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M119   Sept. 1/15:30-15:55/Bld2 R302

Defining the TLU Domain for a New Japanese University Entrance Exam

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This paper will describe the process of defining the target language use (TLU) domain for TEAP, a test of academic English proficiency being developed jointly by STEP and Sophia University for use as a university entrance exam. Central to the validity of such an exam is a clear definition of the TLU domain, which Bachman and Palmer (1996) describe as "the language use tasks that the test taker is likely to encounter outside of the test itself, and to which we want our inferences about language ability to generalize." An essential element of standardization is that this definition be clearly specified in instruments for item writers, ensuring that the test content is relevant and appropriate to the construct being measured and can be replicated consistently across administrations. For this project, the initial test specifications and TLU description were designed and piloted through several stages. However, when items were commissioned from professional item writers to be pre-tested for the creation of an item bank, the items often contained elements that were not appropriate for the TLU tasks intended by the project team. To address this problem, the team fine-tuned its description of the TLU domain in order to more clearly identify relevant aspects of TLU tasks to be included in test items. For example, to identify appropriate topic fields, the team assessed and evaluated the range of academic subjects offered at the university and adopted these into a matrix for topic selection. To illustrate how these changes impacted on item development, the presenter will give actual examples of the TLU description in different stages and items that were produced based on these specifications. Although the procedures described were relevant to all sections of the test, the paper will focus on the development of items for the listening section.

M120   Sept. 1/9:30-9:55/Bld1 R308

Japanese University Students' Analyses of Power Construction in L2 News Reports

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Language constructs and legitimizes power relationships in society, which has contributed to creating and maintaining the current social, economic and political problems on a global scale. Since the English language now plays an important role as a tool of international communication,

it is essential in English education at university to foster students' abilities to analyze, decipher and demystify power constructed by language, in order to build an international society based on mutual respect and cooperation. This study aims to examine students' analyses that attempted to decode expressions of power from texts which they critically read in an EFL class, and to investigate what activities and methods might be necessary to assist students.

Japanese university students (N=25) in an English class were encouraged to critically analyze English news items to reveal interpretive frameworks formed by language, using critical discourse analysis. The analyses were conducted on linguistic elements, such as the selection of information, lexical items, syntax and rhetorical features. The students' analyses were examined as to 1) what kind of power they were and were not able to point out, and 2) from which linguistic elements they were and were not able to decipher power.

The results show that the students were able to note power relationships, constructed by language, among different groups, although they were not able to question the criteria which categorize participants into the groups. The students were able to decode power relationships formed by lexical items and the selection of information, but it was difficult for them to decipher power from syntactic or rhetorical features. The results indicate that teachers' assistance is needed to raise awareness toward the construction of power by these linguistic elements, in order to develop students' abilities to decode power shaped by L2 discourse.