
Research Digest

Aspiring and Inspiring Community of Publishing

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For at least a few years, the back pages of *On CUE* (now the *OnCUE Journal*) waited to publish a submission to the Research Digest (RD) section. None came. The section was intended for promoting research papers already published within university in-house journals (often called *kiyo* in Japanese) so that the articles “wouldn’t get lost,” according to the submission guidelines back then, due to narrow distribution and readership. RD in those days would have offered only a single paragraph in which to publicize one’s article. But without use, this dormant section seemed a wasted opportunity for authors and readers within the CUE community.

Then under the editorial supervision of Mike Hood, who had been working on establishing a vetting process for the journal’s Features section that we benefit from today, I joined in 2003 and developed the RD section beyond mere back page summaries of published research. At that time, I envisioned switching from summaries to full articles in a journal section akin to *The Language Teacher’s* Reader’s Forum, which follows the Feature Article section. I thought back then that if authors felt their articles were being “lost” through in-house publishing and distribution, then they might be more inclined to skip those in-house submissions and instead submit to an RD section that offered a place to publish entire, original articles that would be distributed and read more widely and perhaps hold more weight on a resume or promotions review.

Moreover, these articles might have some meta-purpose—*research about how to research*. That way the CUE community could form a sustainable community

of publishing with members teaching and learning from each other about researching. Relatively inexperienced researchers would have a venue in which they could aspire to share what they recently learned, while seasoned researchers could publish their wisdom to inspire us all. Since the first articles appeared in RD in 2004 and through now, I believe the section has been meeting these goals. Recently, however, the submission rate has been decreasing. So with this present article I would like to encourage potential contributors to join (or rejoin) this community of publishing.

Looking back at past articles, I can generalize three approaches to writing about research that offer “perspectives on applying theory to practice in second language acquisition (SLA) or a related field,” as the submission guidelines specify now. The approaches that previous authors have taken are (1) ways of doing research, (2) literature reviews, and (3) primary research studies. Each approach is further described below, while the exemplary articles given in summary are all downloadable in whole from the CUE homepage at http://jaltcue.org/back_issues.

Ways of Doing Research

The first and most common type of article in RD delineates the purposes and procedures of researching in a specific way, written clearly enough for readers to start trying it themselves. Included are struggles, successes, criticisms, and advantages of using the research procedure described. For example, Andy Curtis and Kathleen Bailey (2009) wrote about diary studies, which are a way of conducting research through analyzing journal entries. They presented a full background for the use of diary studies in SLA, methodical ways to collect and analyze the data, and then steps to present the research findings. Christopher Long (2006) brought insights into researching attitudes through a quantitative experimental method called the matched-guise technique. Long compared two types of matched-guise research designs using specific examples from published studies. The presentation of the second type included his own original variation on the technique. Tim Murphey and his collaborators (Murphey, Kim, Kusatani, Lawson, Sugawara, & Yamaura, 2008) strove to convince unpublished

teachers that they have valuable ideas that when published can contribute to the professional development of readers and the writers themselves. Their article, “Publishing Ecologies,” models its own main message of encouraging teachers to collaborate on writing to try publishing together. Finally, Richard Sampson (2011) took a theoretical approach of using complexity theory for classroom-based action research into learner motivation. This article features accessible explanations of this recent, exciting, and abstruse theoretical expansion of complexity theory into SLA and related bodies of research.

Literature Reviews

The second type of article in RD focuses upon a sample of research studies in a particular area. Literature reviews are also known as secondary research, in which selected papers are presented in a cohesive fashion, such as by categorization and summary of research procedures and results. Secondary research usually contains some critical perspective for a theoretically-grounded argument or purpose. For example, David McLoughlin (2007) overviewed attribution theory and its connections to learners’ feelings and behaviors related to learning. He suggested that teachers might try to retrain learners’ maladaptive thinking patterns into positive ones for increased motivation and achievement. Similarly, Manami Suzuki (2007) illustrated from self-efficacy studies the uses and effects of training learners’ outlooks for more motivating, optimistic, and psychologically healthy learning experiences. She finished with concrete examples of learning strategy applications that teachers might try in the classroom. For a *Festschrift* article, a publication honoring an academic’s contributions to their field, Eddy White (2006) outlined key concepts in Corder’s 1967 paper, and explained their significant and lasting influence on many current notions in the field of SLA. White did this by tracing the lineage from Corder’s older, original ideas as they evolved into more recent theoretical areas of language development and pedagogy that researchers may be familiar with today.

Primary Research Studies

The third type of article in RD investigates an aspect of SLA or related field through a primary research approach and usually offers a metacognitive perspective on the research process. In other words, these studies perform experimental research plus bring a reflective description about the research process itself. For example, George Harrison (2007) compared three different types of vocabulary tests, first in terms of practicality for teachers in constructing and administering them, and second in terms of validity to see if the tests were fairly and accurately measuring what they were intended to measure. Besides concluding with specific recommendations of what type of tests might be useful for certain classrooms situations, this article modeled for teacher-researchers how they might develop, score, and critique their tests and test-making processes in a self-conscious and methodical way. Kaoru Kobayashi (2006) analyzed the use of metatext within research papers of popular, respected applied linguistics journals, making a comparison between papers written in English and those in Japanese. This cross-cultural study was conducted to help teachers of Japanese students in English academic writing courses. Last, David Ockert (2009) explained the process of designing, administering, and verifying a substantive scale survey for use in classroom-based research of student attitudes. He walked teachers through the process and potential pitfalls by presenting the article as a case study of one of his own attempts of using a substantive scale survey with his students.

Your CUE

Potential contributors might ask, “What makes a good RD article?” My response would be an article that can help readers with the following:

- Understand the concepts and their importance within SLA research and practice
- Gain schemata for their next encounter with the concepts
- Start investigating these concepts on their own with a set of key references
- Apply the concepts in their research and teaching practices

Thank you very much for joining me in this retrospective look at the last 10 years of Research Digest. I hope this sparks your interest in contributing to our aspiring and inspiring community of publishing.

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Author's bio

Joseph Falout edits for the Asian EFL Journal and JALT's OnCUE Journal, the latter for which he created the current purpose and design of the Research Digest section. He researches, publishes, and presents internationally regarding social educational psychology of language learning and teaching, with an interest toward pedagogical applications. researchdigest@gmail.com

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***Editor's note:** Joe has brought up some old issues in CUE's publication history, and I'm glad we still have them available online for readers to access. However, if you look at the back issues page, you will see we have some gaps in the On CUE record. If you have any of those issues, please send a copy or scanned image to me so we can plug the holes. We already have some of these being prepared to better serve CUE readers. Thank you.*