

July 2003

*From the Candidates' Point of View: Diary-keeping in a Testing Context*

25<sup>th</sup> Language Testing Research Colloquium (LTRC), University of Reading, Reading, UK.

***"From the candidate's point of view: diary-keeping in a testing context"***

Keeping a diary has been a pervasive narrative form in many people's private reflections in diverse fields such as sociology, anthropology, history, (Corti, 1993), psychotherapy (Progroff, 1975; Assagioli, 1976), etc.

In English language teaching and learning in particular, diaries have become increasingly significant as an introspective technique over the past twenty years contributing to our understanding of the processes underlying language learning and teaching in formal classroom settings (Schumann and Schumann, 1977; Schumann, 1980; Jones, 1977; 1994; Bailey, 1980; 1983; Schmidt and Frota, 1986; Brown, 1983; 1985; Gillete, 1987; Howell-Richardson and Parkinson, 1988; Halbach, 2000; Myers, 2001; inter alia).

The present paper will report on a diary study that was set in a Greek private language school involving teenage students preparing for an EFL test, namely the First Certificate in English (UCLES).

This explorative, qualitative piece of work is bringing into light many interesting findings concerning teaching and learning English in the present context of inquiry and will shed light onto issues such as test-preparation and examination impact on candidates' feelings and motivation towards learning English.

The research data mainly involves the diarists' entries but an attempt will also be made to triangulate these classroom observations. The approach to analysis is essentially heuristic and one of discovery (Seliger and Shohamy, 1989) making the findings yielded so far rich and exciting.

The role of diary-keeping both as a classroom and research instrument, the process of setting up a diary project, the pitfalls and "rewarding moments" will also be discussed.

It is hoped that the present study will relate and contribute to the work of other researchers who undertake investigations into the impact of language tests or use diaries as a research instrument.