Semantics and Pragmatics: Reviewer guidelines

David Beaver
University of Texas

Kai von Fintel
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

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1 Preliminaries

Normally, we will ask a reviewer for a short review, short both in terms of the allotted time and in terms of the expected length of the review. The editors will have based the review time on what they perceive to be the length and technical complexity of the paper, but will work on the assumption that writing a short review for a paper should normally require a half-day of work. Given that we aim to ask for at most two reviews per year from each reviewer, someone who accepts a position on our editorial board is making a commitment to approximately one day of work per year, or slightly more if we happen to ask for extended commentary, or a review of a particularly long or technically complex paper. This is by no means a trivial commitment, and we ask editorial board members to notify us immediately if it is beyond what they can offer. One of the most important goals of the journal is to keep time from submission to publication to a minimum. With the advantages of the open access format, and the strong commitment of our editorial board to this goal, we aim for a significantly faster time-to-publication than is currently common in linguistics. Our typical time-frame is 4 weeks from the review request to when the review is due. We take this deadline very seriously and expect our reviewers to do the same; this is, frankly, different from most other journals, whose deadlines for reviewers are mostly fictional.

If you are asked for a review for *S&P*, consider the following three preliminary questions:

First, decide whether you think you can perform the review within the time allotted by the editor. Our review times are shorter than for other journals in the field. Please help us get good work to press rapidly: this will ultimately be in everybody's interest.

Second, notify the editors immediately (via the website) whether you can perform the review within the time allotted. It is crucial to the editorial

process that you notify the editors both in case that you can accept the review, and in case you cannot. It is quite acceptable that you will occasionally reject a review request because you are particularly busy, and the editors do not require any explanation. We would however appreciate advice regarding alternate reviewers.

Third, check whether for some reason you think it might be inappropriate to continue with the review:

i. Most obviously, determine whether there is any potential conflict of interest, and notify the editors if you think there may be. A conflict of interest might occur if a reviewer was based at the same institution as an author, or had collaborated with an author in the past, or had corresponded extensively with the author about earlier versions of the paper. However, we will consider each case on its merits.

ii. You may feel on reflection that you do not have the right background to review the paper.

iii. You may know the identity of the author of a paper which has been submitted for anonymous review.

iv. You may judge that the standard of English is so low that the paper is painful to read or hard to follow. In any such case, please email the editors immediately rather than ploughing on with a difficult or inappropriate review.

If you do decline to review the paper, please help us out by suggesting some alternative reviewers (the template presented by the website when declining a review includes a space to put in such recommendations).

2 The review

If you accept to be a reviewer of this paper, please read through the paper, and in your report to us address questions A–C, and optionally D, below. Note that a perfectly adequate review might be just a page long (or even shorter). Many reviewers go beyond the call of duty and provide us with editorial advice (and lists of typos and the like); that is of course appreciated but we really mean it when we say that a concise review delivered by the agreed upon deadline is all we need in the first round. As a paper moves closer to

publication, we may call on reviewers to give us more detailed advice, if they agree to that.

A. Estimate of overall quality. Check one of the following:

- Instant classic (with minor revision, may be among the most important publications in this field this year)

- Top 100 (with minor revision, should be among the top 100 contributions to the field of semantics/pragmatics in a typical year)

- Contains much important material which would be appropriate in *S&P*, but is marred by omissions or other flaws

- Contains some publishable material, but is marred by major omissions or other major flaws

- Does not contain sufficient publishable material to warrant consideration for *S&P*.

B. Recommendation. At the moment, we are constrained by the choices that our journal management software provides. The pull-down menu for reviewers allows the following recommendations:

- Accept submission

- Revisions required

- Resubmit for review

- Resubmit elsewhere

- Decline submission

- See comments ($\Longleftarrow$ preferred option)

Unless you strongly believe that you should make a specific recommendation from that list, we recommend that you choose "See comments" and simply provide us with a narrative assessment. It is the job of the editors to make a decision based on the input from multiple reviewers and their own reading of the submission.

But to give you a picture of the journal's practices, here is how we interpret the choices offered by our software:

Accept submission "We will publish this paper as soon as possible". Typically, there will be minor revisions needed but those shouldn't take very long and the paper will move into production as soon as those are done.

Revisions required "Accept the paper but minor revisions are necessary". The revisions will take no more than 2 weeks of work and only need to be checked by the editors. We will only issue this decision if the revisions are crystal-clear to us. NB: If the authors have not submitted a revised version within 6 months of our decision, we will consider the paper rejected. Any resubmitted version after 6 months will be considered a new submission and will be subject to the regular review process again.

Resubmit for review This is the decision also known as "Revise and Resubmit". This is intended to be a rare decision, and implies that substantial rewriting and possibly new research is needed, possibly taking months, but that the extreme originality of the piece merits acceptance in spite of the flaws. We will only consider such a decision if the path to a successful revision is quite clear to us. The revised version will almost certainly be reviewed not just by the editors but by outside reviewers. These will likely be drawn from the reviewers who reviewed the initial submission; but the editors reserve the right to use fewer or different reviewers.

Resubmit elsewhere This is really a variant of "Decline submission" but with helpful advice about where else the paper may find a more hospitable home.

Decline submission "Reject". This is the modal decision for a journal of *S&P*'s standards. There are shades depending on whether the reviewers and editors recommend submission of a substantially improved paper on the same topic. Any such submission will be treated as a new submission and while we might solicit the opinions of previous reviewers, there is no assurance whatsoever that the same set of reviewers will look at the paper. We should note that quite a few of our published papers were declined in an earlier round. Some of our most enthusiastically positive feedback has come from authors of declined submissions, because of the speed of decision and the quality of editorial feedback.

C. Justification. Please write a short justification, in broad terms, of the above estimate of overall quality (and of your explicit recommendation, if you chose to make one). Although you should feel free to explain your reaction in any way you think will be helpful, issues that you might consider include:

Principle results What are the major contributions this paper makes to semantics and pragmatics? Note: we would expect a pointer rather than a full explanation, e.g. "The most important contribution is the analysis of Cacgia Roglai temporal markers as dynamic generalized quantifiers."

Originality Are there important new theoretical insights, important new data, perhaps a notably original synthesis of ideas from disparate fields, or new formal techniques? Does the paper substantially overlap with a separate published paper of the author?

Technical competence and presentation of technical material Are there minor or major examples of sloppiness or misunderstanding? Are there places where the argumentation should be strengthened? Would the paper be improved with new statistical analyses, proofs of claims, or worked examples demonstrating proposed techniques? Should graphs, tables, or other presentations of data be added or modified?

Empirical quality Most (but not all) articles in *S&P* will be based on empirical data. Is the evidentiary basis of this paper adequate to the theoretical conclusions reached? Are there places where the quality of the data could be improved (cross-linguistic data, naturally occurring data, corpus data, experimental data)?

Audience Consider the background someone would need to follow the main thread of this paper, e.g. only a few specialists, most of those who give papers at major semantics conferences, most people with a few graduate level semantics courses, most people who've taken a graduate level introduction to semantics and pragmatics, or perhaps any smart educated person with access to a search engine could follow the main thread. And if this is the population that could follow the main thread, are there nonetheless parts of the paper that are much more demanding? Might minor changes substantially increase the potential audience?

Quality of prose Is the paper stylish, clear, and concise? Is it unclear in places, but probably repairable by the author? Could the prose be repaired by a native English speaker who has no special training in semantics and pragmatics, or would rewriting require both the author and probably also outside help of a native English speaker?

Contextualization of research Are the main research questions contextualized in terms of earlier related work? Does the paper adequately cite related work? Could the impact of the paper be improved through modifications that would show the relevance of the results to future work in the same or other fields?

D. Comments. Optional comments for the author. (You may just note that it would be acceptable to share your answer in C, or you may provide no commentary at all for the author's eyes)

3   Short contributions

S&P welcomes various shorter contributions (squibs, commentaries, remarks and replies, reviews, state of the art surveys). If you are asked for a report on such a submission, the criteria outlined above need to be modulated. Short squibs, in particular, "will not be required to propose a solution to problems they address as long as their relevance to theoretical issues is made clear" (as *Linguistic Inquiry* puts it).

4   Short and quick

Please note that when the editors request a short review, that means they do not at that stage require or expect detailed feedback on individual errors or areas for improvement. The priority is for a rapid decision, and the editors will make an additional request of the reviewer if and when they feel further information is needed.