

Editorial

Innovation and expansion in *Language Testing* for changing times

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As we begin 2022 in a world that is still experiencing the COVID-19 pandemic, there remain many challenges on the horizon. For journal editors, these challenges involve the following: remaining sensitive to issues that require quick exploration and explication; thinking of new ways to engage with and bring together a community of scholars that has—in most cases—not had face-to-face conferences for over two years; monitoring submission figures to identify potential inequalities and inequities; and taking a compassionate approach both to authors and to reviewers in managing the demands of scholarship and reviewing in the midst of a range of other priorities (and with many at a point of exhaustion). We have realized, over the past two years, that for the journal to continue to function smoothly and to meet the needs of the language testing and assessment research community, what is needed above all is flexibility. And yet “flexibility” is not a word that often comes to mind when we think of an academic journal. Rather, we might consider a traditional academic journal to be staid, slow to act, lumbering along within the constraints of an antiquated model of print publishing. But these things are changing, and *Language Testing* will be at the forefront of these changes. We are pleased to be able to share that *Language Testing* will now publish a larger variety of articles and allow higher word limits for some of the article types we publish.

Throughout 2021, we at the *Language Testing* editorial office have been thinking about the best ways to embrace open science practices and encourage the submission of various article types to best serve the wider field. Our aim is to create a journal for diverse types of research and to foster high levels of engagement. We also want to provide sufficient space

for rigorous review-style pieces. For those reasons, we introduce the following new submission types in 2022:

- **Meta-analyses (12,000 words):** We have already begun publishing meta-analyses in *Language Testing*, but to date these have been treated as regular submissions. In order to accommodate authors wishing to publish these types of manuscripts, we are creating a dedicated submission type for these kinds of manuscripts, and we will encourage those working on meta-analyses on assessment-related topics to publish them in the journal.
- **Systematic reviews (12,000 words):** We frequently publish conceptual papers, and often these include in-depth reviews of literature. However, we rarely receive submissions in the form of systematic reviews. One reason for this might be that, previously, the word limit for articles in *Language Testing* was restrictive and would not allow for sufficient scope and depth for a high-quality review article. We are therefore allowing a word limit of 12,000 words for this category, and we encourage authors to conduct systematic reviews on important issues in the field.
- **Registered reports (5000 words at first peer review stage, 9000 words as a completed paper):** A registered report undergoes two stages of review. First, the authors submit a proposal of 5000 words or fewer prior to data collection. The reviewers focus on the importance of the research questions and the quality of the methods. If the outcome of the review is “in principle acceptance,” the researchers are invited to self-publish their proposal in a recognized public repository. The authors then collect and analyze the data and finish writing the paper. Next the authors resubmit the manuscript and it is reviewed again, ideally by the same reviewers, and if the authors have followed through with the methodology, the paper is accepted for publication. As explained by the Center for Open Science (<https://www.cos.io/initiatives/registered-reports>), registered reports can help prevent publication bias by having the main review conducted before results are known.
- **Brief reports (up to 3,000 words):** One of the problems we have had over the years is finding a space for submissions which have very high technical quality, but which do not make the level of theoretical contribution necessary to be published as a full research article. And yet, there should be space for this kind of research, particularly in a

practitioner-oriented field such as language testing where we learn from seeing examples of how others solve problems in their own assessment contexts. We will therefore encourage short articles of empirical research or practical, action-oriented research which have the potential to be informative for others working on similar problems. Submissions in this category may include descriptions of modifications to an assessment or an assessment program; the development of novel instruments, methods, or resources; or research validating existing tools. We envision references should be kept to a minimum of 15 or fewer to allow for a focus the methods. A brief report that we are modeling this format on is Mechelli et al. (2004).

- Obituaries (750 words): The journal, to date, has lacked a dedicated space to run obituaries recognizing the contributions and achievements of key figures in our field. We will therefore begin commissioning obituaries to run in the journal with a view to honouring those in our community who have passed on.
- Viewpoint (4000 words for main viewpoint; 1500 words for counter-viewpoints): We would like to promote more interactivity within the pages of the journal and our new Viewpoint submission type is designed to do just that. We will invite position papers on key topics from authors, and we will then distribute those position papers to respondents who will write brief rejoinders. We will then publish the position paper together with the responses (or with responses to follow in a later issue) in a dedicated section of the journal. Our aim is to choose timely topics and publish these through an expedited process, ensuring that the journal remains responsive to current issues and debates in the field.

These are significant changes for the journal, and fortunately we have a strong editorial team to support us as the journal makes this transition. In addition to Dylan Burton (Editorial Assistant) and Ute Knoch (Test Review Editor), we welcome on board Benjamin Kremmel, who has taken on the role of Book Review Editor from Slobodanka Dimova. We take this opportunity to publicly thank Slobodanka for her dedicated and excellent work for the journal over the past five years. Slobodanka has overseen an impressive range of book reviews, and there has always been a steady stream throughout her tenure. Slobodanka also oversaw changes to the process of the Sage/ILTA Book Award, and her interview with Ute Knoch and Susy Macqueen (Dimova, 2021) represented an important new direction for

the Book Reviews section. We are sure that Benjamin will carry on Slobodanka's model of innovation and industriousness in the coming years.

Another significant change in personnel is that we have appointed Ruslan Suvorov into a newly-created position: Associate Editor. This role is intended to have a dual focus: (1) to assist us (the co-editors) with the anticipated higher volume of submissions owing to the changes described above, and (2) to steer the journal's growing online content. On the latter, in addition to the journal's social media account, Ruslan will lead our new video abstracts initiative: encouraging authors to create video abstracts, and maintaining the journal's new YouTube channel

(<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC64QMsV0Dwp0bo8Ra9C1sAw>). Ruslan will also begin the process of shifting Glenn Fulcher's *Language Testing Bytes* (Fulcher, 2010–2021) podcasts into video format to be housed on the YouTube channel as well.

This last activity is necessary because Glenn Fulcher has stepped down from his role as Podcast Editor following many years of service to journal, first as a co-editor over nine years with Cathie Elder and then April Ginther, and from 2016 onwards continuing his service as the creator of the *Language Testing Bytes* podcast, where he has produced over 34 episodes. Glenn's final episode (Fulcher, 2021) is a reflection on his time as Podcast Editor and provides a moving and typically educational farewell. We take this opportunity to thank Glenn for his leadership of the journal over many years, the innovations he introduced, and the generous support he has given to us during his time on the wider editorial team. Glenn is very much a supporter of renewal and regeneration in the journal, and in wider scholarship in the field. As we introduce new changes and say goodbye to valued members of the *Language Testing* team, we feel it is appropriate to end with words from Marcus Aurelius, from whose *Meditations* Glenn has quoted often:

Unceasingly contemplate the generation of all things through change, and accustom thyself to the thought that the Nature of the Universe delights above all in changing the things that exist and making new ones of the same pattern. (Meditations IV, 36)

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