New Trends in Pragmatics Assessment Research: An Introduction

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Even though it can be argued that pragmatics is an important element of the second language (L2) assessment research agenda, a number of challenges have consistently surfaced in this field. For example, adequate coverage of the construct has been consistently formidable, particularly considering that many studies take an atomistic view of pragmatics through their focus on speech acts rather than on contextualized language use (Roever, 2010). Likewise, issues of practicality and benchmarking remain underdeveloped, and understanding regarding the hierarchy of different types of pragmatic meanings continues to be limited (Roever, 2012, 2014). However, in recent years, there have been several attempts to expand our understanding of L2 pragmatics. As illustration, new models of pragmatic ability have been proposed (Purpura, 2017; Timpe-Laughlin, Wain, & Schmidgall, 2015), and it is hoped that these theoretical developments lead to practical applications in L2 pragmatics research and pedagogy.

The Applied Linguistics and TESOL Program at Teachers College, Columbia University (TCCU) is no exception when it comes to pursuing the pragmatics research agenda, and both professors and students have developed projects to further research in this area. For example, four doctoral students in the Second Language Assessment Track are currently conducting research on various aspects of L2 pragmatics as part of their dissertation. Moreover, Dr. James Purpura (2017) recently revised his model of pragmatic ability, and Dr. Kirby Grabowski (2009, 2013, 2016) offered a course on L2 Pragmatics Assessment, which resulted in the piloting of various instruments, one of which is included in this forum.

In an effort to share insights on the need for the exploration of new directions in pragmatics assessment research, for this issue's forum we invited doctoral students in the Applied Linguistics Second Language Assessment Track at TCCU to share some of the work that they have done in this area. First, Brian Carroll provides an overview of L2 pragmatics research and problematizes the construct definition in this area. Then, Jorge Beltrán discusses the findings of a pilot study that was developed following Dr. Purpura's (2017) meaning-based model of pragmatic ability. We hope that you enjoy reading their contributions.

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