

Referees' comments on submissions to peer-reviewed journals: When is a suggestion not a suggestion?

Brian PALTRIDGE
University of Sydney, Australia
brian.paltridge@sydney.edu.au

This presentation discusses a study which examined the ways in which reviewers ask for changes to be made to submissions to peer-reviewed journals. Ninety-seven reviewers' reports were examined for the study. Forty-one reviewers also completed a questionnaire. Follow up email interviews were also conducted with reviewers. A speech act analysis was carried out of the ways in which the reviewers asked for changes to be made to submissions. The study found that requests for changes were largely made as *directions*, *suggestions*, *clarification requests* and *recommendations*. While a good number of these changes were requested directly, a large number of them were not. For authors who are new to the peer-review process, indirect requests of the kind revealed in the study can be difficult to decode. Very often these requests are directions to make very specific changes to a submission and need, it is argued, to be read as such. The findings are especially relevant to beginning researchers as they provide insights into how they can respond to reviewers' reports and, thereby, increase their chances of publication.

References

Paltridge, B. (2015). Referees' comments on submissions to peer-reviewed journals: When is a suggestion not a suggestion? *Studies in Higher Education*, 40(1), 106-122. doi: 10.1080/03075079.2013.818641

Paltridge, B. (2013). Learning to review submissions to peer reviewed journals: How do they do it? *International Journal for Researcher Development*, 4(1), 6-18. doi: org/10.1108/IJRD-07-2013-0011

Biodata

Brian Paltridge is Professor TESOL at the University of Sydney. His publications include *Ethnographic perspectives on academic writing* (Oxford University Press 2016, with Sue Starfield and Christine Tardy) and *Getting published in academic journals* (University of Michigan Press 2016, with Sue Starfield). He edits, with Sue Starfield, the Routledge *Introductions to English for Specific Purposes* and *Research in English for Specific Purposes* series. He is co-editor of *TESOL Quarterly* and editor emeritus for *English for Specific Purposes*.