In this presentation I will summarize the key findings from a recent project that investigated test takers’ test preparation strategies for two different tests, the University of Tokyo (UT) entrance exam and the IELTS Academic Test. In the Japanese context, university entrance exams play a central role in guiding learning and teaching at the pre-tertiary level, particularly in high schools. The influence of the UT exam on its recent undergraduates was examined in terms of their attained language proficiency and from survey and interview data about their test preparation strategies. These same students took the IELTS test twice during their first and second year of study at university, which further allowed us to compare their test preparation strategies for the IELTS Test with those for the entrance test as well as investigating any changes in behavior/scores over the period. The mixed methods approach provides rich and convincing data regarding the washback effect to learners. I argue that the learners are the primary stakeholders in language testing contexts and thus washback to the learner, which is a crucial part of the consequential validity a test, must be evaluated as part of the test validation process. I will propose a model that integrates current thinking in test validation and test washback in order to create a practical framework for future washback studies.

Abstract

Speaker

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