors, we need to ensure that submissions reach a certain level of acceptability and readability before we can send them to reviewers.

All journal editors therefore advise authors to have their article read by a ‘critical friend’ or colleague, and to ensure that it meets expected international standards of academic English. Publishers and private companies – and some universities – offer authors proof-reading services, usually at the author’s expense, but journal editors are unable to advise on their suitability or cost-effectiveness.

## 6. The submission, peer review and publication process

A PhD candidate wrote to me recently to ask whether, if s/he submitted to *System*, her/his article could be published within two months. The answer was no, but what follows is based on my reply, in which I set out the successive stages through which a submitted article must pass. Practices change with time and with technological innovation, and each journal and each country has its own norms and conventions. But here I seek to set out the situation as it is today, in 2014, for this particular journal.

Your initial submission first goes through a technical check to ensure that pages are numbered sequentially, the tables have been properly numbered and formatted, any references to authors or institutions have been anonymised, the abstract is the right length, the English is to an acceptable standard, references follow the appropriate convention, and so on. This may take up to ten days (the Editors have no control over it, and indeed no involvement at all in the technical check process) and up to half the submissions have to be sent back to the authors at this stage and resubmitted.

Once the technical check is passed, a pdf file is created and the editors are informed. At least two editors will look at the paper and judge whether it has the necessary rigour, significance and originality to be sent for review. Our reviewers are very busy people, and we send them only material which has a chance of ultimate publication. This initial editorial check takes a week or two, and perhaps half of the articles we receive are rejected without review. The rejection memo briefly explains our decision: for example, the topic is beyond the scope of *System*; the literature review fails to take account of recent work, or fails to justify the research; the experiment is methodologically flawed; the statistical analysis is inappropriate or overly technical; the reporting is unclear, badly written or poorly structured; the research reported is valid but lacks pedagogical application or holds no interest for *System* readers. Probably the most frequent reason for rejection without review is lack of significance: international journals like ours rarely publish the kind of small-scale quantitative study designed to give doctoral students experience in statistics, but which is of no importance, even locally, for language learning and teaching practice.

Before a submission is sent for review, we may run a plagiarism check (see [Section 10.5](#) below). The decision to send for review may be taken with enthusiasm or with resignation. We sometimes think that a submission will probably not get through the review process, but will provide the (perhaps inexperienced) author with valuable feedback in return for the effort put into researching and writing. At the other extreme, we get enthusiastic about really exciting and original research where the study has been well conducted and the results are significant.

## 7. Peer review

Once a submission is passed for review, our Editorial Assistant has to identify and invite two appropriate reviewers. *System* operates double-blind review: each anonymous manuscript is reviewed by at least two peer reviewers who themselves remain anonymous. Very often one or both of those invited are either away or too busy. Some, unfortunately, do not reply at all. Automated reminders are sent in such cases, and ultimately, if the reviewer either fails to respond, or accepts the review but fails to deliver, or declines to review, the reviewer is deselected and replaced by another – but all of this takes time. We ask reviewers to complete the review within 30 days (60 days during the summer vacation period), but it is very rare that the whole process is completed so quickly.

To supplement the generic advice for reviewers at <http://www.journals.elsevier.com/system/> (which can also be very informative for authors), we provided outline advice to our reviewers in 2011. They complete two sections, one providing feedback to authors, and the other confidentially for editors, though this second space is often left blank unless there is a special reason to complete it, such as suspected plagiarism, uncertainty whether to ask for major revisions or reject completely, or a judgment so negative that it would be hurtful to the authors. We expect reviewers to begin their feedback to authors with a short section recalling the content of the article (for the benefit of busy editors and to reassure authors that their work has been properly read) and giving a general overview of its qualities. The detailed evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the article follows. The editors are seeking articles which are

- interesting to *System* readers
- original
- rigorous in method and analysis
- significant in their findings and conclusions
- well situated in relevant theory and in the current state of knowledge
- well presented in terms of writing, structure, style and register.

Reviewers select a summary verdict:

- accept without revision (very rare)
- accept with minor revisions (as detailed in the review itself, and sometimes in an attached version of the submission with tracked changes and comments)
- revise and resubmit (where more major revisions are required)
- reject.

Results will be significant enough for international publication only if the issue addressed complements current understandings in a major way. The three essential criteria are originality, rigour and significance, which are those adopted, for instance, by the UK's national research assessment exercises: see <http://www.ref.ac.uk/panels/assessmentcriteriaandleveldefinitions/> for details.

Once authors have experience of receiving feedback, they should consider becoming reviewers themselves. Peer reviewing not only ensures that *System* publishes only the best articles, but provides a form of professional development, allowing colleagues to build their subject knowledge, to be aware of what is current and topical, and to gain experience of reading a wide variety of articles. After an editorial decision has been taken, each reviewer receives – anonymously – the other review, which helps sharpen our critical judgment by comparing it with the views of others. Other aspects of reviewing are covered in David Coniam's (2011, 2012) articles in *System*. *System* regularly publishes the names of all those who have written reviews.

## 8. Feedback to authors

Once two reviews have been received, two or more editors read the reviews in detail, look at the paper itself again, and decide whether to reject the paper or ask for major or minor revisions. It is technically possible for reviewers to recommend acceptance without change, but in my 3 years as editor and 30 years as reviewer this has never happened: there is always something which can be improved, and revising your paper is the norm, even for the most experienced authors. Editors normally send reviewers' feedback unchanged to authors, though they might add a short commentary of their own.

Negative feedback can come as a burning disappointment to newer writers, who may have spent years conducting the research and writing it up to the best of their ability. An emotional reaction is perfectly natural: your self-esteem has been wounded. My advice – to myself and to others – is always the same: 'don't be hurt, be humble'. You will almost certainly feel anger and resentment at first, and the sense of injustice and rejection may incite you to act unwisely. Do not destroy your manuscript. Do not write an irate memo to the editor pointing out the reviewers' failure to understand and appreciate the qualities of the research – this is a complete waste of time, will only irritate the editor, and there are plenty of other journals in the world.

If your paper is rejected, or you are asked to revise, then accept the feedback: the comments come from an expert in the field, very possibly one of the top names in the world, and they have taken the trouble to read your work in detail and to critique it. If you could buy such personalised attention – which you cannot – it would be worth a fortune. So take time to work through your feelings, and do not be too downhearted: acceptance rates for top journals are 5%–20%, and to be asked to revise is already a positive outcome. Since *System* adopted the Elsevier Editorial System for online submission and review, we have received 861 submissions. Of these, 103 have been accepted, 71 withdrawn, and 687 rejected – a success rate of 12%. There is a big difference between a good thesis and a good article, so a successful PhD by no means guarantees publication.

Persevere. Make the changes as requested, then, if you have been asked to revise, resubmit the manuscript, accompanied by a detailed bullet-point list of every change made in response to the reviewers. Address all the issues raised by the reviewers, and accept all their suggestions if at all possible. You may occasionally challenge a reviewer's advice, if you find it inappropriate or impossible to implement: in these cases, explain your thinking.

Writing a review is a subjective process, and you may sometimes receive contradictory reports, for example where one reviewer wants more detail on theory or method, and the other asks for less detail. The journal editor will often indicate which review to prioritise, but in any case you should explain when resubmitting how you have handled the advice.

If your article has been rejected, you can still use the free advice to rewrite before submitting it elsewhere, perhaps to a more appropriate journal.

## 9. From revision to publication

Authors who have been invited to make revisions have three months initially to do so, but can request an extension. If the changes requested were very minor, the editors may themselves read the paper in order to decide whether to accept, reject or ask for further revisions. If the changes have been substantial, the paper will be sent either back to the original reviewers, or (for example if the editors want a third opinion, or the original reviewers are unavailable) to new reviewers. Again the fastest possible turn-around is 30 days.

Depending on how well the author meets the requirements of the reviewers and editors, the paper may go through several revisions. It may be rejected even after two revisions. Some papers go through three or four revisions and several re-reviews before being accepted for publication. In advance of final acceptance, one of the *System* editorial team (other journals make other arrangements) re-reads every single word of your article, checking spellings and punctuation and usually making a few very minor suggestions of phrasing which the author can accept at proof stage.

Once a paper has been accepted, it goes through the publication process, the author receives the proofs a couple of weeks later, makes any final corrections, returns the proofs to the publisher, and the article appears on the journal website a couple of weeks after that.

All of this means that it is typically at least six months between submission and publication, and can be longer. Time is needed to operate the quality assurance processes which have established the reputation of the best applied linguistics journals.

Remember that editors and reviewers are unpaid, and are undertaking their tasks voluntarily, in addition to a full-time job, in order to advance our knowledge and help both researchers and practitioners in language learning and teaching. Your patience is the counterpart to their exhaustion. But if a promised turn-around time is not met, you are entitled to withdraw the paper and submit it elsewhere.

## 10. Ethics of research and publication

We recently received a submission which stated that ‘All of the students participated in the study as part of a course requirement.’ We rejected it automatically. Over recent years, research bodies have increasingly recognised the rights of participants in research, which include informed choice whether or not to participate; the right to withdraw at any time; anonymity and/or confidentiality as regards their identity; protection and timely destruction of data. You should indicate in your article how you have followed research ethics. Universities and associations publish their research ethical codes: see, for example, my own university’s at <http://www.open.ac.uk/research/ethics> or the British Association of Applied Linguistics at [http://www.baal.org.uk/dox/goodpractice\\_full.pdf](http://www.baal.org.uk/dox/goodpractice_full.pdf). Your own university should have its own code, which normally forms part of doctoral supervision.

Academic publishing has its own ethical codes: see <http://www.elsevier.com/about/publishing-guidelines/publishing-ethics> and <http://www.elsevier.com/journal-authors/ethics>. Help can be obtained from PERK (Elsevier’s Publishing Ethics Resource Kit <http://www.elsevier.com/editors/perk>) and the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE: <http://publicationethics.org/>).

### 10.1. Multiple submissions

Never submit the same or similar papers to more than one journal at the same time. This is unacceptable, and where it is discovered, the authors can find themselves blacklisted from all respectable applied linguistics journals. In most cases, part of the submission process requires you to state that your work is original and not under consideration elsewhere: dishonesty earns the severest sanctions.

It is not dishonest but unconventional and inadvisable to submit two different articles to the same journal at the same time. The online submission software flags this up. A good journal may simply reject one automatically, and may reject both. In any case, you should aim to build a research profile which encompasses a range of journal titles.

### 10.2. Writing to the editor

*System* received 523 new submissions in 2013, each of which automatically generates a substantial number of emails. The editorial team also communicates by email, and our links with the different departments at Elsevier are also conducted by email, which means the editors handle several thousand emails a year, in addition to their salaried full-time university job. We attempt always to respond to authors’ emails, but you should never write to the editor without first thoroughly checking other sources of information such as the journal and publisher websites. If you do write, always cite the reference number of the submission in question, give your full contact details including institutional address, and do not expect to receive an instant reply.

### 10.3. Co-authorship

Practice regarding co-publication by a student with her/his supervisor varies by country and by discipline. In my own UK university, I have often been listed as second author on an article arising from research conducted under my supervision by the doctoral student who is named as first author. I do not see co-authorship as an automatic right: I accept to be co-author only with the student’s agreement, and only where I have made a substantial contribution to the individual article. The first author gains by knowing that I have used my experience to guarantee the quality of the article (I will not attach my name to an unsatisfactory piece), and through the association with a known individual and with the research group of which s/he is part.

If a supervisor has not specifically worked on the article, s/he should get no mention as author, but perhaps an acknowledgement.

### 10.4. Plagiarism

Plagiarism is passing off someone else’s work as your own, without acknowledging the source. In other words, you are stealing someone else’s intellectual property. When you submit an article, you explicitly state that it is your own original work, so submitting an article containing plagiarised material embodies both lying and theft.

We know that some national academic cultures have not yet adequately acknowledged the seriousness of plagiarism, or the criteria of transparency which international journals apply: I hope that stating the issue so bluntly underlines the seriousness of the moral issues involved, and the reasons why severe sanctions can result.

Plagiarism is a major problem for many authors in countries with an academic tradition which differs from the predominant Anglo-American model adopted by most international journals. It is particularly acute for colleagues who have had to acquire English as a second or foreign language, and sometimes find that the way in which a native-speaker author has phrased a research observation or conclusion is better than they could have managed themselves. It is also accentuated by the ease of cut-and-paste at a time when virtually all research articles, and an increasing number of books and book chapters, are available in electronic form. But the flipside of electronic publication is electronic detection. Plagiarism detection software can

identify sentences and phrases which have been 'borrowed' from others, even if one or two key words have been substituted. There is no lower threshold for plagiarism.

It is encouraging that, in many countries, new journals such as the *Iranian Journal of Language Teaching Research* are themselves addressing the plagiarism issue.

### 10.5. Checking for plagiarism

Today, all respected journals check submissions for plagiarism. Elsevier allows System's editors and editorial assistant to access <http://www.ithenticate.com/>. Look for yourself to understand the information it provides, which includes advice for authors. Also read <http://www.crossref.org/crosscheck/index.html>. We log in to CrossCheck, upload the article, and it is automatically checked against every known online source. This covers all published journals, including online conference proceedings and junk journals, as well as internet sources such as open-access lectures and guides. CrossCheck calculates a percentage figure which represents the proportion of the text which can be found in previously published sources, and a total count of plagiarised words. We also have on-screen colour-coded word-for-word comparison of the source and target texts.

Of course, we exclude properly referenced quotations and we exclude the References section. Because all academic articles contain some set phrases (such as 'questionnaire developed by the researchers', '... was found to be significant' or 'pedagogical implications might include...'), and because the use of formulaic expressions or 'chunks' is part of all language use, including academic writing, we expect to find a low percentage of unoriginal text. But any score above the norm of pre-used phrases leads us to compare the two texts in detail.

Any submission which uses other authors' work – unless it is fully acknowledged and referenced – is rejected. If the editors judge that the plagiarism is not very significant and appears inadvertent, there may be no further action other than a stern warning. In the worst cases, the author(s) may be blocked from any further submission to the journal. The editors of the leading applied linguistics journals also regularly share information on plagiarised submissions, so that any individual with a record of plagiarism may from now on find it impossible to achieve international publication. Where a plagiarised submission is co-authored by a research student and supervisor(s), it is obviously the responsibility of each named author to ensure that the submission contains no plagiarised elements: any sanction will apply to all.

CrossCheck is not fooled by changing the odd word or two in a sentence or paragraph which has been lifted from another author. For example, it recognised

Cost is a concern when the pencil-and-paper version of the test is replaced with computer-based version [...] learners achieved better on the paper-based test than on the computer-based test as a variant of the plagiarised source text

Cost is a concern when pencil-and-paper versions of tests are replaced with computer-based tests [...] learners performed better on the paper-based test than they did on the computer-based one.

There is another form of plagiarism which is not textual but methodological. This consists of replicating a published study but without acknowledging the source, as if you had chosen the area of investigation and devised the research method yourself. We had an example at *System* two years ago where an experiment had been duplicated in all respects, but in a different country. Since reviewers are selected according to topic, the article was reviewed by the irate author of the original study, and of course rejected. A note is kept of authors who seek to practice such deception.

### 10.6. Self-plagiarism

Self-plagiarism is presenting as 'original' substantial material from another published work of your own. Today you are expected to rewrite even those parts of your article, such as the literature review, which may apply to several related or unrelated research studies which you have completed. You should not simply cut and paste from one output to another: the plagiarism software will pick this up. If you want to re-use text in a new context, state this clearly to editors and readers, obtain copyright clearance, and ensure that self-quotation is fully cross-referenced.

## 11. Open access and predatory junk journals

Open access publication is way of ensuring that published research can be accessed by anybody, without the need for libraries and readers to pay a journal subscription. In some disciplines, open access journals achieve the same high quality and prestige as commercially published journals (e.g. <http://www.plosone.org/>). But a shadow industry has recently sprung up under the banner of 'open access', and predatory junk journals have recently proliferated. You are advised never to become involved with them.

You can identify them easily: launched since 2010, their titles have very broad scope, you have never heard of the publisher, the editors or editorial board, they promise publication within a matter of weeks, they send circular emails asking for submissions, they always charge authors (but may offer a discount or not mention the cost until you have submitted), they claim to be abstracted and indexed but they do not have an impact factor. They claim peer review but actually accept any author who pays, so a single issue can attain enormous proportions, with error-strewn articles of

poor quality, by unknowns, in poor English. They have an ISSN (but anyone can get one free), and they imitate respectable open access journals by stressing 'open access', 'international', 'indexed by...' and 'peer review', but links with established universities are hard to find. You can also look at Beall's list <http://scholarlyoa.com/publishers/> and read Bohannon (2013).

You will have received emails from many of these. Journals which need to invite authors to submit papers should mostly be ignored, although serious new journals do exist, especially in countries which are only recently adopting international conventions on academic publication. Publishing in junk journals - which target people like yourself - will count against you in the long run. You would do better to publish in a respected national or international journal, even if the process is longer and harder. All established publishers also offer open-access publication in return for an Article Publishing Charge (APC), but otherwise, at least in applied linguistics, do not charge authors for publication. Some publishers are themselves launching open-access journals: be aware of developments in this rapidly changing domain.

## References

- Bohannon, J. (2013). Who's afraid of peer review? *Science*, 342(6154), 60–65.  
Coniam, D. (2011). Systematising system: one reviewer's analysis of the review process. *System*, 39(4), 539–553.  
Coniam, D. (2012). Exploring reviewer reactions to manuscripts submitted to academic journals. *System*, 40(4), 544–553.