

## Editorial 2021

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Since our last editorial in January 2020, the world has changed in unexpected and unprecedented ways. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a wide-ranging impact on our personal and professional lives, and we feel certain that this impact will be felt for some time yet. In the short-term, the effects of the pandemic on language testing practices have been marked: face-to-face testing was paused in many countries around the world, leading to a rapid shift to online testing to provide ways for test-takers to demonstrate language proficiency, particularly for university admissions. We, the editors of the journal *Language Testing*, were pleased to be able to offer some assistance to test score users through commissioning a review—written by Daniel R. Isbell and Benjamin Kremmel (2020)—on the new range of “take-at-home” language proficiency exams. This was a first for the journal: a commissioned review responding to a pressing need among test score users, which was produced in around four months from idea to publication. We hope to be able to respond as quickly to other urgent issues in the future, and we now have a template for how the journal can be more responsive to ongoing events in the world. If readers have ideas for timely reviews or commissioned papers, please email us. We will always consider proposals.

Beyond the immediate impact of COVID-19, the journal has continued to make some internal changes. At our last Editorial Board meeting (conducted online, asynchronously, in July 2020), the Board approved a set of changes to the aims and scope of the journal.

Readers can see the new text on our website here:

<https://journals.sagepub.com/description/LTJ>. These changes were designed to move the journal more rapidly towards bilingual, multilingual, and translingual language assessment practices. The intention was to provide a signal that *Language Testing* is keeping track of wider discussions in the fields of Second Language Acquisition and Applied Linguistics, and

also to have the journal's scope and description be a more direct reflection of the kinds of papers *Language Testing* receives. Indeed, language testing and assessment research featured at international conferences has expanded in scope, and so too must the journal's scope expand, adapt, and modernize. We encourage future editors of *Language Testing* to continually compare the journal's scope and description with current research and theorizing in the field. Doing so will ensure that the journal is on the cutting edge, and is well positioned to attract and publish the work of authors whose research will break new ground.

During 2020 in particular, the world was asked to pay more attention to the importance of diversity and the effects of unequal power distributions. In academia and in language testing, researchers and practitioners must do the same. At the same time, COVID-19 is exacerbating inequalities and strengthening the impact of systemic factors that lead to unequal domestic labor distributions, and unequal access to safe and secure work environments. As editors of *Language Testing*, we see diversity in the journal's authors and in its published topics. We know this is important, not least because diversity brings innovation (Hofstra et al., 2020) and fosters equality. But is there enough diversity in the field? And how much will COVID-19 set diversity efforts and progress back? As editors, we do not want to neglect, in any way, important research on race and discrimination, as editors in other fields allegedly have (Omeokwe, 2020). Thus, in 2021, we see a strong need for, and welcome, studies that investigate the impact of diversity and cross-cultural collaboration on language testing research. Based on research in other fields (Hofstra et al., 2020), we know that the many positive impacts of diversity are disappointingly undervalued in academic contexts. In language testing, we ask researchers in particular to thoroughly question rationalizations concerning biases in test score data that fall along racial or ethnic lines. Authors may suggest that observed biases are not problematic, or even that such biases should not be investigated, because they may be explained by other, associated factors—differences, for example, in instructional methodologies or socio-economics—and thus the biases are expected. However, racial and ethnic discrimination exists. We must look for it and work to eliminate it. Test scores can erroneously and unethically be used as

instruments of discrimination. Researchers in language testing, and we as editors of this journal, must be careful to look beyond long-held rationalizations to uncover and understand racial and ethnic discrimination in the field. This is one of our overarching goals.

We have a number of recent special issues and others in progress. Issue 4 in 2020 saw the publication of the special issue on *Repeated test-taking and longitudinal test score analysis*, guest edited by Anthony Green and Alistair Van Moere. In the same issue, we included the introduction to the first ever Virtual Special Issue on test consequences, edited by Carol Chapelle. Our 2021 special issue is on *Assessing young learners*, guest edited by Veronika Laughlin and Yeonsuk Cho. Later in the year, we will publish the second Virtual Special Issue, guest edited by Jamie Schissel and Kamran Khan, focusing on rights, opportunities, and responsibilities in language testing on economic, ethnic, racial, and socio-cultural grounds, which is part of Language Testing's efforts to expose—or even demonstrate what is not known about—racial and ethnic discrimination in the field. Finally, the 2022 special issue is underway, provisionally titled *Local tests, local contexts*, guest edited by Slobodanka Dimova, April Ginther, and Xun Yan. We hope you will agree that there is a wealth of important and exciting scholarship planned for the next two years.

We would also like to formally welcome Ute Knoch as our new Test Reviews Editor, and to thank Ofra Inbar for her work in that role over the past three years. We hope to continue to make test reviews a vital and responsive element of the journal, and we are pleased that *Language Testing's* publisher Sage will continue to make all test reviews freely accessible to readers around the world as part of Open Science initiatives and the journal's mission to enhance language assessment literacy. Slobodanka Dimova continues as the Book Review Editor, and Glenn Fulcher continues to feature *Language Testing* articles on the Language Testing Bytes podcast. Please note, too, that *Language Testing* will continue to feature one article per month in a free access format. To receive updates on those articles, we invite you to follow *Language Testing's* Twitter feed: @LangTestJournal.

We invite *Language Testing* authors to publish their data collection materials and data as part of the journal's Open Science initiatives. Authors who do so are awarded an Open Materials badge, an Open Data badge, or both, with the badges appearing alongside the title of their published *Language Testing* article. In 2020, the journal also began awarding Preregistration badges, which are given when authors demonstrate they published the study's research plan in a read-only public repository prior to data analysis. *Language Testing* allows for any-size supplemental files that are reviewed but do not count toward the word limit, abstracts in multiple languages, and links to video abstracts. We ask authors to take advantage of these features for more robust, transparent, and replicable research.

We also invite you to read the fascinating set of articles in the current issue. Aryadoust et al. provide a highly useful overview of Rasch measurement in language assessment. Holzknecht et al. investigate the “primacy effect” in placement of the answer key in multiple choice questions. Latifi and Gierl look at the usefulness of Coh-Metrix indices in automated essay rating, and Lukácsi explores the use of checklists for distinguishing finer shades of writing performance within a level. Toprak and Cakir take a novel approach to cognitive diagnostic assessment using a purpose-built diagnostic reading test, and Kotowicz et al. describe how an existing assessment of British Sign Language was adapted to assess Polish Sign Language. Finally, Monfils and Manna present a “survival analysis” investigating a range of factors that influence the time required for test-takers to achieve a certain level of proficiency.

We hope you will enjoy this issue, as well as the other issues throughout 2021. We would like to conclude this editorial by paying tribute to Don Porter, one of the founding editors of *Language Testing*. Don Porter's work was instrumental in creating the vibrant, international journal we enjoy today.

## References

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