Speech - Prof. Yukio Tono

There is a growing awareness that insights gained from corpus analysis will be beneficial in many aspects of English language teaching (ELT). Especially in such areas as pedagogical lexicography, syllabus and materials design, intelligent computer-assisted language learning (iCALL), and language testing, corpora are becoming more and more essential resources.

In this talk, I will begin with a general overview of how corpora have been used for ELT, introducing my own contribution to the TV English conversation programs based on corpora. Then I will argue that it is important to diagnose learners' production data in order to fully understand how corpus-based materials for teaching will interact with second language learners at different learning stages. For this, I will introduce the new research enterprise initiated by the Cambridge team, called the English Profile. The core element of the project is to investigate the relationship between the Common European Framework of Reference for Language (CEFR) and learner corpora. I will elaborate on such important concepts as "criterial features" for the CEFR, "reference level descriptions" for the CEFR, and profiling learner ability based on the CEFR.

In the latter half of my talk, I will focus on my own work using learner corpora to identify criterial features for the CEFR and its adapted version in ELT in Japan, called the CEFR-J. I will report on a series of studies focusing on the objective procedure of identifying criterial features for different CEFR levels in terms of verb new co-occurrence patterns, the most frequent omission and addition errors, as well as overall syntactic complexity measures.

Finally, I will discuss theoretical, methodological and pedagogical implications of this approach. Theoretically, probabilistic views of language will shed light on the nature of second language learning and acquisition. Methodologically, statistical analyses of large quantitative data based on corpora will change the perspectives of how language is learned and what will serve as criteria for such development. Pedagogically, the recognition of L2 learning processes will make language teachers even more aware of learning objectives at different stages and how to support learners with materials and resources available to them to achieve that goal.