THE EFFECT OF AGE ON LEXICAL PREFERENCES OF TEST-TAKERS: EVIDENCE FROM THE TRINITY LANCASTER CORPUS

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This presentation reports on the investigation into lexical preferences of L2 users of English in a spoken high-stakes assessment situation. The data is taken from the Graded Examination in Spoken English (GESE), developed and administered by Trinity College London, a large international examination board. The study uses corpus linguistic methods and GESE data compiled into the Trinity Lancaster Corpus, which contains over four million words and 2,000 transcripts from the GESE exams. The study examined the effect of age on the lexical choice of the test-takers at three levels of proficiency (B1, B2 and C1/C2 of the CEFR), looking at global lexical trends (lexical sophistication and complexity), as well as the effect of topic (choice of topic and topic familiarity). The implication of the findings for language assessment and teaching will be discussed.