

Call for Titles and Abstracts for the 2028 Special Issue of *Language Testing*
Humanizing Practices in Language Testing and Assessment

Special Issue Editors

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Abstract

This special issue seeks to bring together the burgeoning research with(in) culturally and linguistically diverse communities to delineate humanizing practices in language testing and assessment. Humanizing assessment presents an overall perspective that the lived realities of test-takers are inherently valuable for practices of assessment design, development, implementation, interpretation, validation, and understanding the consequences of test and assessment use. Humanizing practices are well established as pedagogical and research approaches, and, for assessment, these practices have been championed for test-takers across multiple disciplines. The need to focus on humanizing practices in language assessment specifically is responsive to multiple calls from scholars about persistent issues in developing assessments for culturally and linguistically diverse test-takers. As a complex area of intersecting research, the transdisciplinary lens of language assessment has been opening pathways to understanding humanizing assessment practices through theoretical, empirical, and practice-based research. Overall, this special issue seeks to provide a broad range of often underrepresented perspectives and approaches that serve to advance the field of language assessment. Engaging and galvanizing research focused on humanizing approaches for language testing and assessment has wide-reaching value across assessment settings. The special issue is thus poised to concisely and comprehensively guide humanizing practices with all test-takers forward.

Keywords

Assessment, Culturally and linguistically diverse, Equity, Fairness, Global South, Humanizing Practices, Justice, Test-taker Perspectives, Test use, Validity Frameworks

Description of the 2028 Special Issue for *Language Testing*

This special issue seeks to bring together the burgeoning research with(in) culturally and linguistically diverse communities to delineate humanizing practices in language assessment. Humanizing assessment presents an overall perspective that the lived realities of test-takers are inherently valuable for practices of assessment design, development, implementation, interpretation, and understanding the consequences of test/assessment use. This special issue focuses on the humanity and dignity (*cf* ILTA Code of Ethics 2000 Principle 1, 2024 Principle of Respect) of culturally and linguistically diverse test-takers in particular. Humanizing practices are well established as pedagogical and research approaches (Freire, 1970; Paris & Winn, 2014). Applying these liberatory practices deepens understandings of agentive stances and actions that embrace creative reimaginings of existing practices, as well as the introduction of new approaches in language testing and assessment. These efforts broadly define assessment in alignment with Shohamy's (2001) position that all tests are language tests.

Across multiple disciplines, there has been a growing emphasis on adopting humanizing assessment practices (*Higher Education*: Case, 2023; Dixon, & Jankowski, 2025; Fuller, 2012; Khumalo & Ajani, 2025; Maki, 2024; Rybas, & Quenette, 2021; *Literacy Education*: Donovan, 2025; *Mathematics Education*: Guarino et al., 2022; Livers et al., 2024; *Science Teacher Education*: Dankwa et al., 2025). Additionally, Schimmer and Vardabasso (2025) recently published a practitioner-centered book focused on storytelling as a method of rehumanizing assessment. These studies provide a growing body of evidence supporting the claim that all test-takers benefit from humanizing practices where the assessments more closely reflect their realities. Specific to culturally and linguistically diverse test-takers, research related to humanizing assessment is especially relevant. The literature has connected theory to practice, including the use as Ubuntu philosophies to inform assessment approaches (Ukpokodu, 2016; Mdzanga et al., 2023), Indigenizing assessment practices around academic language ideologies (Ryan & Wilde, 2024), translanguaging in formative science assessments (Fine & Furtak, 2025), conceptualizing reading assessments by beginning with relational and humanizing practices (Forzani et al., 2024), humanizing through decolonizing, historicizing, and communing approaches to developing community-based associations (Schissel, 2025), and co-designing culturally and linguistically responsive assessments in the International Baccalaureate (IB) (Badham et al., 2026). Hamid and Hoang (2018) have called for humanizing language testing in response to globalized connections. Across multiple contexts, languages, and disciplines, these approaches have provided pathways to explore and expand humanizing practices in language assessment.

The need for humanizing practices in language assessment is responsive to multiple calls from scholars about persistent issues in developing assessments for culturally and linguistically diverse test-takers. "To date, efforts to address linguistic diversity have been less effective than researchers have hoped" (Solano-Flores & Trumbull, 2003). More than 20 years after this statement, researchers continue to search for more effective practices. Meta-analyses have found that test accommodations, which aim to reduce construct-irrelevant variance due to language for content area testing, have had limited effectiveness (Abedi et al., 2020; Kieffer et al., 2009; Li & Suen, 2012; Rios et al., 2021). Test-takers have had mixed feelings about test accommodations as well. De Backer (et al., 2019a) reported test-takers' decisions to (not) make use of audio bilingual accommodations and issues of fairness (De Backer et al., 2019b). Classroom teachers have also struggled to use test accommodations during classroom assessment and instruction (Clark-Gareca, 2016; Schissel, 2014). For English proficiency tests, a recent meta-analysis pointed to the limitations of the predictive validity of TOEFL and IELTS exams for admissions decisions at universities (Ihlenfeldt & Rios, 2023). Test-takers have reported that English proficiency tests do not reflect their understandings of who they are and what they know (Koné et al., 2025), which contributes to frustrations with policy

guidelines about test-based decisions that restrict access to rigorous educational opportunities (Brooks, 2022; 2023; Kanno, 2018).

As a complex area of intersecting research, the transdisciplinary lens of language assessment has been opening pathways for state-of-the-art contributions to understanding humanizing assessment practices through theoretical, empirical, and practice-based research. Multiple approaches that exist within the current landscape of assessment research also can be leveraged to identify qualities to delineate a conceptualization of humanizing practices in language assessment that connect with ethics (Yan & Bowels, 2024). Ecological approaches to language assessment (Lin et al., forthcoming), classroom assessment (Chong & Issacs, 2023), and assessment with multilingual communities of practice (Arias & Schissel, 2021) provide insights into connecting on-the-ground practices across scales of interaction with areas such as policies. Learner- or teacher-centered approaches to language assessment literacy also represent research that foregrounds the perspectives of test-takers and test-users (Butler, et al., 2021; Levi & Inbar-Lourie, 2020). Recent scoping reviews of use of translanguaging in content-area tests (Kelly et al., 2025), multilingual assessment in higher education (Tiongson, et al., 2026), and literature synthesis of research using translanguaging in assessment in both content and language assessments (Tian et al., 2025) documented promising directions for developing assessment practices. Randall et al. (2023) provided a validity lens where their justice-based framework deeply connects to the humanity of test-takers.

Overall, this special issue of *Language Testing* is poised to provide a venue for a vast array of often underrepresented perspectives and approaches that serve to advance the field of language testing and assessment. We see the potential contributions of humanizing practices in language assessment scholarship as addressing areas identified as in need of increased research representation. There has been a growing attention to the need for language testing to incorporate perspectives from diverse regions (López-Gopar, 2021; Schissel & Khan, 2021), in particular the Global South (Villa Larenas, 2026). Jin (2023) has also argued for more research that focuses on test-takers' insights, acknowledging the challenges while ultimately concluding that test-takers are the most important stakeholders. Engaging and galvanizing research focused on humanizing approaches for language testing and assessment is responsive not only to longstanding issues in assessment for culturally and linguistically diverse populations, but also inequities in less diverse contexts because humanizing approaches have wide-reaching value across assessment settings. The special issue is thus poised to concisely and comprehensively guide humanizing practices with all test-takers forward.

Submission Guidelines

For this call, we are asking for qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods research. Meta-analyses and literature scoping reviews are also highly encouraged. All submissions need to address the theme of **humanizing practices in language testing and assessment** (broadly defined). Although the focus is generally on culturally and linguistically diverse communities, studies in less culturally and linguistically diverse contexts that have the shared aims of advancing humanizing practices in assessment are also strongly encouraged. The following list are areas that research could address:

- Affective or emotional dimensions of language testing and assessment
- Centering ethics in language test and assessment development and use (e.g., assessment of and/or for learning)
- Current innovations in language assessment as they shape or influence shifts in language testing ideologies
- Global mobility, migration, and transnational education systems of testing and assessment
- Heritage language education and assessment

- Intersections of humanizing practices in language assessment with other areas of research and/or fields (e.g., applied linguistics, applied psychology, ecological approaches, GenAI, language policy)
- Justice-oriented approaches to validity
- Localizing context in language testing
- Minoritized-language testing and test users (e.g., Indigenous languages)
- Multilingual, plurilingual, translanguaging assessment
- Post-colonial contexts of language testing and assessment
- Professional learning, development, and institutional supports for humanizing practices
- Reconceptualizing the development and interpretation of language proficiency and proficiency scales
- Relational and community-centered approaches to research
- Test-taker narratives, identity, representation, and/or participation in decision-making

Abstract proposals are due **September 1, 2026 by 5pm EST**. Email your submission as an MSword file to JLSCHISS@uncg.edu. Please include the following information:

1. All author names, affiliations, contact information, and the corresponding author
2. Article type if not an Original Manuscript (e.g., Brief Report, Systematic Review; see <https://journals.sagepub.com/author-instructions/LTJ#ArticleTypes>)
3. Proposed title (15 words or less)
4. Abstract (300 words or less, not including references)
5. List of references formatted according to APA 7th edition guidelines
6. A statement of commitment to work with editors to ensure research accessibility and transparency

Tentative Timeline for authors:

2026

September 1: Abstract proposals due 5pm EST. By September 30: Notification of acceptance/rejection status of proposed papers

2027

Early January: Authors upload manuscript to ScholarOne

Late January: Authors receive Special Issue editors' feedback and check-in with editors

Late February: Authors upload revised manuscript

April: Authors receive reviewer feedback and check-in with editors

June: Authors upload revised manuscript

August: Authors receive reviewer feedback

October: Authors upload revised manuscript

2028

January: Authors review proofs and sign publishing agreements

February: All manuscripts uploaded to Online First

July: Special Issue published