

What Do Journals Mean? A Genre-Based Analysis of “Instructions for Authors” in Linguistic Journals

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Abstract

This study investigates the communication from journal editors to authors in the context of academic publishing. More specifically, it tries to uncover the “black box” of how journal editors achieve their communicative purposes through their online Instructions For Authors (IFA). By using a self-constructed IFA corpus consisting of 25 IFAs in linguistic journals with high impact factor, and a self-modified threefold analytical framework, this study identifies three key communicative purposes of journal editors through the IFA: stipulating submission requirements, sharing information, and journal promotion. The findings also suggest that stipulating submission requirements is the major purposes realized through all the forms of communication within the analytical framework, while the other two purposes are not equally valued by editors. This study also explores the possibility of power play in terms of the social role of journal editors and their authors. The results of this study are expected to have theoretical as well as practical implications for both journal editors and authors.

Keywords

Academic Publishing, Journal Submission, Instructions for Authors, Critical Genre Analysis, Multimodal Social Semiotic Analysis, Linguistic Injustice

1. Introduction

A common problem always exists in academic publishing, i.e., an expectation mismatch between journal editors and authors (Cerejo, 2014). On the journal side, editors feel that the submissions from authors need to improve in terms of

clarity, depth, and details (Marks, 2010). Methodology rigors could also be problematic for editors since some submissions contain no errors per se, but fall in the category of gaps or lags between previously accepted practices and current consensus among methodologists (Mustillo et al., 2018). On the authors' side, they express concerns about aspects such as the long duration the submission process and how time consuming it is for them, opaque peer review systems, and ambiguity of submission requirements and criteria (D'Souza et al., 2018; Plakhotnik, 2021). A longitudinal study by Li (2006) shows the painstaking submission procedure experienced by a Chinese doctoral student of physics through multiple rounds of resubmission before final acceptance by the journal.

The difference in experiences and expectations between journal editors and authors reveal a problem of information asymmetry and a failure in communication. A large-scale global survey on authors' perspectives on academic publishing draws an essential conclusion that there are major gaps in author-journal communication (D'Souza et al., 2018). According to the survey, approximately 17.4% of authors express fear about contacting the journal, 16.6% mention that they do not know they can contact the journal, and 14.8% even don't have an idea of how to contact the journal. To improve the communication with authors, most academic journals set up specific web pages with information to share detailed clarifications and instructions for submission. These web pages are commonly known as Instructions For Authors (IFA), Author Guidelines, Instructions for Contributors, Submission Guidelines, Guide for Authors, Manuscript Submission Guidelines, or General Guidelines for Contributors, depending on the individual choices of journals. This paper will refer to this communication as Instructions For Authors (IFA).

Though IFAs are created for clarity of the journals' demands for submissions and thus better communication with their contributors, their utility from the contributor's point of view is not entirely satisfactory: Authors often find the journal guidelines listed on IFA pages/sections incomplete and unclear, whereas journal editors regard their IFAs as clear and complete (Cerejo, 2014). Researchers find that even IFAs from prestigious medical journals fail to adequately clarify their expectations for authors, which increase the possibility of journal rejection and lowers the quality of research (Tao et al., 2011). Communication problems concerning IFA appear more prominently between international English-language journals and their English-as-second-language (ESL) contributors (Mudrak, 2013). Mudrak (2013) also stresses that a better understanding of the IFA as well as the communicative intentions behind the IFA would decrease the anxiety of contributors and improve the quality of journal submissions. Given the significance of IFA for better communication between journal editors and authors, and its contribution to the growing awareness of mutual expectation between journal editors and authors in international academic publishing, the present study attempts to investigate how journal editors realize their communicative purposes through IFA.

Aiming at answering this given research question, we will firstly go through previous studies on IFA in the section “Literature review”. Then, the general information of IFA data collection and analysis will be presented in the section “Material and methods”. In the following sections, we will illustrate the detailed results and conduct further discussions. In the final section, we will wrap up the study with reflections and future directions.

2. Literature Review

We would like to introduce the theoretical background of the present study and talk about previous studies on IFA, followed by outlining the directions for the present study.

2.1. Studies on IFA from Perspectives of Linguistics

IFA, with its specific communicative purposes in the field of academic publishing, belongs to the genre of research articles for journal submission (Jin, 2020; Liu, 2021). It is more “meta” in that it applies to original research articles. Through IFA, journal editors are able to present their expectations and standards for submission. They could then take those IFA-norms as important parts in the mechanism of article quality control (Giofrè et al., 2017).

Recently, IFA as a specific genre has received increasing attention from linguistics scholars all over the world. Different linguistics scholars have focused on journals from different fields, such as journals of economics (Henshall, 2012; Henshall, 2018), geography (Meadows et al., 2016), chemical engineering journals (Jin, 2020), medical journals (Mungra & Webber, 2010) and applied linguistics (Hartse & Kubota, 2014).

Focal sections within IFA based on existing studies could be divided into two groups: the section outlining the “use of language” and other sections, e.g. “peer review” (Hewings, 2007; Mungra & Webber, 2010) or “video authority (VA)” (Liu, 2021). However, other sections have not been studied as much as the “use of language”. This growing interest in “use of language” could be attributed to the rapid growth of submissions (Thomson-Reuters, 2012) to international English-language journals (often, “international” denotes “English-language”), or “Anglophone center journals” from ESL contributors, or those who are “outside Anglophone center contexts” (Lillis et al., 2010; McKinley & Rose, 2018). It is also worth noting that many scholars not only focus on the text-internal components of IFA but also take the text-external social context into consideration, which could be viewed as a Critical Genre Analysis. These scholars believe that the requirements for English-language usage in IFA highlight the issues of linguistic injustice as well as power inequalities in academic publishing (Canagarajah, 2003; Lillis et al., 2010; Hyland, 2016).

2.2. Critical Genre Analysis, Multimodal Social Semiotic Analysis, and Communicative Purposes

Genres are defined as “staged and structured communicative events motivated

by various communicative purposes” (Frankenberg-Garcia et al., 2011: p. 139). Communicative purposes shape the rhetorical structure of a genre by “influencing and constraining the choice of content and style” (Swales, 1990: p. 58). Based on the theoretical framework of Swales, Bhatia (2015, 2016) further proposed the analytical framework of Critical Genre Analysis (CGA). CGA is no longer limited to a text-internal analysis but also covers a broader text-external social-culture context. For example, Bhatia related the text-internal components to specific communicative goals in professional areas (Bhatia, 2004).

Kress (2009) regards communication as a dynamic rhetorical process from the perspective of Multimodal Social Semiotics (MSS). MSS scholars hold that the rhetorical process is constructed by the “rhetor”, the agent who initiates the process, through multiple modes (semiotic resources such as, language, images, layout, etc.) to achieve particular social or political communicative purposes (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001; Kress, 2009).

Both approaches, CGA and MSS, are adopted in attempts to open the same “black box”: How are communicative purposes achieved in communication under certain social and professional contexts? This study aims to answer this question in the context of journal publishing and journal’s IFA.

2.3. Directions for the Present Study

An overview of the existing literature revealed that there is still some scope for additional research. As a genre of research articles for journal submission, the IFA needs to be studied both text-internally and text-externally from CGA and MSS perspectives. As for the text-internal aspect, the communication process and the structure of IFA still remain unclear. As for the text-external aspect, though the communicative purposes fulfilled by separate sections of IFA have been inferred by some scholars, the major communicative intentions across IFA sections, and the IFA as a whole, remain understudied. Moreover, few studies investigate the similarities and differences among IFA sections in terms of their communicative purposes.

3. Material and Methods

This study aims to investigate how journal editors realize their communicative purposes using multiple tools to create the IFA. Drawing upon the frameworks of CGA and MSS, this study performs a threefold analysis on a self-constructed IFA-corpus, combining move analysis, semantic field analysis, and multimodal analysis. More details about the methodology used are presented below.

3.1. The IFA Corpus

Following the sample selection criteria suggested by Biber (1993), this study focuses on the IFAs of representative linguistic journals. Journal impact factor is a well-acknowledged metric among scholars that can represent the general quality of journals (Garfield, 1999; Garfield, 2006). To construct an IFA-corpus, this

study at first selects 25 influential journals in the field of linguistics from Journal Citation Reports (JCR), using the impact factor (IF) ranking in 2020 as selection criteria. Since the 23rd-ranked journal *Annual Review of Linguistics* does not present journal-specific IFA on its official website, the 26th-ranked journal *Linguistic Approaches to Bilingualism* was then added into the corpus. Then, we manually extract the IFA information from journals' web pages. The whole corpus contains 25 IFAs with 98,496 tokens. General information of journals in IFA corpus is listed below (see **Table 1**).

Table 1. General information of journals in IFA-corpus (Date of data access: 2021/06/19).

No.	Name	Publisher	Location	Language	IF
IFA1	Theoretical Linguistics	Walter De Gruyter GmbH	Germany	English	5.75
IFA2	Applied Linguistics	Oxford University Press	England	English	4.286
IFA3	Journal Of Memory and Language	Academic Press Inc Elsevier Science	United States of America	English	3.892
IFA4	Language Teaching	Cambridge University Press	England	English	3.714
IFA5	Modern Language Journal	Wiley	United States of America	English	5.538
IFA6	Language Learning	Wiley	United States of America	English	3.408
IFA7	Journal Of Second Language Writing	Pergamon-Elsevier Science Ltd.	United States of America	English	3.077
IFA8	Studies In Second Language Acquisition	Cambridge University Press	United States of America	English	2.838
IFA9	Language Teaching Research	Sage Publications Ltd.	New Zealand	English	2.647
IFA10	Computer Assisted Language Learning	Taylor & Francis Ltd.	England	English	2.642
IFA11	English For Specific Purposes	Pergamon-Elsevier Science Ltd.	United States of America	English	2.612
IFA12	Journal Of Phonetics	Academic Press Ltd., Elsevier Science Ltd.	England	English	2.6
IFA13	Computational Linguistics	MIT Press	United States of America	English	2.51
IFA14	Language Learning & Technology	Univ Hawaii, Natl Foreign Language Resource Center	United States of America	English	2.473
IFA15	Corpus Linguistics And Linguistic Theory	De Gruyter Mouton	Germany	English	2.417
IFA16	Assessing Writing	Elsevier Sci Ltd.	England	English	2.404
IFA17	Brain And Language	Elsevier Sci Ltd.	England	English	2.339
IFA18	Bilingualism-Language and Cognition	Cambridge University Press	United States of America	English	2.21
IFA19	Foreign Language Annals	Wiley	United States of America	English	2.198
IFA20	International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism	Routledge Journals, Taylor & Francis Ltd.	England	English	2.168
IFA21	TESOL Quarterly	Wiley	United States of America	English	2.071

Continued

IFA22	Language In Society	Cambridge University Press	England	English	2.04
IFA23	International Journal of Multilingualism	Taylor & Francis Ltd.	England	English	1.981
IFA24	System	Elsevier Sci Ltd.	England	English	1.979
IFA25	Linguistic Approaches To Bilingualism	John Benjamins Publishing Co	Netherlands	English	1.93

3.2. Methods and Procedures

Combining the multimodal move analysis conducted by Lam (2013), the Critical Genre Analysis framework created by Yu and Bondi (2019), and the genre and multimodality model proposed by Liu (2021), this study has designed a modified threefold framework to investigate how the editors of academic/scholarly journals achieve their communicative purposes through the IFA (see Figure 1).

The method of move analysis is now commonly used in applied linguistics and was originally proposed by Swales (1990) to analyze the textual structures. We read through the whole IFA corpus and denote the paragraphs according to their themes and communicative purposes using MAXQDA, a tool for qualitative data analysis. We compared the themes and communicative purposes across journals, marking similarities as well as differences. These two phases were iterated, until there were no emergent themes or communicative purposes. Then, I categorized all the themes into several moves that share with internal stability, according to their communicative purposes and the positions where they are located on the IFA web pages. Moves are further divided into obligatory moves (ob) and optional moves (op) based on the frequency of their occurrence on IFA web pages (Pappas, 2006).

Then we conducted the semantic field analysis. Using the text analysis software AntConc (3.5.9) developed by Anthony (2018), we generated a top 1000 word list from my IFA corpus. Those 1000 words were most frequently used in IFA by editors, and could well reflect their lexico-semantic preferences. Then, with the help of UCREL (University Centre for Computer Corpus Research on Language) Semantic Analysis System (USAS) embedded in WMatrix4 developed by Lancaster University (Rayson, 2008), top 1000 words were tagged with semantic labels. Through the study on preferred semantic fields of journal editors, their communicative intentions could be better understood.

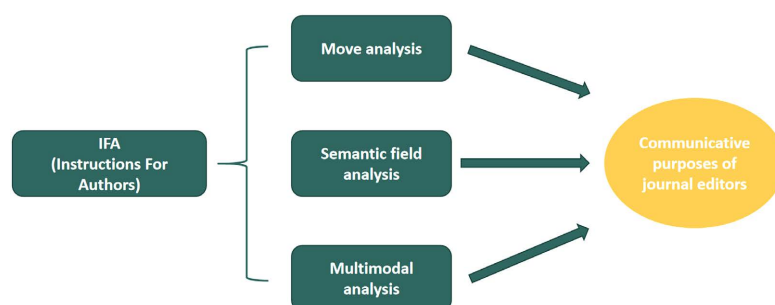


Figure 1. The threefold analytical framework of this study.

Last but not least, multimodal analysis was also included in the study. Journal submission processes are now online and all the IFAs are published on web pages presenting diverse semiotic signs. Hence, the research on multimodality is of great importance. Here, communicative modes on the web pages listing IFA were discovered. Paying attention to bold typeface in characters, images, and hyperlinks, while having their communicative purposes in mind, a multi-modal analysis of IFA corpus of this study may enrich the knowledge of editors' communication behaviors through the IFA web pages.

After conducting this threefold analysis, we take an overview of the results using CGA and MSS perspectives. Then we relate the results drawn from the internal textual analysis to its text-external social context. From a more macro perspective, we then discuss in detail the communicative purposes of editors as well as their forms of realization through the IFA.

Based on the analytical framework introduced above, the research question in the study can further be refined into:

- 1) How do journal editors realize their communication purposes through generic moves in the IFA?
- 2) What are the lexico-semantic resources that journal editors use to construct the communicative images of IFA?
- 3) What are the multiple modes on the IFA web pages that are applied to communicate with potential authors?

4. Results

We now present the findings from my threefold analysis of the IFA corpus. First, we look at the findings from the move analysis from the perspective of generic structure. We then generate the results of the semantic field analysis from the content perspective. Finally, we present a new understanding of IFA using multimodal analysis.

4.1. Move Analysis: IFA Moves for Diverse Communicative Purposes

The move analysis of the self-constructed IFA corpus (25 linguistics journals that yielded 98,496 tokens) identifies a total of 14 move types that mainly follow the order of their presence in the authors' submission journeys. Though all the 25 journals are broadly from similar research fields (i.e., linguistics), only one move appears in every journal, showing disparity in IFA across journals. Therefore, we set the criteria of 80% to define whether the move is obligatory or optional. In other words, moves appearing in 20 journals or more could be defined here as obligatory moves, and those appearing in less than 20 journals are categorized as the optional group. Using this criterion, 11 obligatory (ob) and 4 optional (op) moves are identified.

Further, the 14 moves identified are grouped into three discourse types according to communicative purposes. Though Lam (2013) introduces five key discourse types according to the communicative purposes, we reclassify these into

three key discourse types based on the specific communicative purposes of the IFA, namely the stipulating, informative and promotional purposes (see **Table 2**).

Table 2. Identified moves of IFA.

No.	Move (obligatory-ob; optional-op)	Communicative purposes	Author's journey of submission	Frequency of occurrence in the IFA corpus	Frequency in percentages across IFA corpus	Specific Journals in IFA corpus
1	Introducing the aims and scope of the journal (ob)	informative		23	92%	IFA1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25
2	Indicating the benefits or free services provided to authors (op)	promotional	Introduction	16	64%	IFA1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 17, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25
3	Clarifying the types of contributions/articles accepted (ob)	informative		22	88%	IFA1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25
4	Stressing the ethical publishing requirements and policies of the journal (ob)	stipulating		21	84%	IFA1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24
5	Asking authors to declare competing interests (op)	stipulating		16	64%	IFA3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24
6	Specifying the language style and conventions to be used (ob)	stipulating	Before Submission	22	88%	IFA2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25
7	Declaring the journal's copyright policy (ob)	stipulating		22	88%	IFA1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25
8	Informing authors about open access and inviting them to choose open access (ob)	mixed (informative + promotional)		23	92%	IFA1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25
9	Instructing authors to adhere to the review policies and submission procedure (ob)	stipulating		23	92%	IFA2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25
10	Listing the article structure, format, and styles required by the journal (ob)	stipulating	Submission	25	100%	IFA1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25
11	Regulating data management (op)	stipulating		16	64%	IFA2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 14, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 23, 24

Continued

12	Asking for proof corrections (ob)	stipulating		20	80%	IFA1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 22, 22, 24, 25
13	Providing the offprint option (op)	informative	After Acceptance	18	72%	IFA1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25
14	Sharing contact information for additional inquiries (ob)	informative		21	84%	IFA1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25

- The stipulating moves

The stipulating moves have the biggest share (64.2%, or 9 out of 14) among all the IFA moves and usually appear in the middle of the IFA. The definition of the stipulating move, just as its name implies, refers to those IFA statements that require authors to behave as the editors expect, such as conforming certain policies, procedures, or rules. These statements or expectations could be either regulatory or instructional, but they always strongly indicate the sense that authors “must” follow them. Then obligatory stipulating moves listed below reflect the authority of editorship to a great extent:

Move 4 Stressing the ethical publishing requirements and policies of the journal (ob)

In this move, journals stress their high standards in terms of publishing ethics (IFA12). Authors are always required to obtain approval from local ethics boards as well as informed consent from research participants (IFA7) and to avoid plagiarism or other breaches of best and ethical publication practices (IFA9).

Move 6 Specifying the language style and conventions to be used (ob)

In this move, journals specify the language style and conventions to be used, specifically in two parts: the requirements around the use of the English language and those around inclusive language. As for the use of English, the IFA corpus of this study accepts both British and American English, however, require that authors maintain internal consistency (IPA25). Inclusive language requirements call for sensitivity to diversity and equal opportunities among diverse groups of people (IFA16).

Move 7 Declaring the journal's copyright policy (ob)

Journals declare their copyright policy in this move. The policy shares high internal consistency across IFA corpus: the acceptance of an author's copyright material is on the understanding that it has been assigned to the journal and the publisher subject to certain conditions (IFA2). Authors are required to fill out and sign a license-to-publish form or a journal publishing agreement with publishers (IFA1, IFA3, IFA4).

Move 9 Instructing authors to confirm the review policies as well as the submission procedure (ob)

Move 10 Listing the article structure, format, and styles required by the jour-

nal (ob)

We regard the moves 9 and 10 as “core moves” of IFA since the major communicative purpose of the IFA is to guide and instruct authors to submit articles in formats that journals expect (D’Souza et al., 2018). After reading through the entire contents of IFA, it will become apparent to authors that those moves together account for majority of the content. Move 10 appears in every IFA, in the form of requiring manuscript structure, format, and styles. Taking structure as an example, the detailed requirements for manuscript structure differ across different sections of the article, such as, the overall structure, i.e., introduction, materials and methods, results, discussion, conclusions, and appendices (IFA3, IFA10, IFA13).

Move 12 Asking for proof correction (ob)

This move appears relatively later in both time (during the “After Acceptance” phase) and space (at the end of the IFA web page). In this move, authors who have been notified that their manuscripts have been accepted need to re-check the proofs (the final version before publication) sent by the journals. Authors are requested by journals to check their proofs as soon as possible. Some journals even set a time limit for proof correction to two or three working days (IF3, IF4). It is worth noting that all the journals require their authors to correct and share feedback online (through an online system or via E-mail).

- The informative moves

The informative moves are statements providing useful information to authors referring to the IFA. Those moves are rather objective and neutral. Thus, authors can freely take the information presented by these moves into consideration in their submission process. We notice that most informative moves posit at the beginning or at the end of the IFA (Table 2):

*Move 1 Introducing the aims and scope of the journal (ob)**Move 3 Clarifying the types of contributions/articles accepted (ob)*

Introducing “who we are” and “what we do” is crucial for both editors of journals and their potential authors. Both moves are key sections of the “Introduction” phase in the authors’ submission journey. Normally, journals prefer to introduce the journal briefly (name and year of first publication) and then inform the authors concretely of the aim and scope. For example, IF6 clarifies that its domains covered include “first and second language acquisition in naturalistic as well as tutored contexts, including second, foreign, and heritage language, bi-/multilingual education, immersion programs, and study abroad”. Move 3 usually follows move 1, aiming to share information about the types of articles suitable for the journals, using similar statements such as “We accept original submissions in the following categories...” (IPF6).

Move 14 Sharing contact information for additional inquiries (ob)

At the end of the IFA, journals provide additional information for authors who might wish to make enquiries-contact details of the journal editor(s). Typically, contact information includes the name, email address and/or location of the journal’s point of contact (IFA24, IFA25).

- The promotional moves

The promotional moves are usually present in commercial genres, such as in all types of advertisement, web homepages of brands, or social media content posted by companies, where the rhetoric actors (or rhetors) would help obtain competitive advantages over other competitive rhetors (Lorenzo-Dus, 2006; Sanjurjo-González et al., 2014). Some studies also indicate that even academic institutions have begun to use promotional texts to gain competitive advantages (Osman, 2008; Kim, 2021).

Though most of the linguistics journals in IFA corpus do not charge authors for submissions, they still have the motivation to encourage their potential authors to submit high-quality articles and to publish more reliable academic contributions from them. In this research, statements including “strongly recommended and encouraged” or “attracting authors to choose typical journal” with strong emotion are defined as promotional. In this study, Move 2 is identified as promotional move:

Move 2 Indicating the benefits or free services provided to authors (op)

Some journals point out the benefits they could provide to their authors. IFA17, for example, dedicates a whole paragraph to outline the benefits for its authors, such as “free PDFs, a liberal copyright policy, special discounts on Elsevier publications and much more”.

- The mixed move: Informing authors about and inviting them to choose open access

A single mixed move draws my attention during the generic move analysis: Informing authors about and inviting them to choose open access (move 8). This mixed move indicates both informative and promotional communication purposes. The information stated in the move seems to be rather neutral and optional for readers; however, “strong recommendation” is already implied (see the example below):

“Open Access: You have the option to publish open access in this journal via our Open Select publishing program. Publishing open access means that your article will be free to access online immediately on publication, increasing the visibility, readership, and impact of your research (informative). Articles published Open Select with Taylor & Francis typically receive 32% more citations and over 6 times as many downloads compared to those that are not published Open Select (promotional)” (IFA 20).

The underlined sentence shows the objectivity and neutrality of the journals informing their target authors about the options concerning “open access”. However, the sentences that follow are somewhat “promotional” in comparison. The journal presents persuasive data to support its argument that choosing to publish open access with its publisher could be a wise decision.

4.2. Semantic Field Analysis of IFA: Lexico-Semantic Resources for Diverse Communicative Purposes

With the semantic analytical tool USAS embedded in WMatrix4, we take a dee-

per look into the content of IFA to identify the lexico-semantic resources. Altogether, 21 discourse fields with 191 subgroups (category labels) are identified by Wmatrix4 according to the top 1000 word list generated by AntConc 3.5.9. Additionally, five most frequent major semantic fields with their category labels that appear 10 times or more are listed to form a “panorama” of the lexico-semantic resources of IFA (see **Table 3** below).

As mentioned in section 4.1, IFA has multiple communicative purposes. This so-called “interdiscursivity” (Lam, 2013) can also be discovered in the use of lexico-semantic resources within IFA. We identify three main images of the IFA constructed by journals: IFA as an outline of the submission requirements of a journal, IFA as a publication’s academic statement, and IFA as an online web page.

Table 3. The use of lexico-semantic resources in IFA.

No.	Major discourse fields/category labels	Examples	Frequency of occurrence
Five major semantic fields			
A	General and abstract terms		227
A9+	Getting and possession	accept, receive, have, keep, obtain	23
A1.1.1	General actions/making	process, make, prepare	16
A9–	Giving	provide, submit, contribution, offers	16
A7+	Likely	can, may, ensure, possible	14
A2.2	Cause & Effect/Connection	link, result, responsible	13
Q	Language and communication		160
Q2.2	Speech acts	declare, acknowledgement, references	43
Q1.2	Paper documents and writing	manuscripts, text, list, writing	40
Q3	Language, speech and grammar	languages, bilingualism, linguistics, phonetics	19
Q2.1	Speech: Communicative	statement, discussion, summary	18
Q4.1	The Media: Books	authors, readership, publisher	15
Q4	The Media	editor, publishing, reviewer	13
Z	Names and grammar		154
Z5	Grammatical bin	the, to, of, and	70
Z99	Unmatched	Elsevier, http, www, org	36
X	Psychological actions, states and processes		91
X7+	Wanted	requirements, policy, wish, purposes	17
X2.4	Investigate, examine, test, search	research, review, check	16
X4.2	Mental object: Means, method	methodology, ways, system	11
N	Numbers and measurements		76
N4	Linear order	first, prior, previous	13

Continued

Most frequently occurring category labels outside the five major semantic fields			
M6	Location and direction	on, where, out, there	18
Y2	Information technology and computing	web, online, software, upload	16
S8+	Helping	guidelines, service, support	16
O2	Objects generally	files, file, products	13
P1	Education in general	teaching, study, academic, education	11
M2	Putting, pulling, pushing, transporting	send, place, deposit	11
S5+	Belonging to a group	institution, association, affiliation	11
O4.1	General appearance and physical properties	image, template, format	10

- IFA as an outline of the submission requirements of a journal

Results shown in **Table 3** reflect the strong stipulating purposes of IFA. In other words, a large number of semantic fields are used to express various requirements of journals.

The most frequent semantic field found in this study's IFA corpus, "general and abstract terms (A)", indicates the stipulating and requiring image portrayed by journals. Twenty-three words on the word list belong to "Getting and possession (A9+)" field, including "accept", "receive", "have", "keep", "obtain", etc. Normally, these words are used to outline the conditions of submissions for contributors. Taking the word "accept" as an example. We explore the context of usage for this word using AntConc. The results below show that (**Figure 2**), most of the subjects who actively "accept" (not accept) submissions, manuscripts, papers, or reviews are "we", the journals, with corresponding conditions.

The field "General actions/making (A1.1.1)" also indicates the requirements related purposes of IFA. Applying words such as "process", "make", and "prepare", journals can regulate the submission procedures that their potential contributors will follow. Interestingly, "Giving (A9-)" is considered as the opposite side of "Getting and possession (A9+)". At this time, most subjects of "Giving (A9-)" transfer to "you", the authors/contributors. Then, the next part of the sentence would clarify the requirements for submissions (example of the word "provide" in **Figure 3**).

Moreover, the major semantic field X, "Psychological actions, states and processes", also contains words that clearly indicate requirements, especially within the sub-group "Wanted (X7+)". Expressions such as "requirements", "policy", "wish", and "purposes" under this category can already present that IFAs are written as outlines of the submission requirements of journals.

Seventy-six words grouped into the semantic field N, "Numbers and measurements" could also be understood as elements that help build the precise and highly demanding image of the journals and their IFA.

. Forum We no longer accept unsolicited manuscript
 Teaching Research may accept submissions of paper
 editors. We do not accept unsolicited manuscript
 Reviews ESP does not accept unsolicited book review
 testing. LLT does not accept unsolicited reviews.
 review (possible outcomes: accept for external review, re
 step 3, possible outcomes: accept, accept with revisions
 the language sciences to accept manuscript submission
 . Otherwise, we will usually accept the paper if the

Figure 2. Concordance results of the word “accept” in the field “Getting and possession (A9+)”.

arises) the author must provide copies of the consen
 esting a corrigendum must provide: the complete name
 , at revision you must provide us with an editable
 , at revision you must provide us with an editable
 arch Notes. Research Notes provide a fast-track opportu
 after the abstract, please provide a maximum of 6 key
 appropriate address. Also please provide the full postal addre
 k review considered, please provide a personal statemen
 of the journal, please provide text for both the

Figure 3. Concordance results of the word “provide” in the field “Giving (A9-)”.

- IFA as a publication’s academic statement

The IFA image found in this study is academic statement. Due to the sample selected of IFA corpus in this study, IFA image as a linguistic-themed academic statement could be identified. Major semantic field “Language and communication (Q)” can best reflect this image. Forty-three words on the word list are categorized into Q2.2 “Speech acts”, such as “declare”, “acknowledgement”, and “references”. Similarly, words such as “statement”, “discussion”, and “summary” tagged as Q2.1 “Speech: Communicative” take up 18 positions on the top 1000-word list. Those words could prove the statement image and the speech characteristic of IFA. Further, words in both “The Media: Books (Q4.1)” and “The Media (Q4)” could provide more information, especially about the participants of IFA statements. “Authors”, “editors”, “readership”, and “publisher” reveal the rhetors and interpreters of IFA statements. The sub-group under the major semantic field Q, “Paper documents and writing (Q1.2)” could also directly reflect the academic features of IFA. Moreover, Q3, “Language, speech and grammar Languages”, is a category label suggesting the common theme of the IFA corpus, since the IFA corpus in this study is constructed by 25 linguistics journals. So, there is no surprise seeing typical words within this sub-group such as “bilingualism”, “linguistics”, and “phonetics”.

- IFA as an online web page

Since all the IFAs are collected from the websites of linguistics journals, IFAs are “born to be” web pages. With the digitization of journal submission processes, contributors are able to use online systems or e-mails to submit their

works. This is noticed in several semantic fields and relevant category labels.

The most self-evident sub-group of semantic field is Y2, “Information technology and computing”. Words belonging to this category directly construct the image of IFA as web page: “Web”, “online”, “software”, “upload”, etc.

Thirty-six words under the category label Z99, “Unmatched”, are also worth deeper study. A number of unmatched words are e-words, such as “http”, “www”, and “org”. They appear in a form of website links (see the concordance results of “www” in [Figure 4](#)).

4.3. Multimodal Analysis: IFA Modes for Diverse Communicative Purposes

From the perspective of multimodality, different modes are combined for people to communicate with each other and express themselves ([Kress, 2009](#)). In this section, we explore how the rhetors of IFA achieve their diverse communicative purposes through multiple modes. As introduced in the methodology, inspired by the genre and multimodality model of [Liu \(2021\)](#), we investigate IFA’s application of multimodality by focusing on the use of three modes, namely, bold, images, and hyperlinks.

- The use of bold typeface in IFA

The bold typeface is always applied by rhetors to stress certain arguments ([Thomas, 2014](#)) and to realize the meanings of “emphasis” ([Lemke, 1998](#); [Kress, 2009](#)). Through the analysis of bold characters in IFA, we are able to identify statements that are more important than others for journals.

A review of the IFA corpus again reveals that all the section titles indicating obligatory moves are presented in bold font. From the perspective of communicative purposes, all the section titles of stipulating moves are in bold, showing that journals value contributors’ compliance to norms and policies. Further, some keywords indicating certain formats or reference styles are indicated in bold. In contrast, only some parts of informative and promotional moves are in bold, specifically, move 8 (Informing authors about and inviting them to choose open access-ob) and move 14 (Sharing contact information for additional inquiries-ob).

- The use of images in IFA

An image is a relatively vivid mode compared to text and can attract readers’ attention at first sight. This mode is most frequently used in advertisements, social media platforms, and other circumstances with a strong need for attention ([Guo & Feng, 2017](#); [Ananda et al., 2019](#); [Liu et al., 2020](#)). An overview of the IFA corpus of this study reveals that images are not used frequently on IFA web pages. Images, more specifically, icons, merely appear in certain promotional move and informative-promotional mixed move, namely in move 2 (Indicating the benefits or free services provided to the authors-op) and move 8 (Informing authors about and inviting them to choose open access-ob). On the contrary, there are very few images used in the stipulating moves. Thus, the IFA corpus of this study only included colorful images wherever the intent is promotional ([Figure 5](#)).

data. Please see <http://www.iris-database.org> for ACTFL Web site, <http://www.actfl.org> and at [Computer software]. <http://www.praat.org> Gass, S. .asp and visit <http://www.wileyopenaccess.com/d> re information, visit: <http://www.sciencedirect.com/scier> re information, visit: <http://www.csa.com>). These keywor re information, visit: <http://www.sciencedirect.com/scier> re information, visit: <http://www.sciencedirect.com/scier>

Figure 4. Concordance results of “www” in “Unmatched (Z99)”.

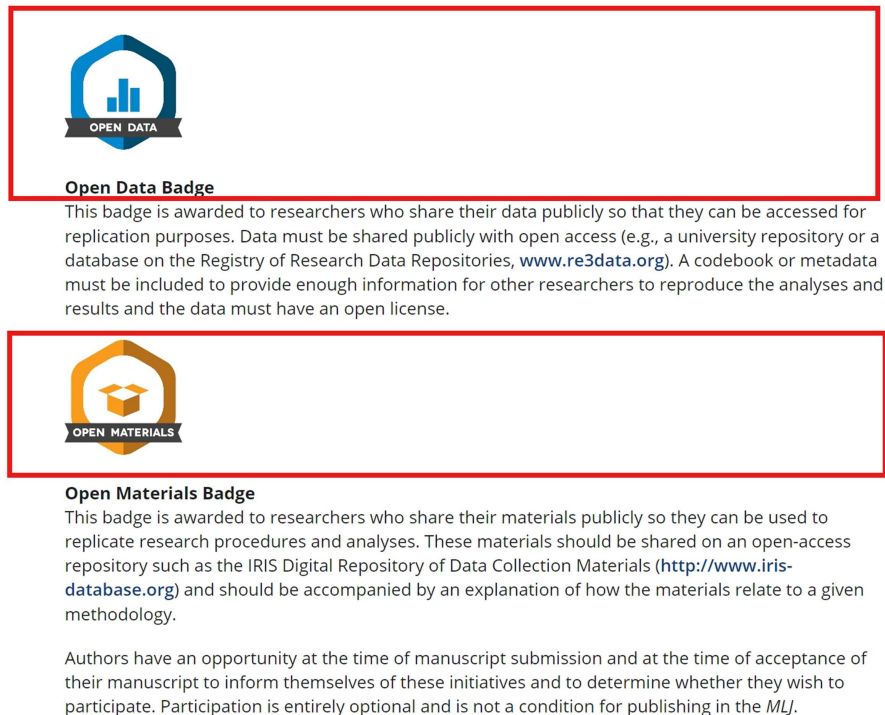


Figure 5. The use of images of Move 8 on the IFA web page (IFA5).

- The use of hyperlinks in IFA

Hyperlinks are a mode “exclusive” to online genres. By clicking on the hyperlink on one web page users can easily access another web page. Normally, hyperlinks on web pages provide more detailed information or supplementary material related to the contents of the present page.

A hyperlink is a mode that appears most frequently on the web pages of IFA. In every move of IFA, hyperlinks are attached by editors. Especially in the case of stipulating moves of IFA, such as Move 4 (Stressing the ethical publishing requirements and policies of the journal-ob), and move 9 (Instructing authors to adhere to the review policies and submission procedure-ob), hyperlinks direct readers to access further information or fill out required forms. As for informative and promotional moves, most of the hyperlinks are presented in the section that focuses on open access (move 8). An example of the use of hyperlinks in multiple IFA moves is provided in **Figure 6** below.

Please note

- Please see the [De Gruyter Mouton journal style sheet](#) for further information regarding the proper formatting of your manuscript
- Manuscripts must be written in clear and concise English
- Before submitting your article please have a look at our [Publication Ethics Statement](#) and our [copyright agreement](#)
- Once your article is accepted you have the option to publish it [open access](#).
- Our [repository policy](#) allows you to distribute 30 PDF copies of your published article to colleagues (the PDF has to include the information that it is an author's copy). Please also feel free to distribute the link to the online abstract
- If you have any general questions please visit our [FAQ page for journal authors](#)

Figure 6. The use of hyperlinks in multiple moves on the IFA web page (IFA15).

In general, the use of three modes (bold typeface, images and hyperlinks) in IFA varies based on different communicative purposes. In stipulating moves, bold typeface and hyperlinks are the major modes used by journals to clarify, emphasize and justify their rigorous expectations. In contrast, images are especially concentrated in promotional moves to draw the attention of potential authors and encourage them to contribute to their journals.

5. Discussion

As mentioned in the materials and methods section, this study takes an analytical view of a self-constructed IFA corpus, and employs CGA and MSS perspectives to focus on both text-internal and text-external components and semiotic resources in IFA. Thus, in the following sections, text-internal and text-external findings are further discussed.

5.1. Consistent Purposes through Divergent Forms

All Roads Lead to Rome. The shared major communicative purposes (i.e., stipulating, informing and promoting) of IFA among journals are realized through specific moves, semantic fields, and semiotic modes. The threefold analysis points out that IFA, as a special genre created by the editors of the journal, has the main communicative purpose of stipulating journal requirements. To realize this major goal through the IFA, editors of journals provide requirements using most of the moves listed in **Table 2**. Furthermore, in terms of the use of lexico-semantic resources, editors also tend to use words from semantic domains that can express their requirements to the contributors. Additionally, modes such as bold typeface and hyperlinks clearly show the rigor of the journals concerning their policies and requirements.

The IFA corpus in this study also shows an inconsistency between communicative tools and aims. Although from the perspective of move analysis, IFA has other communicative purposes (promotional and informative purposes), these purposes do not achieve “complete consistency” across threefold forms. Taking the example of promotional purposes, though eyes-catching images indicate the

presence of multimodal forms, there is a lexical absence of promotional purposes in the lexico-semantic dimension.

5.2. The Power Inequality between Editors and Authors

As mentioned before, linguistic scholars have already noticed the power inequality in the field of academic publishing (Canagarajah, 2003; Lillis et al., 2010; Hyland, 2016). This study highlights the power play in the communication between editors and their potential authors in IFA. From the perspective of CGA, the results of this study indicate that editors, as writers of IFA and rhetors of IFA statements, often have greater powers over authors. Equipped with structural, content-related, and semiotic communicative tools, editors from journals could construct their authority relative to authors through IFA. Rigorous submission policies and detailed submission instructions bring clarity to the submission process, but could also result in pressure on contributors. This unequal power may be due to the unequal reliance of one party on the other: as editors of linguistic journals with high impact factor, they may receive a large number of high-quality submissions every day and have the right to select and decide, while the contributors need to wait in most cases.

This study also highlights that the power relationship between editors and authors will not remain unchanged in IFA: when journals attempt to achieve its promotional communicative purposes, the power relationship between both parties indicates a “situational transform”, which means, under certain circumstances, the power of editors is inferior relative to their potential authors. Move 8 (Informing authors about and inviting them to choose open access-ob) is a great example of the presence of situational power-transform. In this move, editors are trying their best to persuade their contributors to open the access for the benefit of the publishers and journals.

6. Conclusion

The present study tries to uncover the black box of the communication process of IFA using a threefold analytical framework from the perspective of CGA and MSS. Three key communicative purposes of IFA are identified in self-constructed corpus of the study, namely, the stipulating, informative and promotional purposes. Results derived from the threefold analysis also prove that the major communicative purpose of stipulating submission requirements, is realized successfully through content-related, lexico-semantic, and semiotic communicative resources, while the other two purposes are sometimes ignored. Relating the findings in text with the social context of international article submission, we determined that a presence of power inequality between the editors and the contributors is also communicative-purpose-related. Editors as rhetors have greater power over their contributors when they are stipulating the submission requirements. However, when the rhetors attempt to encourage contributors to make an optional contribution to their journals (promotional purposes), the

power transfers. At this time, editors are at power inferior compared to their expected contributors.

The findings of this study bring theoretical as well as practical contributions. First, the newly introduced analytical framework adopted from the CGA and MSS could be applied in other communication circumstances for a deep look into the rhetorical processes. In addition, this study expands the previous understanding of the power inequality in scholarly publishing, from the perspective of linguistic inequality to the perspective of social-role inequality (editor-contributor).

These results may also provide both journal editors and contributors with feasible suggestions. Concerning the application of lexico-semantic resources in IFAs, editors could apply more words to express their informative and promotional purposes, and moderate the use of words that convey stipulations and requirements. The over-emphasis of stipulation may strengthen contributors' feeling of power inequality and thus decrease the affinity of journals. As for the dimension of multimodality, more icons could be included in the web pages of IFA to grab contributors' attention, not only for promotional intentions but also for stipulating and informative purposes. As for the contributors, this study may help them better understand the intentions of the submission demanders. Keeping in mind the communicative purposes and their outward linguistic expressions, contributors are able to assess and filter out the information that is more important for the submission. They can be more aware of the submission requirements, further information and even promotional traits of journals. In this way, this study tries to relieve the expectation mismatch between journal editors and authors.

As for the future direction of this study, we would like to expand the IFA corpus, since the IFAs in the present corpus are mainly from giant publishers (Elsevier, Wiley, Springer, etc.), and sometimes share similar information under the guidance of the same publishers. A cross-cultural analysis would be beneficial in future research, too, as being aware of the cross-cultural similarities and differences would better instruct authors from non-English speaking countries to submit paper at home and abroad.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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