

Università Ca' Foscari Venezia
Dipartimento di Studi Linguistici e Culturali Comparati
Scuola Interdipartimentale di Relazioni Internazionali

English Lingua Franca: Contexts, Strategies and International Relations

Papers from a conference held
at Ca' Foscari University of Venice
October 2011

edited by
Geraldine Ludbrook and David Newbold

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*English Lingua Franca: Contexts, Strategies and
International Relations. Papers from a conference
held at Ca' Foscari University of Venice. October 2011*

Edited by Geraldine Ludbrook and David Newbold

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(Not just) a question of style: new literacies and visual authenticity in online test design

Maria Rees, Ca' Foscari University of Venice

This article discusses a research project set up to explore the possibility of creating an online screening test for European students intending to take English-taught courses at home or abroad. The focus is on the impact that Information and Communications Technology has on all areas of social, professional and academic life, with reference to the effects of ICT on language testing and, in particular, on the needs and expectations of the digitally literate potential test takers. The rapid evolution of increasingly sophisticated computer hardware, software and developments in Web 2.0 has been accompanied by a change in the concept of literacy. In a context of social media, information-sharing and user-centred design, the ability to retrieve and process information requires new and multiple literacies. The important question of the visual and navigational authenticity of the test tasks is also discussed as it is directly connected with the concept of multiliteracies.

Introduction

This paper sets out to explore the issues of authenticity and literacy in the context of a research project set up to investigate the possibility of creating an online test to assess the language of European students planning to study in another European country in which English is used as the means of academic communication. The test, referred to here as the Test of English for European University Students (TEEUS), was designed to focus on receptive skills within an ELF framework, and aimed to discriminate between levels A2, B1 and B2 of the CEFR. Newbold and Ludbrook (both in this volume) give detailed accounts of the background to the development of the test as well as a thorough description of the test construct.

As part of the preparatory work on the project, the research team reviewed several of the major tests and examinations available either in pen & paper format, online or computer-based. The critiques enabled the researchers to single out aspects that were felt to be either inappropriate (not based on real world target language situations, or manifestly not representative of the contexts in which English is used as a lingua franca) or lacking in audio/visual components that could be considered typical and characteristic of the European academic context which was to be the setting for TEEUS.

The most challenging aspects of devising any test lie in the choice of tasks and text types and in item writing. The challenges increase when the online test is specifically intended for university students, all of whom are completely computer literate and make frequent use of the internet.

As work on the test progressed, a much clearer idea emerged of what the 'final' product could look like. This visualisation evolved gradually: first of all, as a result of the choice to use authentic material wherever possible (and to adapt it as little as possible); second, the picture of the potential test takers that emerged from the needs analysis gave the team a clear indication of their use of internet for study purposes; third, the pre-trialling of the reading items led to a greater awareness of the limitations of a pen & paper test in which very little visual material was included.

The first part of this article focuses on the revolution in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and the impact this has had on the design and delivery of computer-based tests of English proficiency. Section 2 looks in detail at the potential test takers of TEEUS and their IT literacy. Section 3 examines issues relating to literacy and multiliteracies. In Section 4 the focus is on the design and content of the test, and on the questions of authenticity of input and task. Section 5 deals with the question of visual authenticity and how this is connected with the creation of an identity for the test. Section 6 focuses on one particularly innovative test task. Section 7 concludes, providing some pointers for future development of on-line test design.

1 The ICT revolution

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) has not only developed and reinforced our interconnectedness at a global level but has also revolutionised the ways in which we communicate at home and in the workplace, within our immediate circle of family and friends, in the world of business, and in the world of education. ICT and multimedia applications have had considerable impact on language teaching and learning, as well as on the assessment of language skills and proficiency. The major tests of academic English can now be delivered online; this form of delivery not only makes test administration easier but also contributes to quicker and more accurate collection and analysis of results.

A relatively recent, important, development relates to the programmes that have been developed to assess writing tasks in high-stakes testing. ETS's e-Rater has been used since 2009 in the assessment of parts of the TOEFL, while Pearson's Intelligent Essay Assessor (IEA) is used for assessment of writing tasks in the PTE Academic. Both these forms of automated assessment are currently used to give 'a second opinion' on the marking by human assessors¹.

Alderson (2005) mentions 'the ease with which data can be collected, analysed and related to test performance' (p. 354). Not only has ICT made both data gathering and test reporting easier, it has also made these processes much faster. The candidates also benefit as the largest certification bodies provide individuals (and/or institutions) with their test scores within an average of 5-13 days.

The speed at which virtually all types of information can be retrieved is one of the most important characteristics of the digital age; it has been accompanied by a general reduction in the age at which familiarity with a whole range of sophisticated and complex devices is acquired. Although full understanding of how these, and other, complex electronic devices work is confined to the few, there is complete familiarity of use (i.e. computer literacy) among 18-19-year-olds entering university. As the potential test takers of TEEUS fall into this age group, we shall focus more closely on their distinctive characteristics in the following section.

2 The test takers

The potential TEEUS test takers of the online screening test are what Marc Prensky (2001) has defined as 'digital natives', in that 'they are all 'native speakers' of the digital language of computers, video games and the internet' (p. 1). They are familiar with the whole range of Web 2.0 technology from social networking and microblogging sites (e.g. Facebook and Twitter) to YouTube, Skype, podcasts, wikis and a whole series of other applications. They use the Internet for study purposes but also to retrieve information about work placements and internships (e.g. Erasmus), university courses and syllabuses, as well as details of language requirements and language certification. Being a digital native has everything to do with age, and virtually nothing to do with gender or socio-economic background; as such, it has led to a generational literacy gap between digital natives and, to use Prensky's other term of reference, 'digital immigrants' (p. 2). Three aspects in particular characterise the digital natives' use of technology: their familiarity with the multi-layered design of web pages; the ease with which they navigate, and – most important of all – the speed with which they can access information. They expect quick – if not instant – access to a wide range of sources of information. The increasing use of smartphones and tablet computers (and availability of Wi-Fi) means that a greater amount of information can be retrieved and processed 'on the go'.

Many universities and higher education institutions throughout Europe have recognized the social and educational importance that 'connectedness' has for their students and have set up Facebook and Twitter pages both for providing general information and for responding to specific, individual enquiries². In the UK, for example, the universities that are part of the Russell Group,

¹ See <http://kt.pearsonassessments.com/download/IEA-FactSheet-20100401.pdf>

² See <http://ukwebfocus.wordpress.com/2012/05/18/what-next-as-facebook-use-in-uk-universities-continues-to-grow/> and <http://snacksofmarketing.wordpress.com/2012/06/20/universita-italiane-e-social-network-unanalisi-esplorativa/>

which represents 24 leading academic institutions – among others, Oxford, Cambridge, Edinburgh, Glasgow, the LSE – are all on Facebook and provide links to an astonishingly wide range of information that goes from academic course requirements, visiting speakers and university events to advice on health, diet and dealing with difficult landlords. These pages, and the YouTube videos that are often embedded in them, are a valuable complement to the classic university web pages, as they add a social dimension to the institution as well as using media networks with which the digital natives are familiar and in which they may perceive a shared identity.

Much of the interpersonal communication of the digital natives is through social networks, which make it possible to post links, tag photos and add a wealth of details to a simple message, announcement or invitation. The other principal form of communication is via text messages; in this case, the ‘generational’ divide most probably lies in the number of SMS sent per day: according to a recent report on CBS news, teenagers ‘are sending an average of 60 text messages a day’³. While opinion appears to be divided on the possible effects of *txt spk* on general levels of literacy (i.e. the ability to read and to write ‘properly’ in one’s own native language), there is recognition that the changes in forms and means of communication over time will inevitably alter our concept of ‘literacy’ itself and our definition of what it means to be ‘literate’.

3 From literacy to multiliteracies

3.1 Literacy

One definition of literacy that goes well beyond the standard dictionary definition comes from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) : Literacy is the ‘ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in their community and wider society.’⁴ Even though UNESCO is defining a single-word concept, its definition captures a wide variety of multiple facets and contexts of literacy, each of which is in itself an individual kind of literacy.

Alderson (2005) also mentions that ‘increased use of the word-processor, the use of email, access to the World Wide Web, computer-based instruction and even computer-based testing are all real and increasingly important elements of literacy, at least in much of the Western world’ (p. 353). New technologies and ICT have multiplied the ways and the speed in which human beings in the ‘Global Village’ are able to, and can choose to connect with one another. Use of these technologies, which have such an important role in facilitating national, international, intergenerational and intercultural communication, requires forms of literacy that are much more wide-ranging than in the past.

3.2 ‘Multiliteracies’

In an influential article written in the late 1990s, the New London Group, a team of ten academics concerned about how literacy pedagogy might address the rapid change in literacy due to globalisation, technology and increasing cultural and social diversity, used the term ‘multiliteracies’ ‘as a way to focus on the realities of increasing local diversity and global connectedness. Dealing with linguistic differences and cultural differences has become central to the pragmatics of our working, civic and private lives. Effective citizenship and productive work now require that we interact effectively using multiple languages, multiple Englishes, and communication patterns that more frequently cross cultural, community and national boundaries’ (Cazden *et al* 1996, p. 64).

³ http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-501465_162-57400228-501465/teens-are-sending-60-texts-a-day-study-says/

⁴ From the Wikipedia entry on Literacy.

The Literate Futures Project (Department of Education and Training, Queensland Government), defines multiliteracies as follows: ‘The term multiliteracies implies many literacies. It acknowledges that literacy goes beyond language alone, embracing other modes of representation which arise from technology and the impact of culture and context’⁵.

Cope and Kalantzis (2001), writing in Australia, underline how the effects of ‘cultural and linguistic diversity have led to the development of English into a *lingua mundi*, and a *lingua franca* – which they define as ‘a common language of global commerce, media and politics’.

However, the settings in which English is now used as a *lingua franca* have extended considerably since the early 2000s. Multilingualism has also proceeded alongside ELF. The pace at which ICT has evolved and continues to evolve has undoubtedly played a part in this parallel development, in that new technologies favour new forms of inter-cultural communication. ELF obviously poses no threat to other languages; if anything, it is symbolic of the multiple skills and abilities that today’s world requires of its inhabitants.

The European Commission’s Community Research and Development Information Service (2010, CORDIS) states – paradoxically, perhaps – that ‘the role of English as a *lingua franca* in the digital world is constantly decreasing. It is estimated that it currently makes up less than 30% of total web content’⁶. Nevertheless, in the world of academia, English remains the prime language for study, research and scholarly publications.

3.3 New literacies

The greater use of new technologies has raised important issues concerning the ways in which they affect the users’ ability to retrieve and process information. There is ample evidence in the literature that ‘electronic tools demand new literacies such as navigating electronic databases, using multiple search engines, and navigating hierarchical subject guides’ (Coiro 2003). Coiro goes on to mention the importance of considering ‘new aspects of comprehension that are clearly related to traditional comprehension areas (e.g. locating main ideas, summarizing, inferencing, and evaluating)’.

Other studies (Leu *et al* 2004, Rouet and Coutelet 2008) emphasize the need to develop new ways of dealing with ‘multiple language styles, sources and codes (...) those new and multiple literacies include the skills needed for people to explore, evaluate and select information sources relevant to their purposes’. Leu *et al* (2004) also state that ‘traditionally, reading comprehension has often been defined by the construction of meaning from a fixed body of text. On the internet, reading comprehension takes on a very different and broader definition. New skills and strategies are required in this context to successfully comprehend information such as how to search for appropriate information; how to comprehend search engine results; how to make correct inferences about information that will be found at any hyperlink’ (p. 7).

Leu *et al* (2011) state that ‘a critical component of successful Internet reading is the ability to read and locate information that meets one’s needs’. The example given is of the need to develop ‘new skills and strategies that may be required to generate effective keyword search strategies’ and ‘to read and infer which link may be most useful within a set of search engine results’ (pp. 5-14).

Thanks to Erasmus study and placement programmes an increasing number of European students leave their home universities to follow English-taught courses in countries throughout Europe, and further afield. Before leaving they need to retrieve information from university websites about enrolment procedures, language requirements and courses. Most students will also need to consult the university websites and Facebook pages to find help and advice about finding accommodation, using public transport, signing up with a doctor, and – where necessary – obtaining a visiting student’s residence permit. In short, students will need to be able to search for and read specific information on screen. The reading strategies they use as they navigate in order to locate the information they need will be different to those used when consulting printed texts.

⁵ <http://www.equity.uts.edu.au/language/inclusive/multiliteracies.html>

⁶ http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ict/language-technologies/consultations_en.html

4 Test Design

The choices that the research team made in designing the test were based on a careful analysis of the target language situation of European university students planning to study in English. They therefore took into consideration the skills, needs and expectations of the potential test takers.

As Ludbrook (this volume) reports, the test input was designed to be a simulation of the context in which the test was set. Likewise, the reading, listening and listening/viewing tasks designed were characteristic of academic settings. These situations included reading titles of courses and lectures to identify the content; using a search engine to retrieve specific information; listening to teachers and /or administrators to retrieve information about academic course requirements or organizational procedures; retrieving information from peer discussions related to everyday life at university.

Hence, it was considered that the test contained innovative components and avoided ‘the limited range of situations in which it is possible to include in tests that are largely constrained by pencil-and-paper presentation and response modes [and] the disparity between the test situations and real-world authentic language situations’ (Ingram 2003, p. 11).

4.1 Issues of authenticity

Authenticity is a multi-faceted term and there are various definitions of what is meant by ‘authentic’; over the years, the concept of authenticity has invariably undergone some transformation (for an extensive overview, see Lewkowicz 2000). It is debatable not only whether full authenticity is possible or achievable but also whether it is necessary or desirable. This is particularly true, perhaps, in the field of language testing and assessment, as the construction of some types of item (e.g. writing distractors for multiple choice items) in and of itself leads to a partial loss of authenticity.

Nevertheless, the importance of attempting to replicate the language of the target situation, and the inclusion of real-world situations and contexts, is vital. Not only does authenticity play a role as a strong motivational factor and lead to greater engagement on the part of the test takers, it also provides evidence to support arguments regarding the validity of the construct on which the test is based.

4.2 Test input

The target language domain of the test is an academic context in which English is used as a lingua franca. All the reading texts used in the prototype test were taken from a variety of European university websites and search engine results pages. The audio texts were semi-scripted non native speaker (NNS) student/student interactions recorded at the Venice International University (VIU); the students who took part in the recording confirmed that the content topics were indeed typical of student-student interaction. This was true also of the semi-scripted monologue of a member of the teaching staff giving details of assignment deadlines. The listening/viewing component included a short video – available on You Tube – of a professor at the VIU explaining the content of his course. (See Newbold and Ludbrook, this volume) for further details of the input.

In this way, both the context and content of the test may be said to be authentic, and both fit two definitions of authenticity: Nunan (1999): ‘[material] not specifically written for the purpose of language teaching’; and Lee (1995): ‘a text is usually regarded as textually authentic if it not written for teaching purposes, but for a real-life communicative purpose’ (p. 324).

4.3 Test tasks

In the section of the test based on reading a university website, the test takers are required to retrieve information about university life in general (social and academic) and about specific courses, lecture and book titles (for further details, see Ludbrook and Newbold in this volume).

The tasks are authentic in that they follow the path students would usually go along in order to retrieve the information they want or need from a university website. In the real world, however, users of a website would either continue their search for information by clicking on other links, or they might simply opt to continue their search elsewhere; in a small-scale test situation, a simulation of real-world content and tasks is possible, but ‘full’ authenticity is unlikely to be achieved; indeed, it may not always be advisable. In her article on the development of an online certification project, Ludbrook (2005) points out that: ‘The internet page is a highly complex reading text: advertisements flash on and off, advertising banners come and go, alternating words and images; tickertape scrolls horizontally with news updates; characters with different fonts fade in and out; texts on the same page can vary in length from a few telegraphic words to a full-length article; the same document is sometimes available in two versions, with and without images.’ Although a real, vibrant and ‘busy’ internet page may be entertaining and may even be visually appealing, it would need to be simplified for testing purposes. However, simplification need not be achieved at the expense of visual authenticity.

5 The importance of visual authenticity in online testing

The development of online or computer-based tests should ideally go hand in hand with the design of a suitable interface (Fulcher 2003, Dolan *et al* 2009). While design of an interface went beyond both the remit of the research project and the technical expertise of the team working on the test, much thought was given to some of the possible ‘screen design features’, which Alderson considers of vital importance in tests which ‘include the relationship between verbally and graphically presented information’. Alderson (2005) also says that ‘test developers would be well advised to ensure that texts are suitably presented, and are as legible as ‘normal’ texts of any given genre in the target language. It is clearly undesirable for readers to be penalised because of poor or *untypical* text layout or reproduction’ (pp. 76,78-79) (my italics).

Charles Kostelnick, Chair Professor of English at Iowa State University and expert in the history of visual communication, states that ‘satisfying reader expectations is an important rhetorical consideration in any visual design. A bank could probably conduct business in a functional aluminium building, but that would contradict what clients expect. To communicate the stability of the organization, the visual text must be constructed of materials like brick and stone that typify the genre’ (1990, p. 200). Although bank clients nowadays might possibly see a steel and glass construction as more representative or symbolic of the dynamism of today’s business world, Kostelnick’s point about genre is worth focusing on in the context of visual authenticity. An online test that requires test takers to engage in a variety of tasks that use authentic material from university websites and search engines, should be as visually coherent as possible in terms of page layout, active links and other navigational devices found in the ‘real world’. Visual coherence (i.e. ‘looking the part’) contributes to the overall attractiveness of the test; more importantly, it not only gives the test credibility (as far as the perceptions of the test takers are concerned) but also a clearly recognizable identity.

5.1 Identity and screen features

All valid and reliable tests – whether they are pen & paper or computer-based, adaptive or non adaptive, high stakes or low stakes – are the end product of what is usually a long process involving researchers, item writers, technicians and, above all, the examination/certification body or institution that has commissioned the test and paid for its development. Ultimately, the test is the property of an organization, not of the groups of people involved in its development. As the organization will have a logo associated with its brand, there may already be a colour (and font) associated with the corporate image. The logo and colour constitute the ‘identity’ of the organization; this may influence the overall visual layout of a test, especially one designed for

online delivery – a context in which clear and unequivocal identity (brand image) is crucial. A requirement to include logo, specific colour(s) and possibly the name of the examining body on each ‘page’ of the test would inevitably constrain other design issues relating to the overall layout and to the individual sections of the test.

5.2 Creating an identity within the test

As several parts of the TEEUS simulate university websites one factor to consider was how to give the universities an ‘identity’ on the web page. This identity could be created by using a fictitious name and symbol/logo (e.g. University of Greyland), but this choice might have an adverse impact on the perception of authenticity and might indeed distract the test taker. Another option would be simply to use a bold colour and make use of still photos to indicate various aspects of what is clearly identifiable as part of university life (e.g. a teaching room, canteen, library or laboratory). The function of still visuals in this case would be mainly decorative, in that they give no clues as to the content of the item/s; instead, what they do is ‘set the context of the communicative event’ (Ginther 2001; see also Ludbrook 2005, p. 32). Ginther’s suggestion that learners ‘benefit when the presentation of visual and verbal information is contiguous’ (ibid, p. 15) is probably equally applicable to test takers.

Ginther’s idea of context visuals is also important in the audio sections of the test, which contain examples of NNS-NNS interaction. There is clearly no need to use photographs of the students who were actually involved in the recordings of the semi-scripted dialogues, but a still, neutral image of two or three students outside a lecture hall, in a library, sitting at a cafeteria or outside a sports facility provides an idea of the variety of social and academic contexts in which NNS interaction actually takes place.

5.3 Visual aspects: practical considerations

Many of Fulcher’s (2003) recommendations about the design of a test interface and screen layout features are very similar to the standard best principles in designing for the web; these have been summarised below. Some of these recommendations are particularly important for developers of tests which might need to include the possibility of accommodations for the visually impaired⁷ or for those with other types of accessibility problems.

Layout: each ‘page’ or section of the test should be ‘uncluttered’, (i.e. clearly laid out, with no distracting or redundant information). The text should be concise and readable, and ideally should not require the test taker to scroll up or down. The general consensus is that readability is maximised with the use of black characters on a white background. Other colour combinations either decrease readability or prevent it (e.g. green/red for people who are colour blind).

Contrast: A fairly high level of contrast is necessary for all users, whatever their ages. For visually impaired users, the higher the contrast the better.

Font type and size: Consistent use of fonts and font sizes is advisable. In terms of readability, sans-serif typefaces have the edge over standard serif ones. Verdana, a sans-serif font designed specifically for on-screen readability, is available for both Windows and Mac. Font size should be 11-12 point for general use, increasing to 16-18 for those with impaired vision.

Spacing: The spaces between lines should be adequate for easy reading.

⁷ See Aries Ardit: <http://www.lighthouse.org/accessibility/design/accessible-print-design/making-text-legible>

Alignment: Left-aligned text is easier to read and ‘text is easier to read when it is justified on the left and unjustified on the right’ (American Printing House for the Blind).

Images: (e.g. photos, tables or graphs) should be clear and still, and the quality should be pin-sharp.
Audio and audio/visual materials: the sound quality must be clear and good.

Fulcher’s observations may seem obvious; however, there are many badly designed or downright unattractive web pages in which small print, mixtures of lurid colours and eccentric fonts all play a part in dissuading us from continuing to read, even when we have an interest in the content. As users of the web, we can simply leave the site and go elsewhere; the test taker, however, will not be able to exercise that option.

The research team gave equal consideration to the possible visual aspects of the test and to the avoidance of offensive, ambiguous or biased references in both the test input and the rubrics. If the on-line test were to be developed further, crucial decisions would have to be made about its presentation and delivery.

It has been said that ‘the visual appearance of products is a critical determinant of consumer response and product success’ (Crilly *et al* 2004). While it would certainly be stretching a point to see the test only as a product and the test takers only as consumers of that product, the visual considerations involved in test design are indeed ‘critical determinants’ in that a pleasing aspect, clear layout, ease of navigation and a wise use of colour and images can have beneficial affective and cognitive effects on those taking the test.

6 TEEUS test task: using an internet search engine

At this point I would like to focus on what is perhaps the most innovative of the test tasks designed for the TEEUS. This task (see below) simulates the real world task of seeking specific information using an Internet search engine. The test takers are required to choose (and click on) one of three search engine results in order to find out what cold fission is.

Task

ITEM: You need to understand what cold fission is. Which link will you click on?

(a) **Cold fission** as emission of fragments

Cold fission, defined as a process where virtually all the available energy goes into the total kinetic energies of the fragments, is considered to be ...

iopscience.iop.org/0954-3899/15/12/008

(b) **Cold Fission** Media, LLC

Cold Fission Media is proud to introduce our first GPS self guided walking tours of the New York City Financial District. On the Fly Tours are a fun to use, ...

web.coldfissionmedia.com/

(c) Dan Quinn Explains His Discovery of **Cold Fission** - Comedy Central ...

Dan Quinn Explains His Discovery of **Cold Fission**. STEVIA IS THE CURE. video. Comedy Central | Video | Dan Quinn Explains His Discovery of **Cold Fission**. Back ...

community.comedycentral.com/...Cold-Fission/04CFAFFFF020165A3001B01170233 –

It is immediately apparent that this task is both authentic in its layout and visually coherent. The key words Cold Fission appear in all three search results. To make their choice of option, the test takers are required to quickly assess the nature of the website they have been referred to and the information they can retrieve from the link. The task also requires the test takers to engage authentically with a text and requires them to use skills in processing the information they are given. Search engine ‘snippets’ (Google defines a snippet as ‘a description of or an excerpt from the webpage’, which comes after the title and before the URL and cached link) are typical examples of short, fragmented texts which require new literacy skills in order to rapidly access and retrieve information; the retrieval of information is an aspect of the textual and functional knowledge in the construct of the test.

One of Alderson’s (2005) main worries about computer-based testing methods is that ‘all too many computer-based test use the multiple-choice technique, rather than other, more innovative, interesting or simply exploratory test methods’ (p. 354). The research team feels strongly that this search engine task is an example of how a multiple choice item can be interesting and innovative. The item is innovative not only because of its visual and navigational authenticity but also – and more importantly – because it elicits precisely the kind of engagement with the text that new literacies (reading and ICT) involve.

7 Conclusion

The work carried out during the research project explored the design of a test of receptive skills within an ELF framework. In this paper I have focused on the issues concerning new concepts of literacy, multiliteracies and ICT in the development of the test. I have discussed some of the practical visual aspects involved in designing a test and giving it a recognizable identity. In particular, I have described how the design of test texts and tasks has attempted to simulate the language requirements of the target language situation to ensure the engagement of the test takers and activate their knowledge.

The TEEUS research project has begun to explore possible new avenues of designing test tasks that simulate the real-world tasks of the target language situation with a high degree of visual and navigational authenticity. Moreover, the project has examined the issue of new literacies. The changing skills and abilities – the multiple literacies – required in academic contexts provide new scope for task design. This project has begun to explore how online language tests might be designed to reflect the language knowledge – textual, rhetorical and functional – that these new literacies entail.

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Maria Rees (rees@unive.it) is a researcher in English language in the Department of Management at Ca’ Foscari University of Venice. Her research interests include ESP, Business English (including BELF) and language testing. Although interested in photography and the visual arts in general, she has (as yet) no specific expertise in web design or layout.

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