

## Call for papers

### *Language Assessment Quarterly* Special Issue –

#### *Multimodal constructs of language assessment in a digital age*

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Multimodality is a “concomitant of human communication” (Lotherington & Ronda 2012, p. 107). To convey meaning, we use various modes including those that are linguistic, visual, aural, gestural, or spatial in nature (Kress 2003, New London Group 1996). It is now widely acknowledged that linguistic modes are part and parcel of visual, auditory, and spatial patterns of meaning-making in our increasingly multimodal communication (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, p.5). From a socio-semiotic approach to multimodality, speech and writing are only “partial” means of communication. The nature of partiality of speech and writing and the expected complementarity between and within linguistic- and non-linguistic modes for successful human communication present a serious challenge to (a) the long-held assumption of the sufficiency of linguistic modes for all communicational needs, and (b) the current common practice, especially in high-stakes large-scale language tests, that use only linguistic modes in task input and completion.

With the use of computer technology in task design and delivery, we have witnessed an expansion of the construct of multimodality in language assessment. We observed that there are three types of interpretations of “multimodality” in our field of language testing, (a) multimodality in terms of integrating different language modes or skills (e.g., *reading-to-write*, *listening-to-write*, *listening-to-speak*, *reading-to-summarize*, and *listening-to-summarize*), (b) multimodal task input - “in print, audio and/or visual forms” (Cumming, 2013, p.1), and (c) multimodal digital composing, ensemble or orchestration which requires integration of linguistic- and non-linguistic- modes to create a semiotic harmony to convey meaning (Kress 2015). In practice, some language assessment tasks have combined the three interpretations.

Large-scale language tests are using multimodal *input* such as videos, maps (e.g., in IELTS Listening), graphs (e.g., in IELTS Academic Writing, Pearson Test of English-Academic Speaking and GEPT-Advanced Writing), and still images/pictures (e.g., in TOEFL iBT and TOEFL Young Students series). And there is a growing body of research on the effects of multimodal *input* on task performance and process. However, there is hardly any large-scale language test that uses tasks which require multimodal composing (see a review by Zhang, Akoto and Li, 2023).

Several scholars in the field of language assessment (e.g., Butler 2022; Fox, Abdulhamid & Turner, 2022; Harding 2014; Hsieh & Chapman, 2021; Hafner & Ho, 2020; Hung, Chiu & Yeh, 2013; Khabbazbashi, Chan and Clark, 2023; Kormos & Taylor, 2021; Levi & Inbar-Lourie, 2020; Shaw & Imam, 2013; Shohamy and Pennycook, 2019; Yu & Zhang, 2017) have been calling for the expansion of the constructs of language assessment tasks to include multimodality in language assessment tasks.

This proposed *LAQ* special issue welcome papers that address one or more of the questions below, from the perspectives of task design, test-taking process, assessment criteria, and test impact.

- To what extent is multimodality being operationalised in standardized large-scale language tests, in comparison to the use of multimodality in small-scale teacher-designed assessments?
- What are the key features that define multimodal constructs of language assessment in the digital age?

- What are the differential effects of the features of multimodal input (e.g., visuals, audios, texts, graphs) on task performance?
- What are the differential effects of the features of multimodal input (e.g., visuals, audios, texts, graphs) on test-taking cognitive process?
- What roles do test takers' characteristics (e.g., language and scientific skills, social, educational background, and training experience) play in their performance in multimodal assessment tasks?
- What are the cognitive processes involved in completing multimodal assessment tasks?
- To what extent is multimodality a supplementary and supportive component of, or an integral part of the construct of language assessment?
- What are the implications of the different roles of multimodality (supplementary and supportive vs. integral) for the focus of assessment criteria (i.e., weak vs. strong version of multimodal constructs of language assessment)?
- What would be the key indicators of success/failure of multimodal task performance? How would assessment criteria for multimodal composing be developed and validated?
- How do we operationalize multimodality for different assessment purposes, test score users, test takers, and so on?
- What are the practicality issues or challenges in implementing multimodal assessment in large-scale tests, at design, administration, and evaluation stages?
- To what extent are multimodal assessment tasks coachable?
- What are the impacts of multimodal assessment on language learning?

We hope the papers in this *LAQ* special issue will collectively provide much needed practical guidance in using multimodal tasks for different assessment purposes and help to develop the theoretical framework of multimodal constructs of language assessment in a digital age.

**Please send proposals, of 800-1,000 words** (references can be in addition to this), and any inquiry to [Guoxing.Yu@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:Guoxing.Yu@bristol.ac.uk) and [Tony.Clark@cambridge.org](mailto:Tony.Clark@cambridge.org)

**Your proposal should include:**

1. Title of article
2. Author name(s), affiliation(s), website and ORCID, and contact information
3. A summary of the article
4. An explanation of the contribution the article will make to the theme of this special issue.

Successful authors will be invited to submit full papers for peer review, following normal [peer review procedure of the journal](#).

**The following timeline is anticipated:**

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| • Call for papers  | 15/09/2023 |
| • Abstract submission to guest editors                               | 30/11/2023 |
| • Response to authors (Invitation to submit full paper or Rejection) | 15/12/2023 |
| • Full paper submission to guest editors for internal review         | 31/03/2024 |
| • Guest editors' comments to authors                                 | 30/04/2024 |
| • Full paper submission to the journal for peer review               | 01/07/2024 |
| • Completion of peer review and selection of papers to be included   | 01/11/2024 |
| • Publication of the special issue with our Editorial                | 2025       |

(Note: papers will be published online first as soon as they are ready).