Using a corpus to validate test construct: Epistemic stance in the Trinity Lancaster Corpus

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http://www.trinitycollege.com/site/?id=3328
http://cass.lancs.ac.uk
Large, balanced and representative collection of language data in computer-readable format. TLC is based on the Graded Exam in Spoken English.
Trinity Lancaster Spoken Learner Corpus
Currently: 3.5 million words

✓ 1,700+ L2 users
✓ Age range: 9 to 72
✓ Three main proficiency levels
✓ Four different speaking tasks
✓ Ten different L1 and cultural backgrounds

~ 20,000 A4
~ 300 h
# Graded Exam in Spoken English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TASK</th>
<th>TOPIC FAMILIARITY</th>
<th>INTERLOCUTOR ROLES</th>
<th>INTERACTIVENESS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PRESENTATION</td>
<td>Candidate choice; pre-selected</td>
<td>Candidate-led</td>
<td>monologic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISCUSSION</td>
<td>of Presentation</td>
<td>Jointly led</td>
<td>dialogic</td>
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<tr>
<td>INTERACTIVE</td>
<td>Examiner selected</td>
<td>Candidate-led</td>
<td>dialogic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONVERSATION</td>
<td>Examiner selected</td>
<td>Jointly led</td>
<td>dialogic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Grade 6 = B1; Grades 7 & 8 = B2; Grades 10-12 = C1/C2*
PRESENTATION
[L2 Speaker (S): Age: 49; Gender: female; Exam location: India; Grade: 10; Examiner (E)]

S: erm my topic for presentation today is the social conditioning I will first of all speak a bit about definition of what social conditioning and how pros and the cons of social conditioning and how <1.2>phenomenon which has been progressive changes through generations it's said that a child had natural adjustment brain takes dominance and developed socially conditioned into play then the child er begins
E: mm

INTERACTIVE TASK
[L2 Speaker (S): Age: 28; Gender: male; Exam location: Mexico; Grade: 10; Examiner (E)]

S: but do you think that technology is good for the society for us?
E: erm well I think it's a tool I'm not sure that it's good for us but it's like any tool it's the people isn't it?
S: right I I think so or I find the technology is really useful for me I think that that's my thinking because of my work
E: mm
S: or I teach and I like to teach with technology
E: mm mm
S: or do you use your t= the technology in your work?
E: in my teaching yes absolutely all the time
S: what kind of techniques do you apply with technology?
E: erm well I I use it in in teaching all aspects of English
S: right
E: spoken written or listening and yes so and pronunciation erm but I don't think it's always necessary to have the latest
S: right erm for or some people er it's necessary yeah but for me it's not necessary er because er my students are not er able to buy the latest technology
E: mm
S: in the world and but I think that they like to work with that do you think so?
E: erm I I think yes erm erm it's great it's a motivating tool erm but I suppose what I'm really talking about is you know this sort of <.> desire very strong desire people fee-feel to rush out and buy whatever is new
S: alright < LAUGH >
E: < LAUGH >
Sample

.5 million @ C1 & C2 level

L1: China, Italy, Mexico, Sri Lanka, India & Spain

Speakers:
132 speakers (81 female, 51 male); age 14 – 55
WHY?
• express opinion
• maintain relations
• discourse organisation

NB individualised usage = speaker’s position & identity
(Hunston & Thompson, 2000)

WHAT?
actually; apparently; certainly; definitely; evidently; for sure; kind of; maybe; no doubt; obviously; perhaps; possibly; predictably; probably; roughly; sort of; surely; undoubtedly; without @ doubt
Results 1: all adverbials x tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PRES</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISC</td>
<td>7.45</td>
<td>7.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INT</td>
<td>8.81</td>
<td>7.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONV</td>
<td>7.05</td>
<td>5.82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Gablasova et al. 2015
Results 2: certainty

Epistemic adverbials: Strength

RELATIVE FREQUENCY PER 1,000

PRES  |  DISC  |  INT  |  CONV

PRES: Certainty, DISC: Uncertainty, INT: Other, CONV: Other
Results 3: individuals

L1 Spanish + *maybe*

Source: Gablasova et al. 2015
Results 4: across L1s adverbials with strong polarity

If we listen to the data:

- Testing: How do we construct criteria for measuring pragmatic ability?
- Teaching: Does ELF mean strategic & pragmatic competences take centre stage?

If we ignore the data:

- Test taker: At what cost do we exclude the learner’s identity from the exam room?
- EAP: How far is academic English driving epistemicide – ‘rendering invisible rival forms of knowledge’? (Bennett, 2011)
REFERENCES


and Bennett, K. Call for papers (2011)
• [http://www.trinitycollege.com/site/?id=3328](http://www.trinitycollege.com/site/?id=3328)
• [http://cass.lancs.ac.uk](http://cass.lancs.ac.uk)
• CASS briefings: [http://cass.lancs.ac.uk/?page_id=956](http://cass.lancs.ac.uk/?page_id=956)