

The role of questioning prompts in conversation: A study of pupils' performance in a secondary school EL oral assessment

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Pupils' performance in the English Language oral examination is never an isolated outcome. The examiner's role would in some ways, affect how well a student performs. A detailed analysis of the discourse characteristics of the oral interactions could help to highlight this relationship. This study considers the effect of examiners' prompts in the conversation session of the examination. Based on conversational analyses of 17 full-length oral interactions, it is argued that assessments of students' performance are reflected in the extent of promptings by the examiners and that the variation in results may provide a useful understanding in validating proficiency and providing a parameter for examiners' conduct. In general, the findings of this study suggest that the examiner plays an important role in students' display of oral proficiency. Apart from the questionings, factors like linguistics, pedagogical and social, interact in influencing the performance of test takers.