

## Some Characteristics of a Bad Research Paper

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**Stephen Krashen** is professor emeritus at the University of Southern California. He is a well-known linguist, educational researcher, and political activist. Known for introducing various hypotheses related to second-language acquisition, including the acquisition-learning hypothesis, the input hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, the affective filter, and the natural order hypothesis, Krashen has more than 500 publications to his credit. Krashen promotes the use of free voluntary reading during second-language acquisition, which he says “is the most powerful tool we have in language education, first and second.”

1. Make the paper too long (Krashen, 2012a).

Example: Far too many papers waste space on long and irrelevant literature reviews, designed only to show that the author has done some reading. “When we ask the time, we don’t want to know how watches are constructed.” Georg Christoph Lichtenberg (1742-1799)

2. Fill the paper with unnecessary jargon and jibberish (Krashen, 2012b). Incomprehensible papers are a good way of avoiding criticism: “As long as academics write in the tortured vocabulary of specialization for seminars and conferences, where they are unable to influence public debate, they are free to espouse any bizarre or ‘radical’ theory” (Hedges, 2010: p.125). Such papers do not advance knowledge.

3. Publish in an expensive journal or an even more expensive book. Prices of journals and books are now outrageous, which means research is not available to most people unless they have access to a first-class university library. Universities make it worse by insisting

that professors only publish in these expensive journals or collections.

Mathematician Tim Gowers, winner of the Fields Medal (math’s Nobel Prize), has led a boycott of the Elsevier publishing company because of their high prices. His solution is open-access journals published on the internet that do not charge readers and that either don’t charge authors or charge only minimal fees to meet some of the journals’ expenses (e.g. not US \$600 but US \$10).

Education should be the first field to encourage and accept open access, but instead it seems to be the last. The results of educational research should be made freely available to all teachers, researchers, and interested members of the public.

Note: Many of my papers and books are available for free download at [www.sdkrashen.com](http://www.sdkrashen.com). I am gradually adding more, and I intend to add this one.

Gowers, T. 2017. Another journal flips. <https://gowers.wordpress.com/2017/07/27/another-journal-flips/#more-6336>

Hedges, C. 2010. *Death of the Liberal Class*. (New York: Nation Books).

Krashen, S. 2012a. A short paper proposing that we need to write shorter papers. *Language and Language Teaching* (Azim Premji University). 1(2): 38-39. [http://www.sdkrashen.com/content/articles/a\\_short\\_paper.pdf](http://www.sdkrashen.com/content/articles/a_short_paper.pdf)

Krashen, S. 2012b. Academic jibberish. *RELC Journal*. 43 (2): 283-285. [http://www.sdkrashen.com/content/articles/academic\\_jibberish.pdf](http://www.sdkrashen.com/content/articles/academic_jibberish.pdf)