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REJECTION OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE MANUSCRIPTS ANALYSIS OF REASONS FROM THE EDITORS' PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

This article explores factors that are crucially associated with the manuscript rejection in highly ranked and impact factor journals with special reference to the English language/literature context. Literature reviews indicate that there are numerous reasons connected to different kinds of journal in the context of specialties. In other words, the criteria of rejection or acceptance differ in science from humanities or commerce. On the other hand, other journals like in the medical field(s) have entirely different reasons for acceptance or rejection. Academic writing and language also plays a major role at least in the case of papers/manuscripts that fall under the category of English language/literature. Having a close look at different journals, it appears that sometimes it depends on the mood of the editor who reviews at initial stage before sending the article for second stage peer review for reports. The actual problem appears to be with the chief editor because the rejection is less once the article is peer reviewed or refereed. The method of the study is qualitative-analytical which relied on content analysis of the rejection letters and interviews with the editors. Results will facilitate publications aspirants to develop an insight into rejection of papers in general and English language and literature in particular.

INTRODUCTION

Manuscript rejection is a commonly experienced issue. Most of the researchers and publication aspirants have had the bitter experience of getting their research

work rejected at one point or another as stated by around 87% of prominent authors admit to have sad experience of facing their manuscripts' rejection (Gans and Shepherd, 1994). Thus, manuscript 'rejection' is part and parcel of academic and professional career (Venketasubramanian and Hennerici, 2013). Rejection issues in good or high status journals become more challenging, however there is a difference of opinion between scholars regarding the term 'high status' as discussed by Wellington & Torgerson (2005). It has been noticed that the main causes of manuscript rejection in highly ranked journals are one or the other of the following: inappropriate format, out of scope issue, originality issue, lack of research significance, substandard design, under-described methods, lack of focus on the theme of the paper, old literature review, ineffective academic English and so on.

It is interesting to note that 'space limit' is another reason for rejection as observed by Straub (2009), "even if the manuscript is of the quality, many top journals do not have the space to publish." Hence, it is interesting to note the editorial board never mentions the actual rejection reason(s) of the submitted manuscript.

The worst part of the rejection is related to the initial rejection (at the first stage) without sending the manuscript for peer review or refereeing process. Therefore, it is quite likely that some good manuscripts may be rejected at the entry point depending on the likes or dislikes of the handling editor.

Some common reasons for rejection

There are many reasons for manuscript rejection. Editors of different journals follow different criteria however focus may vary. Following are some specific categories.

Technical reasons

There are different kinds of reasons for manuscript rejection. Following are some of them. Technical reasons of rejection: Foremost technical reason is formatting. In addition, manuscripts may be ejected if the data are incomplete or inappropriate or the sample size is too small. Next important consideration is inappropriate analysis, particularly statistical one. In addition, average methodology for testing null hypotheses or using old methodology may lead to easy rejection. Further, if the paper is quantitative, unclear hypotheses or scientifically invalid hypotheses will cause rejection of papers in good journals. Lastly, inaccurate conclusions such as not supported by relevant data are considered as one of the indicators of a poor manuscript.

Reasons for rejection: editor's perspective

The commonest comment of rejection according to the editor is: the paper is out of scope. It is commented on in most cases so that the authors would not be

disappointed and ask any questions. Moreover, it is polite as well. Then comes the other comment: the paper does not carry enough impact for the journal. This simply means that the article may be OK but it does not contribute to the rank of the journal. In other words, it is not useful for the journal or the audience. The editor may comment (if it is required) that the ethical issues are not taken care of such as consent from patients or approval from an ethical committee for animal research (in scientific or medical research). Plagiarism related issues are also connected to the ethical dimensions. In addition, issues which contribute to the manuscript rejection are: journal's formatting, lack of up-to-date references or less than required number of references, substandard language quality and poorly presented data.

The role of academic English in research writing

In the present digital and technological era, English has become one of the most important academic and professional tools. Importance of English in the cyber age can never be ignored due to its increasing demand for digital international community (Schütz, 2005). English as the global language for even academicians and researchers facilitates researchers worldwide. (Graddol, 2006).

Academic English writing: types and characteristics

General English (for daily use) used in everyday situations or for communication is quite different from the English used in academic purposes. English for academic purposes (EAP) has emerged from umbrella term 'English for Specific Purposes' (ESP) say Flower dew & Peacock (2001, p. 8). Hyland & Hamp-Lyons (2002, p. 1) are also of the same opinion, and add that Academic English is specifically meant for writing about a topic or a subject.

Academic writing in English is different from general English writing. It is certainly of higher quality compatible to the fixed standard or benchmark on which review is performed. Huff (1999) believes that academic writing must be able to contribute to the concerned field/domain of knowledge. Yakhontova (2003) talked in detail about the importance, types and technique of academic writing for scholars. The foremost characteristic is planning which is done prior to initiating any piece of writing in order to make it more analytical and better organized. In addition, a good outline is essential for effective academic writing. An outline will not only enable one to formulate ideas and develop thoughts, but will also connect the author with related concepts. Language and style need to be clear and impressive therefore selection of appropriate words is mandatory. Good academic writing does not use first person pronouns as it is considered as an opinion rather than facts.

In a nutshell, the writing should be precise, simple, clear and coherent. Vocabulary should be academic and standard. In other words, the academic writer

should avoid colloquialisms (slang), clichés, or metaphoric expression. An expression might be common in ordinary speech but cannot be used in academic writing purposes. In addition, expression of thought should be honest without any bias or prejudice. Most importantly, if one is writing for research purposes, one should always abide by journal's prescribed guidelines for submission, internal review success, and possible acceptance.

The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 2020 (<https://apastyle.apa.org/products/publication-manual-7th-edition-introduction.pdf>) includes the tips of writing style include: use of specific language, the past or the present-perfect tense; short and easy words as well as short sentences if possible and variance in sentence length. There is a need to avoid following: noun strings; jargon; wordiness; redundancy; non-academic or sub-standard English; pronouns (such as, 'this, that, these and those'), vague comparisons; third person references.

IMPORTANCE OF PUBLICATION AND CRITERIA

Higher education focuses on quality research and innovation. Research publication requires qualification, vision, expertise and command over language in which the paper is written. It is expected that a research article/ paper that is published in a good national/international journal should be authentic and reliable. If otherwise, papers are not of quality as described in the guidelines, rejection is quite normal especially by good journals' editorial board. It should be kept in the researcher's mind that rejection is part of academic and research life (Venketasubramanian and Hennerici, 2013).

Many studies have put forth various reasons for manuscript rejection that basically include: wrong formatting, and relevance, lack of originality, inappropriate research design, poor methodology, lack of focus on the theme, less literature review, poor academic writing (may be due to poor knowledge of English language).

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Main purpose of this study is to find out the reasons for manuscript rejection in general, and criteria of Academic English in particular. The study is expected to identify English language issues in general and Academic English for research in particular. The findings will offer appropriate solutions and implications to the issues of English language used in research writing, and if not of quality, the manuscripts are rejected.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Bills berry (2014) listed some of the top reasons of manuscript rejection: Technical issues, domain/scope, contribution, length, underdeveloped manuscripts, poor language, references, methods, conclusions, format etc.

Bartol (1983, cited in Eichorn & Vanden Bos, 1985) identified crucial issues as follows: unclear introduction, ambiguous research questions, poor methodology, average conclusions and discussions, and inadequate literature review, improper citations, poor statistical techniques, bad sample description, excessive length, poor writing style etc.

Ignoring journals' protocol

The manuscript is likely to be rejected at the initial screening by the chief editor if the journal's protocol is not followed by the researcher/author. Nearly all good journals have their own protocol created by them or adopted from other protocols. They usually write clearly under the guidelines so confusions do not occur. In other words, a journal prescribes to authors its own guidelines related to even minor issues like font, margin, citation-referencing style, spacing etc. Therefore, if one does not comply with the prescribed norms in his paper/manuscript, there is a likelihood of rejection at the initial stage.

Editorial board and peer review system

Long ago, a submitted manuscript used to get assessed by the main editor, and if it suited him/her, the papers used to be accepted or asked for some revisions. In the recent past, 'peer reviewing' became a favorite activity for evaluation of submitted manuscripts especially in good journals. It is a trend now which is commonly and globally recognized procedure for evaluating manuscripts: papers or articles (Flower dew, 2013). The outcomes of peer reviewers become the criterion for the editorial board to decide the articles to be accepted or rejected. There are different criteria and guidelines for different journals belonging to different fields.

El-Omar (2014) believes that the ratio of selected or rejected manuscripts varies from journal to journal, but it is certainly the high quality journals will only send the best papers for external peer review. However, the chosen papers might have certain flaws of different kinds. Popular reasons for manuscript rejection after peer review include the following: faulty design/methods, lack of novelty and clear message, low scope effect, limited audience, poorly explained rationale, confusing charts, inadequate tables or figures, figure etc.

Smith et al. (1993, 210) analyzed the manuscript rejection causes as research design (85%), substandard literature review (75%), inadequate discussion /average implications (70%), and ineffective academic writing (45%). Byrne (2000) published a research paper and concluded that the main reason for rejection was the design followed by the method part. In addition, he also mentioned that conclusions were unsupported by data besides flaws in the results which were not original. Board age (2001) observed that an average of 8.1 reasons per manuscript. 123 manuscripts out of 151 were rejected with negative

comments. The researcher categorized 10 major types, and identified 20 groups of the reasons. Some of them were: inappropriate statistical methods, overstating and generalization of the results, ignoring the literature, inaccurate study design and ineffective communication//language/writing.

Pierson (2004) recognized the top ten reasons; some of them are: Picking the wrong journal, submitting without required format, not following the guidelines/instructions, poor writing etc. Turcotte et al. (2004) identified some of the criteria which were experimental design, originality, results, discussion and aligned with conclusions, while Stout et al. (2006) pointed out that primary reasons for rejection were poorly designed and average writing.

Ehara and Takahashi (2007) conducted a study on the reasons for rejection, and concluded that lack of novelty, innovation and useful knowledge (44-76% of all rejections). According to Kibret (2015) is of the opinion that insufficient contribution and lack of relevance are prominent reasons of rejection in addition to poor connection to the journal's audience, or faulty research design which may eventually lead to rejection of even a publishable manuscript. Daft (n. d.) analyzed 111 manuscripts reviews and found 11 problems of rejection: lack of theory, poor concept, inadequate rationale, average style and tone, weak research design, irrelevant research problem, over engineering, unaligned conclusions, poor implication etc.

THE STUDY

The present study is qualitative-exploratory in nature. Sample selection is purposive-convenient type. Self-developed interviews (Appendix-A) were conducted with 5 editors of different types of journals to explore issues related to manuscript rejection and their possible popular reasons. Question-wise analysis has been done and the findings have been supported by the rejection e-mails. One sample e-mail has been put as appendix-B

Importance and justification of the study

Based on the literature review, one can clearly have an idea that there are multiple factors of rejection of manuscripts in different fields: medicine, engineering, commerce, management etc. However, there is a shortage of research in the area of humanities/languages/literature especially in English language/literature field. Many eminent scholars in humanities (English) submit their works to impact factor journals, but their submissions are rejected without sending for peer reviews. It usually happens in non-native countries despite the fact that the non-native scholars or researchers' contribution to English language/literature is by no means less authentic than those who are known as native speakers/scholars. The criteria of rejection of manuscript in humanities are different from other disciplines. Similarly, the causes of rejection of humanities scholars of non-native speakers might be different from those of native ones. It has been suspected by

many that there is a case of monopoly and ownership of English. If we read the list of Web of science/ SCCI indexed journals in the master list of Clarivate (previously known as ISI) we will find every second journal's office is either local in the US or the UK, and only a few are based in even Canada, Australia, New Zealand or other Western (native speaking countries), and if there are some they are in the list of emerging source citation index(ESCI) which are not considered in many universities either for research scholars or promotion or even funding. It appears as if the two countries would like to exercise full control on publishing of reputed or so called impact factor journals.

Scopus indexed journals are better in this case. They have different indexed journals in many countries across the world. This is why a lot of scholars prefer writing in Scopus journals because of accessibility, less publication charges, friendly dealing etc. Moreover, Elsevier is also a popular brand in the field of publication.

This modest paper aims at exploring some of the crucial issues related to publication in reputed journals and chances of rejection for different reasons. If the papers are rejected after the second stage (peer review), a researcher can modify his work, but around 70% submissions are rejected at the technical screening stage where an editor may be biased. It explores especially if the rejection in humanities basically caused due to poor academic writing skills or there are other reasons.

Objectives of the study

1. To identify the reasons for manuscript rejection in general and in humanities (English).
2. To find out the role of Academic English writing in manuscript selection/rejection.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the reasons for manuscript rejection in good journals?
2. Is academic English an important criterion of manuscript acceptance/rejection?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology deals with the tools or instruments and procedures that are incorporated to respond to the research questions in order to attain formulated research objectives. The section usually has a technical justification of types of the research employed in addition in the present context: qualitative research methods were applied to collect needed data to deal with the research problem.

DATA COLLECTION

In qualitative research, two tools are more popular than others: open ended survey and interviews. Keeping the aims of the study, a structured interview (Appendix-

A) was used as the instruments for the major data collection. Prior to finalization of questions, five experts in area of editing/educational research/authors were consulted to check if the questions have the ability to elicit required response types. Data collected is analyzed using with both qualitative/descriptive methods to elicit findings in accordance with the objectives, questions and overall purpose of the research.

INTERVIEW DATA ANALYSIS

The researchers reviewed popular methods of analyzing 'Interviews' used in qualitative researches. The most popular method used by most scholars has been the 'thematic analysis' that has recently been employed as a "distinctive method of analysis in social science" (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 178). It has 6 stages. (Sage research methods data sets, 2019):

- 1-Familiarizing with data,
- 2-Assigning preliminary codes to available data for content description,.
- 3-Searching patterns or themes in codes across the interviews,
- 4-Reviewing themes,
- 5-Defining and naming themes, and
- 6-Producing report.

Based on the responses of the interview questions, following thematic codes were assigned for identification of themes for thematic analysis.

Theme-1 criteria of manuscript rejection

Data reveal that most of the manuscripts are usually rejected at the initial stage by the handling editor mainly because that the manuscript is beyond the scope of the journal. It has also been noticed that this is a common note from most editors even if the reason may not be completely valid. Hence, various criteria lead to rejection, but these vary from journals to journals. Moreover, it is noted that originality, research methods and conclusions are the main ones.

Sub theme-1.prominent criterion

The interview could not exactly reveal that one reason is the prominent one. It is theory in one journal while in others, methodology, contribution, formatting, ethical considerations are the main reasons.

Sub theme.2.originality and contribution

Originality, novelty and contribution are very important criteria of manuscript rejection. It is believed that unless there is originality, no contribution is credited. Plagiarism factor is also related to originality. Researcher and editors both believe that if the research is plagiarized, one can't actually contribute anything to the body of knowledge.

Sub theme.3. research methods

In most quantitative researches in which statistical techniques are needed for analysis, research methods play important role in manuscript rejection. However, typical English language researches, if purely qualitative, don't require rigid research design or methods. On the other hand, in-depth analysis is always needed. But, if language researches fall under education category, there is a need of research methodology used in social sciences.

Theme-2 Importance of academic English

A language is means of communication therefore it needs to be communicative and impressive. English language itself has variety of types such as English for Academic purposes and English for specific purposes(ESP).ESP itself has many sub-types such as technical English, business English, medical English and so on.

Interview data reveal that Academic English is quite important in manuscript writing in the fields of humanities and social sciences. On the other hand, scientific, medical and business, academic English is not the priority. Design, originality and ethical considerations are more important than academic English.

Theme-3 ethical consideration

Nearly all the journals have fixed criterion of ethical issues. Plagiarism is the most important. Next are citations related issues. Lastly, copyright and permission issues become a reason of manuscript rejection in most of reputed journals in nearly all the areas of research.

Sub theme-1.plagiarism

Once a manuscript is submitted, nearly all good journals initially check plagiarism. In other words, similarity index is found in order to check originality and contribution. It is extremely illegal and unethical to include plagiarized material without proper acknowledge and fulfillment of technical requirements.

Sub theme-1-citation flaws

Some authors are not well aware about the technicalities of citations, these are mentioned in author's guidelines though. Referencing style in accordance with cited studies is always important. Since the beginning of modern research and digital access of the research works, it has become easy to find out the source of material/content used in research papers. Therefore manuscripts with improper citations are likely to get rejected.

Sub theme-3.permission and copyright

Manuscripts without legal permission of the actual source will surely be rejected in reputed journals. Good journals always require details about copyright

permission, declaration of conflict if any and similar other issues. In other words, reproduction of any previous work needs clearance from the original author or publication.

Theme-3 guidelines and formatting

Manuscripts must be prepared in accordance with specific journal's guidelines. If the author(s) misses any and the editor considers it crucial, he will out rightly reject. For example, formatting of the paper is essential, looks unimportant for some, though. Formatting and style related to citation/referencing is also important. It has been noticed that some editors are even particular about the edition(s) of the referencing style such as APA (6th or 7th or the latest editions) as there are differences.

Theme-3 reviews professionalism

A publishable paper can even be rejected if the reviewers are not expert and professionally experienced in the field of reviewing. Therefore a good panel is essential for growth of the journal. Good reviewers are sincere and dedicated. They don't do their task for the sake of reviewing rather for improvement of the papers and uplift of the journal.

Theme-4 handling editor's responsibility

As mentioned earlier, all the submitted manuscripts are initially screened by the handling editor/editor in chief to cross check if the manuscript is publishable in the journal. In other words, the manuscript should not be out of the scope of the journal. Later, having satisfied with the required components, the paper is sent to 2-3 peer reviewer/referees for feedback which they are supposed to write as per the attached guidelines. If the handling editor is not ethical and professional, good papers may even be rejected at the very first stage of review.

Theme-4 ownership of English

The ownership of English issue directly or indirectly affects the acceptance or rejection of the manuscript(s) in the field of English language/literature/humanities. It is an opinion of most of the non-native authors that their papers also get rejected because they are not the owners of English language. Since every second journal in general and journal of humanities/language in Clarivate database is owned by either American or British publishing companies, non-native authors are seldom able to penetrate into the system. They are considered as foreign language learners of English. Hence, such sensitive issues cannot be raised and justified by mere qualitative analysis it is somewhat true, though. Linguistic bias is an accepted fact.

Theme-4 commercialization of publication

Apart from the issue of manuscript rejection due to other reasons, monetary issue is also a huge problem. There are many good journals which charge huge amount of fee even up to USD 2850 which is extremely unjustified. Even if a paper is publishable, but the publication fee can't be paid by the author(s), it can't be published.

Content analysis of the rejection mails/messages

Following analysis is based on Appendix-B (a reviewer's form/comment), a rejection mail.

The form has two parts (A & B), presented below.

Criteria to be Rated	Excellent	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory
1. complete, clear and well organized presentation			X
Comments: Not convincing approach			
2. significance of the problem		X	
Comments:			
3. applicability and interest to the field (relevance beyond case presented)		X	
Comments:			
4. description of the problem within a theoretical framework (where appropriate)		X	
Comments:			
5. literature review demonstrates a clear relationship to the problem		X	
Comments:			
6. appropriateness of research design and method			X
Comments: Research design does not fit according to the type of study, hypotheses and sample.			
7. accurate and useful interpretation			X
Comments: Since method of the study lacks quality, analysis and interpretation can't be reliable.			
8. sound argument and analysis		X	
Comments: Argument is weak.			
9. conclusion describes implications for education theory, research and/or practice			X
Comments: Study has not been properly linked to a popular theory, and literature review in support.			

Figure 1 Reviewer's report-components

As it is evident from the evaluation form that there are different criteria of evaluation of a manuscript, the reviewer is supposed to consider all of them. In addition, he can attach additional comments or feedback of the manuscript (also attached). The design and focus may vary from journals to journals the points are almost the same.

Based on the above criteria, the reviewer checks (X) one of the options as under. In the present case, the reviewer has written extra notes in addition to the above in order to clarify.

Part B – Final Recommendation
 Based on my assessment of the basic criteria in Part A, my recommendation for this manuscript is (indicate your recommendation with an "X"):

Accept with minor revisions

Resubmit after major revisions
 (a second round of review will be necessary)

Reject
 (the paper is not suitable for publication)

Overall comments:
Though the problem/title of the study seems interesting, it has not been suitably justified. The author looks bit confused in choosing methods, sample type and justification of certain components. Analysis is weak basically due to inappropriate design of the study, validity, reliability of the tool used. In addition, there is no permission attached in the appendix related to the adapted tool.
In summary, the manuscript can not be accepted in its present form, however, it can be resubmitted with the modification as per the comments.

Figure 2 Reviewer's report

Therefore, it can be summed up that reviewing of a manuscript is quite a professional task which requires an insight, qualification (at least a PhD and experience of publishing papers/researches. Else, a publishable paper may be deprived of getting a slot in a good journal.

RESULTS, DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS & IMPLICATIONS

This section has been divided into results and discussions, conclusion, implication, limitations, future research opportunities.

RESULTS & DISCUSSIONS

Based on the data analyses, it was found that there are many criteria that contribute to paper rejection, however, these differ from editor to editor or journal to journal. Most significant factors are: the paper is beyond the scope of the journal(s) or it can not attract global readership. The paper IS not written in accordance with the journal's specific guidelines especially the formatting in general and citations/referencing in particular. In addition, the methods used in the paper in general and analysis in particular could not justify. It might be the reason that the conclusions are not aligned with the objectives or the research questions. Besides, the aspect of implications is too weak to be considered. Though the content is good enough, the quality of the language used is not satisfactory.

It was also found that English language writing skill (Academic English for research) is also important, how some editors might differ on account of the nature and domain of the journal where academic writing skill may not be the main criterion of rejection or acceptance of the paper. Hence, it should be noted that English writing for research may be the top priority for publication in journals of English language/literature.

It has been noted that journals' ratio of rejection vs acceptance is on average around 60-70%. There are different reasons. Papers rejected in good journals do

not only and always mean that the submitted papers were substandard so they were rejected. Hence, the fact may be that there were too many papers submitted and only a few could be shortlisted from them. Therefore it is likely that less important papers will be rejected they might be publishable, though.

The study also revealed that plagiarism is one of the main reasons for the rejection of research papers. It is connected with ethical dimensions. Honesty and integrity in academics and research are essential because teaching is the noblest profession. Therefore, plagiarism, though quite common yet it is unacceptable. Some journals accept similarity index up to 5-15% but highly ranked journals demand 100% plagiarism free submission.

If the paper is plagiarized (both content and linguistic plagiarism), the originality will be affected. Once the originality is missing, the contribution of the author is doubtful. Therefore, the editors will be forced to reject the manuscript despite the fact that the paper has many strong points to be considered. In addition to the issue of plagiarism, ethical aspect is closely related to valid data collection, copyright or permission issues etc. Such issues lead to straightaway rejection because these details are technically important. Some editors may not reject at the initial stage, but can ask the author to add the required details and submit again.

The researcher explored that in addition to general formatting, citations and referencing styles are also crucial. The simple reason being that the technically formatting is extremely important, and citations style is part of formatting. If proper citations are not made, the manuscript may be categorized as unethical and poorly formatted which are very important components in some journals.

The results indicate the crucial role of a poor/unqualified reviewer(s) in rejecting a publishable paper. Reviewers are as important as editor(s). If an editor is able to send paper(s) for second stage review, reviewers have the power to reject papers based on the guidelines. In addition, if the reviewers are not from the specialty (major) and experienced either a poor paper will be selected or a publishable paper will be rejected. In order to ensure that reviewers are suitably qualified and experienced, one should see if the reviewers must have published enough papers in the field of the paper(s) they are reviewing. They should be sincere, and they must know about the guidelines, criteria and quality of the papers to select or ask to modify or reject. Their language should at least be as good as the writer/author of the paper(s).

Out of honesty, editors share their opinion that the handling editor is ethically responsible for not sending even a publishable paper for the second stage (peer review). It was strangely revealed by some of the editors, however honest and professional the handling editor(s) can be, biased for many unknown reasons including the issue of native non-native authors occurred. It was found that the handling editor forwards one paper for peer review and the other not, despite both

the papers possessed the same quality. He can consider the author's past experience and recognition or if he is from a methodology/statistical background, he may prefer technical/statistical issues more. It was found especially in the context of journals of English language/literature, native vs non-native issue becomes an important consideration in the process of rejection of a paper.

Last but not least, the study revealed as the interviewees responded that the charge of a huge amount as processing or publishing fee is unethical. It promotes commercialization of publishing research. A good paper author despite being enthusiastic cannot pay USD 2850 for publication in Clarivate/ISI indexed journals however his manuscript may be far better than many others who can pay a huge amount.

CONCLUSIONS

Main conclusions are: Publishing in good/high ranked journals is not an easy task. There are many criteria of getting the manuscript submitted successfully and start of the peer review process/refereeing. If the manuscript is prepared without looking into the specific guidelines of a journal in general and scope in particular, the chance of second stage review (external /peer review) is bleak. The handling editor will outright decline or reject the submission. Most of the rejection emails contain a couple of lines which may not be the actual reasons. However, there is something missing in the manuscript. Publishing a paper in the area of language and literature especially needs good command over academic writing or writing skill of research papers. Quite many rejection mails indicate that the communication is weak while others specify: theory, rationale, clarity of concepts, research design, plagiarism, analysis, conclusions or overall contribution. Plagiarism is really a serious matter as it is something that someone uses others intellectual property without proper citations or permission to use (Helgesson, & Eriksson, 2015).

Regarding the causes of rejection of manuscript, Ligthelm & Koekemoer (2009) studied intensively the review process of academic journals, especially the Southern African Business Review, and concluded that the editorial review process of the SABR follows an in-depth analysis of the reasons for rejecting manuscripts ranging from multidimensional issues to general weakness such as poor research design, presentation of findings, to a lack of focus on the researcher's contribution in addition to mechanical problems such as language, style, tone, citations and referencing. Shaikh's (2016) work is in line with the findings of the study as he referred to seven tips for publishing in a good journal that even includes an impressive cover letter. Soule et al (2007) also referred to some problems and some useful tips for getting through the tough process of publishing in humanities and social science journals. Therefore, an aspirant must take care of the journals' requirements and a published paper template to have an idea. In addition, publications are becoming an economic activity which is also unethical, but there seems no control of any agency/organization on such

publication. Good databases like Clarivate and Scopus must warn such publishers to charge reasonable amount of fee rather than asking for USD 2850 for each paper. This is somewhat a legal corruption which agencies have legalized for reasons.

A non-native English language researcher faces huge problems in getting his paper published for many unknown reasons apart from the ownership of English language. Hence, it is essential to master Academic writing skill which is inevitable in the Education field (Kemp, 2007). It is quite interesting to note that in the master's list of Web of science or SCCI journals, most d journals (Clarivate indexed) are published from either the US or the UK, therefore an author from the East is not able to break the ice, and despite his paper being publishable he does not succeed in the process of getting through.

Implications

Based on results and conclusions, it can be recommended for implication that an author aspiring to publish his paper in a reputed journal should:

- 1- read carefully about the guidelines of the journal,
- 2- focus the methodology part,
- 3- consider ethical dimensions,
- 4- make the paper highly relevant,
- 5- use academic and impressive language,
- 6- Develop a good theory, and align conclusions with it. There can be many other implications in given contexts

Limitations

Any research has some limitations, so has this one. First of all, the sample size is too small so data can't be statistically analyzed. As a result, findings can't be generalized. Second, the causes of manuscripts' rejection are looked at from the editors' viewpoints which cannot be authentic enough. Authors and reviewers b=viewpoints are also important to be compared for better insight into the problem(s).

Future research

This research explores a few things, but not all. Therefore a continual attempt is always needed in the direction. Having got a few insights from the present research, it is recommended that the present researcher or others may take up studies of following types:

- 1-Challenges of publishing in impact factor journals,
- 2-Role of Academic writing in English in publication of papers in good journals,
- 3-Native non-native factors and publication of research,

- 4- Professionalism and honesty in publishing jobs,
- 5- Commercialization of publication,
- 6- Ethical considerations and publication of papers.

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Appendix-A (Interview schedule-responses)

(Responses of the editors have been summarized due to the space issue)

Q-1. What are the criteria of judging a research paper for publication in your journal?

Answer.1-There are many criteria such as paper beyond scope, journal's guidelines, formatting, methods, analysis, conclusions and implications, language clarity etc.

Answer.2-Relevance and scope, technical issues, plagiarism, incomplete manuscript, language issues, inappropriate and incomplete referencing beyond aims and Scope of the journal, incomplete research, method related issues not related conclusions, no novelty etc.

Answer.3- lack of theory, old concept, poor rationale, average style, weak research design, irrelevant research problem, over engineering, unaligned conclusions, poor implication etc.

Answer.4- Technical issues, domain/scope, contribution, length, underdeveloped manuscripts, poor language, references, methods, conclusions, format etc.

Answer.5- vague beginning, ambiguous research questions, substandard methodology, average conclusions and discussions, and inadequate literature review, improper citations, poor statistical techniques bad sample description, excessive length, poor writing style etc.

2. What are the foremost vital criteria for rejecting a research paper for publication in your journal?

Answer.1-novelty or genuine contribution
 Answer.2-interesting topic for global readership
 Answer.3- author is well recognized
 Answer.4-language is impressive
 Answer.5-analysis and interpretation of quantitative data

3. Do you consider English language skill as a criterion for publication in your journal?

Answer.1-not much because there are editing services which a writer can avail themselves of, if the content is worth publishing.
 Answer.2-yes, but it is not the priority.
 Answer.3-selection of correct words and precise expression is important. Waste and huge words are not always needed.
 Answer.4- very, because if language is not good what else can be expected from an author.
 Answer.5-Language quality is important, content is more important, though.

4. Is plagiarism a reason for the rejection of research papers?

Answer.1-Ofcourse yes.
 Answer.2- Most important factor
 Answer.3-Yes, for sure
 Answer.4- plagiarism of all kinds is a negative feature of an original writing especially in social sciences and humanities.
 Answer.5.Yes, it is extremely unethical and it affects originality.

5. What is the ratio/ percentage of rejection of research papers, and why?

Answer.1-67%
 Answer.2-78%
 Answer.3-82%
 Answer.4- 55% (mostly due to inadequate preparation of key components in a manuscript.
 Answer.5-71%

6. Is research method/design a significant criterion in acceptability for publication of a research paper? (Please list these in order of significance):scope, theory, concept, definition, rationale, organization, language/style, design, irrelevant topic, engineering, conclusions, ethical issues)

Answer.1- (1- scope, 2-theory 3- design, 4-rationale, 5-language/style, 6-relevance, 7-ethical issues,8-conclusions,9-engineering etc).
 Answer.2. (1-scope, 2- theory, 3- relevance, 4- rationale,5- ethical issues,6-language/style, 7-conclusions, 8-design, 9-engineering etc).

Answer.3-(1-scope, 2-ethical issues,3-theory, 4- relevance, 5- rationale,6- design, 7-conclusions, 8-style,9-engineering etc).

Answer.4- yes, in a research of any type, methods of research is important even in language related researches. However, research methods in language domain will be considered. (1-scope,2-theory, 3- ethical issues, 4- relevance, 5- rationale, 6- language/style, 7- conclusions, 8-design, 9-engineering etc).

Answer.5-(1-scope, 2- theory, 3- relevance, 4- rationale,5- ethical issues,6- language/style, 7-conclusions, 8-design, 9-engineering etc).

7. Do the absence of originality of the research topic and the researcher's contribution also cause rejection? Please explain your idea.

Answer.1-Yes. If the writing is not original, how can one contribute to research domain.

Answer.2- Originality and contribution are interrelated.

Answer.3- Contribution to research without originality is doubtful.

Answer.4- Yes for sure A research can't be a replica.

Answer:5- More originality better contribution.

8. Do ethical considerations (such as valid data collection, copyright or permission issues) straightaway lead to rejection or you ask authors to provide such details later? If yes why?

Answer.1-These details are technically important, and can be submitted after the first stage review. My team un submit the paper and ask the researcher to provide such details and submit again.

Answer.2-Absence of these details are considered as ignoring the guidelines, therefore we reject the manuscript at the initiate stage.

Answer.3- These details are technically and ethically important to be taken into considerations.

Answer.4- Integrity and ethics are integral component of any kinds of research.

Answer.5- A researcher must read carefully all the details prior to submission of his manuscript to a journal.

9. How much important is the formatting and citations for a research paper?

Answer.1- Technically formatting is extremely important, and citations style is part of formatting.

Answer.2- Not more important than other requirements.

Answer.3-Citations and references must be in accordance with a style such as APA, 8th edition.

Answer.4-Knowledge of citations is a part of research writing.

Answer.5-proper citation is related to ethical dimensions of research writing.

10. Do you think any role of a poor/unqualified reviewer(s) in rejecting a publishable paper?

Answer.1- Reviewers are as important as editor(s). If an editor is able to send paper(s) for second stage review, reviewers has the power to reject papers based on the guidelines.

Answer.2-If the reviewers are not from the specialty (major) and experienced either a poor paper will be selected or a publishable paper will be rejected, so they play important role.

Answer.3-Reviewers must have published enough papers in the field of the paper(s) they are reviewing.

Answer.4-Reviewers must know about the guidelines, criteria and quality of the papers to select or ask to modify or reject. Their language should at least be as good as the writer/author of the paper(s).

Answer.5.All the reviewers should be suitably efficient.

11. Is the handling editor ethically responsible for not sending even a publishable paper for second stage (peer review)?

Answer:1- Of course yes.

Answer.2- He can even be biased for many unknown reasons.

Answer.3-Personal likes and dislikes are likely.

Answer.4-They may be biased on account of native, non-native writer issue.

Answer.5-They can deprive a paper from getting published.

12. Why does the handling editor forward one paper for peer review and the other not despite the same quality of the paper?

Answer.1- mood matters

Answer.2-carelessness

Answer.3-biased attitude

Answer.4-May be he bothers more about an author's past experience and recognition.

Answer.5-May be he is from methodology/statistics background, and he prefers technical/statistical issues more.

13. Is native or non-native issue important in rejection of a paper in humanities/language?

Answer.1- Yes, it is.

Answer.2-Since English is a foreign language for non-native speakers, the style matters.

Answer.3-Not always

Answer.4-most often, it is.

Answer.5-It is not if writing is free from obvious errors and interesting in reading.

14. Some journals even charge nearly 3000 USD for one paper, it is ethical and justified?

Answer.1-never.

Answer.2-one should only charge nominal fee to meet some expenses.

Answer.3-It is unfortunate.

Answer.4-Some publishers are money minded, and they exploit academicians especially if they are Clarivate or Scopus indexed.

Answer.5-This is sheer exploitation. Authors must boycott such publishing companies.

15. Any other idea would you like to share about the tips of accepting a paper?

Answer.1- The author must read carefully about the guidelines of the journal.

Answer.2-The author should not ignore the methodology part.

Answer.3-Ethical considerations and relevance of the paper are significant.

Answer.4- The language must be academic and impressive.

Answer.5- There must be theory, and corresponding conclusions.

Appendix-B (Rejection notes from the reviewer/ editor)

XXX.....Journal

Research Article Reviewer Evaluation**Manuscript Code #:****Title:****Date RA received:****Date review returned:****Reviewer:**

This form should be completed and submitted electronically.

Please complete both Part "A" and "B" of this manuscript review/rating form before submitting to:

Part A -- Assessment of Basic Criteria

Please indicate your assessment of each of the criteria by placing an "X" in the appropriate column. Please enter comments specific to particular criterion in the comments row below each criterion.

Criteria to be Rated	Excellent	Acceptable	Unsatisfactory
1. complete, clear and well organized presentation			X
Comments: Not convincing approach			
2. significance of the problem		X	
Comments:			
3. applicability and interest to the field (relevance beyond case presented)		X	
Comments:			
4. description of the problem within a theoretical framework (where appropriate)		X	
Comments:			
5. literature review demonstrates a clear relationship to the problem		X	
Comments:			
6. appropriateness of research design and method			X
Comments: Research design does not fit according to the type of study, hypotheses and sample.			
7. accurate and useful interpretation			X
Comments: Since method of the study lacks quality, analysis and interpretation can't be reliable.			
8. sound argument and analysis		X	
Comments: Argument is weak.			
9. conclusion describes implications for education theory, research and/or practice			X
Comments: Study has not been properly linked to a popular theory, and literature review in support.			

Part B -- Final Recommendation

Based on my assessment of the basic criteria in Part A, my recommendation for this manuscript is (indicate your recommendation with an "X"):

- Accept with minor revisions**
 Resubmit after major revisions
 (a second round of review will be necessary)
 Reject
 (the paper is not suitable for publication)

Overall comments:

Though the problem/title of the study seems interesting, it has not been suitably justified. The author looks bit confused in choosing methods, sample type and justification of certain components. Analysis is weak basically due to inappropriate design of the study, validity, reliability of the tool used. In addition, there is no permission attached in the appendix related to the adapted tool.
In summary, the manuscript can not be accepted in its present form, however, it can be resubmitted with the modification as per the comments.