

EDITORIAL

Introduction of Methods Showcase Articles in *Language Learning*

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Building on initiatives to promote high quality methodologies and Open Science practices in the language sciences, *Language Learning* will introduce, as of March 2020, a new manuscript type entitled Methods Showcase Articles (MSAs). The purpose of MSAs is to introduce new or emerging qualitative and quantitative methods, techniques, or instrumentation for language data collection, cleaning, sampling, coding, scoring, and analysis. MSAs are intended to describe methods and provide detailed examples of their application such that language researchers can easily adopt or adapt them in future studies. In this editorial, we outline the goals, format, and benefits of MSAs, discuss how they can advance language sciences, and discuss potential concerns.

Keywords manuscript type; research methods; transparency; peer review; publication

The Background to the Introduction of Method Showcase Articles

Language Learning intends to continue promoting methodological innovation in language studies. Previously, *Language Learning* introduced manuscript types specifically focused on methodological advances (i.e., Methodological Review Articles) and promoted practices to improve methodological transparency including initiatives aimed at increasing Open Science (Trofimovich

We are proud to continue promoting principled and robust methodologies along with Open Science practices at *Language Learning*. We give thanks for the efforts of the editorial team and to the editorial board at *Language Learning* and, more specifically, to Professor Pavel Trofimovich, the previous editor of *Language Learning* who helped push forward a number of Open Science initiatives. We are also grateful to Wiley for their sustained support of the journal and to Rurik Tywoniw for his assistance in collecting data to support this editorial.

& Ellis, 2015), introducing Registered Reports (Marsden, Morgan-Short, Trofimovich, & Ellis, 2018), providing accessible non-technical article summaries (Marsden, Trofimovich, & Ellis, 2019), and asking authors to make all materials available for reviewers (Marsden et al., 2019).

The purpose of this editorial is to introduce a new article type in *Language Learning* called Methods Showcase Articles (MSAs) that will highlight qualitative and quantitative methodological innovations in language studies. MSAs are articles that focus specifically on new or emerging methods, techniques, or instrumentation for language data collection, cleaning, sampling, coding, scoring, and analysis. MSAs are intended to describe methods and provide detailed examples of their application such that language researchers can easily adopt or adapt them in future studies. MSAs are different from the Methodological Reviews already published by *Language Learning* because MSAs will focus on a single, cutting-edge method, demonstrate its use, and describe best practices, whereas Methodological Reviews provide a state-of-the-art, critical review of methods and techniques used in language learning research. Thus, unlike Methodological Reviews, authors of MSAs will be required to illustrate the use of the method in detail (for instance, via worked examples or sample datasets) and, where possible, will make tools, materials, and/or relevant data openly available. Any author will be able to submit an MSA through the *Language Learning* submission system, though some authors known to be using an innovative method maybe invited by the Associate Editor for MSAs (currently Professor Scott Crossley) to make a submission. Like all articles in *Language Learning*, MSAs will be peer-reviewed following standard journal procedures.

We see MSAs as filling a gap in the field of language studies. Specifically, we envision MSAs as providing a forum in which to discuss new and emerging methods that could help language researchers produce more robust and principled language data and analyses and, where relevant, help with replication research. Such methods are of prime interest within language studies as evidenced by a number of articles and books recently published (McKinley & Rose, 2016, 2019; Phakiti, De Costa, Plonsky, & Starfield, 2018; Riazi, 2016) as well as by dedicated social media sites. These are indicators that the field is developing greater awareness of the importance of research methods, transparency, transferability, and reproducibility, as well as increased statistical and/or methodological principles that are leading to greater methodological literacy in our fields. However, to our knowledge, there are no dedicated journals or journal sections focusing specifically on the practical introduction and use of innovative methods in the language sciences. In other

fields, there are outlets specifically devoted to methods, including *Behavioural Research Methods* and *Advances in Methods and Practices in Psychological Science*, as well as method sections in specific journals, including “Emerging Trends” in *Natural Language Engineering* and “Methods Corner” in *Health Services Research*. *Language Learning* would like to build on this previous work in other disciplines by promoting a space for authors to introduce new methodological movements in the language sciences and demonstrate their appropriate and principled use. Such a space will provide methodologists with a forum to showcase their work and materials-developers (such as software engineers or survey designers) the opportunity to introduce new tools to the community.

What is a Method Showcase Article?

Below we present the criteria that authors should consider prior to submitting an MSA for consideration in *Language Learning*. Because MSAs constitute a unique article type, they have different expectations from those of standard *Language Learning* articles.

Methodological Advances

The methods, techniques, or instrumentation covered in MSAs need not be new to research in general, but they need to focus on an emerging trend in language learning research, and they need to be strongly applicable to data collection, coding, or analysis. As an example, there is an emerging trend in language learning research towards the use of mixed modelling for statistical analysis (i.e., models that include both fixed and random effects). Mixed models are widely used in other fields such as cognitive science but are still emerging in language learning studies, and so they would be an appropriate topic for an MSA. In essence, any method that shows promise for language learning research whether new, emerging, or established in other fields but relatively uncommon in language learning research will be considered.

Detailed Examples

All MSAs will fully describe the methods, techniques, or instrumentation introduced. The most in-depth part of the article will provide detailed descriptions of the method, its application, its comparison to more traditional methods, its limitations, and its potential pitfalls. Authors will focus on producing an overview that is fully transferable to new and varied data sets that focus on language learning. The main purposes of an MSA are to allow for the easy use and the transfer of the method being introduced.

Example Data and Data Analysis

All MSAs will include a sample data set (consisting of real, not simulated, data) and analyses that demonstrate how to apply the method, technique, or instrumentation introduced with the purpose of allowing readers to work through the steps taken by the authors to reproduce the results. However, the sample data analysis is not the focus of the paper, so the data sampled does not need to be original, innovative, or a highly-valued area of replication. In short, the data used in the sample data analysis do not necessarily need to meet the standards that *Language Learning* has for addressing substantive questions in the field of language learning research, whereas the method(s) introduced should meet these standards. The analysis does need to be relevant to the goals of *Language Learning* (i.e., the understanding of language learning broadly defined).

Good Reporting Practices

Authors will guide readers on how to properly report the method(s) covered in the MSA and detail what exactly is needed for reporting the method in the data analysis section of an article.

Interpretations and Claims

A good MSA will guide readers through the process of developing clear and appropriate interpretations of the data that result from the method(s) in the MSA, paying careful attention to the potential limitations to the method(s) used and highlighting benefits over more traditional methods.

Open Science and Accessibility

All methods, techniques, or instrumentation reported in an MSA, as well the data used in the case study, should be, wherever possible, openly and freely accessible. When introducing techniques or methods that are already openly available (such as statistical packages available in R or Python or Natural Language Processing tools), the authors should provide access to their scripts. When introducing new methods (such as a language proficiency assessment or a new statistical package), these methods must be openly accessible by the time of publication (in a sustainable platform such as IRIS, the Open Science Framework, or GitHub). In addition, any data used to demonstrate the method introduced in the MSAs should be made openly accessible to ensure that readers have the necessary information needed to reproduce the example data analysis and to transfer the method to their own research.

Although *Language Learning* will prefer to publish data, materials, methods, and tools that are freely and openly available, we recognize that in some

cases, it may not be possible to make materials (or data) openly and freely available because, for example, they are proprietary. In such cases, authors will be required to inform readers about where they can obtain the materials (or data), the current costs of the materials, any non-proprietary alternative options, and any other additional information needed to use the method.

We also recognize that some methods, especially computerized methods, may be limited to specific operating systems or applications, may require some background knowledge in computer programming, or may require computers that can process a large amount of data, thus making the methods difficult to access. Similarly, accessibility challenges may arise with instruments that are monolingual or only available in a narrow range of languages, an issue that we would expect authors to acknowledge and, ideally, propose how to address.

In keeping with the theme of Open Science, Wiley and *Language Learning* will ensure that the first few published MSAs are freely available.

Peer Reviewed

All MSAs will follow the same review process as that for regular manuscripts. The peer review will be handled by the Associate Editor for MSAs, who may desk reject the article or send it to at least three expert reviewers. A specific template for reviewing MSAs is available for both authors and reviewers on the *Language Learning* website (<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/page/journal/14679922/homepage/forauthors.html>).

Writing Conventions

All MSA manuscripts will follow the same writing style as that of other *Language Learning* articles. However, because the focus is on new and emerging methods, there is no need to provide detailed background literature. Generally, the articles will focus on the method introduced and draw connections to other methods, describe and illustrate its application in language learning research, propose appropriate interpretations of findings, and propose limitations and future directions of work with the method. The length of MSAs will normally be about 6,000 words (thus shorter than typical articles) because the literature reviews and discussions will be attenuated. Technically challenging methods should be described in a manner that is accessible to the *Language Learning* readership.

Conclusion

The Editorial Board of *Language Learning* is introducing a new article type—Methods Showcase Articles (MSAs)—to help promote methodological

awareness and expertise that will facilitate the fundamental understanding of language learning, broadly defined. Our aim is that MSAs will introduce readers to new or emerging methods, techniques, or instrumentation for language data collection, cleaning, sampling, coding, scoring, analysis, and interpretation. In addition, MSAs will describe methods and provide detailed examples of their application such that language researchers can easily adopt or adapt them in future studies. MSAs are open to all methods, whether they be qualitative, quantitative, or mixed, as long as they fit the scope and aims of *Language Learning*.

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