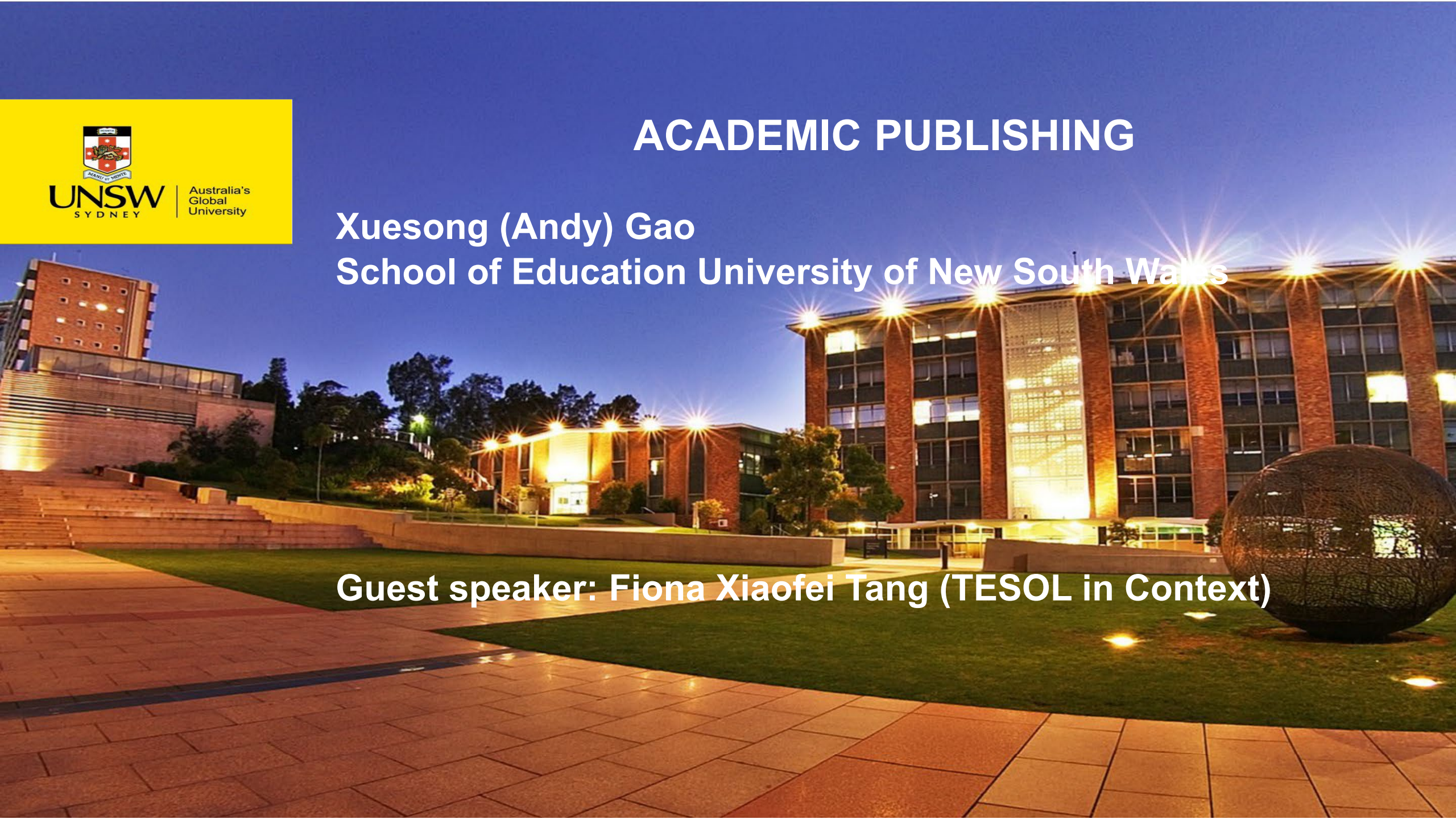


ACADEMIC PUBLISHING

Xuesong (Andy) Gao
School of Education University of New South Wales

Guest speaker: Fiona Xiaofei Tang (TESOL in Context)

OUR ACADEMIC CAREER ASPIRATION

FAQS FROM EMERGING SCHOLARS

- What questions do you have regarding publishing in academic journals?

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS FROM EMERGING SCHOLARS

- What are the types of academic journal in the field of XXX?
- What is the journal that suits my paper best?
- What are the criteria adopted by most institutions for the evaluation of academic journals?
- What does the peer-review process look like?
- How long does it take from submission to feedback?
- What is the rejection rate of a specific journal?
- Are there SSCI-or Scopus-Indexed journals that are more new-writer-friendly (with lower rejection rate)?

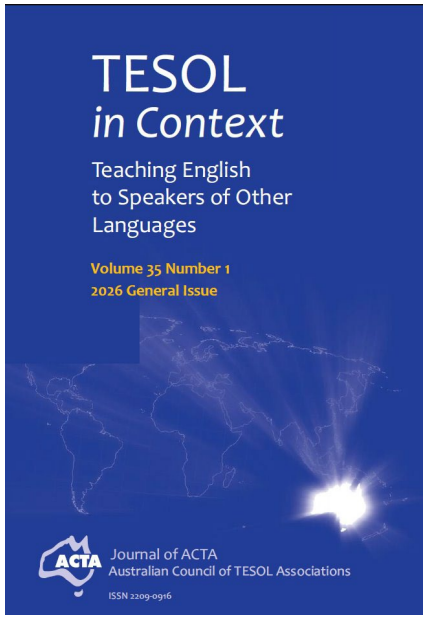
THREE TYPES OF ACADEMIC JOURNALS

- Take the field I am most familiar with: Applied linguistics
- Journals in applied linguistics can roughly be categorized into Teaching/pedagogical journals, Magazine-style journals, and Research-oriented journals.
- Target audience of Teaching/pedagogical journals consists of in-service teachers, textbook authors and editors, curriculum designers, and others whose job is more or less relevant to language teaching.
- Papers published in Teaching/pedagogical journals are usually more concise (3000-4000 words on average). The style of writing must be teacher-friendly with less references. Topics will have direct relevance to classroom teaching reality. Even in papers with a theoretical emphasis, focus must be on classroom application of the theory.

THREE TYPES OF ACADEMIC JOURNALS

- Do not think of Teaching/pedagogical journals as not 'academic' enough.
- In fact, many Teaching/pedagogical journals are listed in SSCI and with good Impact Factor. ELT Journal is one example, with latest IF of 4.0 /Citescore of 7.7 (Q1)
- Some Magazine-style journals are also SSCI-indexed. They publish papers similar to those in Teaching/pedagogical journals in terms of length and style. These journals target a wider audience including almost all people who have a language-related job. English Today is an example with latest IF of .9/Citescore of 2.7。
- If your paper is not very theoretical but with a classroom focus or some news value, you can consider Teaching/pedagogical journals and Magazine-style journals.

TESOL in Context



Publishing since 1990: Among the very few refereed scholarly journals of TESOL & EAL/D in Australia.

Our focus: Research and practice-based scholarship in TESOL and EAL/D that examine the nexus between theory and practice across diverse educational contexts in Australia and internationally.

Types of manuscripts

- Research articles/empirical studies
- Reflections on experience
- Examples of practice from teachers including practical teaching strategies
- Special reports on TESOL and/or EAL/D policy
- Book reviews

The latest issue – 2026 Vol. 35 No. 2 Special Edition "*AI in English Language Learning & Teaching in the Australian Context*"

Editor-in-Chief

Chris Davison

Managing Editor

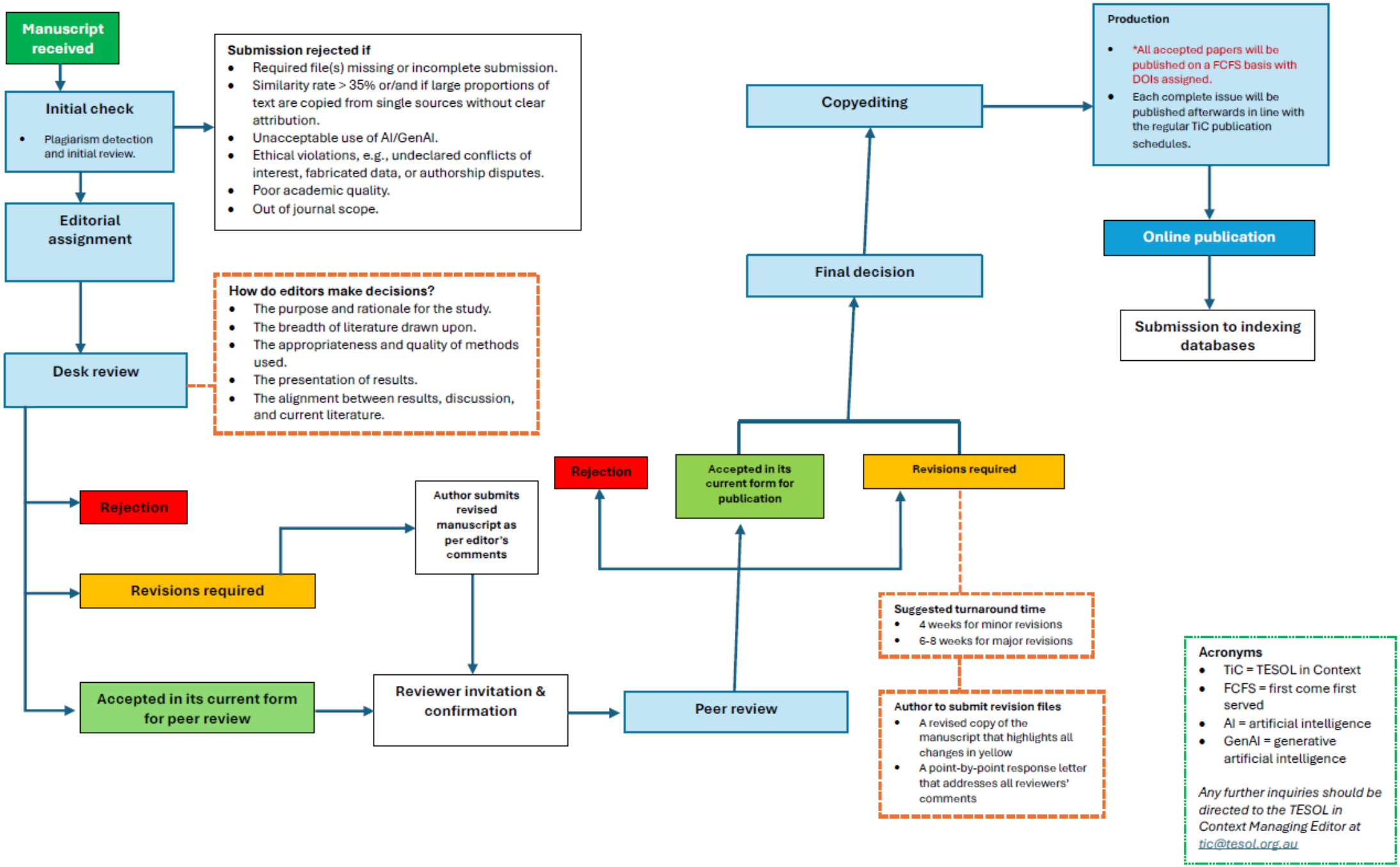
Fiona Xiaofei Tang

TESOL in Context is the official publication of the Australian Council for TESOL Associations (ACTA).

**Two teams of Associate Editors alternate responsibility for the general issues plus a team of guest editors for the special issue.*

Link to the journal website:

TESOL in Context Editorial and Review Process Overview – ONLY used for ACTA 2026 International Conference



RESEARCH-ORIENTED JOURNALS

- The target audience of Research-oriented journals mainly consists of researchers who pay scholarly attention to state-of-the-art research outputs. The length of a full-length article is usually 7000 or so. The features of this specific register include very formal academic English, extensive use of terms and a long list of references.
- Some research-oriented journals publish a small number of articles which focus on classroom teaching practices. However, compared with Pedagogical/teaching journals, these papers appear to be more theoretical and less practical.
- Flagship journals: Applied Linguistics / TESOL Quarterly / Language Teaching Research / Language Learning / Modern Language Journal / System: An International Journal of Educational Technology and Applied Linguistics…

ANOTHER TYPOLOGY

- Journals can also be categorized as generalist journals and specialist/niche journals.
- Generalist journals cover a wider range of topics, such as RELC Journal (a very highly ranked journal in 2025), ELT Journal, System.
- Specialist/niche journals confine their topics within a very narrow field of inquiry, such as Language Policy, Journal of Second Language Writing, Reading in a Foreign Language, etc.
- Due to the narrower topics, papers published in Specialist/niche journals are more likely to be cited. Impact factors of Specialist/niche journals are relatively higher. However, some think that rejection rates of Specialist/niche journals are also higher.

ABOUT REJECTION RATE

- A journal's rejection rate: the number of accepted papers divided by the papers received within one year by that journal. A 90% rejection rate means 9 papers will be rejected in every 10 papers.
- In the field of applied linguistics, most journals with good reputation have a 70% rejection rate. Rejection becomes a default setting.
- A major reason for the high rejection rate is the wrong match between the manuscript and the journal. Many manuscripts cannot even get into the review process. For examples, many authors received replies from editors like this: "We regret to inform you that your manuscript doesn't fit with the aim, scope and target readers of our journal."
- If the manuscript fits the aim, scope and target readers of the journal, the manuscript will undergo the peer-review process after initial screening.

PEER-REVIEW

- Most journals with a good reputation adopt a single-blind or double-blind review policy. Nowadays double-blind review represents the mainstream, which means both reviewers and authors do not know each other's names. The double-blind review process is fairer and more objective. The process ensures that an article is accepted because of the value of itself, rather than the fame of the author.
- Your peer reviewers are academics active in your field. They are quite busy. The peer-review work is voluntary and reviewers receive no salary from journals. Journals will make sure the responsible use of reviewers' time and before peer review, editors will conduct initial screening.
- In these cases, your article cannot survive initial screening: terrible quality, too many grammatical mistakes, wrong target audience, wrong field of inquiry, format problems, etc.

PEER-REVIEW

- Please be patient!! The peer-review process is normally time-consuming.
- Editors have to keep looking for the right reviewers who would like to devote considerable time to the voluntary job. The peer-review process starts after two or more reviewers agreed to read the manuscript. Different reviewers will respond at different paces. The editor normally will not contact the author until all reviewers finish their job.
- Decision can usually be rejection, minor revision, major revision and acceptance. Acceptance without revision is rarely seen. After the submission of the revised version, the manuscript will normally go back to the original reviewers. If they are busy and cannot continue the review process, editors will find other reviewers and it will take time!

WHAT ARE THE CRITERIA THAT REVIEWERS USE?

- Coniam, 2012
  - Scholarly background (literature review)
  - Contributions to the field (framing, introductory section, crucial!!)
  - Research methodology (crucial!!!)
  - Language (accuracy, writing style etc.)
- Frequent reasons of rejection:
  - Out of journal's scope (editors' decision)
  - Little knowledge contribution (editors' decision and reviewers' recommendation)
  - Argument deficiencies (methodological, writing style, etc.) (reviewers' recommendation)

EVERY ARTICLE OCCUPIES A NICHE! WHY ARE ARTICLES PUBLISHED?

- Theoretical innovation
- Methodological innovation or timely and meaningful replication
- Strong synthesis or meta-analysis
- New knowledge generation
- Satisfying specific requirements of the journal

SELECTING RESEARCH TOPICS

- The most critical issue in getting your works published:
- We are also concerned with practical problems, but practical problems are not always research problems
- For instance, in teaching： it is an important issue for us if students are not willing to study
- If we manage to help them to be more involved in the study, it does not mean that we have significant research findings though we have done something important
- Research should focus on what is underneath the students' involvement: e.g. motivation

SELECTING RESEARCH TOPICS

- We need to select core research topics in any given field of inquiry
- These topics stood the test of time
- These topics help us to achieve some cutting edge findings
- We need to think: how long we can do research on the topic (planning a research scheme)
- Start from literature, have a deep understanding of key issues in a particular field
- Be careful about undertaking cross-disciplinary research

PRINCIPLES FOR WRITING ARTICLES

- Title： consistent with the main text and research questions
- Abstract： concise but accurate summary of the research, appealing
- Introduction: Concise summary of the field and present a strong argument for the relevant knowledge gap that motivates the study
- Literature review: Not list the references and sources. Sources are used effectively to argue for the study
- Research methods: detailed methodological procedures and their justification
- Findings: Present findings as responses to the research questions, indepth analytic writing, avoid being too descriptive
- Discussion: Present a rigorous argument for the study's significance, in comparison with previous research, in what sense do the current findings extend or confirm or negate our understanding of relevant research issues.
- Conclusion: reflections on the study (including its limitations), what can we do with the findings, what research can we do in the future, relate to the core issues in the field
- Writing style: accurate and accessible

How to find journals for submission?

READING TARGET JOURNALS

- Who are editors?
- Who are on the journal's editorial board?
- What has been recently published in the journal?
- What has been mostly viewed in the journal?
- What has been mostly cited in the journal?
- Journal's turnaround time (first received date, revise date, and accept date)

Engage with reviewers

WHO ARE (UN)LIKELY TO BE REVIEWERS?

- Authors who have recently published in the journal
- recent Phd graduates
- pre-tenure faculty
- potential authors who regard a publication outlet as a desirable venue for publication
- any colleagues who are kind/generous

- Unlikely reviewers
  - colleagues who do not regard a publication outlet highly
  - rejected authors (sometimes they do)
  - senior professors who have major (administrative) responsibilities
  - anyone who wants to prove themselves

JOURNALS AND REVIEWERS' ROLES

- In general, journals expect reviewers to be:
  - reasonable
  - considerate
  - critical, and
  - Incisive
- Some journals may also expect reviewers to be
  - Supportive
  - mentoring
  - identifying areas for improvement
- Other journals (or occasionally) expect reviewers to
  - identify limitations
  - evaluate manuscripts' suitability for publication, or even
  - help editors find reasons for rejection

REVIEWERS AND REVIEWERS' ROLES

- We choose to be:
  - Constructive/fair reviewers?
  - nice/soft reviewers?
  - trustworthy/reliable reviewers?
  - harsh reviewers (the legendary 'third' reviewer)?

- Consequently, when reviewing, we focus on
- what the authors have achieved?
- what the authors have failed?
- critically evaluating a study's contributions?
- identifying a study's methodological strengths/limitations
- language and formatting issues?

FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF REVIEWERS

- Bol., L. & Hacker, D. J. (2014). Publishing in high quality journals: perspectives from overworked and unpaid reviewers. *Journal of Computing Higher Education*, *26*, 39-53.
- "First, good writing is good thinking."

1) The quality of your research
2) The quality of how it is written

Reviewing is a voluntary free job

What do reviewers do with your manuscripts?

PROCEDURES OF REVIEWING (WHAT DO I DO AS A REVIEWER)

- An appropriate manuscript title: is it consistent with the main content?
- A good abstract: does this capture the manuscript's main idea without using too much jargons?
- Clearly motivated research questions (by the research gap and literature review)
- Well explained, described methodology: methodological descriptions detailed, methodological decisions fully justified
- Findings: analytically engaging narratives (not descriptive)
- Discussion highlighting the study's contributions and implications
- Writing style: accessible

1. READ ABSTRACTS

- The relevance of your work needs to be made crystal clear to the reader in a concisely written and self-contained abstract that addresses each major section of your manuscript: purpose, hypotheses, method, results, and conclusions.

1. "The results have interesting implication for future practice"
2. "The conclusions are important in light of theory"
3. "The authors emphasize how critical the findings are for further research"

Your abstracts play a critical role in helping journals to find reviewers!

2. READ THE LITERATURE REVIEW AND REFERENCES

- whether there is a clear theoretical perspective represented by a cohesive group of theoretically linked research
- whether the empirical evidence that has been garnered to support the perspectives of the manuscript is strong or weak, timely or dated
- Check if there are fake references or not
- More important, whether the authors have sent the manuscript to the right journal

3. CHECK FIGURES AND TABLES

- "Tables should be integral to the text but should be designed so that they can be understood in isolation" (APA, p. 128)
- A picture is worth a thousand words
- This is not just applicable in quantitative research
- Qualitative research also needs supporting visuals to

1） display conceptual frameworks

2) Present findings to demonstrate conceptual links

4. READ INTRODUCTIONS

- **As a reviewer, there is a desire to recognize good research so that it can see the light of day.**
- Ideally, a strong introduction would contain at a minimum five basic elements:

(1) a clearly stated research problem

(2) a good rationale for why the problem needs to be studied

(3) clearly stated and answerable research questions

(4) an up-to-date and balanced literature review that makes clear what research has been done to address the problem and what gaps remain

(5) a description of specifically what gaps your research is going to fill (i.e., what new knowledge will be potentially gained from your research)

(6) that the reader can develop a mental script of what to anticipate in the upcoming text.

5. READ METHODOLOGICAL DETAILS

- **Sufficient information** (not boatloads!) should be provided about the design of the research, measures being used, the participants, the conditions of the experiment or the context of the qualitative study, and the procedures followed.
- e.g. experimental designs (control of variables), qualitative studies (trustworthiness, triangulation strategies)
- **A thorough description of participants** informs generalizability and context.

6. READ THE RESULTS OF ANALYSIS/FINDINGS

- One essential question should be answered for any type of study:
- Do the analyses answer the research questions?
- There should be a good alignment between research questions and findings

7. READ CONCLUSIONS

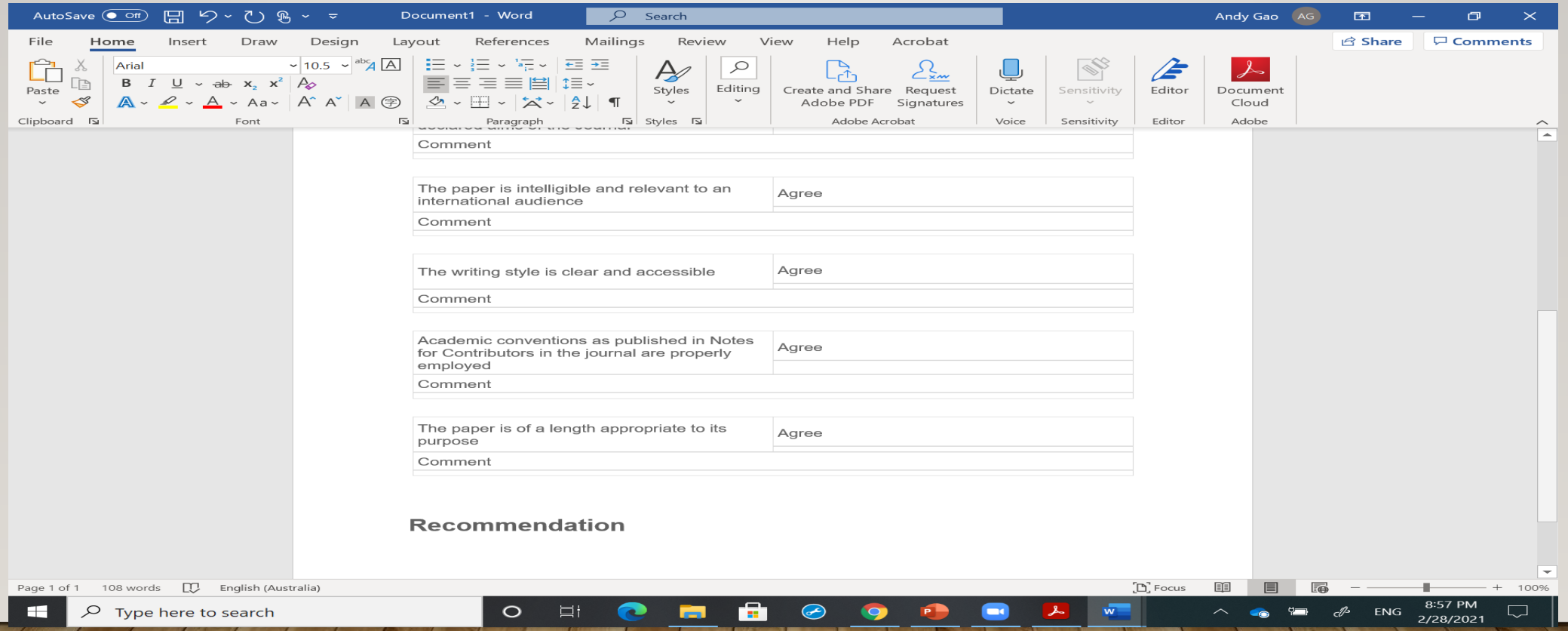
- Research questions are addressed, answers are given, new contributions are discussed, limitations of the research are fairly noted, and clear implications for research and practice are provided.
- Stick to your data
- You may need to revisit your research questions and the knowledge gaps you intended to fill (has it been done properly?)

8. EVALUATE THE QUALITY OF WRITING

- repeating oneself in different sections of the manuscript leads to a de´ja` vu feeling for the reviewer that can be frustrating ("Didn't I just read this?").
- Verbose/repetitive writing: repeat what has been presented elsewhere. Keeping saying that the study is important and interesting without much supporting evidence. Repeat the findings
- Formatting (formatting free does not mean no formatting)
- APA manual's recommendation (p. 13):

1. Use digits for all numbers
2. Abbreviate liberally
3. Use the active voice

REVIEW FORMS IN THE REVIEWING PROCESS



REVIEW FORMS IN THE REVIEWING PROCESS

- Recommendation is most important
- Detailed comments are also critical
- Comments need to be compatible with recommendations

HOW TO RESPOND TO REVIEWERS' COMMENTS?

1. Close reading
2. grouping
3. revision
4. Response

CAREFULLY READ ALL THE COMMENTS FOR GROUPING

The first step should be to read through the reviewers' and editor's comments carefully. Comments and requests for changes should be divided into three groups:

- Those that are **easy** to address and that you agree with
- Those that are **harder** to address and that you agree with
- Those with which you **disagree**, whether they may be easy or more difficult to act upon.

Table 3 Example of selected Author's Reponses to reviewers' and Editor's critiques

Source	Comments	Changes	Page No.
Editor, R1, R2, R3	Include literature on teacher beliefs and knowledge to support research questions and findings	There is not a lot of literature on teacher beliefs about SRL or metacognition. However, we reference teacher epistemology more generally and how it connects to practice. We describe two studies that presented measures of teacher knowledge and beliefs related to metacognition. We describe an experiment in which teacher beliefs was one outcome measure. The title and a research question reflect teacher beliefs	Intro. pp. 2–3, p. 5
Editor, R1, R2, R3	Include or relate findings to teacher beliefs. A concern was raised about a larger study in which other variables were manipulated or measured. "Finally I understand that participants were part of a larger study. Did the study focus on SRL and/or metacognition? Or did any of the teachers have a personal interest in/focus on SRL and metacognition?" Address whether participants knew the purpose of the study and whether this may have affected the results	It was a larger study in the sense that we also collected quantitative data from a larger sample of teachers on their beliefs, but we decided to focus on the qualitative findings. We have not published any of our findings related to teacher beliefs elsewhere because we did not believe they would make a significant contribution on their own. There was no intervention related to SRL and no special interest in these topics by teachers. We included questionnaire responses on teachers' beliefs for the sample of teachers that we also observed and interviewed. Participants knew the purpose of the study, and we recognize demand characteristics as a limitation	Method p.8 Results pp. 11–12 Discussion p.25

TASK

- Read the comments and categorize them into "easy" or "hard" …
  - Add new literature
  - Do more experiment
  - Reconsider theoretical framework
  - Reconsider the interpretation of data extract
  - Citation and reference formatting
  - Check if research questions and data collection/analysis are in a good alignment
  - Use research questions to organize the presentation of findings
  - Articulate the contributions of the study

TYPE A: THOSE THAT ARE **EASY** TO ADDRESS AND THAT YOU AGREE WITH

- providing further explanations of a concept
- incorporating additional references
- reformatting (parts of) the manuscript

TYPE B: THOSE THAT ARE **HARDER** TO ADDRESS AND THAT YOU AGREE WITH

- gathering further data
- restructuring the manuscript
- providing further justification to address a point of contention between yourself and the reviewer(s)
- articulating the contributions made by your article more clearly

TYPE C: THOSE WITH WHICH YOU **DISAGREE**, WHETHER THEY MAY BE EASY OR MORE DIFFICULT TO ACT UPON.

- Your response is critical!

A GOOD RESPONSE TO THE REVIEWERS

- Polite
- Thoughtful
- Clear
- Detailed

THANK YOU