

## Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) SIG Meeting

**“Reframing validity for inclusion and social justice.”**

University for Foreigners of Siena (UNISTRASI), Siena, Italy

Thursday 11th June, 2026 - 2.00 - 5.00pm

- 2.00**     *Introductions and welcome to the SIG*
- 2.10**     *Taking On the Gatekeepers: Raising Neurodiversity Awareness and Assessment Literacy in a Traditional University Context.*  
Vicky Allan, Berlin School of Economics and Law
- 2.35**     *Diagnosed but Undocumented: The Evidence Gap in Test Accommodations for Japanese Learners with Dyslexia.*  
Chihiro Inoue, University of Bedfordshire
- 3.00**     *Constructing inclusivity: Rethinking language constructs in assessment.*  
Ananda Senel, Oxford University Press
- 3.25**     **Break**
- 3.45**     *Student Attitudes Toward World Englishes in the Italian School Context*  
Rosalba Nodari, University of Siena  
Claudia Soria, Italian National Research Council, Rome  
Silvia Calamai, University of Siena
- 4.10**     Panel discussion: *EDI and Validity in Language Assessment. How do we measure what matters?*  
Chair: Gemma Bellhouse, SpeakNow/IDP Education  
Chihiro Inoue, University of Bedfordshire  
Ananda Senel, Oxford University Press  
Richard Spiby, British Council
- AOB - issues of interest to participants
- 5.00**     **Close**

## **Taking On the Gatekeepers: Raising Neurodiversity Awareness and Assessment Literacy in a Traditional University Context**

**Vicky Allan, Berlin School of Economics and Law**

How fair are classroom tests? As a field, we are increasingly aware of the neurodiversity of our learners, yet many teachers and lecturers are not specifically trained in inclusive assessment design. This can lead to assessments that do not effectively measure the intended construct and may even disadvantage certain students. Common accommodations, such as extra time, often lack sufficient research backing and may not truly help neurodivergent learners.

This session provides a clear overview of the latest research on inclusive language testing and best practices, including principles from Universal Design for Learning (UDL). The presenter will outline common pitfalls in test design, such as unclear rubrics or tasks that assess unintended skills.

**Wiktorja Allan** has over ten years' experience teaching English in Germany. She is currently the Head of the Language Centre at the Berlin School of Economics and Law. Vicky is also pursuing her PhD in Linguistics at Lancaster University on the topic of testing accommodations for students with ADHD.

## **Diagnosed but Undocumented: The Evidence Gap in Test Accommodations for Japanese Learners with Dyslexia**

**Chihiro Inoue, University of Bedfordshire**

Dyslexia manifests differently across writing systems, yet test accommodation frameworks in English language assessment rarely account for this variation. This paper presents a qualitative case study of two Japanese learners of English, both identified as having dyslexia through a formal assessment conducted by a certified speech-language pathologist. While both participants reported minimal difficulties in Japanese beyond kanji writing and oral reading, they experienced severe challenges in learning English. Drawing on interview data and diagnostic profiles, this study examines how the logographic and morphosyllabic properties of Japanese may reduce the visibility of dyslexia-related difficulties. A key finding is the identification of a systemic documentation gap: although formal diagnoses may exist, they reflect the learners' difficulties observable in Japanese and do not capture the extent of difficulties in English. Critically, the supplementary evidence typically required alongside a diagnosis — such as records of prior accommodations and educator support letters — is also absent in their English learning history. This structural exclusion means that such learners of English have no clear pathway to building an evidence base for applying for testing accommodations. This presentation seeks to invite dialogue among test developers, assessment researchers, and practitioners about how accommodation eligibility criteria might be reconsidered to achieve greater fairness and inclusivity

**Chihiro Inoue** is Associate Professor at the Centre for Research in English Language Learning and Assessment (CRELLA), University of Bedfordshire. Her research centres on the interplay between test-taker characteristics, task design, and the features of elicited language. She has led over 20 externally funded projects for language testing organisations and government bodies worldwide.

## **Constructing inclusivity: Rethinking language constructs in assessment**

**Ananda Senel, Oxford University Press**

The paper explores how reasonable adjustments requests interact with the operationalisation of language assessment constructs in high stakes testing. Using mixed methods evidence from test takers, test centre managers, and disability advocacy groups, it considers where tensions may arise between accessibility, test security, and construct definition, and reflects on possible implications for equitable assessment practice.

**Ananda Senel** is Senior Assessment Research and Analysis Manager in ELT Assessment at Oxford University Press.

## **Student Attitudes Toward World Englishes in the Italian School Context**

**Rosalba Nodari, University of Siena**

**Claudia Soria, Italian National Research Council, Rome**

**Silvia Calamai, University of Siena**

This study investigates Italian secondary school students' attitudes toward different English varieties (African American, Standard Southern British, Chinese, General American, Indian, Italian, Multicultural London, Nigerian, and Ukrainian) within a World Englishes framework. Combining a variety identification task and a Verbal Guise Technique, 194 students rated speakers on competence, warmth, and speech traits. Results show generally low recognition rates, with Italian English being the most accurately identified, and recognition positively influencing evaluations on all dimensions. Accent effects emerged clearly: General American and Standard Southern British English received the highest competence ratings, while Italian English, followed by General American and African American English, was rated highest for warmth; Ukrainian English was evaluated least favourably overall. Familiarity with English accents significantly improved evaluations of competence, while appreciation of linguistic diversity positively influenced warmth. Participants who reported greater familiarity with different English accents rated all varieties more positively in terms of competence, suggesting that greater exposure to different varieties of English is linked to more favourable evaluations of speakers' linguistic ability. However, familiarity alone was not sufficient to enhance warmth evaluations: a positive effect was observed only when familiarity was paired with appreciation. In other words, participants who reported both higher familiarity and stronger appreciation provided more favourable warmth ratings, whereas familiarity did not increase warmth among those who lacked such appreciation. Gender effects were also observed, with male voices generally rated more positively, especially for Inner Circle varieties. Overall, the findings highlight the role of recognition, experience, and social framing in shaping evaluations of English varieties, with implications for more inclusive approaches to English language teaching.

**Rosalba Nodari** is a fixed-term researcher and teaches Language acquisition and language teaching at the University of Siena. She has a background in sociophonetics. Her research interests include linguistic discrimination, sociophonetics, oral archives and gender linguistics.

**Claudia Soria** is a researcher at CNR-ILC. She has a background in Computational Linguistics. Her research interests revolve around linguicism and the use of language technology for the protection and valorization of linguistic diversity.

**Silvia Calamai** is full professor in Linguistics and Sociolinguistics at the University of Siena. She is a member of the CLARIN Legal and Ethical Issues Committee and the CLARIN-IT Consortium. Her main research interests are sociophonetics, oral archives and dialectology.