SiLA PUBLICATION POLICIES

ABOUT THE JOURNAL

Studies in Language Assessment (SiLA) is a peer-reviewed international journal in the field of language testing and assessment. It is published on an open access basis by the sponsoring organisation, the Association for Language Testing and Assessment of Australia and New Zealand (ALTAANZ). The Committee of ALTAANZ has general oversight of the journal in terms of publication policy and financial matters. However, all editorial decisions are in the hands of two co-editors, who are elected by the membership of ALTAANZ for concurrent two-year terms. The co-editors periodically seek advice on policy matters from an editorial board comprising leading members of ALTAANZ in Australia and New Zealand as well as top researchers in the field elsewhere in the world. Membership of the board is reviewed annually and new members are added by invitation of the co-editors.

Currently, one regular issue and one theme-based special issue are published each year. No fees are charged to authors for the publication of their work. The avenues of publication for issues of SiLA are the ALTAANZ website and the website of the Language Testing Research Centre at the University of Melbourne

ALTAANZ is committed to raising the status of SiLA through recognition as a top journal in the field. It is included in the Web of Science Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI) and is a member of Crossref, the organisation that issues DOIs. Further recognition of the journal is being actively sought.

SUBMISSIONS

The journal primarily solicits full-length research articles but also consider discussion papers on theoretical or methodological issues and short research reports. Book and test reviews are generally commissioned by the reviews editor.

Submissions are received as email attachments sent to sila.editors@gmail.com. The email account is monitored by the SiLA editorial assistant, who will make an initial check that the journal's submission requirements have been met and then forward each submission to the co-editors.

For contributions to a special issue there is a different submission process, which is outlined below.

In making a submission, the corresponding author is required to state explicitly that the manuscript has not been previously published in the same or a similar form and that it has not been submitted to another publication. A submission is also accepted on the understanding that the authors have met all the requirements that are listed in the Responsibilities of Authors section below.

THE REVIEW PROCESS

One of the co-editors takes responsibility for handling each new submission, usually in an alternating pattern. If one of the editors is an author of a submission or has a close personal, professional or supervisory relationship with an author, the editor withdraws from any involvement in decisions about the submission and the other editor is by default the handling editor.

The two editors read the article independently and then confer, in order to decide whether it should be sent for external review. The main criteria to be considered are:

- whether the content of the article is within the scope of the journal
- whether the quality of the research is of a satisfactory standard
- whether the research is adequately reported, according to the norms of academic publication
- whether the text is comprehensible and expressed in a suitable academic style.

The editors need to keep in mind whether external reviewers are likely to consider that evaluating the submission will be a worthwhile use of their time. If in doubt, the editors may seek the advice of a member of the editorial board or someone else with relevant expertise before a final decision is made.

Submissions are not routinely screened for plagiarism but may be submitted to Turnitin if any doubt is raised.

If the submission is "desk-rejected" at this stage, the corresponding author is informed by the editorial assistant by email, including notes by the handling editor on why the paper has been rejected.

For external review, the standard practice is double-blind review by two scholars with relevant interests and expertise, who may be members of the editorial board or others. The handling editor identifies at least two potential reviewers in consultation with the other editor and secures their agreement to undertake the review. Reviewers are asked to report, on the basis of reading the title and abstract of the submission, whether they have a potential conflict of interest through a personal, professional or supervisory relationship with the presumed author(s).

The editorial assistant sends to the reviewers an anonymised version of the manuscript and a review form. The standard time for completing the review is six weeks. The form is returned to the editorial assistant with comments for both the editors and the authors, together with a recommendation: 1) accept, 2) accept with minor revisions, 3) revise and resubmit, or 4) reject.

The handling editor considers the reviews and, in consultation with the other editor, decides which of the recommendations to follow. In the case of recommendation 3), a period of eight weeks is normally allowed for resubmission of the manuscript, and authors are expected to inform the editors promptly if they decide not to resubmit. When a revised manuscript is received, it is sent back to the two original reviewers, except where one or both of them have declined to re-review the paper, in which event a third reviewer may be used. For

recommendation 2) one or both reviewers may be asked to check the revisions. Normally, a definite decision to accept the paper or not is made after the second round of reviews, although some further revisions may be required.

After each round of reviews, the author is sent the reviewers' Comments to the Author from the review forms. The comments may be sent in an edited form at the handling editor's discretion. Each reviewer also receives the other reviewer's comments and is notified of the editors' decision.

Once a paper has not been accepted, whether by desk-rejection or as a result of external review, it cannot be re-submitted to this journal. In exceptional cases, the editors may indicate a willingness to consider a substantially revised version as a new submission.

Book reviews are initially evaluated by the reviews editor and then reviewed by the co-editors. The review may be returned to the author for revision.

Test reviews are subject to the same double-blind review process as regular articles.

PUBLICATION OF ARTICLES

Once a submission has been accepted for publication, the handling editor copy-edits the text and requests any additional revisions. Then the manuscript goes to the editorial assistant, who checks the references and citations and formats the paper according to the SiLA style. The formatted article is returned to the author for a final check and responses to any queries.

In its final form, the article is published initially in the Early View section of the journal websites, unless it is close to the publication date of a regular issue. Errors can still be corrected at this stage but, when the article has been published in an issue (becoming the Version of record), the text is considered definitive and cannot be amended, except in exceptional circumstances.

Each article and review is assigned a digital object identifier (DOI) upon publication.

All articles and other content published in SiLA are covered by the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, which permits the user to copy, distribute, and transmit the work provided that the original authors and source are credited.

Authors are permitted to deposit their articles, either the accepted version or the published version, in an institutional or other repository of their choice.

SPECIAL ISSUES

Special issues follow a somewhat different process from regular issues.

A call for proposals is usually issued in March for the special issue planned for publication in the following year, but the issue may also be commissioned by the editors. If more than one proposal is received for a particular special issue, the editors discuss which one to accept with the ALTAANZ Committee before making the final decision themselves.

Proposals should include the name(s), affiliation(s) and contact details of the proposed guest editor(s); a statement on the theme of the issue and a justification of its significance for the field of language assessment; and a list of the proposed contributions, including titles, author names and affiliations, and abstracts. Guest editors generally approach prospective authors directly but may also issue a public call for additional contributors.

One of the SiLA co-editors takes primary responsibility for each special issue, normally in an alternating pattern. The editor negotiates with the guest editor(s) a timeline for the development and publication of the issue, which includes:

- at least one and preferably two cycles of review of the draft articles, where the authors submit their work to the guest editor(s) and receive detailed feedback on the content and text in order to revise the drafts;
- submission of all the articles to the SiLA editor, who reviews them in terms of acceptability according to the journal's publishing standards and also solicits a blind external review of each one;
- provision for feedback to the authors from the editor and the external reviewers, with a further round of revision as required;
- the guest editors being informed of the external reviewers' comments and any substantial revisions to the articles;
- the guest editors also being consulted before any decision is made to reject an article;
- acceptance and final editing of each article by the editor; and
- formatting and checking of all the articles in time for publication before the end of the calendar year.

Special review articles do not appear in Early View but are published together as a single set. Otherwise, the provisions in the Publication of Articles section above apply to them.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF AUTHORS

A submitted manuscript must represent original work produced by the author(s).

It must not contain text or other material that has been copied from another source without acknowledgement in the form of quotation marks, citations or references.

The manuscript must not have been generated largely or substantially by AI tools such as ChatGPT. Any significant use of AI technology should be disclosed to the editors.

The manuscript must give an honest and accurate account of the research that is being reported, without any misrepresentation or concealment of what was done.

The research must have been conducted according to the appropriate ethical standards and should have been approved by the relevant human ethics review board, where appropriate.

The analyses presented in the manuscript must not involve any fabrication or massaging of the data to obtain more favourable results. In principle, the author(s) should be able to submit the raw data for review if questions arise about its authenticity.

SiLA encourages authors to follow good practices in open science when publishing with the journal. These include, for example, the use of persistent identifiers such as an Open Researcher and Contributor ID (ORCID), the publication of the materials used in the study (e.g., questionnaires, interview protocols, or tests/test items), and the sharing of anonymized data in open-access public repositories like the Open Science Framework (OSF, https://osf.io/).

The author(s) must honour all commitments made to maintain the confidentiality of research participants, their organisations and institutions, and other people who may have contributed to the study.

It is the responsibility of the author(s) to obtain permission for the inclusion of any copyrighted material in the manuscript.

The author(s) should be the person or persons who have made a substantial contribution to the research study and the preparation of the manuscript. Their respective roles should be disclosed to the editor and specified in the published article. Other people who have made a more limited contribution, such as giving access to research participants and resources or providing statistical advice, can be recognised in the Acknowledgements section of the manuscript.

The author(s) must acknowledge any sources of financial support for the research and the preparation of the manuscript, including grants, scholarships, honoraria and consultancies.

The manuscript must include a statement on conflict of interest, which reveals any personal, academic, professional or commercial relationships of the author(s) that might be seen to influence their conduct of the study as well as their conclusions and recommendations. In the field of language testing and assessment, it is important to disclose any relationship with test publishers, either currently or within the past five years, especially if the study has involved a published test or assessment procedure. On the other hand, the statement should declare that the author(s) have no conflict of interest to report.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE EDITORS

The editors treat all authors with respect and an open mind, focussing on the merits of their work without reference to the authors' identity or background.

The editors maintain the confidentiality of authors and reviewers and their submissions throughout the review process.

The editors provide adequate feedback to authors, particularly on the reasons for rejecting a submission and how a manuscript should be revised.

An editor is not involved in the review and decision-making process for submissions of which they are an author; where they have a close personal, academic or professional relationship with at least one of the authors; or where they have some other conflict of interest.

If there are concerns or allegations about any form of malpractice on the part of authors and reviewers before or after publication of an article, the editors should take prompt action in response, as further specified below.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF EXTERNAL REVIEWERS

Reviewers should be realistic about whether they can complete their review within the stated time period and should negotiate an extended due date if required.

Before or after receiving the manuscript, reviewers should report to the handling editor any conflict of interest arising from their involvement in the work being reported or their personal relationships with the (presumed) author(s).

Reviewers must maintain the confidentiality of the manuscripts they receive for review.

Reviewers should avoid any personal bias in evaluating a manuscript and should adopt a respectful tone in giving feedback to authors. The editors reserve the right to edit feedback containing inappropriate or inaccurate language before it is sent to the author(s).

Reviewers should be alert to any indications that a submission contains plagiarised material, has previously been published elsewhere, or is currently being reviewed for another journal. Such evidence must be reported to the handling editor as soon as possible.

DEALING WITH CONCERNS ABOUT MALPRACTICE

The journal has no significant history of issues related to various forms of malpractice. However, as submissions increase and ethical concerns become more prominent in the field, it is necessary to have guidelines for dealing with such concerns as they may arise.

Malpractice here is a cover term that includes plagiarism, misattribution of authorship, multiple submissions of a single manuscript, breaches of ethical procedures in conducting research, fabrication or falsification of data, breaches of confidentiality, misuse of material in submitted articles, and failure to declare or act on a conflict of interest. It can involve not only authors but also reviewers and editors who do not meet the responsibilities set out above.

Concerns about malpractice may come from the editors, reviewers, authors, readers or other outside parties. Once a concern has been raised, the editors must act on it promptly. If the concern is about a particular manuscript or published article, normally the handling editor will be responsible for investigating it and obtaining any necessary evidence, in consultation with the other editor. The author(s) or reviewer(s) involved must be given the opportunity to respond to the concern before any final action is taken.

If the concern involves one or both editors and/or they have a conflict of interest in dealing with the issue, the matter should be referred to the co-Presidents of ALTAANZ, who may delegate the task of investigating it and recommending a remedy to a former editor of the journal or a member of the editorial board with experience as an editor.

Actions and remedies will obviously depend on the nature and seriousness of the malpractice once it has been confirmed. They may include:

- A written acknowledgement by the party concerned that a minor form of malpractice has occurred and an undertaking to avoid it in future.
- Return of a submitted manuscript to the author(s) for revision.
- Rejection of a submitted manuscript.
- Correction or amendment of an article published in Early View.
- A correction or amendment of a published article, to appear in a subsequent issue of the journal.
- Removal of a published article from the journal database, with a note about the action taken.
- Removal of a reviewer from the editorial board (if applicable) or from the journal's database of prospective reviewers.

The ALTAANZ Committee should be informed of serious cases of malpractice, particularly those resulting in the last three actions on the list above.