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EDITORIAL

SSLA expands its commitment to open science: *Introducing* Data Reports *and* Registered Reports

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SSLA has a longstanding commitment to the ideals of open science (OS). Indeed, in recent years, the journal has intentionally and explicitly sought to implement a range of OS policies and practices. For example, like many other journals, we began by placing OS badges on articles that provide open materials and/or data, thus facilitating both (a) scrutiny from the scholarly community as well as (b) subsequent replication and re-analysis (Gass, 2019). We have also supported field-wide initiatives meant to increase transparency and reproducibility such as IRIS and the OASIS Database. Later this year, SSLA will publish a special issue on OS in the context of qualitative and mixed methods in second-language (L2) research, guest edited by Meng Liu, Ali Al-Hoorie, and Phil Hiver. And perhaps most importantly with respect to our outward commitment to OS, as of 2026, all articles published in SSLA are freely accessible.

We are proud of these steps toward openness and transparency, which are key, we believe, to the notion of quality at the study- and field-wide level (Plonsky, 2024a). But we're not done. The purpose of this brief editorial is to announce the launch of two new article types, both with a strong OS orientation: Data Reports and Registered Reports. We are happy that SSLA is able to contribute to OS in these ways and, thereby, we believe, improve the quality and potential impact of the research we publish. However, recognizing that SSLA is just one of several dozen applied linguistics journals, we end this piece by addressing the role of professional organizations in fostering a culture of OS as well as some of the responsibilities we would like to see them take on.

Data Reports

Data Reports, the first of two new article types in SSLA, present an openly available dataset with strong potential to be used by others in the field. Making high-quality datasets available for subsequent analysis allows for increased efficiency across research groups. In addition to providing a thorough codebook and a rich description of how the data were collected, coded, and prepared—and any corresponding distributional and/or validity evidence—such submissions will often include brief demonstrations of the types of questions the data set can be used to address. Examples of the types of

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data that authors might present in such a paper include a tagged corpus of L2 writing with detailed metadata, a set of speech stimuli, or a list of vocabulary items normed for frequency and other linguistic features.

We acknowledge that not all studies produce datasets warranting a separate write-up for wider usage. And despite major strides toward data sharing and transparency more generally, there are still many authors who are hesitant to allow others to have access to their hard-won data (Liu & de Cat, 2024). Nevertheless, we have chosen to make space for articles that present and illustrate openly available datasets, thereby incentivizing more of a collectivist, all-in-this-together approach to science, not unlike the ethos often associated with replication and research synthesis and, of course, the open science movement (McManus, 2024; Norris & Ortega, 2006; Plonsky, 2024b). Through this initiative, we also highlight that making a study's data open does not necessarily mean that the data are accessible or usable by others. For example, not all open data include variable dictionaries or coding protocols, meaning that researchers often have to work out by themselves what the data are, as well as what has been shared by the research team. A Data Report thus helps to make visible what the data are, a better understanding of how they were collected and prepared, as well as how new research teams can use the data. Not all approaches to doing L2 research will think of data in the same ways, so we expect that Data Reports will allow for better understanding across the field about what we take data to be, standards for sharing and reporting data, as well as building understanding that data re-analysis and re-use is expected.

To date, SSLA has published four Data Reports. Kuperman et al. (2025) presented a publicly available corpus of eye movement and reading comprehension data from over 1200 English L2 users representing 19 different L1 backgrounds. Wang et al. (2025) introduced a corpus of written learner production linked to a rich and highly accessible set of participant- and text-level metadata. In addition to describing their rationale for the creation of the dataset, the authors also illustrate potential uses and applications of the corpus. The third and fourth Data Reports are both in the domain of L2 speech production and perception. Kachlicka et al. (in press) provide a set of stimuli and recordings covering a highly controlled range of prosodic variants, features, and difficulty levels meant to facilitate future research in L2 prosody. And the Data Report by Huensch & Nagle (in press), presents production data from L2 speakers along with listener ratings and a rich set of participant/listener-level background and metadata ripe for subsequent analyses.

Our aim in offering this new article type is twofold. First, we hope that the Data Reports published by SSLA will lead to more consistent and more efficient advances in our knowledge of language development. We also hope that the existence of this article type will prompt scholars in the field to consider making their datasets not only available but also accessible and usable to others.

Registered Reports

We are also very pleased to see the launch of Registered Reports as a new manuscript type for the journal. A Registered Report offers authors a different route to publication, separated into two Stages. First, authors write up the study's motivations, research design, and methods before any data are collected. This submission (a Stage 1 Registered Report) is then reviewed and revised based on journal and reviewer feedback. This process can lead to an editorial decision of In-Principle Accept (or IPA), in which the journal agrees to publish the paper regardless of the results following the procedures

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laid out in the Stage 1 Registered Report. After receiving IPA, the study authors then register the study protocol and carry out the study as described and approved by the journal. Then, authors write up the results and submit the manuscript as a Stage 2 Registered Report (i.e., Stage 1 Registered Report plus results, discussion, conclusions). The key difference between a Registered Report and what we can call the standard route to publication (i.e., conduct the study and then write it up) is that in a Registered Report, the study's motivation, research design, and methods are reviewed before data collection.

Registered Reports have been around for a while now (see Huensch, 2024; Nosek & Lakens, 2014; Marsden et al., 2018), which means that we know a good amount about their value for the field. For example, we know that ignoring null results and replications biases the scientific record (Giner-Sorolla, 2012; Nosek et al., 2012). We also know that replication studies and null results are rare in the published literature. Registered Reports can't solve this problem, but they can help us make publication decisions based on the timeliness, quality, and potential benefit/impact of a study, regardless of the results. A Registered Report gets us to focus on study quality, hear from peers about recommendations for improvement, and work toward developing a better version of the study before we commit to collecting the data.

Putting this into practice, SSLA will be publishing a series of Registered Reports inspired by the *replication marketplace* concept (Hüffmeier & Kühner, 2024). To this end, we tasked the SSLA editorial board with identifying SSLA studies published within the last five years that they thought should be replicated, with a brief rationale. This process resulted in 17 studies, which we then reviewed and shortlisted to five. This list of five included studies with open materials and/or data that the editorial board considered important, impactful, and worthy of replication. We then sent out an open call to the SLA community to propose a replication of one of these five studies. We received 24 proposals, which were internally reviewed, and a selection was invited to submit a Stage 1 Registered Report. At the time of writing, all invited submissions have been reviewed, and several have already received IPA. By the end of this process, we are hoping to have several replications of each study.

So, what have we done here? Well, we are seriously investing in the quality and potential impact of the research we publish. In this way, SSLA is taking a proactive editorial approach. Replications are important. But replicating some of the most influential and impactful studies published in the journal is also important. Taking this position allows us to further invest in the quality and potential impact of research published in SSLA.

On the potential role of AAAL in shaping editorial policy and a culture of OS

We, the editorial team at SSLA, have taken consistent steps over the years to foster a culture of open science, some of which we describe in this editorial. Much of this work has been inspired by our colleagues leading other journals who have likewise sought to increase transparency and accessibility for the field (e.g., Andringa et al., 2024; Bolibaugh et al., 2021; Hiver et al., 2026; Harding & Winke, 2021; Marsden et al., 2018; Silver & Lin, 2024). We recognize and sincerely appreciate their efforts and leadership.

In contrast with the proactive approach by many of the field's editors and journals, AAAL (and most other learned societies in applied linguistics) have remained largely agnostic when it comes to OS (cf. Brysbaert, 2024). This is disappointing considering the value of OS both in terms of its benefits for advancing scholarly knowledge as well as

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for its potential to increase equity and accessibility of research findings, materials, and data worldwide. In our view, the lack of leadership from AAAL on this and other fronts (e.g., methodological and reporting guidelines) has held the field back relative to professional societies in neighboring disciplines. Organizational leaders in psychology, for example, have been very proactive in promoting OS as it pertains to virtually all aspects of our professional activity, from conducting and reporting individual studies to funding considerations, outreach, researcher training, and standards for career advancement.

In addition to field-specific guidelines for OS that could be taken up across journals, AAAL could also follow the lead of organizations such as the Linguistic Society of America (LSA), the American Psychological Association (APA), and the Association for Psychological Science (APS) in launching open-access publishing platforms and resources. In fact, a few years ago, several scholars brought a proposal to do so to the leadership of AAAL. The case was, in our view, fairly straightforward: A digital-only, in-house publishing operation would allow for free and open access to current research in applied linguistics to anyone in the world with an internet connection. AAAL declined to give the idea any serious consideration, a move that stands in stark opposition to the organization's very public statements of deep concern for the Global South and principles of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI). The unwillingness of AAAL to put their values into concrete action of this sort also stands in stark contrast to the success of the Dutch Association of Applied Linguistics, which chose to move their flagship journal from a for-profit, paywalled publisher to a self-published, diamond OS model. Check out Andringa et al. (2024) for the full rationale and backstory.

Conclusion

Despite a preference held by some for the status quo, we are hopeful and undeterred. In our experience, the intellectual and ethical rationale for OS seems to resonate almost immediately with younger scholars who will soon replace us and occupy positions of leadership in the field's journals, learned societies, and graduate programs. In fact, we optimistically envision a future when we no longer talk about *open* science because the principles and practices of OS will have become so integrated into what we do (Plonsky, 2024b). Indeed, although it's not always easy to ask authors and reviewers to embrace new ways of presenting, sharing, and evaluating scholarly research, we believe in this movement. We also believe that a time will come when practices such as data sharing and preregistration, embodied in the two new articles we introduced in this editorial, will become the norm.

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