

# Exploring the Role of Methodological Factors in Publishing Turkish and Foreign Journals

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to analyze and compare recent research papers on foreign language education in Turkish context with those published in international context to shed light on researchers and policy makers for future studies. This study filled a gap in this field and also aimed to increase the rate of acceptance of research papers submitted by Turkish authors in foreign journals. Content Analysis method was used in this study. This study focused on recent 188 research papers published in 8 prestigious journals indexed in Social Sciences Citation Index in Turkey and in the world and they were analyzed in terms of research design, data collection tools, samples, sample size and data analysis method. The results of the study revealed that quantitative research design was predominantly used in Turkish journals while qualitative research design was mainly preferred by foreign journals. In addition, undergraduates were the focus of attention as sample group particularly in Turkish journals. This study suggested that qualitative research design should be given priority and alternative instruments like concept maps and portfolio should be used in this type of studies including observation and interviews. Moreover, experimental studies should be more focus of attention rather than administrating only one questionnaire in quantitative studies.

**Keywords:** publishing in journals, ELT journals, methodology in journals, content analysis in journals

## 1. Introduction

The concept of ‘publish or perish’ which is commonly accepted in the western world has become more widespread in today’s world because both scholars and institutions need academic publications in prestigious journals to raise their rankings in global scientific area, to acquire academic title, promotion or to keep their positions (Uysal, 2012). While Gevers et al (2006: 108) consider journals as the “life-blood of living and evolving science”, Knorr-Cetina (1981, 106) think that “the published paper is a multilayered hybridco-produced by the authors and by members of the audience to which it is directed”. Furthermore, Casanave & Vandrick (2003, 1) point out that faculties do research “to grow professionally and intellectually to share their ideas with peers and become better teachers through the reflective and critical processes of writing for a public readership”.

Hyland (2010) states that writing a manuscript in English is an important advantage in having a publication in high impact factor journals. 95% of all publications in the Science Citation Index are in English. As a result of this situation, many journals’ goal is to publish in English, which is a demanding task and an obstacle for non-native speakers of English (Wood, 2001). The growing number of researchers particularly from Iran and China increased the competition for publication and the rate of rejection for prestigious journals was almost 93%. In 2010, only one out of 300 papers submitted in Science Citation Index journals was accepted for publication in the field of Applied Linguistics (Hyland, 2010). Colquhoun (2011) also revealed that for 2006, 3 million papers published in 23,750 journals all over the world.

Salager-Meyer (2008) cites that “In 2001, the United States of America, the European Union (then made up of 15 members only), and Japan collectively accounted for 78.3% of the world’s published scientific research” (European Commission Report, 2003).

Moreover, it is maintained that only 31 nations out of 191 make up of 98 % of citations in scientific research world. In ranking, the U.S.A. was first, European Union was the second. These nations were followed by Japan and Canada (King, 2004). Swales (2004, 52) names this phenomenon as the impact of “Englishization”. According to Abdelrahim (2004), developing countries had only 2% of indexed scientific publications although they had the 80% of the world’s population. In other words, 10% of journals publish 90 % of important scientific research. According to European Commission Report (2003), there is a link between scientific research publication and national wealth distribution.

Turkish scholars struggle to have publications in indexed journals with high impact factor both at home and in different parts of the world. The limited number of indexed journals in Turkey leads researchers to submit their manuscript in foreign journals, which is quite competitive and challenging for some reasons.

Uzuner (2008) lists some of the problems that multilingual scholars have to cope with international publishing as follows: Language problems, Parochialism, divergence from the accepted norms of research reporting, consuming and tedious nature of writing for publication in English, lack of connections with members of the core academic communities, potential bias against multilingual scholars’ submissions, lack of sufficient funds to conduct research. In the light of this information, the purpose of this study was to analyze and compare

the content of Social Sciences Citation Index journals both in Turkey and in international area on foreign language education in terms of research method, data collection instruments, sample, sample size and data analysis method to boost the number of Turkish researchers submitting in international journals with high acceptance rate. This study is considered significant and believed to fill a gap on foreign language education because no research has been found in the literature comparing Turkish and international journals in foreign language area.

## 2. Publishing in Prestigious journals

Table 1 indicates the common errors made by authors submitting their manuscripts in indexed foreign journals (Chris Kapp & Ruth Albertyn, 2008).

Table 1. Common Errors made by authors

Common errors	Never	Sometimes	Often	N/A
Does not comply with rules for submission	1	64	30	04
Content inappropriate for journal	10	77	12	1
Poor contextualization of the study	4	78	16	1
Lack of focus	5	77	18	0
Summary	6	64	14	14
Problem statement	3	64	21	12
Research design	1	67	23	8
Data analysis	7	66	22	5
Style/Language	0	53	45	1
Length	19	56	21	4
Originality of work	15	71	12	1
Reference style	5	52	38	4
No keywords	7	38	16	38
Dated references	7	55	10	1
Discussion of results	7	53	7	5
Conclusions	8	75	11	5
Recommendations	5	66	10	19
Plagiarism	58	37	0	5

According to Table 1, Style and language (45%) and reference style (38%) were the common errors with a frequency of “often”. Diezmann (2005: 444) refers to these aspects as the “mechanical writing” which is not linked with the content of the article. Accordingly, Li (2002: 186) also found that 80% of Chinese doctoral researchers considered themselves insufficient in terms of language in comparison with the researchers whose native language is English. Similarly, 68% of Cantonese researchers felt themselves unqualified in writing a manuscript in English and 51% worried about “technical problems with the language” (Flowerdew, 2000). Although Cantonese researchers also believe that there is discrimination in favor of native speakers in acceptance of a manuscript in ELT and applied linguistics, Flowerdew (2001) contradicts this view and argues that no discrimination exists. Furthermore, in Table 1, research design (23) and data analysis (22) were the other important reasons for increasing the rate of rejection, which were the one of the focus of this study.

Coleman (2014) emphasizes the factors influencing the rate of acceptance of a manuscript in prestigious journals as follows: Interesting to readers, original, rigorous in method and analysis, significant in the findings and conclusions, well-situated in relevant theory and in the current state of knowledge, well-presented in terms of writing, structure, style and register.

Ferguson (2007: 21) draws attention to a different aspect of publishing an article and emphasizes that the cost of a scientific research is very high. Therefore, developing nations face problems in realizing, publishing and dissemination of a research due to the lack of financial support. In industrialized nations, private sector provides subsidy to 70% of researches while 30% of the research are funded by the public. On the other hand, in developing nations, public supports 75% of researches and the contribution of private sector is minor (Nour,2005).

The impact factor is considered the most important element indicating the quality of a journal. However, Egbert (2007) criticizes the use of impact factor as the only indicator of the value of a journal. Because the editors of some leading journals ask the authors add their publications in the references list during submission to boost impact factor of the journal (Begley, 2006).

## 3. Review of Literature

Researches analyzing the content of the manuscripts published on foreign language education have been quiet rare and content analysis studies have mainly focused on mathematics and science education in Turkish context

(Göktaş et al, 2012; Sözbilir & Kutu, 2008).

Göktaş et al (2012) scanned educational research papers published from 2005-2009 in 2115 papers in 19 Turkish educational research journals indexed in SSCI and the ULAKBIM database in Turkey. Research methods, specific topics, data collection tools, data analysis methods, and types of samples and sampling methods were taken into consideration in this study. The results suggested that quantitative research method, quantitative data collection tools and descriptive analysis methods were dominant. Undergraduate students and teachers were the focus of attention as the sample group.

Solak (2014) investigated the trends of recent research papers in foreign language education in Turkish context and analyzed 189 research papers published between 2009-2013 years in journals indexed in SSCI and the ULAKBIM database in Turkey. The results of the study suggested that concept analysis, teaching and learning were studied with the highest frequency, quantitative method was used more than qualitative method in research design, and researchers mainly preferred undergraduate students as the sample group and the size of this sample group was 31-100.

In international context, content analysis of articles published on foreign language education has also been rare, too. Woravut et al (2012) studied the differences between Thai and international research articles in English Language Teaching (ELT) and analyzed 200 research articles in some aspects between 2003 and 2007. The results of the study revealed that researches conducted by Thai ELT academics exhibited a lower quality of methodological foundation in comparison with international ones.

#### **4. Method**

The purpose of this study was to analyze and compare recent research papers on foreign language education in Turkish context with those published in international context to shed light on researchers and policy makers for future studies, because the number of Turkish researchers having publication in internationally prestigious journals were few and they had difficulties in publication for some reasons. Therefore, this study filled a gap in this field and aimed to determine the similarities and differences in two types of journals and to increase the rate of acceptance of research papers submitted by Turkish authors in international journals. Content Analysis method was used in this study. According to Sağlam & Yüksel (2007) Content Analysis helps to summarize content of many research papers and provides reliable and valid generalizations in a research field. Content analysis is generally used in qualitative studies as systematic analysis of papers. This study focused on recent research papers published in prestigious journals indexed in Social Sciences Citation Index in Turkey and in the world in terms of research design, data collection tools, samples, sample size and data analysis method. Totally, 188 research papers on foreign language education were scanned from 4 national SSCI and 4 international indexed journals. The titles of the journals scanned were presented in the appendix 1. The following research questions were answered in this study:

1. Which research designs were frequently applied in SSCI indexed Turkish and foreign journals?
2. What were the similarities and differences in SSCI indexed Turkish and foreign journals in terms of the relationship between research design and data collection tools?
3. What were the similarities and differences in SSCI indexed Turkish and foreign journals in terms of the relationship between research design and sample group?
4. What were the similarities and differences in SSCI indexed Turkish and foreign journals in terms of the relationship between research design and sample size?

#### **4.1. Instrument**

In this study, Research Papers Classification Form which was developed by Sozbilir and Kutu (2008) was modified with regard to objectives of the study and used as data collection instrument. This tool was presented in Appendix 2 and composed of the following sections: research design or methods of paper, data collection tools, sample, sample size, data analysis method. The collected data were transferred to SPSS 16.0 and the results were analyzed and presented in terms of frequency and percentage.

#### **5. Findings and Results**

The data collected from the study were presented in tables below in terms of research design, data collection tools, sample and sample sizes. Table 2 shows the comparison between Turkish and foreign SSCI journals in terms of research design.

Table 2 The comparison between Turkish and foreign SSCI journals in terms of research design.

Research design	Turkish journals	Foreign journals	total
quantitative	49 52%	28 30%	77 41%
qualitative	21 22%	50 53%	71 38%
mixed	24 26%	16 17%	40 21%
total	94 100%	94 100%	188 100%

According to the table 2, quantitative research design was predominantly used in Turkish journals (52%). In addition, mixed design (26%) was also used in Turkish journals more frequently than foreign journals. As of qualitative research design, foreign journals mainly preferred this type of design at a rate of 53%. All in all, quantitative research design (41%) was in the first place, qualitative (38%) was in the second and mixed (21%) was the third.

Table 3 displays the comparison between Turkish and foreign SSCI journals in terms of the relationship between research design and data collection tools.

Table 3 The relationship between research design and data collection tools.

Research design	Data collection tools	Turkish journals	foreign journals	total
quantitative	Achievement tests	1 2 %	9 32 %	10 13 %
	questionnaire	37 75,5%	3 10,7 %	40 51,9%
	documents	1 2,0%	6 21,4%	7 9,1%
	Alternative instruments	1 2,0 %	0	1 1,3 %
	total	49 100 % 64%	28 100% 36%	77 100 % 100 %
qualitative	observation	1 4,8 %	1 2,0 %	2 2,8 %
	interview	3 14,3 %	6 12,0 %	9 12,7 %
	documents	11 52,4 %	10 20,0 %	21 29,6 %
	Alternative instruments	0	2 4,0 %	2 2,8 %
	More than one instruments	5 23,8 %	31 62,0 %	36 50,7 %
	total	21 100 % 30 %	50 100 % 70 %	71 100 % 100 %
mixed	interview	1 4,2 %	0	1 2,5 %
	Achievement tests	0	1 6,3 %	1 2,5 %
	questionnaire	0	1 6,3 %	1 2,5 %
	documents	1 4,2 %	3 18,8 %	4 10,0 %
	More than one instruments	22 91,7 %	11 68,8 %	33 82,5 %
	total	24 100 % 60 %	16 100 % 40 %	40 100 % 100 %

According to the table 3, in quantitative studies, while questionnaires (75%) were used mostly in Turkish journals, foreign journals benefitted from achievement tests (32%) as data collection instruments. Analyzing the qualitative studies in detail, foreign journals used more than one instruments (62%) as data collection instruments, yet document analysis was studied less than Turkish journals (52%). In addition, while alternative instruments (4%) were used at a minimum rate in foreign journals, those tools were not preferred at all in Turkish journals. Finally, in terms of mixed method design, while Turkish journals (92%) used more than one instruments, foreign journals made use of documents (19%), questionnaire (6%) and achievement tests (6%). Table 4 shows the comparison between Turkish and foreign SSCI journals in terms of the relationship between research design and sample groups.

Table 4 the relationship between research design and sample groups.

Research design	sample	Turkish journals	Foreign journals	total
quantitative	Elementary (1-4)	1 2,2 %	2 9,1 %	3 4,4 %
	Secondary (5-8)	1 2,2 %	2 9,1 %	3 4,4 %
	High school (9-12)	1 2,2 %	1 4,5 %	2 2,9 %
	undergraduate	32 69,6 %	14 63,6 %	46 67,6 %
	Post-graduate	0	1 4,5 %	1 1,5 %
	Others	7 15,2 %	1 4,5 %	8 11,8 %
	More than one	4 8,7 %	1 4,5 %	5 7,4 %
	total	46 100 %	22 100 %	68 100 %
qualitative	Elementary (1-4)	1 8,3 %	6 15 %	7 13,5 %
	Secondary (5-8)	1 8,3 %	1 2,5 %	2 3,8 %
	High school (9-12)	0	1 2,5 %	1 1,9 %
	undergraduate	7 58,3 %	14 35 %	21 40,4 %
	Post-graduate	0	1	1
	Others	2 16,7 %	15 37,5 %	17 32,7 %
	More than one	1 8,3 %	2 5,0 %	3 5,8 %
	total	12 100 %	40 100 %	52 100 %
mixed	Elementary (1-4)	0	1 7,7 %	1 2,8 %
	undergraduate	13 56,5 %	5 38,5 %	18 50 %
	Post-graduate	0	2 15,4 %	2 5,6 %
	Others	8 34,8 %	4 30,8 %	12 33,3 %
	More than one	2 8,7 %	1 7,7 %	3 8,3 %
	total	23 100 %	13 100 %	36 100 %

According to the table 4, in quantitative research design, undergraduates (68 %) were the focus of attention. While the ratio was 70% in Turkish journals, it was 64% in foreign journals. In addition, others (families, parents and teachers) and more than one sample group were preferred in Turkish journals (9%) more than in foreign journals (5%). On the other hand, elementary (9%), secondary (9%), high school (5%) and post

graduate (5%) were the target group studied in foreign journals. In qualitative studies, similarly, undergraduates were targeted at a rate of 40% in the first place. In Turkish journals (58%), undergraduates were studied more than foreign journals (35%). However, elementary (15%), high school (3%) and others (38%) were the population preferred in foreign journals more than Turkish journals. Finally, as of mixed research design, Turkish journals made use of undergraduates (57%) and others (35%) more than foreign journals. On the other hand, elementary (8%) and post graduate (15%) were more focused in foreign journals.

Table 5 shows the comparison between Turkish and foreign SSCI journals in terms of the relationship between research design and sample size.

Table 5 the relationship between research design and sample size.

Research design	Sample size	Turkish journals	Foreign journals	total
quantitative	1-10	1 2,3 %	1 4,5 %	2 3,0 %
	11-30	2 4,5 %	3 13,6 %	5 7,6 %
	31-100	18 40,9 %	11 50 %	29 43,9 %
	101-300	11 25 %	5 22,7 %	16 24,2 %
	301-1000	12 27,3 %	2 9,1 %	14 21,2 %
	total	44 100 %	22 100 %	66 100 %
qualitative	1-10	4 28,6 %	24 60 %	28 51,9 %
	11-30	4 28,6 %	8 20 %	12 22,2 %
	31-100	5 35,7 %	8 20 %	13 24,1 %
	101-300	1 7,1 %	0	1 1,9 %
	total	14 100 %	40 100 %	54 100 %
mixed	1-10	0	2 15,4 %	2 5,6 %
	11-30	5 21,7 %	4 30,8 %	9 25 %
	31-100	10 43,5 %	3 23,1 %	10 27,8 %
	101-300	7 30,4 %	3 23,1 %	10 27,8 %
	301-1000	1 4,3 %	1 7,7 %	2 5,6 %
	total	23 100 %	13 100 %	36 100 %

According to table 5, in quantitative studies, 31-100 (50%), 11-30(14%) and 1-10 (5%) sample sizes were predominantly used in foreign journals. However, 301-1000 (27%) and 101-300(25%) sample sizes were mainly preferred by Turkish journals. As of qualitative studies, while 1-10 sample size was used at a rate of 60% in foreign journals; 31-100 (36%), 11-30 (29%) and 101-300 (7%) sample sizes were the focus of attention in Turkish journals. Finally, in terms of mixed research design, 31-100 (44%) and 101-300 (30%) sample sizes were predominantly used by Turkish journals, yet 11-30 (31%), 1-10 (15%) and 301-1000 (8%) sample sizes were comparatively preferred by foreign journals.

## 6. Discussion

This study investigated the similarities and differences between Turkish and foreign SSCI indexed journals in terms of research design, data collection tools, sample and sample sizes to shed light on current trends in academic publications in foreign language education field both in Turkey and internationally. Since the number of publications of Turkish authors has been quiet few in foreign journals, this study fills a gap in this research



area and can help to boost the rate of acceptance of manuscripts in the journals with high impact factors.

This study revealed that quantitative research design was predominantly used in Turkish journals while qualitative research design was mainly preferred by foreign journals. In addition, mixed design was also used in Turkish journals more frequently than foreign journals. According to Kapp & Albertyn (2008), research design and data analysis method were among the important factors which led to rejection of submission for foreign journals. Coleman (2014) also supports this view and emphasizes the role of “rigorous in method and analysis” in the acceptance of a manuscript for publication. The findings of Göktaş et al (2012) were in line with the results of the present study even though its implications covered educational sciences in general in Turkey. The results of that study suggested that quantitative research method and quantitative data collection tools were dominant in comparison with qualitative research design in Turkish context.

According to the results of the present study, in quantitative studies, while questionnaires were used mostly in Turkish journals, foreign journals benefitted from achievement tests as data collection instruments. This case was similar in Turkish educational context and questionnaires were commonly used as data collection instrument (Göktaş et al, 2012). As of the qualitative studies, foreign journals used more than one instruments like observation and interview as data collection instruments, but document analysis was rarely studied in these journals. Furthermore, foreign journals made use of alternative instruments, though those tools were not preferred at all in Turkish journals. Moreover, in terms of mixed method design, whereas Turkish journals used more than one instrument, foreign journals made use of documents, questionnaire and achievement tests.

This study also suggested that in quantitative research design, undergraduates were the focus of attention. It can be maintained that Turkish journals concentrated on undergraduate population more than foreign journals. In addition, others (families, parents and teachers) and more than one sample group were comparatively preferred in Turkish journals at a higher rate.

The findings of Göktaş et al (2012) were also consistent with the results of the present study and their study revealed that undergraduate students were the focus of attention as the sample group in Turkish educational context. On the other hand, elementary, secondary, high school and post graduate were the target group studied more frequently in foreign journals. In qualitative studies, similar to quantitative studies, undergraduates were targeted in the first place in Turkish journals whereas elementary, high school and others were the population preferred more frequently in foreign journals. Finally, as of mixed research design, while Turkish journals made use of undergraduates and others in the first place; elementary and post graduate were more focused in foreign journals.

In quantitative studies, although 31-100, 11-30 and 1-10 sample sizes were predominantly used in foreign journals, 301-1000 and 101-300 sample sizes were mainly preferred by Turkish journals. As of qualitative studies, while 1-10 sample size was used mostly in foreign journals; 31-100, 11-30 and 101-300 sample sizes were the focus of attention in Turkish journals. Finally, in terms of mixed research design, 31-100 and 101-300 sample sizes were predominantly used by Turkish journals, yet 11-30, 1-10 and 301-1000 sample sizes were comparatively preferred by foreign journals. The data collected cannot be compared with the findings of the other studies due to the lack of current literature comparing Turkish and foreign journals on foreign language education.

## 7. Conclusion

The results of the study do not suggest that foreign journals are more qualified than Turkish journals or vice versa. The results only reflect some of the common characteristics of articles published in both Turkish and foreign journals. The main difference between two types of journals can be the role of high impact factor which is very controversial issue for some editors. It can be implied from the study that following the main characteristics of the journals can increase the rate of acceptance by the foreign journals. In the light of this information, following suggestions can be made for the authors who are willing to have publications in foreign journals.

- Qualitative research design should be given priority. In addition, the use of mixed design can increase the acceptance rate by foreign journals.
- In quantitative studies, achievement tests (open-ended or multiple choice) should be used in addition to questionnaires. In other words, experimental studies should be more focus of attention rather than administrating only one questionnaire.
- In qualitative studies, more than one (observation, interview) and alternative instruments like concept maps and portfolio should be used.
- In both quantitative and qualitative studies, elementary, secondary, high school and post graduate sample group should be focused in addition to undergraduates.
- In both qualitative and quantitative research design, the number of population in scanned foreign journals is comparatively low. However, this result cannot be generalized as a scientific data, because the higher the number of the population is, the more reliable the

collected data is.

This study compares the Turkish and foreign SSCI indexed journals and limited with the research design, data collection tools, sample group and sample size of the articles published on foreign language education in recent years. As an implication for further researches, covering different aspects of an article like setting, authors, language and the subject of the papers can be studied to highlight authors to fully increase the rate of acceptance of their manuscripts in foreign journals.

### Appendix 1

The title of Journals scanned in this study

The title of journal	Scores assigned to journals by TUBITAK	The number of articles scanned
EURASIAN JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH	4,98	26
HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY JOURNAL OF EDUCATION	4,98	49
EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES: THEORY&PRACTICE	4,98	3
EDUCATION AND SCIENCE	3,91	16
SYSTEM	40,20	25
LANGUAGE AND EDUCATION	70,73	25
LANGUAGE CULTURE AND CURRICULUM	28,42	19
JOURNAL OF ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES	75,89	25

### Appendix 2

Adapted Paper Classification Form (Sözbilir & Kutu, 2008)

#### Research design or methods of paper

- quantitative
- experimental (true experimental, quasi-experimental etc.)
- non-experimental (descriptive, comparative, correlational, survey etc.)
- qualitative
- interactive (ethnography, case study, phenomenology etc.)
- non-interactive (concept analysis, historical analysis)
- mixed

#### Data collection tools

- Observation (participant, nonparticipant)
- interview (structured, semi-structured, unstructured)
- achievement tests (open ended, multiple choices)
- questionnaire (open-ended, likert etc.)
- documents
- alternative instruments (diagnostic tests, concept maps, portfolio etc.)
- others

#### Sample

- elementary (1-4)       secondary (5-8)       high school (9-12)       undergraduate
- post graduate       others

#### Sample size

- 1-10     11-30     31-100     101-300     301-1000     more than 1000

#### Data analysis method

- (1)  quantitative data analysis
- descriptive (frequency, mean sd, tables, graphs)
- inferential (t-test, correlation, anova, manova, factor analysis, regression)
- qualitative data analysis
- content analysis
- descriptive analysis

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