



Exploring Cultural Differences in Rating Oral Performance During the National English Language Examination in Estonia

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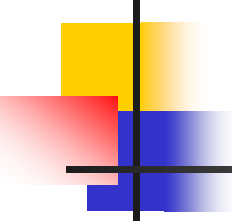
Research into Rater Behaviour

- **Factors affecting the variability in raters' judgements:**
 - severity (Lumley, McNamara 1995, Bachman et al 1995)**
 - consistency in assessment (Wiggleworth 1993, Luoma 2004)**
 - variety of perceptions of what constitutes speaking proficiency (Pollitt, Murray 1996, Fulcher 2003)**
 - educational level (Brown 1995, Fulcher 2003)**
 - linguistic background (Brown 1995, Winke et al 2012)**



Cultural Variability in Testing

- Cultural variability in interlocutors' handling of oral proficiency interviews (E.Alas' PhD thesis 2010)
- Cultural validity (Abedi 2011)
- Cultural variation in communication styles, talk distribution, turn-taking patterns (Tannen 1984)
- Communication styles reflect cultural values (FitzGerald 2003)
- *Estonian culture* vs *Russian culture*
individualist vs collectivist
small power distance vs large power distance
low uncertainty vs high uncertainty
avoidance vs avoidance
INNOVE/former National Examination and Qualification Centre in Estonia
- Estonian-based vs Russian-based learners' results in oral proficiency interviews (Kriisa 2012)



The National Examination in English in Estonia: Speaking Test

- **Structure**

Introduction

A monologue and follow up questions (task 1)

A role play (task 2)

Marking scale for speaking

communication

vocabulary

grammar

fluency and pronunciation



Research

- **Hypothesis:** the conduct of the two non-native groups of Estonian and Russian raters in the oral part of the national examination in English in Estonia will display culture-related differences in their rating process that may in turn affect the candidates' scores
 - **Method:**
 - video recording* of 20 oral proficiency interviews in 2012 (300 minutes of interview time);
 - rating* of these videorecordings by 18 raters from Estonian-based and Russian-based schools in 2013;
 - questionnaire study* among the same raters in 2013
- Participants:** assessment experience 2-18 years; teaching experience 5-15 years
- Statistical methods employed:** ANOVA, 95% Confidence interval for mean, Chi-Square tests



Assessment of OPIs: Monologue and Follow-Up Questions

	Communication	Vocabulary	Grammar	Fluency & pronunciation
Estonian	4.36	4.14	4.04	4.36
Russian	4.41	4.31	4.20	4.39



Assessment of OPIs: Role Play

	Communication	Vocabulary	Grammar	Fluency & pronunciation
Estonian	4.35	4.21	4.00	4.43
Russian	4.38	4.38	4.11	4.45



The Total Scores for OPIs

	Communication	Vocabulary	Grammar	Fluency & pronunciation
Estonian	4.37	4.18	4.02	4.39
Russian	4.46	4.32	4.14	4.43

Frequency of awarding minimum and maximum points

		Minimum	Maximum
Communication	Russian	1	5
	Estonian	2	5
Vocabulary	Russian	1	5
	Estonian	2	5
Grammar	Russian	1	5
	Estonian	1	5
Fluency and Pronunciation	Russian	2	5
	Estonian	1	5
Total	Russian	5	20
	Estonian	6	20

Correlation between the raters' teaching experience and their severity of rating

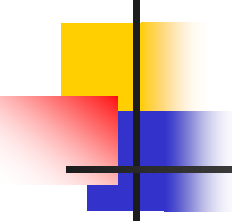


- **Fluency and pronunciation**
 - < 5 years of teaching experience – mean score 4.23**
 - >15 years of teaching experience – mean score 4.44**
 - 6-10 and 11-15 years of teaching experience - mean score 4.55**



Questionnaire study results

- **The aim was to elicit data about the raters' opinions of:**
 - quality of the marking scale***
 - assessment of various aspects of a candidate's oral performance* (i.e., the effect of an accent on the rating, the importance of content, pronunciation, lexis, fluency and grammar use)**
 - their own behaviour* (i.e., any distracting factors, interference of their cultural identity with the assessment, effect of test takers' self-confidence, willingness for cooperation, display of interest)**



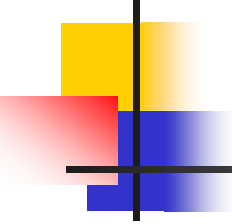
The raters' impressions of the marking scale

- **Attitude towards the existing rating scale**

Estonian group: in favour of some improvements

Russian group: no need for improvements

Features of the candidate's language and the rater's behaviour



- Perception of the degree of *relevance of fluency or grammar* in the assessment
Russian group: *grammar knowledge* over fluency
Estonian group: *fluency* over grammar knowledge
Perception of the *most distracting factors* in rating: *limited vocabulary choice*
Attitude towards the *candidate's interaction skills*: *fluency and communication skills*



Conclusion

- **The analysis of the assessment of 20 videorecordings by 18 Estonian and Russian raters as well as the questionnaire study confirmed the hypothesis *to some extent*.**