Opening open science to all: Demystifying reproducibility and transparency practices in linguistic research

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# Abstract

In recent years, numerous fields of research have seen a push for increased reproducibility and transparency practices. As a result, specific transparency practices have emerged, such as open access publishing, preregistration, sharing data, analyses, and code, performing study replications, and declaring positionality and conflicts of interest. While many agree that open science practices represent a positive step forward in improving scientific rigor, these practices, by and large, have not been adopted in the field of linguistics (Bochynska et al., 2023). Few, if any, researchers have had explicit instruction on the practices of open science as part of their professional training. Nonetheless, today’s speech researcher is expected to be up to date on the current protocols of open science in order incorporate the methodological practices aimed at improving reproducibility/replicability. The present work intends to help make open science practices understandable and accessible to researchers in linguistics from all backgrounds and at every stage, from students/early career researchers to senior researchers and advisors. We outline eight specific open science practices that linguists can adopt to make their research more open, transparent, inclusive, and accessible to a wider audience.

*Keywords:* Open science, Reproducibility, Replicability, Transparency, Positionality, Linguistics

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# Opening open science to all: Demystifying reproducibility and transparency practices in linguistic research

# Introduction - What is open science?

In recent years, numerous fields of research have seen a push for increased reproducibility and transparency practices. These practices, collectively, have been referred to as open science. Parsons et al. (2022) refer to open science as an umbrella term “[…] reflecting the idea that scientific knowledge of all kinds, where appropriate, should be openly accessible, transparent, rigorous, reproducible, replicable, accumulative, and inclusive, all which are considered fundamental features of the scientific endeavor” (p. 11). As a result, specific transparency practices have emerged, such as open access publishing, preregistration, sharing data, analyses, and code, performing study replications, and declaring positionality and conflicts of interest. Though it may come as a surprise to some, these open, transparent research practices have not been the norm in empirical and quantitative sciences, despite painstaking efforts being made in recent years (e.g., Berez-Kroeker et al., 2018; Berez-Kroeker, McDonnell, Koller, & Collister, 2022, among others).

To properly contextualize the need for open science, one must first consider the so-called reproducibility (replication) crisis. In the early 2010’s, a team of researchers in Psychology embarked on a large-scale replication project to scrutinize what many considered to be the fields’ major findings. Specifically, they attempted to replicate 100 influential studies (Open Science Collaboration, 2015). The endeavor produced astounding results—of note, that approximately 53% of the major findings did not replicate—and inspired similar large-scale replication projects in other fields, yielding similar results.[[1]](#footnote-23) This series of events represents what is now referred to as the replication (or reproducibility) crisis (See also FORRT, 2021). Unsurprisingly, the results generated an uproar in the psychological sciences. The alarming findings garnered media attention (e.g., Oliver, 2016) and have led to periods of introspection and self-reflection in many adjacent fields, among them, linguistics (e.g., Berez-Kroeker et al., 2018; Bochynska et al., 2023).

Researchers have pointed to questionable research practices (QRPs), such as p-hacking and HARKing, along with small sample sizes, poor theory, lack of transparency, misguided incentive structure in academia, etc. as factors that ultimately led to the replication crisis, though it is likely that many factors are/were simultaneously at play. In the aftermath of the aforementioned crisis, there has been a push for increased transparency and reproducible methodology to help mitigate the effects of QRPs. The resulting methodological framework and associated techniques have reshaped research methods in Psychology, and, slowly but surely, are making their way into related fields. While many agree that open science practices represent a positive step forward in improving scientific rigor, these practices, by and large, have not been adopted in the field of linguistics (Bochynska et al., 2023). One reason for the slow adoption in linguistics may be related to the fact that engaging in open science is no trivial feat. To wit, it often requires learning new skills, thoughtful planning, as well as an openness and willingness to share materials, code, and data. Many researchers need to implement new techniques with limited pedagogical resources and embrace alternative methods of disseminating their research, all of which can constitute a steep learning curve. That being said, what engaging in open science ultimately entails is sure to be field-specific and vary accordingly. In some disciplines, for instance, it may only involve a few of the practices we outline in the present work without the need for innovative methodologies. Nonetheless, given how new open science practices are, it is reasonable to assume that current senior researchers were not trained in these innovative methodologies. As a consequence, many early career researchers (ERC) find themselves at a crossroads in which they are forced to learn open science on their own, often without institutional support. Ironically, there is also a growing expectation that ECRs implement these novel tools in order to be successful in their programs, on the job market, or to advance in their careers.

The present work intends to both highlight and contribute to a line of research focused on making open science practices understandable and accessible to researchers in linguistics from all backgrounds and at every stage, from students/ERCs to senior researchers and advisors. To this end, we identify the following three areas of stance, workflow and dissemination, in which linguists can engage in open science (see [Figure 1](#fig-os-flow-edit)). The first area, *stance*, refers to practices that focus on the researchers position or attitude towards openness and transparency. The second area, *workflow*, deals with methods and techniques researchers can implement to make their research projects more open and transparent. Finally, *dissemination* refers to novel ways in which researchers can help ensure that their research products are accessible and free from QRPs. While our coverage of these areas cannot be exhaustive, in what follows, we dedicate five sections of this paper to highlighting eight open science practices within these areas: positionality statements and declarations of conflict of interest, open data (as both a stance and a dissemination practice), reproducible code/projects and literate programming, preregistration, registered reports, and pre-prints. We provide practical examples and detailed descriptions of the aforementioned practices with the goal of helping the interested linguist commence their journey of engaging in open science practices in their own research. Importantly, the present work should be considered a complement to the extant work fomenting open science practices in the speech sciences.

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| Figure 1: Some open science practices amenable to research in linguistics as they pertain to one’s stance, workflow, and the dissemination of research products. |

# Positionality statements

A positionality statement is a reflective piece of writing that acknowledges a researcher’s stance/position, toward a research topic, framework, and even participants. Similar to a statement of conflict of interest, a positionality statement can influence how results are interpreted (Rowe, 2014). One’s positionality differs from a statement of conflict of interest in that it can also influence how research is undertaken and can encompass the researcher’s social, cultural, and personal identity, as well as their biases and assumptions (Holmes, 2020). Among others, relevant personal characteristics that may be included in a positionality statement are gender and racial identity, age, sexual orientation, immigration status, and ideological stances (Berger, 2015). These traits may indirectly impact research endeavors, since participants may be more willing to engage in a study if they perceive the researcher as sympathetic (De Tona et al., 2006), or may even offer different responses based on the researcher’s perceived identity (Berger, 2015). While positionality statements, due to their reflexive nature, may encompass larger pieces of writing, they can also take the form of short paragraphs that illustrate a few personal characteristics deemed relevant for the particular research endeavor. For instance, “Gabriela is a white immigrant cis-gender woman from Romania whose research focuses on how non-native speakers are ideologically framed as linguistically deficient in comparison to native speakers who are characterized by their linguistic authority and expertise”. When submitting a study for publication, the positionality statement can be included in additional materials if the word limit is a concern.

Though positionality statements have been adopted in some disciplines of the humanities and social sciences as a way of recognizing the various ways in which researchers’ backgrounds and identities may intersect with their research endeavors, they are a relatively new incorporation in the field of linguistics, appearing primarily in subfields, such as applied linguistics, linguistic anthropology, and linguistic ethnography (Bucholtz et al., 2023). Savolainen, Casey, McBrayer, & Schwerdtle (2023) draw connections between positionality statements and relatively more common statements of conflict of interest, arguing that, while researchers are required to disclose any and all financial gains associated with a research project, “positionality statements grant authors the freedom to decide which parts of their biography they choose to share and how they choose to frame it” (p. 1334). While statements of conflict of interest are notably underused in linguistic research (See Bochynska et al., 2023)[[2]](#footnote-29), positionality statements are likely even less common. Nonetheless, they are considered by some to be increasingly crucial components of the research process, as they increase transparency into research practices (Steltenpohl, Hudson, & Klement, 2022) and contextualize the environment in which studies take place, or, in other words, they “[define] the boundaries within which research was produced” (Jafar, 2018, p. 1). Traditionally, positionality statements have been more prevalent in qualitative research. Our stance is that, when appropriate, they should be considered equally important in quantitative research as well. Aside from contributing to ongoing efforts to promote transparency and openness in research practices, recognizing and addressing one’s positionality can, in some instances, support a study’s quantitative validity by helping to reduce notions of bias (See Jafar, 2018, for a discussion in the field of medicine).

The support and advocacy for the inclusion of positionality statements in research publications is increasing (Bucholtz et al., 2023; Jafar, 2018; Steltenpohl et al., 2022). Bucholtz et al. (2023) note that considering a researcher’s positionality may be especially important in linguistic research on certain language communities, such as indigenous communities, “[…] which relies on racially minoritized communities as sources of data yet lack adequate (if any) representation of those communities among faculty researchers” (p. 2). Nonetheless, others contest this practice. For example, some investigators point to the universalism of research, that is, the belief that scholarly endeavors should be assessed on their inherent merits, regardless of the status or personal identity of the person making the contribution (Savolainen et al., 2023). In addition and in opposition to Bucholtz et al. (2023), the self-identification associated with a positionality statement may also place some individuals, particularly women and individuals from marginalized groups, in a vulnerable position (Massoud, 2022). Specifically, in the field of law and society, Massoud (2022) posits that the pressure to state one’s positionality can lead to increased anxiety, as well as cause readers to question the researcher’s neutrality, and, ultimately, shift the focus away from the contributions of the research.

How can one marry the aforementioned benefits of including one’s positionality with the legitimate counterpoints related to marginalized individuals? We believe researchers should only consider the option of including their positionality if they feel comfortable doing so. Roberts, Bareket-Shavit, Dollins, Goldie, & Mortenson (2020), for instance, argue against mandating one’s positionality. Some journals have started to encourage authors to include positionality statements with their submissions (e.g., the Journal of Social and Personal Relationships) as a means to show their commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusivity, and Belonging (DEIB) initiatives. No journals, to the best of our knowledge, require positionality statements.

In sum, we believe positionality statements can be productive in linguistic research, as they promote critical self-reflection, increase transparency, can potentially help address diversity and inclusion concerns, and may increase the validity of findings in quantitative research. By reflecting on who it is that does the research, linguistics can become a more diverse, inclusive, and transparent field. That being said, it is important to consider the impact and potential burden of disclosing positionality on marginalized researchers, particularly in collaborative research settings. In the end, regarding one’s positionality, *what* and *how* to share are fundamental considerations that cannot be overlooked by investigators, journals, publishing houses, and consumers of academic research. It is our stance that researchers should reflect on their positionality before starting a project, and, if and when it makes sense, consider including a positionality statement. For examples of positionality statements in linguistic research, the interested reader is directed to Bochynska et al. (2023) and Weissler et al. (2023).

# Open data

The term *open data* refers to data collected for research that is freely and easily available to anybody interested in accessing it for any purpose (Open Knowledge, 2023). In academic research, statements such as “data available upon request” are commonplace (See Hardwicke & Ioannidis, 2018). In spite of such assurances, we now know they do not typically result in adequate sharing of research materials (Hardwicke & Ioannidis, 2018; Spellman, Gilbert, & Corker, 2017; Wicherts, Borsboom, Kats, & Molenaar, 2006). Recent efforts have attempted to encourage researchers to make linguistic data open and accessible via servers. An illustrative example is the IRIS database (<https://www.iris-database.org>), a language sciences digital repository that is freely accessible and permits the up- and downloading of research instruments and materials. Additional efforts include open science badges–visual symbols offered by some journals (e.g., *Language Learning*, *Language and Speech*) on published articles. These badges are awarded to researchers for adhering to certain open science principles, such sharing code and data or preregistering a study. In arguably more extreme cases, other journals have made data sharing a requirement for publication (e.g., *Applied Psycholinguistics*). Nonetheless, open data is still the exception rather than the norm in linguistics (Bochynska et al., 2023). In this section, we provide more detail regarding the benefits of open data and consider the specific challenges researchers face in the field of linguistics.

The underlying motivation for open data is relatively straightforward, particularly in the wake of the reproducibility crisis. Though researchers may understandably hesitate to share their data, we believe understanding the benefits of open data can help alleviate many concerns. Among researchers, there can exist anxieties unrelated to technical considerations about sharing data (Stieglitz et al., 2020). Stieglitz et al. (2020), in a study investigating 995 researchers from 13 universities in Germany across various fields, found that there were anxieties about competitive pressures, such as losing the opportunity to publish again from the same data set before another researcher does. In this case, anxieties can be quelled with the knowledge that the data can be made available after all research inquiries by the original researchers have been completed. Making linguistic data freely available improves credibility in our findings, to other researchers, and the general public, and may help develop more accurate generalizations and theories (See Berez-Kroeker et al., 2022). Prohibiting or impeding access to data collected for publicly funded research is, in many cases, unethical and can be a detriment to inclusivity. Open data is fundamental for cumulative science in numerous ways. It affords third parties the opportunity to scrutinize original findings, which promotes reproducibility and reduces errors, such as those related to statistical analyses and reporting of outcomes (e.g., Roettger, 2021b). Furthermore, it allows for published data to be reanalyzed in novel ways and utilized in meta-analyses. Revisiting old data sets using innovative techniques can support or contradict past narrative conclusions. For instance, using meta-analytic techniques, Casillas (2021) reexamined extant research regarding ‘compromise categories’ in early bilinguals. This line of research posits that bilingual individuals produce speech sounds intermediate to those produced by monolingual speakers of either language. By systematically reevaluating prior data and incorporating new acoustic analyses of coronal stops from early Spanish-English bilinguals, Casillas (2021) suggested that the cumulative evidence for ‘compromise’ stop categories was negligible. In lieu of intermediate phonetic categories, the study proposed early bilinguals can exhibit performance mismatches resulting from dynamic interlingual interactions. This reanalysis contradicted earlier assumptions about bilingual phonology and provided in-depth scrutiny of statistical power and evidence accumulation in bilingualism research. In short, open data is a cornerstone of scientific research in the 21st century that enables wider access to research information, which, in turn, facilitates validation, motivates replication, promotes reproducibility, and makes possible future scientific progress.

Open data are particularly important for the field of linguistics, for all of the aforementioned reasons, and also because some linguists have described the state of the field, as far as English-language publications are concerned, as being Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic (WEIRD, see Bochynska et al., 2023; Faytak et al., 2024; Nagle, Baese-Berk, Amengual, & Casillas, 2024). That is to say, the majority of linguistic research appears to be concentrated on specific languages, mainly Indo-Germanic, in overrepresented communities, by privileged scholars. Making linguistic data accessible to all researchers can promote participation *in* and *with* underrepresented communities. Furthermore, it can increase the study of diverse and underreported languages, which fosters a more inclusive and comprehensive understanding of the global linguistic landscape.

Having stated all the above, it is necessary to recognize that linguistics faces a unique set of challenges with its multitude of subfields, each potentially working with a variety of data formats. Due to such diversity, one must determine which aspects of open science are relevant to their data. For example, a neurolinguistic study investigating event related potentials (ERPs) could share raw data for transparency, as well as preprocessed data with the code used to transform the raw data and a corresponding description for facilitation of reanalysis. In another field, the creation of a corpus will benefit from open access and the use of standardized file formats; the analysis of a corpus will benefit from sharing the search queries, the analysis code, and a description of the analysis code. At the heart of these challenges are ethical concerns that must be considered with care. First and foremost, the privacy and consent of participants must be safeguarded. Linguistic data often include personal information, which can be especially difficult to anonymize. While on the surface written and behavioral data may not appear to pose as many issues as audio and video recordings, which constitute a large portion of linguistic research materials, it is imperative that one consider the sources from which all types of data are derived.[[3]](#footnote-34) As expressed by Holton, Leonard, & Pulisifer (2022), if we haphazardly take language to represent trivial data points and lose focus on the individual embedded within a community, as well as the values of said community, we are doomed to “dehumanize and decontextualize” it (p. 50). This is particularly true when working with minority languages and/or marginalized communities. In cases such as these, the researcher must be held accountable, not only for the anonymization of participant information, but also for respecting and upholding the specific goals and restrictions put forth by the community. This includes, but is not limited to, the use, access, and storage of all collected data. In sum, careful consideration of the priorities of the researcher and the researched, which often do not align, is paramount (for more detailed views, see Adetula, Forscher, Basnight-Brown, Azouaghe, & IJzerman, 2022; Holton et al., 2022; Hudley, Mallinson, & Bucholtz, 2020; Leonard, 2021; Mufwene, 2020; Singh, Killen, & Smetana, 2023; Tsikewa, 2021, among others). In addition, generative artificial intelligence technologies, such as Large Language Models, are burgeoning. These technologies will certainly pose currently unknown challenges in the near future and may necessitate additional steps to secure the protection of sensitive data against misuse, particularly regarding adherence to the original agreement of informed consent, and, importantly, in upholding the conditions of use put forth by the stakeholders in marignalized communities.

While these challenges are substantial, we believe acceptable solutions exist in many, if not all, cases. When primary data, such as audio or video files, cannot be shared, derived data in the form of tabular files can take its place. For instance, if institutional policies prohibit the sharing of audio files, a comma-separated or tab-separated file (csv, tsv) containing the variables of interest (e.g., formant values, response times, etc.) can be made public instead. Tabular data files can be anonymized easily using arbitrary identification codes. Online data collection platforms, such as Prolific (<https://www.prolific.com>), typically remove identifying information by default and provide participant-specific identification numbers. In more uncommon cases in which institutional policies do not permit the sharing of derived data sets, synthetic data containing the same statistical properties can be generated and shared freely (See Quintana, 2020).[[4]](#footnote-36) To quote the Directorate-General for Research & Innovation of the European Commission (2016), we believe the field can follow the principle that data should be “as open as possible, as closed as necessary” (p. 4).

Another substantial hurdle that cannot be overlooked revolves around the fact that researchers must learn to use new technologies to participate in open, transparent research. Making data open *and* accessible is not as simple as merely uploading a data file. Ideally, researchers should include relevant information to contextualize the data set at the project-level (i.e., a project-summary document), the data-level (i.e., a README file explaining the data set), and the variable-level (i.e., a data dictionary) (C. Lewis, 2024). The inclusion of resources at these three levels is the optimal way for authors to provide the necessary context for an independent researcher to access and utilize the data set. Unfortunately, most publicly available data do not adhere to this standard. For this reason, we direct the interested reader to templates provided in C. Lewis (2024) for documentation at the project-level (<https://osf.io/q6g8d>, <https://osf.io/d3pum>), data-level (<https://osf.io/tk4cb>), and variable-level (<https://osf.io/ynqcu>).

Once the data has been prepared for sharing, the researcher must decide where to share it. Platforms such as google drive, dropbox, etc. are not recommended because they are linked to personal accounts that may change or become unavailable over time. Free repositories designed for the purpose of sharing research materials, such as the Open Science Framework (Foster & Deardorff, 2017), github, etc., are preferable and can be accessed simply by sharing a link. These repositories represent stable, long-term solutions with ample storage capacity. The data sets (and other materials) can be downloaded directly, free of any kind of payment or exchange of personal information (such as an email address) by the user. For relevant examples, we direct the interested reader to <https://osf.io/zx9ky/>, <https://osf.io/3bmcp/>, or <https://github.com/RAP-group/empathy_intonation_perc>. [Table 1](#tbl-platform-features) summarizes some of the options used by researchers and describes which features are available on each platform.

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| Table 1: Common data-sharing platforms and their respective features.   | Platform | Long-term Support | Version Control | DOI Assignment | Anonymous Sharing | Key Features | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | Open Science Framework (OSF) | + | + | + | + | Project management and collaboration | | GitHub | + | + | Integrates with Zenodo | + (public repositories) | Project management/collaboration, ideal for coding | | GitLab | + | + | Integrates with Zenodo | Limited | Project management/collaboration, ideal for coding | | Bitbucket | + | + | Integrates with Zenodo | Limited | Project management/collaboration, ideal for coding | | Zenodo | + | + (via GitHub integration) | + | + | Supports range of file types | | Figshare | + | Limited | + | + | Sharing datasets and figures | | Box | − | − | − | Limited | Basic file storage and sharing | | Google Drive | − | − | − | Limited | Basic file storage and sharing | |

To summarize, open data is important because it facilitates transparency, rigor, reproducibility, replication, accumulation of knowledge, and, importantly, it makes participating in the scientific endeavor more inclusive. According to some accounts, linguistics, in general, does not engage in open science practices, including sharing data (See Bochynska et al., 2023), though others characterize its participation in different terms. For instance, as stated in Berez-Kroeker et al. (2018) “Practitioners in different subfields ‘do transparency’ differently, and these practices could serve as models for an eventual amalgamated standard” (p. 9). While linguistics does face legitimate, field-specific challenges related to non-WEIRD communities, ultimately, the benefits of open data outnumber many of these challenges. Researchers should take the stance to share what is reasonable and ethically responsible all the while holding at the forefront the priorities of the individuals from which the data are derived, especially regarding marginalized communities.

# Reproducible code/projects and literate programming

Having seen the consequences from the reproducibility crisis in other fields, reproducibility must be a crucial aspect of any scientific study. Researchers must be able to provide a clear and transparent account of their findings, including the methods used to obtain them. Reproducibility can help to ensure that research results are valid, reliable, and can be used by others to build on existing knowledge. In this section, we explore the importance of reproducibility, what we know about it in the field of linguistics, and how researchers can make their code and projects more reproducible.

In general, reproducibility helps to increase the credibility of research findings and allows other researchers to verify and build on existing work. A lack of reproducibility can lead to findings that cannot be replicated, resulting in wasted resources, and, conceivably, downstream impacts on public health and policy decisions that are often grounded in funded research. For these reasons, among others, transparency in research methods are essential to ensure reproducibility, which includes not only the data collection and analysis methods, but also the code used to conduct the analysis. In linguistics there is increasing awareness of the importance of reproducibility and how a lack thereof could potentially impede advancements in linguistic theory and theories of language acquisition, in addition to having implications for education and language policy decisions based on research findings. As a consequence, many investigators are showing heightened interest in safeguarding the reproducibility of their research.

For quantitative research, there are several steps that researchers can take to make their code and projects more reproducible. One approach is to create reports that document the research process by including descriptions of the data, the methods used to analyze the data, and the results. This documentation can then be made publicly available and used by third parties to retrace the steps to reproduce the research findings. While better than nothing at all, a more complete approach includes the analysis code in the same document in which the very manuscript is written. This integration of analysis code and prose into a single, dynamic document is known as literate programming (Knuth, 1984, 1992). Under the hood, a series of macros and functions are used to tangle the code and prose of the document into a separate file, usually a word document or a pdf, which can then be submitted for publication. Literate programming reduces the likelihood of copy and paste errors that often occur when passing the results of a statistical analysis from the analysis software to the word processing program. If the analysis changes in any way, e.g., more data is included, a different analytic strategy is applied, etc., the document is retangled to update the output file. Currently there are several implementations of literate programming for research purposes, the most common of which are R markdown files (Rmd) and Quarto markdown files (qmd). These formats use the R package knitr (Xie, 2014, 2015, 2023) to tangle (also “knit” or “render”) the output file. In fact, the present manuscript was generated using literate programming and is available for download here: <https://osf.io/bsu2q/>.

While the implementation of literate programming into a research workflow is ideal, the gold standard is to use literate, dynamic documents in conjunction with reproducible projects. These projects include all of the data, code, and documentation necessary to reproduce the research findings, not only in a single report, but rather in many reports and/or presentations, simultaneously. This approach makes it easier for others to reproduce research findings and build on previous work because it obviates the complications involved with user-specific file paths and differing operating systems. Ideally, if the project works on one user’s computer, it should work on any computer running the same software. This allows a researcher to download an entire project and reproduce the analyses and reports at the click of a button. A popular choice for reproducible projects is the open source software Posit (formerly RStudio), which utilizes .Rproj files called RStudio projects. Examples of completed reproducible projects are available to the interested reader here: <https://osf.io/un45x/> and <https://osf.io/cp9bs/>.

Exciting, new technology that facilitates open science is coming out at a rapid pace. This is excellent news for anybody interested in learning the new tools, but also creates other issues, particularly with regard to outdated software. Dependency management tools like renv (Ushey & Wickham, 2023) and targets (Landau, 2021) can be helpful in future-proofing projects and ensuring reproducibility. These tools help to manage the dependencies that are necessary to run code by providing specific versions of the software used originally by the researchers. Computational reproducibility platforms like Binder and Code Ocean can also be used to create virtual environments in which projects can be reproduced online. Thus, these platforms allow researchers to share their code and data in ways that can be easily replicated by anybody with an internet connection.

At this juncture it is important to note that there is no way to completely future-proof code or projects. Researchers must continually strive to maintain the reproducibility of their work. This includes updating code and documentation as needed and testing projects on different operating systems to ensure that it can be run in different environments.

Summarizing, reproducibility is a crucial aspect of scientific research. It helps to ensure that research findings are valid, reliable, and can be used by others to build on existing knowledge. In linguistics there is increasing awareness of the importance of reproducibility, and many researchers are taking steps to improve the transparency of their research. By creating dynamic reports using literate programming and integrating them into reproducible projects in conjunction with dependency management tools, linguists can make their projects more reproducible and accessible.

# Preregistration and registered reports

In this section, we will briefly consider two open science innovations that are making a profound impact on how academic research is conducted, evaluated, and, ultimately, disseminated to the public. These innovations, preregistrations and registered reports, were designed with the goal of reducing QRPs and publication bias.

## Preregistration

A preregistration is a time-stamped document that provides comprehensive detail about a study, including, but not limited to, research questions, hypotheses, methodologies, and analytic strategies (Mellor & Nosek, 2018). Preregistrations are written prior to data collection and do not undergo peer review. The depth of content detail within a preregistration spans a spectrum: in the simplest case, a preregistration can comprise merely a hypothesis or perhaps a brief description of the methods; on the other extreme, a detailed preregistration can include code, power analyses, participant exclusion criteria and beyond. In this section, we provide information regarding the various components of a preregistration, centering on their advantageous impact on linguistic research. Specifically, we focus on *who* might want to consider preregistrations, *why* they might want to do so, *what* content they can include, and *how* they can complete a preregistration for a linguistics research project.

Linguistic research is multifaceted and spans diverse areas such as corpus analysis, conversation/discourse analysis, experimental research, and more. However, as highlighted by Roettger (2021a), researchers are human and humans have evolved to filter the world in irrational ways, which can lead to QRPs and other problems that may affect the replicability of published research. Preregistration emerged as a powerful instrument empowering linguists to bolster the trustworthiness and credibility of their inquiries by establishing a systematic and predefined methodology. We believe the practice of preregistration extends its benefits to researchers at all levels, including students and ECRs, senior academics, and professionals alike.

Researchers face vital decisions while engaging in research, with inherent flexibility involved in the process of designing and carrying out projects, as well as in the analysis of the data and interpretation of the results (Simmons, Nelson, & Simonsohn, 2011). This type of flexibility, termed “researcher degrees of freedom”, can have serious down-stream consequences in quantitative research, particularly in linguistics. For instance, Coretta et al. (2023) provided the same speech-production data set to different research teams and asked them to answer the same research question. They found substantial variability in both the acoustic analyses and the analytic strategies, neither of which could be explained by analysts’ prior beliefs, expertise, or the perceived quality of their analyses. Crucially, these decisions, both acoustic and analytic, impacted the teams’ answers to the research question. To provide a simple example, a researcher studying lexical stress could concentrate on distinct acoustic cues typically associated with stress, i.e., pitch, duration, and intensity. Beyond selecting acoustic cues to measure, she must also select a domain for these measurements, such as the mid-point of stressed/unstressed syllables or an average value over the entirety of the syllable. Choices such as these, i.e., the researcher degrees of freedom, can wield significant influence on subsequent outcomes. Preregistration serves the purpose of meticulously documenting these choices *a priori*, thus acting as a deterrent against QRPs, like HARKing or p-hacking (Wicherts et al., 2016). This is because the researcher establishes what decisions will be made, such as measurement choices and analytic strategies, before data collection commences. A benefit of including a high level of specificity in the preregistration is that is forces researchers to consider facets of their study that might usually be deferred to a later stage, e.g., specific statistical tests.  
This proactive approach demands more initial time investment from the researcher, but also increases the likelihood of uncovering crucial flaws in the study design.

The scope of preregistration extends to any facet of research deemed worthy of temporal documentation preceding the initiation of the study. The essential components often include research questions/hypotheses, methodological framework, and analytic approaches. The specific elements that will comprise a preregistration can be considerably diverse, as they will depend on the specific domain within linguistics and the nuanced nature of the study in question. Consider, for instance, a psycholinguist conducting a self-paced reading study. In this context, the focus of the preregistration might include the formulation of hypotheses, as well as a complete description of the experimental paradigm. Additionally, the researcher may include a characterization of participant demographics, recruitment strategies, sample size considerations, independent variable manipulations, data transformations, and analytic strategies to test hypotheses. Importantly, not all of the aforementioned components are equally prioritized in all preregistrations.

It is important to acknowledge that incorporating the entirety of these components into a preregistration represents a formidable challenge, as it front loads large portions of work that often take place after a study has begun, e.g., determining sample size, statistical models, etc. In such instances, researchers are encouraged to commence with elements they perceive as most valuable to their study. Many concerns about preregistration revolve around the potential burden of ‘extra work’. Conversely, preregistration is intended to streamline the workflow, fostering efficiency both in the short term and the long run, as it provides the researcher with complete control over the level of detail she chooses to include. The depth of preregistration directly correlates with the effort invested; the more comprehensive the preregistration, the greater the initial workload, leading to reduced effort in subsequent stages.

The Open Science Framework allows researchers to preregister a study. Since its inception, the amount of preregistrations has grown each year (See [Figure 2](#fig-pr), left panel) and the cumulative number of registrations totals over 183,575 at the time of writing this text (See [Figure 2](#fig-pr), right panel). We provide examples of preregistrations at the following links: <https://osf.io/nprgz> and <https://osf.io/qvjzy>.

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| Figure 2: Charts |

## Registered reports

The reproducibility crisis has drawn attention to the shortcomings of the traditional model of publishing scientific research. In the current model, researchers generate hypotheses, design studies, collect data, analyze data, interpret results, and submit their findings for publication. However, this model has been criticized for lending itself to QRPs, such as p-hacking and harking, which can result in publication bias.

To address these issues, researchers have attempted various reforms, such as meta-analysis and preregistration. Meta-analysis is a statistical technique that combines the results of multiple studies to increase the power of analysis. Preregistration, as we have seen, involves publicly registering a study’s design and methods before collecting data, to mitigate QRPs. Registered reports (RRs) represent a new publication model that conceptually combines preregistration with peer review (Nosek & Lakens, 2014). Preregistration is often confused with RRs, but they differ in that preregistration is a separate step that occurs before the traditional publishing pipeline, whereas RR is integrated into the publishing process. In this model, researchers submit a detailed proposal of their study, including their hypotheses, methods, and analyses, for review before data collection. If the proposal is accepted, the study is guaranteed publication, regardless of the results. This incentivizes rigorous methodology and reduces QRPs, as researchers cannot manipulate their analyses to obtain significant results. [Figure 3](#fig-dissemination-cycle) provides a side-by-side comparison of the standard publishing model and RRs.

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| Figure 3: Flow chart of the standard publication model and registered reports. |

RRs were first introduced in 2013 by the Center for Open Science (COS), and have since been adopted by many journals across various fields, including psychology, neuroscience, and medicine. In 2019, there were approximately 156 journals offering the option to submit a registered report. This number has jumped to 318 at the time of writing this manuscript, an increase of 104%. Of those 318, only 14 are journals related to language or linguistics. [Table 2](#tbl-rr) lists the language/linguistics journals along with information regarding relevant restrictions. These data are freely available on the OSF website at <https://www.cos.io/initiatives/registered-reports>. Empty cells in [Table 2](#tbl-rr) indicate missing data and TBA implies that the relevant parameter is ‘to be announced’.

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| Table 2: Journals related to ‘language’ or ‘linguistics’ that include registered reports as a possible article submission type. The data were retrieved from the Open Science Framework on 12-14-2024. The complete list of journals is freely available at <https://www.cos.io/initiatives/registered-reports>. Empty cells indicate missing/unavailable data and TBA implies that a pending decision is ‘to be announced’.   | Journal | Permanence | Permits replication studies | Permits meta-analytic studies | Permits use of existing data | Requires data deposition | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | Bilingualism: Language and Cognition | Indefinite | ✓ |  |  | ✓ | | Biolinguistics | Indefinite | ✓ |  |  | ✓ | | Cognitive Linguistics | Indefinite | ✓ |  |  | ✓ | | Glossa Psycholinguistics | Indefinite | TBA | TBA | TBA | TBA | | Journal of Child Language | Indefinite | ✓ |  |  |  | | Journal of Memory and Language | Special issue only | ✓ |  |  |  | | Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research |  |  |  |  |  | | Language and Cognition |  |  |  |  |  | | Language and Speech | Indefinite | ✓ |  | ✓ | ✓ | | Language Learning | Indefinite | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | Linguistics | Indefinite | ✓ |  |  | ✓ | | Neurobiology of Language | Indefinite | TBA | TBA | TBA | TBA | | Second Language Research |  |  |  |  |  | | Journal of Memory and Language | Special issue only | ✓ |  |  |  | |

The majority of the listed journals plan to offer RRs as a possible submission option indefinitely (n = 9), as opposed to only for special issues or during a trial period. Likewise, nine of these 14 journals permit RRs as an option for replication studies. Only one journal (Language Learning) specifically states that it will consider RRs that plan to conduct meta-analyses, and two of the journals consider RRs as an option for studies that propose analyzing data sets that already exits. Finally, for six of the 14 journals, a public data deposition is a requirement for RRs.[[5]](#footnote-66)

RRs cannot solve all the problems with the current model, but they can help reduce QRPs and increase transparency in scientific research. RRs are gaining popularity, but some fields, such as linguistics, have been slow to adopt them. RRs may particularly benefit ECRs, who can use them to increase their chances of publication and build a reputation for rigor. However, more senior researchers may be resistant to change and may need to be convinced of the benefits of RRs for the field as a whole.

In sum, registered reports represent a promising new model for publishing scientific research that can help reduce QRPs and increase transparency. As more journals adopt RRs, the scientific community can move towards a more rigorous and trustworthy publishing model.

# Pre-prints

A pre-print is a version of a research article, open and accessible, that has not yet undergone peer review but is publicly available online, through a pre-print server. The general process consists of an initial screening process, followed by a posting of the manuscript on the preprint server within a few days of submission, bypassing peer review, and making the research findings freely accessible online (Puebla, Polka, & Rieger, 2021). Pre-prints allow researchers to share their findings with the scientific community and get feedback before their work is published in a traditional academic journal. This process can speed up the dissemination of knowledge and facilitate collaboration between researchers. While pre-prints accelerate the dissemination of research, it is vital to remember that this process does not always lead to journal publication. This can occur for several reasons, such as authors may choose not to pursue this route, or the research may be intended for different dissemination avenues (Ettinger et al., 2022). Pre-prints have become increasingly popular in recent years, particularly in fields such as biology, physics, and computer science. The adoption of pre-prints has been slower in some fields, such as the social sciences and humanities, but this is changing as more researchers become aware of the benefits of open science, and new national and regional platforms by open science advocates continue to emerge (Gawne & Styles, 2022).

One of the primary benefits of pre-prints is that they allow researchers to share their findings quickly and easily. This can be especially important in fields where research moves quickly, such as biology or computer science. Pre-prints also allow researchers to receive feedback on their work from their peers, which can help to improve the quality of their research. The provision of commentary and reviews of pre-prints yields benefits not only to the authors but also extends support to the authors, but this process also supports reviewers, journals and publishers, and the reader audience. This inclusive process allows more researchers and reviewers to participate in discussing the research findings and reduces the need for repeated rounds of re-review or extensive revisions.

One of the most significant benefits of pre-prints is their “early view” and “open access” effect, which leads to more attention from readers, increasing visibility and development of the overall research (Das Biswas & Biswas, 2023). Pre-prints are not just quick dissemination; they also promote transparency and reproducibility in scientific research. Recognizing these benefits, more major publishers have either launched pre-print platforms or entered partnerships over the past 5-7 years, allowing pre-prints to be incorporated into the workflow (Puebla et al., 2021). By making research findings available to the public before peer-review, pre-prints not only improve the accuracy and reliability of research findings but also encourage collaborative efforts to identify potential errors, refine methodologies, and accelerate knowledge dissemination.

Another benefit of pre-prints is that they can help to reduce publication bias, a widespread challenge in traditional publishing. Publication bias occurs when positive results are more likely to be published than negative results (Matosin, Frank, Engel, Lum, & Newell, 2014). This can skew the scientific literature and lead to a misunderstanding of the state of the research. Pre-prints address this obstacle by openly sharing all research findings, regardless of outcome, creating a fairer and more accurate representation of the current scientific landscape of that field.

Despite these benefits, some researchers remain hesitant to use pre-prints. One concern is that publishing a pre-print may harm their chances of being published in a traditional academic journal. However, this concern is becoming less relevant as more journals are accepting pre-prints as a legitimate form of publication. According to Liu & De Cat (2021), who conducted a survey asking as to the barriers in sharing preprints and discovered that the following were raised as additional barriers: peer review, journal policy, lack of knowledge of the process, confidentiality issues, data types, utility of sharing preprints, time constraints, and issues in pre-print management.

Additional concerns about pre-prints include their ability to secure the steady resources (technologies, expertise, policies, visions, standards, and so on) required to maintain and enhance the value of a service based on a user community’s needs (Rieger, 2012). Preprints emerged as a ‘public good’ and pre-print platforms provide a free service to both authors and readers; at the same time, many of the existing pre-print services lack a scalable and transparent business model. Moreover, data show that more senior researchers had more experience sharing through the format of pre-print than PhD students and ECRs in the 0-4 years group (Liu & De Cat, 2021). Nonetheless, the data collected from these surveys showed positive attitudes and willingness to contribute to open science through the submission of pre-prints. These findings encourage ECRs to submit their research for pre-prints to receive valuable feedback from established scholars in their field of study and to increase visibility of their research, particularly in rapidly evolving fields.

Researchers interested in making a pre-print publicly available can follow these simple steps. First, select a pre-print server that aligns with the course of research. Next, all pre-prints undergo a short screening, confirming author background, basic research content, and compliance with the ethical standards of the pre-print platform. Once the pre-print passes the screening process, the content is made available online in open access format, encouraging others to comment and share.

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| Table 3: Available pre-print servers related to language and/or linguistics.   | Server | Discipline(s) | Database Size | Year Created | URL | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | LingBuzz | General Linguistics | +8,000 | 2006 | https://ling.auf.net/lingbuzz | | Open Science Framework | Multidisciplinary (includes Linguistics) | +3M | 2011 | https://osf.io/preprints | | PsyArXiv | Psychology, Cognitive Sciences, Psycholinguistics, Linguistics | +30,000 | 2016 | https://osf.io/preprints/psyarxiv | | Cogprints | Multidisciplinary (includes Cognitive Sciences and Linguistics) | +4,000 | 1995 | https://web-archive.southampton.ac.uk/cogprints.org/ | | SocArXiv | Social Sciences (includes Sociolinguistics) | +10,000 | 2016 | https://osf.io/preprints/socarxiv | | EdArXiv | Education Research (includes Applied Linguistics | +1,000 | 2018 | https://osf.io/preprints/edarxiv | | Computational Linguistics Open Archive (CLARIN) | Language-Based Research | N/A | 2012 | https://www.clarin.eu/ | | ACL Anthology | Computational Linguistics and NLP | +10,000 | 2004 | https://aclanthology.org/ | | arXiv | Multidisciplinary (includes Computational Linguistics, NLP) | +2,5M | 1991 | https://arxiv.org/ | | SciELO Preprints | Research pertinent to Latin America, Spain, Portugal and South Africa | +140,000 | 1998 | https://preprints.scielo.org/index.php/scielo/preprints | | HAL (Hyper Articles en Ligne) | Multidisciplinary (includes Language-Specific French Linguistics) | +1M | 2001 | https://hal.science/ | |

The growing visibility of pre-prints, and their acceptance as valid research outputs by diverse stakeholders, including researchers, funders, and national institutions, has fueled collaborative research efforts and strengthened support for their presence in a variety of research disciplines. Pre-prints play an important role in advancing the tenets of open science by promoting transparency, reproducibility, and collaboration. While some researchers may still be hesitant to use this dissemination paradigm, the benefits of open science are becoming increasingly clear. By embracing pre-prints, linguists can accelerate the dissemination of knowledge, improve the quality of research, and ensure that their findings are available to the widest possible audience.

# Concluding remarks

The early 2010’s saw the reproducibility crisis take hold of the psychological sciences. As a consequence, there has been a push for increased transparency and reproducible methodology to help mitigate the effects of questionable research practices. The resulting methodological framework and associated techniques, now referred to as open science, have reshaped research methods in psychology and have slowly but surely made their way into adjacent fields, such as linguistics. In the present work we have outlined eight specific open science practices, classified into three areas, that researchers in linguistics can adopt to make their research more open, transparent, inclusive, and accessible to a wider audience.

Important considerations often overlooked in the wake of the open science movement deal with (1) how linguists actually learn open science practices and (2) how senior researchers can train the next generation of linguists. Few, if any, researchers have had explicit instruction on the practices of open science as part of their professional training. Nonetheless, today’s speech researcher is expected to be up to date on the current protocols of open science in order incorporate the methodological practices aimed at improving reproducibility/replicability. What does it mean for the field? We believe that researchers—linguists specifically—have to adapt and learn the new methods of open science. Additionally, we must, as a field, concentrate our efforts to train current students/ECRs in open, transparent research practices. This necessarily implies providing a framework for senior researchers to learn open science, if we intend for them to train the next generation of linguists. Furthermore, linguistic journals must to adapt to new models of publishing.

While open science provides novel techniques and integrates state-of-the-art innovations, it also comes with challenges, particularly with regard to the steep learning curve researchers face when learning these new methods. We advocate for the “buffet” approach, in which select open science practices are integrated into the researcher’s workflow slowly over time (e.g., Bergmann, 2018). We have provided descriptions and relevant examples of these practices to accompany the many guides already available for learning open science (e.g., Crüwell et al., 2018; N. A. Lewis, 2020). Crucially, the purpose of this article is to help foster open science in linguistics (FOSIL). We leave the interested reader with a series of tutorials designed for linguists: <https://FOSIL-project.github.io>. The FOSIL project details many of the open, transparent practices described here with crowd sourced translations into various languages other than English with the goal of making open science practices clear and accessible to all individuals conducting research in the field of linguistics.

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1. For Economics, see Camerer et al. (2016); for the Social Sciences, see Camerer et al. (2018); and, for cancer research, see Errington et al. (2021). [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
2. Bochynska et al. (2023) surveyed open and transparent practices in linguistics and found that only 10% of the articles sampled included statements of conflict of interest, and, among those 10%, none declared any conflicts. For a clear example of what a declaration of conflicts of interest can entail in linguistics, the interested reader is directed to Bochynska et al. (2023). Of particular value are the *Competing interests* section and the coding form available at <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/6m62j7p6#main> and <https://osf.io/ehyx3>, respectively. Additionally, Cristea & Ioannidis (2018), Hardwicke et al. (2022), and Hardwicke et al. (2020) represent illustrative examples in psychiatry, psychology, and the social sciences more broadly. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
3. Sociolinguistic interviews, for instance, represent a substantial and valuable contribution to linguistics and often necessarily contain sensitive information. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
4. In short, the method consists of capturing the statistical properties of the original data set and using them to simulate new data that preserve the relationships between the variables of interest. A tutorial on the method described in Quintana (2020) is freely available on github (<https://github.com/elifesciences-publications/synthpop-primer>), and an online RStudio instance can be accessed at <https://mybinder.org/v2/gh/dsquintana/synthpop-primer/master?urlpath=rstudio>. All relevant materials are available on the OSF: <https://osf.io/z524n/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
5. A public data deposition implies that the authors must publish ‘all relevant data collected as part of the research within a freely accessible repository’ (See Center for Open Science, 2024). [↑](#footnote-ref-66)