

Experiments on the pages of Cognitive Linguistics from 2012 to 2022.

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The call for empiricism within cognitive linguistics was launched more than 25 years ago (e.g. Sandra & Rice 1995; Cuyckens et al. 1997). 10 years ago Laura Janda wrote that both the field of cognitive linguistics as a whole and the journal Cognitive Linguistics have taken a quantitative turn (Janda 2013). Janda (2013) surveyed all of the articles published in the journal from its first volume in 1990 through to the volume of 2012 and observed an exponential growth in studies that use statistical analysis of corpus data and experimental findings. In light of this quantitative turn, there are naturally those within the field who claim that there is too much “number-crunching” and too little introspective (qualitative) research being done (Langacker 2016), and those who claim that the field is still very much dependent on introspective data and not enough empirical research is being done (Dąbrowska 2016).

We want to follow up on the original survey conducted by Janda (2013) by looking at the articles published in the journal Cognitive Linguistics from 2012 to 2022. In our systematic review, we will focus mainly on experimental methods. One of the predictions we make is that the number of papers using experimental methods has risen over the years, including, inter alia, the rise in more complex research designs and more advanced statistical modelling techniques. This prediction is based on some of the methodological discussions that have taken place in the field of linguistics in general (e.g. Dąbrowska 2010, 2016; Edelman & Christiansen 2003; Gibson & Fedorenko 2010, 2013; Grieve 2021; Sprouse & Almeida 2013). If we exclude book reviews, overviews, commentaries, replies, squibs, CLiPs (surveys of recent publications), and introductions to special issues, we find a total of 240 articles published in the journal during the interval of 2012 to 2022. Some of the questions we will be discussing in our paper include the following: What is the relative proportion of using experiments in comparison with other methods, e.g. corpus analysis, for conducting cognitive linguistic research? Are some experimental designs used more often and hence deemed more suitable to answer the types of research questions cognitive linguists are interested in?

Our justification for the choice of the journal Cognitive Linguistics is similar to Janda (2013) in that it gives us the most consistent perspective available on the use of experiments in the field. We are aware that cognitive linguists who are using experimental work in their research may choose other venues for publishing their research. Our aim is to give an overview of the situation as it is portrayed on the pages of the “official” journal. In our future work, we want to extend the survey to include other prominent venues for cognitive linguists. We hope that by conducting this systematic review we can foster the discussion on the importance of methodological decisions and what these decisions entail in terms of interpreting the data and building cognitive linguistic theories.

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