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***'CO-CONSTRUCTING'
PERFORMANCE IN THE B2 AND C1
KPG ORAL EXAMS:
A COMPARISON OF THE ROLE OF
EXAMINERS AS INTERLOCUTORS***

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THE AIM OF THE PHD STUDY

- *involvement* of interlocutors, i.e. interviewers or examiners who carry out the examination.
- different types of involvement are traced and described
- find those which affect the candidates' linguistic output in a way that eventually influences the final score \Rightarrow an issue of reliability and validity of the test



SOME THEORY AND THE AIM OF THE PRESENTATION

- The study = closely related to research on the complexity of oral proficiency interviews - depending on the *interaction* of tasks, examiners as interlocutors, examiners as raters, candidates and assessment criteria (Ross 1992; McNamara 1995, 1997; Lazaraton 1996; Milanovic & Saville 1996; McNamara & Lumley 1997; Brown 2003, 2005, among others).
- Researchers (Jacoby & Ochs 1995; McNamara 1995; He & Young 1998; Fulcher 2003; Brown 2003, 2005, May 2010, among others) have frequently used the term *co-construction* of the candidates' language output = candidates do not speak alone - their performance is collaboratively constructed, i.e. co-constructed.
- Looking at the B2 and C1 oral tests of the KPG examination battery ⇒ present the strong and the weak points of each test in terms of the level of co-construction regarding the role of the examiner & discuss the implications of the findings for the two types of oral examination.
- Examiner role=differentiated from one level to the other (Karavas and Delieza, 2009), ⇐ 1.difference in the level of proficiency and 2.C1 Activity 2 is a paired activity while in B2 there are three activities with no collaboration between the two candidates.



CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

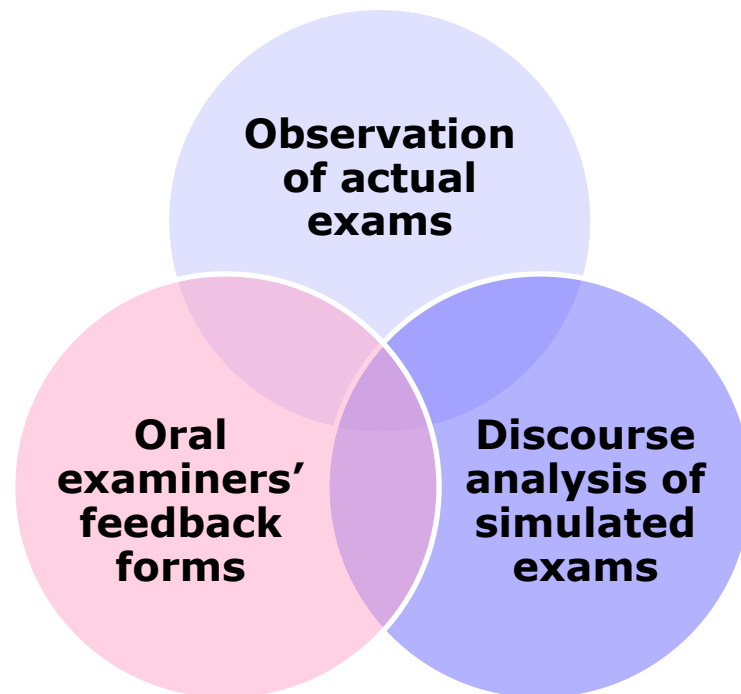
- Research Centre for Language Teaching, Learning and Assessment (RCEL) - Faculty of English Studies, University of Athens
- the Greek State Certificate of English Language Proficiency exams, known as KPG exams, the oral tests at B2 and C1 levels.
- Structure and content of the two exams:

B2	C1
Duration of test	
15-20 minutes	20 minutes
Pattern of participation	
Candidates are tested in pairs but do not converse with each other.	Candidates are tested in pairs and converse with each other in Activity 2.
Content of oral test	
<p>Activity 1 = Dialogue (3-4 minutes) between examiner and each candidate who answers questions about him/herself and his/her environment posed by the examiner.</p> <p>Activity 2 = One-sided talk (5-6 minutes) by each candidate who develops a topic on the basis of a visual prompt.</p> <p>Activity 13 = Mediation by each candidate who develops a topic based on input from a Greek text. (6 minutes for both)</p>	<p>Warm-up (not assessed – 1 minute) Examiner asks each candidate a few ice-breaking questions (age, studies/work, hobbies)</p> <p>Activity 1 = Open-ended response (4 minutes): The candidate responds to a single question posed by the examiner expressing and justifying his/her opinion about a particular issue/topic.</p> <p>Activity 2 = Mediation and open-ended conversation (15 minutes): Candidates carry out a conversation in order to complete a task using input from a Greek text.</p>

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- *In what ways does examiner-as-interlocutor involvement differ between B2 and C1 KPG oral tests?*
- *Can the differences be attributed to the level, the type of activities involved, or both?*

Data from three different sources ⇒



STUDY 1: OBSERVATION

- the observation project = an on-going effort of the RCEL to control and monitor examiners' performance in the KPG oral tests

Results of examiner intervention per activity in the B2 and C1 level oral tests ⇒

May 2007	B2			C1	
Intervention per activity	Activity 1	Activity 2	Activity 3	Activity 1	Activity 2
Changes to the rubrics	57.5%	31%	33%	22.5%	23.5%
Interruptions and/or interferences	20.5%	33.5%	28.5%	36%	55.5%
November 2007					
Intervention per activity	Activity 1	Activity 2	Activity 3	Activity 1	Activity 2
Changes to the rubrics	30%	23%	22%	21.5%	13.5%
Interruptions and/or interferences	25%	40%	30%	34.5%	21%

STUDY 2: FEEDBACK FROM ORAL EXAMINERS

- KPG oral examiners complete *anonymously* the Oral Examiner Feedback Forms at the end of each examination day.

B2 level			
4. Did you change or interfere with the rubrics in any of the following ways?	VERY OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEVER
a. Change one-two words and/ or supplying a synonym for a word.	2.71%	66.67%	29.46%
b. Expand the question and/ or use examples to explain.	2.71%	50.78%	43.02%
6. Did you generally interrupt the candidates or intervene while they were talking in order to:	VERY OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEVER
c. correct or add information?	0%	20.54%	72.48%
d. help the candidate by repeating the whole or part of the question?	3.88%	71.32%	21.71%

C1 level			
4. Did you change or interfere with the rubrics in any of the following ways?	VERY OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEVER
a. Change one-two words and/ or supplying a synonym for a word.	2,22%	38,33%	57,78%
b. Expand the question and/ or use examples to explain.	32,22%	0,56%	62,22%
6. Did you generally interrupt the candidates or intervene while they were talking in order to:	VERY OFTEN	SOMETIMES	NEVER
c. correct or add information?	0,56%	14,44%	77,78%
d. help the candidate by repeating the whole or part of the question?	46,67%	3,33%	45,56%

STUDY 3: DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF SIMULATED EXAMS

- 14 simulations of the KPG oral exams (7 for each level) with learners preparing to take the KPG exams in May 2007
- Video- & audio-recorded and then transcribed

B2	No of interventions per activity	Total no of interventions = 279			
		expansion	repetition	explanation	comment / evaluation
Act 1	133	8.6%	12.2%	4.3%	3.9%
Act 2	79	9.3%	10.8%	0.7%	0.7%
Act 3	67	12.5%	4.7%	0.7%	0.4%
C1	No of intervention per activity	Total no of interventions = 86			
		expansion	repetition	explanation	comment / evaluation
Act 1	50	15.1%	7%	10.5%	5.8%
Act 2	36	18.6%	5.8%	2.3%	0.0%

CONCLUSIONS

- Generally, examiners use different types of intervention - vary in the way they conduct the test, more frequently in the B2 exam than the C1. As sole interlocutors of the candidate ⇒ more facilitative techniques. As listeners of a paired-type task ⇒ more instructive role.
- Examiner intervention is more frequent in Activity 1 of the B2 exam - personal questions = more prone to changes or expansions - examiners undertake a more accommodating kind of interlocutor role - use facilitation strategies in order to encourage the candidates.
- Examiners generally refrain from getting involved in C1 Activity 2 - the only peer-peer interaction activity - instructive role
- Repetition is a strategy frequently used by examiners ⇒ positive fact for the way KPG exams are conducted.
- There is evidence that the involved candidates' performance ⇒ co-constructed by examiners in cases where the latter intervene ⇒ further study
- Examiners tend to be factors of co-construction more frequently in B2 than in C1 and more frequently in the non-paired activities than in the paired one.



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Thank you for listening.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

