

## THE IMPACT OF THE BGCSE ESL EXAMINATION ON THE TEACHING OF SPEAKING

by

**Leonard B. M. Nkosana**  
**University of Botswana**

### Abstract

*This paper reports and discusses the results of form five (year 12) students' and teachers' survey questionnaires regarding the reality of the teaching of speaking in English, which is not assessed in the BGCSE ESL exam compared to the other macro skills like reading and writing, which are assessed. This was done in the light of the asserted power of examinations to determine what is taught. The results have indicated that the BGCSE ESL exam, the sociolinguistic status of English in Botswana, and other factors such as lack of materials and appropriate professional development have influenced teachers' classroom practice as far as the teaching of speaking in English is concerned. It is concluded that multiple factors, beside BGCSE ESL exam, influence the teaching of speaking in Botswana senior secondary schools.*

### Introduction

In the late 1990s the government of Botswana through the Ministry of Education (MoE), adopted a new senior secondary school English syllabus. The previous syllabus, the Cambridge Overseas School Certificate (COSC) ordinary level English one, which was controlled by UCLES, was not considered to be suitable for the linguistic situation in the country. The new syllabus, the General Botswana Certificate of Secondary Education (BGCSE) English one is different from the COSC one in that it is a skills oriented ESL syllabus, which is intended to develop the students' communicative skills in English; while the COSC English syllabus was an academic oriented course intended to develop the academic skills of reading and writing. The COSC English examination also only assessed reading and writing, while the BGCSE syllabus provided for the assessment of all the four macro skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Reading and writing were to be assessed through a final examination, while listening and speaking, were to be assessed by coursework by class teachers. It is important to note that the coursework marks were to contribute to the final ESL mark.

However, at the implementation stage in 1998, it became apparent that the system was not ready for the assessment of speaking and listening by coursework. This part of assessment was therefore deferred to the future "as soon as the facilities for doing so are developed" (Ministry of Education, 2000: ii). To date it is ten years after the BGCSE ESL syllabus was first implemented and the assessment of speaking and listening is still not done. Therefore although the teaching syllabus for senior secondary schools has changed with regard to the teaching of speaking skills, the examination syllabus has not.

### Possible washback effects

It has been argued that unless the assessment procedures are also changed to test

communicative skills, the pedagogy would also remain unchanged in spite of the methodology recommended in the teaching syllabus (Weir, 1993). It has also been argued that in a situation like that of Botswana where there is no congruence between the curriculum and what is tested, it is usually the case that the test replaces the curriculum in that both learners and teachers pay more attention to what is tested than what is not (Kellaghan & Greaney, 1992). Steffy & English (1997) contend that there are three generic curricular contents that provide directions to teachers in schools and school systems. These are the written curriculum, the taught curriculum, and the tested curriculum. They claim that the aim of good curriculum management is bringing these three types of contents into congruence, that is, the written curriculum should be the same one that is taught and tested. Steffy & English (1997) further assert that where there is no congruence between the three curricular contents, more of the curriculum that is tested is taught.

It is worth noting that research on curriculum reform and assessment and on how they bring about the desired teaching and learning indicates that there are divergent views. Some suggest that changing a test is possibly the most powerful means to bring about improvements in the learning experiences that go before it (Kellaghan & Greaney, 1992). Tests, it is argued, can have a most useful and powerful washback effect on teaching. Others argue that a teacher's professional consciousness is a more fundamental determinant of teaching practice (Alderson & Hamp-Lyons' 1996; Yung, 2002). Yet another group while appreciating the strong association between curriculum reform and test reform assert that tests and exams cannot be singled-out as determinants of teaching practice because of other factors that contribute to the success or failure of curriculum reform (Alderson & Wall, 1993; Wall & Alderson, 1993; Wall, 1996, 1999, 2000). They contend that one cannot meaningfully isolate the effects of tests and exams on the curriculum from those of other factors. Such factors include for instance, the quality of the teachers and the availability of adequate resources needed to effectively implement the curriculum. The research was aimed at establishing whether the absence of a speaking test in the BGCSE ESL examination has had a bearing on the teaching and learning of speaking in English in ESL classes.

## **Research Design**

This section briefly discusses the research question and methods that were used to elicit data for this paper. (This paper only reports a small section of much larger study).

### **Research questions**

In order to investigate the impact of the BGCSE English curriculum and assessment on the teaching and learning of speaking skills in the light of the asserted power of the examination to influence teaching and learning the following research question was asked: To what extent has the BGCSE English language curriculum that is accompanied by an exam that does not assess speaking, supported the Steffy and English (1997) claim that where there is no congruence between the written curriculum and the tested one, more of the tested curriculum is taught?

In order to answer the above question a questionnaire with both open and closed-ended was used. This strategy is called Concurrent Triangulation (Creswell, 2003). This strategy was chosen because it is used if one needs to use more than one method in an attempt to confirm, cross-validate, or corroborate findings within a single study (Creswell, 2003). Triangulation was chosen because it allows the research to develop a complex picture of the phenomenon being studied, which might otherwise be unavailable if a single method

were employed (Denzin, 1997; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983; Patton, 2002; Silverman, 1993). Studying why and how curriculum innovations succeed or fail to bring about the expected improvements in the teaching and learning of students is a complex undertaking requiring a multi-faceted approach (Fullan, 2001). Both data source triangulation which involves the use of multiple information sources (students and teachers) and method triangulation which involves the use of multiple research methodologies (quantitative and qualitative) were used (Liamputtong, 2005).

## Research Instruments

### Student questionnaires

A survey questionnaire for form five students (Year 12) was designed with closed questions relating to students' classroom experiences with regard to the teaching and assessment of speaking skills. The survey questionnaire elicited **information on classroom tasks, exercises, materials, and tests relating to the teaching of speaking skills in class**, and also relating to their attitudes, perceptions, opinions and views regarding the importance of speaking. (See student questionnaire in appendix I. NB. The questions in bold face elicited data that was used in writing this paper)

### Teacher questionnaires

A survey questionnaire for teachers was designed with both closed and open-ended questions relating to teachers' classroom experiences with regard to the teaching of speaking skills and to whether they thought the BGCSE English syllabus recommendation to assess speaking is a feasible proposition or not. The questionnaire also elicited information on their perceptions, views, and opinions with regard to the assessment of speaking skills and also on **information relating to their classroom activities with regard to the teaching and testing of oral skills**. They were asked about their attitude towards the recommended teaching approach and whether they used the approach in their teaching or not. (See teacher questionnaire in appendix II. NB. The questions in bold face elicited data that was used in writing this paper)

## Recruitment, sample size and data collection

### Students

A total of 577 form five (year 12) students were originally recruited but 553 participated in the study. The recruitment and the administration of the survey questionnaires were conducted by the researcher himself. The students were drawn from 10 senior secondary schools sampled from a total of 27 senior secondary schools in the country. The 10 senior secondary schools were sampled from all the six school districts in Botswana: Southern, Kgalagadi & Gantsi, South Central, Maun & Boteti, Northern, and Central.

### Secondary school teachers of English

A total of 53 form five teachers of English as Second Language (ESL), recruited from the same 10 senior secondary schools from which the students were recruited, participated in this study. The recruitment and the questionnaire administration for both students and teachers took a maximum of three days per school.

## **Demographic data**

### **Students**

The total number of student participants was 553 and these were from five students aged between 16 and 22 years who were recruited from 10 senior secondary schools. The average number of students recruited from each school was 55.3. The majority of the students attended school in a rural setting (377, 68.2%) and only about one third (176, 31.8%) attended school in an urban setting. This reflects the fact that there are more secondary schools in rural (19) areas than in urban ones (8) because more people in Botswana also live in the rural areas than in urban areas. Male students (286, 51.7%) were slightly more than female (266, 48.1%) students. A large majority of the students (456, 82.5%) have Setswana as their first language. This reflects the linguistic landscape of the country in which about 78% (Batibo, 2005) of the people of Botswana are Setswana speakers.

### **Teachers**

There were more female teachers (29, 54.7%) than were males (24, 45.5%). As with the students the majority (35, 66%) of the teachers were teaching in rural schools.

### **Participating teachers' qualifications**

The majority of the teachers had either a BA degree with a major in English plus a post graduate diploma in education (PGDE) or a BA acquired after a Diploma in Secondary Education (DSE) or a BEd with a major in English language education. Five (9.4%) had graduate qualifications such as MA or MEd or MSc in ELT or Applied Linguistics in addition to BA plus PGDE or BA (Ed) or BEd. Four (7.5%) had only BAs without any professional qualifications. One (1.9%) did not give any information regarding his or her qualification.

### **Teaching experience**

More than half of the teachers, 27 (50.9%) had teaching experience that ranged between 1 and 5 years; 11 (20.8%) teaching experience that ranged between 6 and 10 years; six (11.3%) experience that ranged between 11 and 15 years; three (5.7%) experience that ranged between 16 and 20 years; two (3.8%) experience that ranged between 21 and 25 years; one (1.9%) experience that ranged between 26 and 30 years; three (5.7%) did not give any information on their teaching experience.

### **Data analysis**

#### **Data analysis for quantitative data**

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) program (Version 11.0) was used for data processing and analysis. Data was entered in SPSS and verified. It was cleaned up, and out-of-range values were identified and corrected. After that descriptive outputs were produced for the report. Further statistical analysis was done through McNemar's which assesses the significance of the difference between two correlated proportions, such as in this study the proportions of teachers who give speaking tasks/exercises and those do not were based on the same sample of subjects. Another test, Friedman's tests, was used. This test is a non-parametric test to compare three or more matched groups. This test was found to be appropriate as subjects were asked to rank the frequency with which they were given exercises in the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. The teachers' survey questionnaire also consisted of open questions. The responses to the open ended

questions helped in understanding the reasons behind the responses to the closed questions.

## **Conceptual framework**

### **Steffy & English's (1997) multi-curricula model**

It has been argued that in a situation like that of Botswana where there is no congruence between the curriculum and what is tested, it is usually the case that the test replaces the curriculum in that both learners and teachers pay more attention to what is tested than what is not (Steffy & English, 1997). Steffy & English (1997) contend that there are three generic curricular contents that provide directions to teachers in schools and school systems. These are the written curriculum, the taught curriculum, and the tested curriculum. They claim that the aim of good curriculum management is bringing these three types of contents into congruence, that is, the written curriculum should be the same one that is taught and tested. Steffy & English (1997) further assert that where there is no congruence between the three curricular contents more of the curriculum that is tested is taught.

In the present BGCSE English examination case, in which oral/aural skills are not assessed, there is evidence of construct under-representation (Messick, 1989), thereby threatening the validity of the inferences that can be made from the exam. The consequences or impact of such a test on teaching and learning is essentially what the Steffy & English (1997) claim deals with. One of the aims of the current paper was to find out if data from Botswana would support the Steffy & English (1997) claim that where there is no congruence between the written curriculum and the tested one, more of the tested curriculum is taught.

## **Findings**

The research question that this paper addressed was aimed at finding out to what extent the impact of the BGCSE English language curriculum that is accompanied by an exam that does not assess speaking support the Steffy & English (1997) claim that where there is no congruence between the written curriculum and the tested one more of the tested curriculum is taught.

In order to address the above aim the students were first asked to indicate whether their English language teachers ever taught them speaking skills, in order to estimate the prevalence of the teaching of speaking in BGCSE English classrooms and 412 (74.9%) of them said that their teachers taught them speaking skills. However, 138 (25.1%) said that their teachers did not teach them speaking skills at all. There is a slight difference between the students' responses to the questions on whether teachers gave them teaching tasks and on whether their teachers taught them speaking skills. On the one hand 348 (63.4%) of the students said that their teachers gave them speaking tasks/exercises while on the other hand 412 (74.9%) said their teachers taught them speaking. This may be explained by the fact that teachers may lecture students on speaking skills, such as on how to give a class presentation or a speech, without actually giving the students any tasks/exercises to do. Such students would say they were taught speaking even though they would not say they were given any speaking exercises/tasks to do.

In order to be able to compare the teaching of speaking to the other language skills the students were also asked to indicate if they were taught each of the other language skills—listening, reading, and writing. Two thirds (64.7%) reported that they were taught listening while one just over third (35.3%) said that they were not taught; 98.7% indicated that they

were taught reading; and 100% said that they were taught writing.

To find out if there was a statistical significant difference in the amount of teaching in each of the four skills in BGCSE ESL classrooms McNemar's test was done and the result indicate that the proportion of students who reported that their teachers taught them listening is significantly less than the proportion who said their teacher taught them speaking ( $p < 0.000$ ), which is significantly less than the proportion who reported that their teacher taught them reading or writing ( $p < 0.000$ ). This means that the skills that are tested in the BGCSE English exam are taught more than those that are not tested.

To estimate the extent of the teaching of speaking in BGCSE ESL classrooms, the teachers were asked to indicate in which of the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing they gave exercises or tasks. The results show that 15 (28.8%) gave listening exercises/tasks, 39 (73.6%) gave speaking exercises/tasks, 51 (96.2%) gave reading exercises/tasks and 53 (100%) gave writing exercises/tasks. It should be noted that the amount of exercises/tasks that the teachers give to their students or that the students do in each of the four skills are considered to be an indication of the amount of teaching that takes place in each.

An examination of the number and percentages of teachers who said that they gave tasks/exercises in each of the four language skills also indicates that less teaching was done in listening than in speaking, reading or writing. Further analysis in the form of statistical calculations was done to give a clearer picture. A comparison of proportions of teachers who usually give exercises/tasks in listening ( $15/52 = 28.8\%$ ), speaking ( $39/53 = 73.6\%$ ), reading ( $51/53 = 96.2\%$ ) and writing ( $53/53 = 100\%$ ) was done through McNemar's test. The result indicate that the proportion of teachers who usually give exercises/tasks in listening is significantly less than the proportion who give exercises/tasks in speaking ( $p < 0.000$ ), which is significantly less than the proportion who give exercise/tasks in reading or writing ( $p < 0.004$ ).

The pattern that emerges from the students and teachers results indicate that the proportion of teachers who give exercises/tasks in the skills that are not tested in the BGCSE English exam is significantly less than the proportion who give exercises/tasks in those that are tested. However, things are a bit more complex than one would have expected. One would have expected to find no significant differences between the proportion of teachers that give exercises/tasks in listening and the proportion that give exercises in speaking since both skills are not tested in the BGCSE English exam. However the fact that speaking and listening, which are both not tested in the BGCSE English examination have significantly different results as far as their teaching is concerned, indicates that it is not just the test that is influencing their teaching. Therefore something else beside the BGCSE ESL examination might be responsible for the fact that the teaching of speaking and listening show very different patterns.

When teachers were asked to give reasons for their answers those who indicated that they did not give speaking exercises/tasks gave the following reasons: not in the final examination (17/51, 33.3%); taught in the process of teaching the other skills (10/51, 19.6%); we are used to giving written tasks rather than oral ones (23/51, 45%); the skills are not in the syllabus (27/51, 52.9%); the oral practice we give to students during class discussions is enough (9/51, 17.6%); there's no instrument in place for testing speaking (37/51, 72.5%); the teaching schedule is too tight or crowded (26/51, 50.9%); the students are too poor at oral

skills (7/51, 13.7%); and speaking skills are too time consuming to test (24/51, 47%). The above reasons do not only have to do with the BGCSE ESL examination but also with a variety of other factors in the whole Botswana education system. For example while reasons such as speaking is not in the final examination; the skills are not in the syllabus (meaning the examination syllabus); and there is no instrument in place for testing speaking have to do with the BGCSE ESL examination which does not test speaking, reasons relating to the fact that teachers are used to giving written tests rather than oral ones and to the perception that students are too poor at oral skills have to do with the perceptions of the teachers with regard to the quality of the students and with the teaching habits of the teachers, and not with the examination. It would therefore be incorrect to attribute the fact that teachers indicated that they gave less exercises or tasks in speaking to the influence of the exam alone and not to the other factors as well.

Students were further asked to indicate, of the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, the skill in which they did the first most, the second most, the third most and least exercises and tasks. The results are indicated in the Table 1 below.

Table 1: Students ranking of the skills

Ranking	Skills							
	Writing		Reading		Speaking		Listening	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
First most done	428	<b>77.4</b>	63	11.4	30	5.4	29	5.2
Second most done	78	14.1	331	<b>59.9</b>	85	15.4	56	10.1
Third most done	21	3.8	113	20.4	233	<b>42.1</b>	179	32.4
Least done	21	3.8	41	7.4	200	36.2	284	<b>51.4</b>

Key: the highest percentages in each row are in bold.

Table 1 above shows that more than three quarters of the students indicated that writing was the skill in which they did the most exercises/tasks. Three fifths of the students mentioned reading as the second skill in which they received exercises and tasks. Speaking and listening were the third and the least skills in which students received exercises/tasks respectively. Just from examining the number or the percentage of students who ranked each of the four skills there is an indication that most student ranked those skills that are tested in the BGCSE ESL exam as the first and second skills in which they received most exercises/tasks while the skills that are not tested were ranked third and least. A comparison of the ranking of skills by students, according to the frequency with which they get exercises/tasks was made by use of statistical analysis known as the Friedman test, which is a nonparametric procedure used to analyse this kind of rank data. The result indicate that the frequency with which students get exercises/tasks in listening is significantly less than the frequency with which they get exercises/tasks in speaking ( $\chi^2 = 10.736$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), which is significantly less than the frequency with which they get exercise/tasks in reading ( $\chi^2 = 170.064$ ;  $p < 0.000$ ), which is significantly less than the frequency with which they get exercise/tasks in writing ( $\chi^2 = 247.136$ ;  $p < 0.000$ ).

Again these results show that the students ranked the skills that are not tested as the skills in which they did less exercises/tasks as compared to those that are tested. However, the situation is rather more complex than that. First there was a significant difference in the ranking of the skills that are both not tested (listening and speaking) in the BGCSE ESL exam, and secondly there was also a significant difference in the ranking of the skills that are

both tested (reading and writing). The fact that there is a significant difference in the ranking of the two skills that are not tested on the one hand and those which are on the other is an indication that other factors influence the teaching of these skills beside the BGCSE ESL examination.

The teachers were also asked to indicate the frequency with which they gave exercises/tasks in a month, in a school term, and in a school year. The results are shown in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Frequency with which teachers gave exercises/tasks

Skill	No. of teachers	Frequency per term	Frequency per year
Listening	28.8% (15)	1-3 times	3-6 times
Speaking	73.6% (39)	1-3 times	3-12 times
Reading	96.2% (51)	2-6 times	3-18 times
Writing	100% (53)	2-8times	3-18 times

Table 2 shows that the teachers who gave exercises/tasks to their students did so more in the two skills that happen to be tested in the BGCSE ESL examination and less in listening and speaking which are not tested. However, data from the above table show that speaking is closer to reading and writing in terms of the number of teachers who claimed to give exercises/tasks in it and though to a lesser extent the frequency with which exercises/tasks are given in it in a year. Speaking should have been closer to listening in terms of both the number of teachers who claimed to be teaching it and the frequency with which exercises/tasks are given in it, because like listening, it is also not tested in the BGCSE ESL examination.

However, it should be acknowledged that the results do indicate that the tested curriculum, comprising reading and writing, was taught more frequently than the one that is only written but not tested in the BGCSE ESL exam.

The respondents were then asked to indicate whether they and their students paid as much attention to speaking as they did to reading or/and writing, and the majority 35 (68.6%) said they did not while only 16 (31.4%) said they did. This finding suggests that teachers and students pay much more attention to reading and writing (the tested curriculum) than they did to speaking (part of the curriculum that is not tested) since teachers said that they and their students give less attention to speaking than they did to reading or writing. Of the 35 who indicated that they did not give as much attention to speaking as they did to reading or writing 17 (48.6%) gave various reasons and the rest gave no reasons. 16 out of 17 who answered (45.7%) said that the lack of a speaking test did not encourage both teachers and students to take speaking skills seriously; five (14.2%) of them said that teachers do most of the speaking because the teaching is teacher-centred; and three said that it is not in the syllabus. Since speaking is in both the written BGCSE ESL teaching and the examination syllabuses, the teachers could only have been referring to the tested syllabus by saying that speaking is not in the syllabus. It should be noted that some respondents gave more than one reason.

As the findings indicate above, of those who gave reasons almost all of them said the



lack of a test did not encourage both the teachers and students to take teaching speaking seriously. It seems to be the case that even though the results of this study are rather complex because it is examining the effect of not assessing something in the exam rather than the effects of testing something, the exam has had an impact on the teaching of speaking though that seems to have been mediated by other factors as well. It should be noted that the BGCSE ESL exam has very important consequences for the senior secondary school leaver in Botswana. The scores of the examination are used to make decisions about the candidates' employability in both government and private sectors and also for entrance into tertiary institutions of further education and training. In a situation where the examination has very important consequences for those who take it a lot of emphasis is usually made on ensuring that the students pass the exams by giving more attention to those skills that are tested than to those that are not (Bailey, 1999). However though indeed more attention was found to be given to the tested skills of reading and writing, speaking, though not tested, is still taught to a significant extent. The high sociolinguistic status of English as a language of power and social mobility in Botswana can account for this (Nkosana, 2006).

Also of the 35 who indicated that they did not give as much attention to speaking as they did to reading or writing more than half (18, 51.4%) did not give any reasons. It is interesting to note that the majority of the respondents chose not to give any reasons for not giving as much attention to speaking as they did to reading or writing even when they were asked. The fact that some teachers said that speaking was taught in almost every lesson in the process of teaching the other skills might indicate that speaking could be somehow naturalized for them and is not something they would think of teaching explicitly.

To explore other possible factors that could be making teachers pay less attention to speaking than to reading or writing the respondents were asked a number of questions. The first other factor to be considered was the location of the school. McNemar's test was run to compare the proportion of teachers who teach in rural schools with the proportion of those who teach in urban schools to find out if there were any significant differences in their teaching of speaking skills. The proportion of teachers who teach in rural schools who usually give exercises/tasks in speaking is significantly less than the proportion of teachers who teach in urban who give exercises/tasks in speaking ( $p < 0.000$ ).

It is worthwhile to note that the rural and urban environments in Botswana are different as far as the use of English as a language of communication is concerned. While in the urban areas the use of English for ordinary communication is quite widespread, in the rural areas it is quite limited. Even the student body in urban areas is quite mixed with a sizeable number of students from other countries who do not speak or understand Setswana, the local language, and therefore communication with them can only be in English. Outside the school there are also many people who do not know Setswana and with whom one can only communicate in English. English therefore is an important lingua franca in urban centres which facilitates communication between many local people and foreigners from other African countries and the world at large. This environment is likely to motivate both teachers and students to take speaking in English more seriously.

In the rural areas the environment offers fewer opportunities for students to witness English being used for everyday communication as there are very few people who do not speak and understand Setswana. Therefore the only place where students come in contact with English is at school, especially in the classroom where it is used for teaching and learning. Outside the classroom communication among the students is in Setswana or any

other local language. Such an environment is not likely to encourage both teachers and students to take speaking in English seriously.

Another factor to be considered was the gender of the teachers. McNemar's test was run to compare the proportion of female teachers with the proportion of male teachers to find out if there were any significant differences in their teaching of speaking skills. The proportion of male teachers who usually give exercises/tasks in speaking is significantly less than the proportion of female teachers who give exercises/tasks in speaking ( $p < 0.014$ ). The reasons why this is the case is likely to be the fact that the majority of the female teachers (77.8%) teach in urban schools where speaking skills in English are in more demand.

Factors that directly have to do with teaching were then considered. First teachers were asked to indicate if there were adequate materials to guide teachers in their teaching of speaking skills. The results showed that 32.7% of the teachers said there were, 44.2% said there were not, 19.2% said they were not sure, and 3.8% said that there were no materials at all. This result indicates that only one third thought there were adequate materials to guide teachers in their teaching of English speaking skills while more than two thirds either did not think there were or were not sure if there were or thought that there were no materials at all. Lack of materials to guide teachers in their teaching of speaking may be one of the reasons why teachers are giving less attention to it than to reading or writing. However because the different parts of an education system are interconnected, the lack of teaching materials to guide teachers may be a consequence of the absence of a speaking test.

Secondly they were asked to indicate if the school management was supportive in terms of supplying the materials that are needed to implement the teaching approach. The results indicated that 38 (72%) said the school management was supportive, and 15 (28) said it was not. Asked to give reasons for their answers those who said management was not supportive gave the following responses: the management's reluctance to fully equip the department with audio/video recorders and players and photocopying materials (8/15); there are no teachers' guides for teaching speaking (6/15); textbooks are delivered too late (5/15); they always say there's not enough funds 1/15; their belief in the impractical recommended maximum teaching load of 40 periods/week in a five day timetable (3/15); and they do not enforce the school English speaking policy (2/15). It should be noted that some teachers in the above data gave more than one reason.

The responses indicate that the challenges the teachers face have to do with the general shortage of resources and not necessarily with the lack of support from school management. It should be noted that the unavailability of teachers' speaking teaching guides and limited audio-visual recorders and players would affect the teaching of speaking specifically and this could also account for the less attention given to speaking than to reading or writing. An English speaking policy is a policy which requires everyone, whether a student or a teacher to communicate only in English for all purposes. This policy only works if it is enforced because naturally students prefer to communicate among themselves in their local languages to English. The policy is meant to give the students the opportunity to practise speaking English in genuine real life communication. Therefore the non enforcement of the school's English speaking policy would affect speaking more than it would affect writing or reading. Large teaching loads coupled with crowded classrooms that are typical of the Botswana secondary school situation may be making the work of some teachers more difficult, as it is not easy to effectively use the more interactive speaking tasks such as group work or role-play in a crowded classroom. However, the majority of the teachers seem to be

coping as indicated by the various speaking tasks they used in BGCSE ESL classes found in the major study.

Thirdly the teachers were asked to indicate some of the challenges that may be preventing them from implementing the prescribed CLT teaching approach and the results were as shown in the Table 3 below:

Table 3: Resources

Resource lacking	Number of teachers	Percentage
Adequate classrooms, relevant textbooks, & teachers' guides together	21	40.4%
Relevant textbooks alone	16	36.4%
Teachers' guides alone	16	36.4%
Adequate classrooms	10	22.7%
Audio-visual equipment	6	13.6%

The above data quantifies the problem of the lack of resources that was brought up through the previous question. In a school where there is a shortage of classrooms it is difficult to implement the communicative language teaching approach as it is difficult to split the classes into smaller groups for interactive activities if the classes are too crowded. Lack of teachers' guides is an indication that there was not enough preparation before the BGCSE English syllabus was implemented. Teachers' guides and other relevant materials are usually prepared and sent to the schools before the syllabus is implemented. The fact that more than one third of the teachers mentioned the lack of relevant textbooks as a problem that prevented them from implementing the prescribed teaching approach is an indication that it is a serious problem.

The lack of relevant textbooks may present a serious problem to some teachers, especially inexperienced teachers, who are in the majority and who may be largely dependent on the materials provided by the Ministry of Education. The problems associated with inadequate facilities could be working together with other problems, such as the lack of the testing of speaking in the BGCSE English examination to militate against the successful implementation of the BGCSE ESL syllabus, especially the teaching of speaking, for which the old COSC syllabus did not provide any experience.

Fourthly the respondents were asked to indicate if they thought English teachers were equipped to conduct speaking assessment. This was done because effective teaching entails the ability to assess the learning or the acquisition of what one is teaching. The result indicated that 58.5% said they were while 28.3% said they were not. Even though the majority of the participants said that they were confident that teachers were equipped to carryout speaking assessment it is important to examine the reasons of the more than one quarter who said teachers were not equipped to assess speaking to appreciate the nature of the challenges some teachers might be facing in their work. They advanced the following reasons: more than half (9/15) of them said it was because the training they received did not equip them with the skills for assessing speaking; also more than half (8/15) of them said that the teachers needed training; three fifths (7/15) of them said that considering the large numbers of students in Botswana classrooms speaking assessment would overwhelm the teachers as it is too time consuming; and over half (9/15) of them said that the mechanisms for the assessment and rating of speaking were not in place. It should be noted that some of

these participants gave more than one reason.

The point brought up by the teachers that the large numbers of students in Botswana classrooms would overwhelm teachers if they attempted to assess speaking within an exam period is a valid one. This point was appreciated by the Task Force that drew up the syllabus and in an attempt to get around it opted for the kind of assessment in which coursework done by the classroom teachers throughout form four and five (year 11 and 12) with some form of external moderation as the mode that was likely to work ((Ministry of Education, 2000: ii). However the implementation of the BGCSE ESL syllabus was effected before the logistics of carrying out this form of assessment had been worked out.

Regarding training, teachers need to be given short training courses on how to conduct informal assessment on a continuous and on going basis. In fact the BGCSE English Task Force recommendation is to include course work which involves teachers' continuous assessment of project work in writing and oral proficiency in the terminal BGCSE English examination mark (Ministry of Education, 2000). Since there is no previous experience with this form of teaching and assessment in the Botswana public school system, teachers needed to be given training on how this is done as part of the syllabus implementation. Therefore since this was not done the teaching of speaking is not taught to the level it could if teachers had been given the training that they need as compared to that of reading or writing in which there was experience from the previous syllabus.

The reason relating to the pre-service training could be an indication of a gap in the training that teachers received at the University of Botswana, where the majority of these teachers were trained, in as far as the teaching and assessment of speaking is concerned. This might be so considering the fact that the English curriculum studies course offered to Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) students was initially meant to train teachers to teach the Cambridge Overseas School Certificate English language course which did not include the teaching and assessment of oral skills. The majority of teachers deployed to teach the BGCSE ESL syllabus were trained to teach the COSC English language course and may not be strong on teaching speaking and assessing it. Therefore they need in-service training in the teaching and assessing of speaking.

The reasons relating to teacher training and large classes are all an indication that a lot of preparation in terms of both material and human resources still needs to be done before speaking assessment can be successfully implemented. It should be taken into consideration that the education system was equipped for the teaching and assessment of the old COSC English language syllabus and if the new BGCSE English syllabus, which includes the teaching and assessment of two additional skills, is to be successfully implemented, special preparation, in terms of making additional provision of material and human resources needs to be made.

A similar kind of situation was experienced in Tanzania with the introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE) in that country. Tanzania decided to introduce UPE in order to extend access to education to every primary school going child in the country. The introduction of UPE was strengthened by the decision to make Kiswahili the sole medium of instruction at primary level, but unfortunately the implementation of UPE was not well planned and was hastily done. Hyden (1979) and Rubagumya (1994) assert that UPE is one of the many popular distributive policies that introduced new projects without proper studies and preparation. They further contend that UPE is an example of a political motivated project

which was hastily introduced to produce a sense of rapid advance after independence.

Whereas experts planned a gradual increase in expansion of primary education commensurate with preparations to be completed by about 1989, the Tanzanian ruling party decided to have it completed by 1977. Rubagumya (1994) asserts that the Tanzanian ruling elite was eager to impress the people with the figures (not quality education) and emphasized that as unique in Africa. In a similar way the fact that the resources for teaching and assessing speaking are not in place in the schools and teachers have not been given training on how to teach and assess speaking indicate that the implementation of the BGCSE syllabi seems has been hurried. Therefore not enough time has been given for preparation before implementation. This and many other factors which data from this study has brought to light are working together with the lack of a speaking test in the BGCSE English examination in influencing the teaching of speaking in Botswana.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

From what has come to light above it is therefore safe to conclude that data from Botswana has partly supported the Steffy & English (1997) claim that where there is no congruence between the written curriculum and the tested curriculum more of the curriculum that is tested is taught in that the teaching of listening and speaking in BGSCE ESL classes, which are not tested, were found to be significantly less than that of reading and writing, that are tested. It also means that to some extent the non assessment of speaking as provided for by the syllabus does not promote sustainable, because the examination negatively affects the teaching of speaking and listening. However, the fact that skills that are both not tested were both taught to significantly different extents, for instance, listening and speaking; and also the fact that students ranked skills which are either both tested or not tested significantly differently, for instance, there was a significant difference in the ranking of the skills that are both not tested (listening and speaking) in the BGCSE English exam, and also a significant difference in the ranking of the skills that are both tested (reading and writing); indicate that there were other factors that also influence the teaching of the four language skills beside the BGCSE ESL examination.

The location of the school was found to influence the way teachers taught speaking with urban teachers significantly teaching more speaking than rural ones. Other factors that influence teaching of speaking included the following: lack of adequate classrooms, lack of relevant textbooks, and lack of teachers' guides for teaching and assessing speaking, and lack of audio-visual equipment. All these factors were found to be all working together with the none-testing of speaking in the BGCSE English examination to negatively affect the teaching of speaking in BGCSE ESL classrooms.

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Dr. Leonard B. M. Nkosana  
University of Botswana  
Communication and Study Skills Unit  
Private Bag 0022 Gaborone  
E-mail: [nkosanal@mopipi.ub.bw](mailto:nkosanal@mopipi.ub.bw)