Languages and Modalities

Editorial statement

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Language is widely known as a basic tool for human interaction, and linguistics is dedicated to studying this tool. However, when pursuing complex goals, human beings are rarely confined to just one tool, and to fulfill communicative goals a multitude of cues are normally used to contribute to meaning construction. Thus, the last decades have seen increasing attention from linguists to the diversity of communicative resources that are used by human beings to convey messages and achieve goals.

There is a longstanding tradition of investigating this diversity by comparing spoken languages and showing differences and similarities of worldviews and speech practices in various ethnicities and social groups.

Furthermore, this diversity is often viewed through the interrelation between languages that can influence each other on a regular basis; for example, if we speak a foreign language, we may switch and mix languages, dialects and styles, and translate (or interpret) from one language to another.

More recently, another dimension has been integrated into linguistic research—i.e., a multimodal dimension that focuses on the study of written and spoken discourse in which different modes of communication (semiotic systems and channels) are juxtaposed. The question of *how interlocutors combine modalities to create meaning to achieve their ends* has become one of the main catalysts of modern studies. This trend is linked to new technologies, at least in two ways. First, due to modern communication technologies, interaction has become extremely heterogeneous—from multilingual face-to-face interactions via video conferences to news apps with hy-

pertexts written with scrolling techniques in mind. Second, modern research technologies offer broader opportunities for scholars of multimodality, as they: (a) provide new types and genres of multimodal discourse as objects of study; (b) provide new ways of analyzing discourse via multimodal tools (eye-trackers, MoCap, ELAN, VR, etc.); (c) ensure demand for linguists whose studies are linked to machine translation, face-and-gesture recognition, big data for text analyses, etc.

As a result, present-day studies of languages and modalities have become closely intertwined, as language as a natural communicative activity and an object of investigation is viewed within the context of the multiplicity of languages, on the one hand, and the multiplicity of modalities (words, pictorial images, prosody, manual gestures, facial expressions, etc.) on the other hand.

Contributions to theories and methods of investigating all kinds of communicative diversity and heterogeneity that accompany verbal communication have been spread across many disciplines, both within linguistics and outside its realm, and scholars are often unaware of the key findings in other fields of research. Thus, *Languages and Modalities (LaMo)*—as a new, author-friendly, international journal—is aimed at filling this void by publishing research in the diversified area of study of how meaning is negotiated *within and across different languages and modalities*. The journal also aims to provide a more centralized focus on this diversified area.

Although *LaMo* is inherently a linguistic journal, and language and linguistic expressions remain central to it, it is designed as multidisciplinary and is intended for schol-

ars whose interests go beyond one language and /or one modality.

Providing an open-access forum for international audiences of scholars, the journal is receptive to a wide variety of studies in cross-linguistic, contrastive semantics, various types of bilingualism, as well as the multimodality of human interaction, including multimodal discourse analyses, social semiotics, cognitive semiotics, visual semiotics, and gesture studies. Studies of sign languages also constitute a special and very important area for the journal.

More specifically, *LaMo* welcomes, but is not limited to, research articles on the following topics:

- how we create, express, or negotiate meaning when different languages and modalities (modes, systems or channels of communication) are involved in communication (i.e., in cross-linguistic and multimodal contexts);
- how we borrow and adapt words/expressions and their meanings from one language to another;
- how meanings are transferred from one language/ modality/media to another and how they are transformed;
- how meanings and the ways we express them differ in various languages, including sign languages;
- what implications the four topics above have for studying cognition, natural communication, language learning/teaching, multicultural communication in the workplace and other contexts, etc.

We welcome research carried out at different levels of micro- and macro-analysis of verbal and non-verbal discourse, based on diverse methods that help integrate theoretical, conceptual, and empirical knowledge and ensure replicability of the results (qualitative and computational, experimental, field, laboratory, corpus methods, etc.). Syntheses of prior works relevant to the areas of research could be accepted if they provide an important contribution to modern studies, or encourage further discussions about the development of the field.

To Dominique – an embodiment of wit, charm, and grace

The first issue of *LaMo* is focused on multimodal studies of co-speech gestures as well as sign languages (SL). It is dedicated to the memory of Dominique Boutet (1966–2020), a French researcher who introduced a breakthrough method of analyzing co-speech gestures and SL signs based on modern technology from the digital arts and a multidisciplinary approach to gesture annotation. His kinesiological approach offers a unique methodological system that changes a researcher's perspective from an external (visual) to an internal (physiological) one, allowing for a more objective and digital-friendly analysis.

The contributions that make up this special issue present the results of international multidisciplinary projects carried out in France, Germany, and Russia. The works are inspired, built on, or related to Boutet's framework for multimodal kinesiological analysis of interlocutors' bodily movements observed in various languages.

The papers cover a variety of topics connected to multimodal meaning construction and embodiment, starting from the tenets of Boutet's theory and method (Aliyah Morgenstern, Lea Chevrefils, Marion Blondel, Coralie Vincent, Chloé Thomas, Jean-François Jégo, Dominique Boutet) to empirical studies of presentation gestures (Alan Cienki), negation in signing and non-signing children (Dominique Boutet, Marion Blondel, Pauline Beaupoil-Hourdel, Aliyah Morgenstern), representation of movement in SL (Léa Chevrefils, Claire Danet, Patrick Doan, Chloé Thomas, Morgane Rébulard, Adrien Contesse, Jean-François Dauphin, Claudia S. Bianchini), the role of the body in expressing irony (Clarissa de Vries, Bert Oben, Geert Brône), fictive questions in SL (Maria Josep Jarque, Esther Pascual), gestures in a diachronic perspective (Svetlana Savchuk), and positive statements with gestures of negation (Maíra Avelar, Beatriz Graça).

We are extremely grateful to the contributors who responded to our call, and hope that the results will contribute to multimodal studies of languages and encourage further discussion.

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