

What I would like to see happen in 2019: Easy and free access to all scientific knowledge.

Stephen Krashen

Language Magazine, January 2019 (invited)

We are told that teachers, unlike professionals in other fields, don't read professional journals and don't keep up with research and theory. In one study Marsden and Kasprovicz (2017) reported that over half the classroom teachers they surveyed reported never having read an original research report. The average number of research papers read during their entire career was nine. Non-school-based education professionals (e.g. university-based teacher educators, consultants and advisors) reported doing more reading of research papers but 27% reported having never read about research in a journal.

There are good reasons why teachers don't read "serious" scholarly articles dealing with theory and research:

First, teachers don't have time. Teachers are overworked, and most research and theory papers tend to be unnecessarily long and tedious.

Second, unless you are a scholar with access to a university library, the cost is prohibitive. Subscriptions are expensive, and it is impossible to subscribe to every journal that includes articles of interest, so readers have to order, and pay for, individual copies of articles.

In preparing this paper, as usual, I looked at what had been published on whether teachers read and the reasons for not reading more. Several of the papers, while informative, were painfully long. One ran 30 pages and could have easily presented the same message in three pages. All the articles were in closed access journals, that is, journals that required a paid subscription. Copies of the individual articles were available for a price, the most expensive one costing \$42. (The writer of the paper gets none of this fee: It all goes to the journal publisher.)

Books are also very expensive. Professional books start at around \$40 and can cost much more. You can order a copy of the *Handbook of Advanced Proficiency in Second Language Acquisition*, a collection of scholarly papers published by Blackwell, for a mere \$142, marked down from \$215 through Amazon.

There is a solution: Short, well-written papers, made available free of charge, published in open-access journals, on-line journals that do not charge readers for

access. The legitimate open-access journals do not charge authors large fees for publication. In fact, most charge authors nothing.

If scholarship is freely available, we don't need long literature reviews with detailed descriptions of previous research, as it will be easy to consult sources, nor do we need long sermons about what research needs to be done in the future.

Several of us are doing this now in the field of second language acquisition and teaching. I now publish nearly exclusively in open access journals and make the papers available for free download (at sdrashen.com; this paper will appear there also) and I announce new ones (and old ones) on facebook and twitter ([skrashen](https://twitter.com/skrashen)). I hope other scholars will do likewise.

A barrier to this plan is the fact that many university faculties do not give scholars credit for promotion and tenure unless they publish in "prestige" journals. This will change if enough scholars take the alternate route described here. And if scholars write shorter and clearer papers, review committees will find it much easier to read them, and evaluation will be based on content, not on the prestige of the journal.

Critics of this plan will complain that teachers don't have the background to understand the statistics used in some of these papers. This is easy to deal with: Teach statistics for consumers. My attempt, soon to appear: *A short, narrow, and biased introduction to statistics* (free download: <https://tinyurl.com/ycnpkwe3>).

For a list of open-access journals, see: <http://www.eltresearchbites.com/open-access-journals/>

Reference:

Marsden, E. & R. Kasprovicz. (2017). Foreign language educators' exposure to research: reported experiences, exposure via citations, and a proposal for action.' *The Modern Language Journal*. 101(4): 613-42.

Thanks to the pioneers in this approach: Timothy Gowers, mathematician and winner of the Fields Medal (see <http://thecostofknowledge.com>) and the members of the Grateful Dead.