The school based Oral English Test (OET): Perceptions and practices of selected MARA Junior Science College Teachers

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According to Kitao and Kitao (1996:1), “speaking is probably the most difficult skill to test. It involves a combination of skills that may have no correlation with each other, and which do not lend themselves well to objective testing.” However, in spite of these inherent difficulties in testing speaking, “a speaking test can be a source of beneficial backwash. If speaking is tested, this encourages the teaching of speaking in class.” In the Malaysian setting, various tests of speaking ability have been introduced, among the most recent of which is the school-based oral English test (OET).

The OET was first introduced to Form 4 students in Malaysian schools in 2002. The OET is purported by the CDC (2000) to be authentic in nature and therefore better able to assess a candidate’s actual speaking ability compared to previous test formats. It is also thought to encourage a more effective teaching and learning process in the classroom. Furthermore, the test provides a continuous assessment of a student for two years from Form 4 until Form 5, as the student is assessed twice in Form 4 and once again in Form 5. Another important characteristic of the OET is that the teacher is the examiner and as the person closest to the student, is able to assess the candidate’s actual speaking skills more accurately.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the effects of the OET on teacher perceptions and practices in three MARA Junior Science Colleges. Specifically, this study will address the following questions: (1) Do teachers believe the OET is a fair and valid measure of teaching and student learning of the speaking skill?; (2) How has the OET affected the teaching of speaking?; and (3) What are the practical constraints which affect the assessment of speaking?

Issues in the implementation of the OET
Three inter-related issues are especially relevant in providing a premise to examining the objectives described earlier. They are the notions of a high stakes test; the validity of speaking assessment; and the washback effect or the effect of testing on teaching and learning. These issues will be briefly discussed in this section.

According to Wright (2002), high stakes tests are tests upon which important consequences have been attached. He cites those in favor of such tests who argue that attaching stakes to tests is inevitable in order to hold schools accountable, reward high performing schools, and identify failing schools so that they may be targeted for extra help. The opinion that high stakes tests are largely beneficial, however, is now being increasingly challenged. While previously it was thought that accountability measures of these tests yield an improvement in academic achievement, there now seems to be increasing evidence that gains on such tests are not necessarily indicators of higher achievement (Amrein & Berliner, 2002). As investigations have not seen authentic learning gains due to testing, academicians are becoming deeply concerned over possible negative and harmful effects of testing on schools, teachers, students, and the curriculum (Haney, 2000).

Wright (2002) reports on a thorough study involving elementary schools in America which found that external high stakes testing resulted in negative effects in the classroom. Among the results, it was found that:

1. testing reduces the time available for ordinary instruction;
2. testing affects what elementary schools teach as schools neglect material that the tests do not include; and
3. testing encourages the use of instructional methods that resemble testing.

Although these results seem largely negative, they confirm that high stakes tests have a strong effect on teaching and learning in the classroom. This effect – commonly referred to as test washback – influences not only teaching technique but also content delivered.
In a review of several empirical studies on backwash, Alderson and Banerjee (2001) notes that there is general agreement that high stakes tests do indeed impact on the content of teaching and on the nature of the teaching materials used. Rubin et al. (1982) reported on studies that show that oral proficiency examinations can have potent washback effects on instruction. While some may argue that test washback is largely negative, there can also be a positive effect on teaching. Bachman (1990) highlighted the fact that a positive backwash effect will result when the testing procedures reflect the skills and abilities that are taught in the course. In order to have a positive effect, it is important that tests are valid measures of the constructs they assess. A valid measure of speaking ability, therefore, can influence teaching practice in a positive manner by encouraging the use of teaching techniques that can effectively promote the development of the speaking ability. Part of this effect may be achieved implicitly when teachers help their students prepare for the tests by using techniques that reflect the test format.

Teacher perception of the validity of the test can also affect the extent of backwash especially as teachers who do not consider the test to be valid may resist teaching according to the techniques promoted by the test. Kim (2003), reported that a teacher’s perceptions of the feasibility of a communicative assessment in a particular context are crucial in determining the ultimate success or failure of that assessment. Research also shows that “in the absence of knowledge about appropriate test practices, teachers may be more likely in high stakes testing environment to implement strategies that are questionable” (Banks, 1996:3).

The OET is part of the national level Malaysian Certificate of Education or SPM examination which has a strong influence on the future of students in Malaysia. It can therefore be argued that the school based OET is a high stakes test. Consequently, it would not be wrong to surmise that teachers will be held responsible for implementing the test correctly, for justifying decisions made, and for the results or outcome of the test. Teacher perceptions regarding the OET as well as their practices in its administration are therefore critical to the effectiveness of the OET as a valid assessment of oral ability. Because it has only recently been introduced, the backwash effect of the OET in
Malaysian schools has still not been examined in any great detail and a study of this nature is therefore timely. This study will use qualitative research techniques to investigate the perceptions and practices of a small group of MARA Junior Science College English teachers with respect to the school based oral English test (OET).

**Examining teacher perceptions of the OET**

The teacher, the person closest to the student, is the person who is able to assess the actual capability of the candidate’s speaking skills. Teachers have “local knowledge” and the “lived experience” necessary to understand the effects of testing (Wright, 2002). This study uses a qualitative approach as it is felt that this approach is better able to elicit the relevant knowledge and experience of teachers. Best and Kahn (1998) explain that qualitative research offers opportunities for conducting exploratory and descriptive research “that assumes the value of context and setting, and that searches for a deeper understanding of the participants’ experiences” (p.240). Two instruments used in this study were the observation and interview. Observations involve detailed notation of behaviors, events, and the contexts surrounding relevant events and behaviors (Best and Kahn, 1988). Interviews are used to “gather information regarding an individual’s experiences and knowledge; his or her opinions, beliefs, and feelings” (Best and Kahn, 1998: 255).

Access to the respondents in the study was also important. Fortunately, one of the researchers has been teaching in a MARA Junior Science College (MJSC) for nearly eighteen years. This helped her to establish close ties with the college system as well as with the teachers in the college and enabled her to interview eight English teachers from three MJSCs with some degree of confidence with regards to the honesty of their responses. In line with regulations, however, consent was first obtained from the Director of Education and Training (Secondary) Division, MARA before the interviews were conducted and the observation performed.
The interviews, guided by an interview agenda developed earlier, lasted from thirty minutes to an hour and were tape recorded and later transcribed. The interviews were allowed to digress from the prepared questions should the teachers interviewed have issues they felt warranted more discussion. The teachers interviewed were mostly female and had varying degrees of experience in the teaching profession, ranging from two who each has three months of teaching experience to one who has twenty three years. All of them, however, had administered the OET at least once since its introduction in 2002. Four teachers were interviewed when they attended a workshop in August, 2004. The other four teachers were interviewed at their college after an appointment was scheduled via the Senior Subject Teacher and approved by the Principal. The purpose of the study was explained to them and these four willingly consented to the interview. The observation of the administration of the oral test was carried out on a new teacher who was doing it for the first time. All teachers involved in the interviews and the observation were promised anonymity in the final write-up of the study.

The interview session revolved around seven main questions which were based on the three research questions specified earlier. Responses to the interview questions were collapsed and organized around these three research questions. Questions 1, 2 and 3 of the interview related to the validity and fairness of the OET in general as perceived by the teachers. Questions 4 and 5, in essence, examined backwash effects while questions 6 and 7 involved teacher perceptions of constraints in administering the OET as well as their suggestions in improving the OET.

**Validity and fairness of the OET.**

Teachers were unanimous in their response when asked whether the OET was the best way to assess a student’s oral proficiency: a resounding “NO”. Interestingly enough, when they were asked to explain this response, each teacher opted instead to suggest an alternative test format. One teacher thought that an impromptu test should be given besides the OET as part of the assessment, especially with Model 1 of the OET which involved individual student presentation. She suggests that after each student has
presented a speech, the student should be required to give an impromptu talk on a given topic. One teacher felt that the best form of assessment was a one-to-one test, between the teacher and candidate, while another preferred a dialogue. Other suggestions include pair work and problem solving activities. One teacher thought that “the previous oral test was better.” Another seemed resigned to the fact that while the OET was not the best way to test speaking ability, it was “the best that you can do.”

When the teachers were asked concerning the validity of the test, the majority seemed vehement that the test is not a valid measure of speaking ability. A major concern was once again the contrived nature of the speech elicited by the test format. The teachers felt that candidates merely memorised from the text or article.

Students are well prepared. They memorize and speak whatever they have memorised.

Requiring candidates to produce more natural and spontaneous language has been a problem with many tests of speaking ability and the teachers involved in this study seem to perceive that the OET is also similarly contrained. As one teacher observes, the OET “should be about answering questions at that time and at that moment,” yet, “the students are given time to prepare, and the question is given beforehand so that they can think and prepare for it.”

However, several teachers voiced qualified support of the OET, describing the test as valid, but “only when it comes to answering questions (asked by the teacher based on the topic).” Another felt that although the OET may involve memorization, it still requires the students to be fluent in their delivery. This requirement, she argues, is an important aspect of the speaking ability.

Fairness of a test could refer to two different issues – the first is whether or not the student deserves the marks that he or she is given, and secondly, whether or not the student is unfairly asked to perform a task for which he or she does not have any knowledge of or preparation for. In this respect, the feeling that student responses
during the OET is contrived and largely a function of their ability to remember texts weigh heavily among the teachers. Those who are skeptical of the OET are insistent that the OET is testing the students’ memory and it is “not about their ability but about their preparation” for the test.

It doesn’t sound right. Whatever they produce has no sincerity and it doesn’t come from the heart. It’s about preparation and just to pass the test. The skills that we require them to have are not there.

Another teacher who concurred had this to say:

I don’t think so. They find an article to memorize and then present it. It’s not based on their effort. They just read out aloud what they have memorized.

A few teachers, however, believe that the OET is a fair test of speaking because “the students are talking about something they like and they have put in a lot of work prior to the test.” The many stages involved in preparing for the test including rehearsing and memorization warrant that the test is fair. The assumptions here, of course, are that students who put in more work will get a better grade and that for students of the same proficiency level, the one who practices more will be awarded a higher grade.

**Influence of the OET on teaching and learning**

The extent to which a test affects teaching and learning is referred to as washback. According to Messick (1996), washback occurs when one does something he or she would not normally do if not for the test. Because the OET is a school based test, a clear washback involves the integration of elements of the test in classroom teaching. While all the teachers are already following the directive to integrate the OET with class work in varying degrees, they are calling for more integration. In Form 4, they could integrate the OET with solo presentation and pair work only after they had taught at least two topics. At the Form 5 level where group work is introduced, it is simpler to integrate the assessment with classroom activities. Topics appear to be hooks upon which teachers use to integrate the OET. One example given is on the topic of careers. After finishing coursework on the topic, the students would be informed a day in advance that they are
going to be assessed on the topic. The activity could be a gathering among friends and they would be talking about their careers.

Generally, however, while the teachers are very willing to support their students for the test, it is often the students themselves who determine whether any preparation would be accepted. Some of the teachers describe how students refuse the assistance and test preparation that teachers wish to offer: “I chase after my students … but mine run farther!” With the solo presentation and pair work formats, the teachers have to do a bit more pushing as it is up to the students’ whether they would come to the teacher for help. The students are allowed to choose their own topics and sometimes they don’t come to ask the teacher for help at all. There is also a lot of last minute work involved. Those students who do come seek approval of the topics they have chosen and some will ask for help with pronunciation. Teachers will try to make the whole exercise meaningful for the students; from writing the text, correcting the text with the help of the teacher, and helping them practice their pronunciation and intonation.

As for group work, the students will generally seek the teacher to discuss their projects. Once they have decided on an activity, the students will have research to do, have discussions with the relevant authorities, for example the school counselor, and so on. Another preparation is to have students listen to the tape provided by the Examination Syndicate, before the students are brought to the Internet.

The OET seems to have affected the teachers and students in different ways. Teachers are now directly involved in the assessment of their own students in a national level examination. As a result, teachers seem to have become more concerned with how best to assess the students’ spoken language. Similarly, teachers also seem to have taken on the role of motivator and trainer in preparing the students for the test. Students, on the other hand, seem somewhat taken aback by the prominence of oral assessment in their English language classrooms. Judging by the interviews with teachers, many students have taken to either dismissing the importance of the test or adopting various forms of test preparation techniques. There is not yet any indication that specific teaching and
learning techniques have become preferred over others. One possible reason for this could be because the OET has only recently been introduced.

**Constraints of the OET.**

Most tests of oral ability are constrained in numerous ways. However, when asked about the constraints they faced, the unexpected answer was that the majority of these teachers had few or no constraints. The OET does not affect their school work since students prepare for the test on their own time. The usual practice is, students are given a week to prepare. One college has a one hour class period, so when the teacher carries out Model 1, she can assess up to 18 students in one period, thus finishing her class of 25 in one and a half class sessions. Another teacher conducts her Model 1 after school hours so her class work is not affected.

Curiously, for those teachers who reported constraints, they were not practical constraints like class size and time, but more abstract ones like student attitudes. Apparently, students are very resistant towards English in general and are not motivated to put in any extra effort for the subject. “They know they will pass anyway, so they don’t really care.” Another teacher spoke of the “unwillingness” of the students to do the test.

My constraints are the students themselves. They are not interested especially when there are other exams coming. They are just not interested.

In order to fight apathy, the most senior teacher suggested that if a percentage of the overall grade in the English paper was allocated to the OET instead of a pass or fail grade, then maybe this would give students the impetus to learn. An appropriate level of pressure would motivate the students to work harder.

When time was a constraint, it was not because the OET took up too much class time but because the teacher had to manage students taking the test, and this was time consuming. Another teacher had the same problem when calling the students for the test itself as students kept postponing their turns.
Observing the OET in session

The observation of a teacher conducting Model 2 (pair work) of the OET was carried out twice on two consecutive days. Due to many factors, she had to reschedule her test many times and could only carry it out in the evenings from 3:00 p.m to 4:30 p.m., at her desk in the Language Department or staffroom. While one pair was being tested, the others would be waiting, far from sight. The students assessed were Form 4 students and this was the second assessment of the OET (the first being a solo presentation). The assessment involved pair work, student to student interaction, with the teacher as the assessor. The activities outlined for this model are: talking and sharing information, solving problems, making enquiries and ordering goods and services, making and responding to complaints, interviewing, asking and giving instructions, and role-playing. Students were allowed to choose their own partners and in consultation with the teacher, decide on the topic and task. The students could refer to the Curriculum Specifications for Malaysian Secondary Schools, or simply to their textbooks. Thus the teacher’s role is that of a facilitator. When presenting the task, the candidates were allowed to prompt each other. The teacher, on the other hand, was not allowed to prompt the students but could assess one student individually or both candidates simultaneously.

In the two days of observation, seven pairs were observed; four on day one and three pairs on day two. The pairs were mixed in terms of race, but not gender. Thus, there was an Indian girl paired with a Malay girl but no boy-girl pairs. The tasks the candidates chose were varied: argumentative discussion, role-playing and giving advice, giving descriptions, and talking and sharing information. The topics chosen were also varied and wide-ranging: pets, family and hobbies, ‘Being the eldest in a family is better than being the youngest’, divorced parents, Bollywood movies, and how to play ‘sepak takraw’ and football. There was no time limit given but the pairs finished their tasks in five to seven minutes.
The teacher listened and took notes throughout the assessment without prompting the students. The mark sheets of the students were in front of her and she would jot down the scores and comments she might have of each student’s presentation. Once the task is over, she would go over the scores and explain why such scores were given. She would comment on the performance, explaining each student’s strengths and weaknesses. For example, she may remark on the appropriateness of the topic chosen, the content, choice of vocabulary, or on each student’s grammar or pronunciation. When she is done, she will ask the students if they are satisfied with their marks, following which, each student will put down his/her signature, and the assessment is over. During these seven observations no student disputed the marks given to them. Within one week, each student was to hand in a summary of his/her task to be kept in a file as proof of having presented.

The assessment over the two days went very well. What was impressive was that the students were not mindful of the observer at all, or of the teacher. One student was able to self-correct his pronunciation of a word. Though the students had memorized their tasks, they were quite natural sounding. The two boys who took turns to describe the games of ‘sepak takraw’ and football seemed to be having a ‘real’ interaction, though they were somewhat hindered by a lack of vocabulary. The pair who dealt with divorced parents had a bit of drama going, one playing the role of the tragic daughter and the other an advisor. Two pairs brought along their notes and made a few references to them. One brought a stuffed toy in her discussion of ‘pets’. It was clear that these students were enjoying themselves, though the two Malay boys showed some signs of agitation. However, according to the teacher there were still students who were still coming to change either their topics or their day of presentation, and those who had yet to memorize their tasks. We were told that students had a month to prepare for their tasks – a period which was rather accommodating.

Recurrent themes.
This paper set out to seek answers to three questions based on teacher perceptions and practices in the administration of the school-based oral English test (OET). In analyzing the available data, some recurring themes have surfaced and the subsequent discussion will be based on those themes.

Test format and student responsiveness. The first of these themes involve the appropriate format for testing speaking that is necessary for fairness and validity. At the end of the day when I asked the teachers if better speakers are being produced among the students, a few teachers answered ‘yes’. Those who agreed, however, thought that it depended on the Models used. With Model 1 involving solo presentations, students tended to be uptight and agitated. This is seen when students are found to be more unwilling and disinterested when doing Model 1. Teachers also face the most problems in conducting this model, having to cope with students who falter because they fail to memorize their tasks, who keep changing the topics, or who fail to keep their test appointments. There are indications of high levels of anxiety reflected by instances such as students’ loud exclamations of tension in the hallways when they are called in to present or continued and nervous appeal to teachers because of difficulty in memorizing the speech. This ‘fear’ of speaking is not so surprising. Klinger (1999) cited studies which show cultural values as influencing speech in the classroom. Where Malaysian students are concerned, they seldom volunteer to answer questions. More so if they have to stand in front of the class and talk for five minutes. In another study cited by Klinger (1999), East Asian students are shown to be hesitant to take risks, providing a potential explanation for the ‘fear’ our students have in giving a speech. Such a heightened state of anxiety, bordering on abject fear, could certainly affect the test scores of these students. This attitudinal reaction to tests of speaking should be addressed or else it could introduce construct-irrelevant variance in test scores. Fulcher (2003: 47) describes construct-irrelevant variance as “the extent to which test scores are influenced by factors that are irrelevant to the construct that the test is intended to measure.”

There is more freedom when students do pair work. A case in point was when I observed the seven pairs of students carrying out their tasks. They seemed to be at ease and though
the lines were memorized and the exchanges rehearsed, there were turn-taking and appropriate pauses being used. Kitao and Kitao (1996: 3) advocates the use of pair work when testing speaking “to stimulate speech for the tester to evaluate as this is intended to be less inhibiting.”

Teachers really see students enjoying themselves carrying out the group activity. To the students, doing group work (sketches, forum, debates, etc) is not really a test as they are having fun interacting. As one teacher succinctly puts it, “Students, who normally don’t speak in class, speak to get marks.” Such an observation is in line with other studies such as Klinger (1999) that reports that group activities reduce anxiety, “and as students learn to tolerate the mistakes of others, they learn to tolerate their own.” (p.9) In his own observation, Klinger (1999) notes:

… while they are in groups doing activities, students are extremely patient and helpful with each other as they try to think of what to say and how to say it. If the teacher does not correct them as if they had made a terrible mistake, if they feel it is safe to make mistakes and learn from their mistakes, learners gain confidence in at least trying to speak. (p.9)

The benefits of group work suggest that it may be worthwhile to alter the order of the models of the test. Group work will increase the student’s motivation and probably change his/her attitude towards speaking. Students should therefore be required to perform the group work task first, then proceed to pair work and finally the student build enough courage and confidence to speak on his own in the individual presentation task. After all, the final objective of the English Language Syllabus is to develop in the student the ability to express his/her thoughts in unrehearsed speech and “form and maintain relationships through conversation and correspondence; take part in social interaction; and interact to obtain goods and services; to express ideas, thoughts and feelings imaginatively and creatively.” (Sukatan Pelajaran Bahasa Inggeris, 2000). This ability to be able to speak in front of the class, unrehearsed and unafraid, is a primary language skill that a student should acquire.

**Process and product.** A second issue brought about by the data is that of process and product as they relate to those immediately involved in the testing. When the district
level English language officer comes and analyzes the scores given by the teachers, he/she comments only on the scores, that is, the product. But the teachers seem largely more concerned with the process and effort that goes into each presentation. Additionally, however, teachers also are involved in determining the product by awarding grades to their students. Students, on the other hand, may not be able to appreciate the process despite being an integral part of it. Instead, they are more keen on the results of their assessment – that they should do well – rather than how they achieve such results.

The responses given to the three questions during the interview seem to indicate some degree of dissatisfaction with the OET among teachers. While it may be true that the OET is far from the perfect test of oral ability, some of this dissatisfaction may actually be a reflection of a deeper concern that involves the roles played by the different parties in the OET.

The role of the teacher is especially important in this respect. It is possible that much of the dissatisfaction expressed is because teachers need to teach the oral skill and the format of the test has impinged upon their teaching techniques. The various suggestions provided concerning the OET format could therefore be an expression not only of how students should be tested but also of how they should be taught. While national level examinations are left to central agencies like the Examination syndicate, teaching is undeniable the responsibility of the classroom teacher.

The relationship between the teacher who is the immediate assessor of the students and the district level assessor who largely validates the scores given is also an important element in the administration of the OET. Among the teachers interviewed, those from at least two MJSCs report that the district level assessors are often not happy with marks that they have allocated, deeming them too strict and the marks given too low. Some of the complaints the teachers receive from the district level assessors are that they should be fair in grading and that their students deserve higher marks. But according to the teachers in one college,
How fair is fair? We weren’t given training, briefing yes, but no training, so how can they criticize us? The assessor did not do any inter-rater exercise with us, only the marks given were analyzed. Among the English teachers in our college, we have a consensus as to the marks given.

In another college, the district level assessor commented that government school students could recite a poem they learned like *The Road Not Taken* (from the Literature Component) perfectly and were given high marks. Students in the MJSC who could orally present a memorized text fluently and with correct pronunciation were therefore also expected to be given high marks. To this, the teacher countered by saying:

> Our students deserve the marks they got. We followed the examples given in the compact disc provided by the Examination Syndicate, the only guidelines given. And we followed the bands in giving marks to the students.

Certainly the discrepancy between the district level assessor and the teachers needs to be resolved. The district level assessor looks only at the results awarded to the MJSC students and voices discontent at what seems to be only the end product, that is, whatever is produced by the student during the testing. The teachers, on the other hand, insist that they know their students best including the amount of effort that has been put in by each student before the test.

**Standardization procedures.** Roux (1997: 4), in his article, suggests that if the reliability of a test is to be ensured, oral language proficiency tests should have these characteristics:

- A standardized procedure by which the evaluation is conducted
- Objective criteria for evaluation
- A standardized method for interpretation

He goes on to make an important point that if the evaluation does not meet the requirements above, then the marks given “will be a mere representation of the evaluator’s impression about the person’s ability and not an accurate, objective and fair assessment.” (p.4). Certainly, the teachers interviewed here are crying for more standardization, not just in the testing procedure but also in how the constructs being
tested are to be interpreted. They want inter-rater training so that the marks allocated for each activity is standard and deemed fair. They want that the time allocated for each activity to be standardized for all candidates. And they want that every directive by the Examination Syndicate issued be disseminated to all, nationwide.

An interesting issue raised during the interview was the perception of the word ‘fair’. When the question posed was whether the OET was a fair test, it had meant ‘fair’ as in not to disadvantage some students for example, those from the rural areas or those from different socio-economic backgrounds. But a teacher related ‘fairness’ to how experienced a teacher is. Teaching experience as well as the experience of conducting a speaking test is a factor in the administration of the OET. Certainly there are studies that call for the training of teachers as examiners and Fulcher (2003) argues that such training is essential if they are to grade in the same way and maintain some standardization in scoring. All Form 4 and 5 English language teachers must therefore be given proper training in administering the OET so that no student is biased against because of poor judgment on the examiner’s part.

**Conclusion.**

This study is a small scale study involving eight English language teachers. While the responses may not yet be sufficient to make conclusive remarks concerning the effectiveness and appropriateness of the school based Oral English test (OET), they provide interesting information on how teachers perceive the test. From the data obtained through the interviews and observations, several of these perceptions must be noted as they may affect the implementation of the test itself. They also have the potential to form the basis of future studies in language testing.

First, the format of the OET has encouraged test preparation techniques such as memorization that do not reflect good learning practice. In this respect, the validity of the test as a test of speaking may be questioned. The students are allowed to prepare for their tasks for from a week to a month. This preparation seems to consist largely of
memorization which the students regurgitate when it is their turn to talk during the OET. Few would advocate or condone the use of memorized text in oral testing. Secondly, the product or scores awarded in the test, as well as the process or the teaching and learning involved in preparing for the test need to be reconciled. Administrators concerned with the end product of testing and teachers and students who are involved in teaching, learning as well as in the test itself must be made to agree on numerous. In this regard, teaching and learning techniques used in preparation for the test should be discussed and mutually agreed upon in order for both product and process to be in line with each other. Finally, teacher training that standardize procedures in conducting and preparing for the test would go a long way in helping obtain reliable and valid scores.

The OET is a relatively new test of speaking and its implementation will undoubtedly face many challenges. It is expected that the administration of the test will improve over the years as will the teaching and learning techniques used in preparing for the test. Nevertheless, in order for such improvement to occur, the findings of studies on the OET, must be given due attention based on their own merits. In the same vein, while this study is largely based on the perceptions of eight teachers, it has been able to uncover concerns related to the OET which must be accorded the attention they deserve. Further research based on the tentative findings of this qualitative study could further refine the implementation of the OET.

References:


