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Editorial

Corpus linguistics in language testing research

Sara T. Cushing

Georgia State University, USA

Just over twenty years ago, Alderson (1999) identified language testing researchers. As a result of this identification, there has been a rapid increase in interest in using corpora for the design and validation of language tests. Stubbs and Carter (1997) define a corpus as "a text collection which is used for linguistic analysis." Corpora can be divided into general corpora and specialized corpora. General corpora are intended to represent a language in use by a community of writers, contexts, and registers; examples include the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) and the Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE, 2002) and the TOEFL 2000 Spoken and Written English Corpus (Biber et al., 2004). Finally, an important type of corpus for language assessment is a learner corpus, composed of the language use of individual users of the language, such as the International Corpus of Learner English (Granger, Dagneaux, Meunier, & Paquot, 2002).

One major benefit of corpus linguistics is the ability to conduct comparative analysis of language. That is, the use of corpora has expanded the repertoire of tools for automated analysis of language, making it feasible to conduct detailed examinations of language use across contexts, genres, and languages. This analysis can be conducted on oral and written language in a general corpus, or across proficiency levels in a learner corpus, or across individual words, multi-word units, or phrases in a specialized corpus. The language tester's ability to conduct

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Corresponding author:

Sara T. Cushing, Georgia State University, P.O. Box 4000
Email: sweigle@gsu.edu