The Relationship between English Language Test Scores of the Written and Oral Skills in Secondary Schools in Eldoret Municipality, Kenya

Oriwo Sophia Atieno

Department of Curriculum Instruction and Educational Media, School of Education, Moi University; P. O. Box 3900-30100, Eldoret, Kenya

Abstract- The mastery of grammar forms a basis for achieving proficiency in the four language skills. Teachers are, therefore, supposed to ensure that learners acquire adequate competence in grammar. In order to achieve this, the areas taught in grammar include: parts of speech, phrases, clauses and sentences. Proficiency in oral skills in the English language is tested in two ways, namely through written and oral methods. Based on a study conducted in secondary schools within Eldoret Municipality, this paper examines the relationship between scores attained in the two tests. The study was formulated and interpreted with reference to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach. The study used correlation research design, which enabled the researcher to assess the degree of relationship between the scores attained from a written and an oral test of five sub-skills of the speaking skill. This assisted in establishing the adequacy of the written tests currently used in the assessment of oral as well as aural skills. Purposive, stratified and simple random sampling procedures were used to select the twelve schools and 360 Form Four students who participated in the study. The research instruments used were two achievement tests – one written and the other oral. Descriptive statistics such as mean and mode were used to compare the variables under study. Inferential statistics were also used. Pearson's product moment correlation was used to analyze the degree of relationship between the variables, t-test to establish significance of the difference between the mean scores and analysis of variance to determine between as well as within group variance. The independent variable was speaking competence while the dependent variables were the speaking sub skills tested. These were rendition of an oral narrative, word stress, intonation, contrastive stress and conversation. From the research findings, it was established that there is clearly a correlation between the scores attained in the two modes of testing. The magnitude of correlation (0.910) meant that scores in one mode of testing could be used to predict scores in the other. However, the presence of a sizable number of outlier scores raises a concern over this general prediction. It was thus concluded that there are a good number of students whose oral ability are way below their written ability. It was, therefore, recommended that the selection criteria for pre-service English language teacher trainees should be reviewed because, as revealed by the study, the spoken ability or competence may sometimes not be accurately predicted by scores attained in a written examination.

Index Terms- Relationship, English Language Test Scores, Written, Oral Skills, Secondary Schools, Eldoret Municipality

I.   INTRODUCTION

In conforming to the national goals of education, the Kenya English syllabus incorporated contemporary issues pertinent in society. For example, the national goals of education numbers four and five are concerned with promotion of sound moral and religious values, social equality and responsibility. Goal number eight is about promotion of positive attitudes towards good health and environmental protection. The contents of the reading passages have as a result been organized to create awareness or understanding of important and relevant themes such as importance of civic education, good governance and promotion of social equality and responsibility, gender responsiveness, drug and substance abuse, the need to preserve the environment, positive attitude towards good health (especially fighting against HIV/AIDS) and technological advancement. These contemporary issues have been integrated in the teaching of all the four skills of English language.

The current English syllabus [1] has elevated the status of listening and speaking skills, and seeks to correct the imbalance that has been evident in the treatment of the two skills. In the past, undue emphasis has been laid on reading and writing skills at the expense of listening and speaking. This syllabus states that: listening and speaking skills play a primary role in the social and academic life of a person. One who listens effectively is able to respond to information appropriately. These two skills also contribute significantly to the development of reading and writing skills. In addition, one who has mastered these skills is likely to create favorable impression of themselves [1].

The language teacher, therefore, should make every effort to help the learner acquire and continually refine the two skills to enable the latter interact with others effectively and confidently. The learner should be given ample practice and exposure to good models. Pronunciation drills, role play, debate, listening comprehension, presentation of oral reports, reciting poems, interviews and conversation can all be used by the teacher to help the learner develop fluency and confidence [1].

Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative Language Teaching is also referred to as the communicative approach. Since its inception in the 1970s, it has expanded in scope and is quite comprehensive. Adherents of this approach acknowledge that structures and vocabulary are important. However, they feel that preparation for communication will be inadequate if only these are taught.

Students may know the rules of language usage, but will be unable to use the language [2].

In communication, language is used to accomplish functions such as arguing, persuading or promising. These functions are carried out within a social context. The choice of a particular way of expressing oneself is not only passed based on the speaker's intention and level of emotion but also on whom one is addressing and the relationship with that person. For example, the speaker may be more direct in arguing with one's friend than one's employer. Since communication is a process, it is insufficient for students to simply have knowledge of the target language forms, meanings and functions. They must be able to apply the knowledge in negotiating meaning. It is through interaction between speaker and listener (or writer and reader) that meanings become clear. The interaction between listener and speaker is more effective since the listener gives the speaker feedback as to whether or not he understands what the speaker has said and try to communicate his intended meaning again, if necessary.

In Larsen's reviews of the principles of CLT there are a number of issues that conform to the required preparation of the students for a communicative language test. First is the goal of teachers who use the Communicative Approach. The goal is to have students become communicatively competent. This involves the ability to use the language appropriately to a given social context. To do this, the students need knowledge of the linguistic forms, meanings and functions. They must know that many different forms can be used to perform a function and also that a single form can often serve a variety of functions. They must be able to choose from these forms the most appropriate form, given the social context and the roles of the interlocutors. They must also be able to manage the process of negotiating meaning with the interlocutors [2].

Secondly, Larsen-Freeman [2] describes the role of the teacher and that of students. The teacher's major responsibility is to establish situations likely to promote communication, during which he acts as an advisor, answering students' questions and monitoring their performance. At other times, the teacher might be a co-communicator engaging in communicative activity along with the students. Students become communicators actively involved in negotiating meaning. They learn to communicate by communicating. This makes the approach student-centred. They interact a great deal with one another in various configurations: pairs, triads, small groups and whole groups.

Thirdly, Larsen-Freeman [2] makes a consideration of the characteristics of the teaching/learning process. Everything is done with a communicative intent. Communicative activities such as games role-play and problem-solving tasks are used. Larsen-Freeman [2], quoting Morrow (as cited in Johnson & Morrow, 1981), states that activities that are truly communicative have three features: information gap, choice and feedback. An information gap exists when in an exchange one person does not know something that another knows. In communication, the speaker has a choice of what he will say and how he will say it. Pattern imitation exercises are, therefore, not communicative. True communication is purposeful and a speaker needs a feedback from a listener to make the exchange communicative. The course books prescribed currently for use have avoided pattern imitation exercises, which were common in the past in

the form of substitution tables. Another characteristic is the use of authentic materials. Students should be given opportunities to develop strategies for understanding language as it is actually used by the native speakers.

Fourthly, Larsen-Freeman [2] states that language is basically viewed as being solely for communication purposes. As such, linguistic competence becomes just one part of communicative competence. Another aspect is knowledge of the functions language is used for [2]. In the use of knowledge, the leaner must take into consideration the social situation in order to convey his intended meaning appropriately. Culture is a very important aspect of language. It is the everyday life of people who use the language natively. Certain aspects of it are especially important to communication – the use of non-verbal behaviour receives greater attention in the communicative approach. The inclusion of the non-verbal cues within the scope of this study ensures this important component of culture. Some communities to which the participants belong have certain language behaviours that operate in contradiction to the conventions of English language.

Finally, evaluation in Larsen-Freeman's [2] view is accomplished by not only evaluating the students' accuracy but also their fluency. It turns out that the student who has the most control of the structures and vocabulary may not always be the best communicator. For formal evaluation, communicative tests can be used. These can be infused with integrative tests, which have real communicative function to establish the learners' communicative competence. In the study, the test items used evaluate both accuracy and fluency to the extent that the errors made do not interfere with communication. This amounts to communicative competence discussed in details in the next section.

Current Approaches to Language Teaching
a) The context approach

Bax [3] argues that although CLT has served a useful function in the teaching of English language, particularly as a corrective to shortcomings in the previous methodologies, it now has a negative effect. According to Bax [3], CLT has always neglected one key aspect of language teaching, namely the context in which it takes place. He, therefore, suggests a context approach.

This approach disagrees fundamentally with CLT by arguing that methodology is not the magic solution. It props up context as a crucial determiner of the success or failure of learners. A context approach insists that methodology is just one factor in successful language learning. As Prabhu [4] says, it may be that the ability to learn a second language is an inherent human characteristic. However, it is becoming clearer that contextual factors such as affect (Arnold, 1999) hugely influence that ability. In fact, many aspects of the context such as students' attitudes, cultural expectations and so on are as important as the teaching method. Context and contextual factors should be high priorities for many teachers. Good teachers naturally take account of the context in which they teach [3].

One important component in this approach is the learning context. This will include an understanding of individual students and their learning needs, wants, styles and strategies. Bax [3] treats these as key aspects of context, as well as the course book,

local conditions, the classroom culture, school culture and the national culture. These factors given their full importance as far as possible in each situation influence the teacher's identification of a suitable approach and language focus. The decision will depend on the "context analysis". This will prompt the teacher on which area to start with, e.g. grammar, oral communication or lexis. It may be that group work is suitable, or a more formal lecture mode. The approach will probably be eclectic in order to meet varied leaner needs. All these will take place within a framework of generating communication. That means CLT will not be forgotten but it will not be allowed to overrule context. Then as the lesson unfolds, the teacher will aim to be as attentive as possible to contextual factors and will prioritize these over methodological aspects. Bax [3] thus asserts that the learning context including learner variables is the key factor in successful language learning.

b) Task Based Language Learning and Teaching

Kumaravadivelu [5] cites Ellis' synthesis of task based language learning and teaching (TBLT) as:

a work plan that requires learners to process language programmatically in order to achieve an outcome that can be evaluated in terms of whether the correct or appropriate prepositional content has been conveyed. To this end, it requires them to give primary attention to meaning and to make use of their own linguistic resources, although the design of the task may predispose them to choose particular forms. A task is intended to result in language use that bears a resemblance, direct or indirect to the way language is used in the real world. Like other language activities, a task can engage productive or receptive, and oral or written skills and also various cognitive processes.

The above definition includes almost all the major points of contention in language pedagogy. Those include: attention to meaning, engagement with grammar, inclusion of programmatic properties, use of authentic communication, importance of social interaction, integration of language skills and the connection to psycholinguistic processes.

Kumaravadivelu [6] argues that TBLT is not linked to any one particular method. He reckons that it is beneficial to look at a task for what it is: "a curricular content rather than a methodological construct". In other words, different methods can be employed to carry out language learning tasks that seek different learning outcomes. Kumaravadivelu [6] suggests a three-part classification of language teaching methods. He points out that there can very well be language-centred tasks, learner-centred tasks and learning-centred tasks. Language-centred tasks are those that draw the learners' attention primarily to linguistic forms, i.e. grammar tasks. Learner-centred tasks direct the learners' attention to formal as well as functional properties, i.e. tasks for the communicative classroom. Learning-centred tasks are those that engage the learner mainly in the negotiation, interpretation and expression of meaning, without any explicit focus on form, i.e. problem solving forms. However, it is worth noting that according to some scholars TBLT is just CLT by another name or as Nunan [7] puts it – an offshoot of CLT.

These issues raised by critics of CLT make a lot of sense when one keenly observes teaching and learning activities in the Kenyan classrooms. However, one needs to understand the fact that language-teaching methods do not necessarily come up with totally new ideas rather the old methods are restructured to fit new trends in language teaching and learning. Other factors that influence new methods and approaches are the ever changing learning needs.

Communicative Approach to Language Testing

This study was based on the communicative approach to language testing. Tests should reflect the approach used in teaching. The teaching approach used in the Kenyan secondary schools is the CLT approach. However, it is important to note that the four testing approaches are not mutually exclusive. For that reason, the communicative approach is sometimes linked to the integrative approach. In the integrative approach, language is tested in context and the test items are thus concerned with meaning and the total communicative effect of discourse [8]. Consequently, integrative tests do not seek to separate language skills into neat divisions in order to improve on test reliability. Rather, they are often designed to assess the learner's ability to use two or more skills simultaneously. Integrative tests are best characterized by the use of cloze tests.

Indeed the current English paper 101/1 has taken cognizance of this fact and question two of this paper is a cloze test. The principle of cloze testing is based on Gestalt Theory of Closure [8] explained as closing of gaps in patterns subconsciously. These tests measure the readers' ability to decode interrupted or mutilated messages by making the most acceptable substitution from all the contextual clues available.

Other areas dealt with in an integrative test include: dictation, oral interviews, translation and essay writing. Again it is worth noting that in the same paper 101/1 a functional essay is tested in question one. Both integrative and communicative approaches emphasize the importance of meaning of utterances rather than their form and structure. Nevertheless, there are fundamental differences between the two approaches.

Communicative tests are concerned primarily (if not totally) with how language is used in communication. Communicative language involves negotiation and exchange of information between two parties through the use of verbal and non-verbal signs, oral and written forms. Most communicative tests aim to incorporate tasks, which approximate as closely as possible to those facing students in real life. Success is judged in terms of the effectiveness of the communication, which takes place rather than formal linguistic accuracy. Language use is often emphasized to the exclusion of language usage. Use is concerned with how people actually use language for multitude of different purposes while usage concerns the formal patterns of language (described in prescriptive grammars and lexicons). In practice, however, some tests of a communicative nature include the testing of usage and also assess the ability to handle format patterns of the target language. In view of these concerns, the test items in the study were carefully selected to cater for both use and usage. Items such as stress and intonation were marked for accuracy, that is, usage while rendition of the oral narrative and the conversation were marked for usage.

Kathleen [9] argues that in the communicative approach to testing language, the intention is to measure how testees are able to use language in real life situations. In testing productive skills (speaking and writing) emphasis is placed on appropriateness

rather than on the ability to form grammatically correct sentences. For the receptive skills (listening and reading) emphasis is on understanding the communicative intent of the speaker or the writer rather than on picking out specific details. Ideally, both receptive and productive skills should be combined in communicative testing so that the testee both comprehends language and responds in real time. In life, the different skills are not often used in isolation. Even though rendition and conversation test items have some listening elements in the oral test, in the scoring focus was not put on listening. Emphasis was on appropriateness of the responses.

The communicativeness of a test might be seen as being on a continuum. Few tests are completely communicative; many tests have some element of communicativeness. A test in which testees are face to face with an interlocutor and produce an appropriate response is a more valid communicative test. At this point, one admits that some test items (stress and intonation) lacked communicativeness. The other two items (rendition and conversation) were within the demands of communicativeness. Communicative tests are often very content specific. The test should reflect the communicative situations in which the testees are likely to find themselves. These include the general social situations where they might be in a position to use English. This basic assumption influences the tasks chosen to test language in communicative situations. In this study, the testees were involved in at least one communicative task in an achievement test situation. The other test items fall short of communicativeness but are still within the scope of speaking activities. The testees, in preparation for KCSE, had covered the course material in the sort of tasks the test asks them to perform [9]. The functions the testees were expected to perform had been covered as stipulated in the syllabus.

As propounded by Kathleen [9], evaluation of communicative tests has elements of subjectivity. Real life situations have no objectively right or wrong answers and so band scales befit evaluation of the results. Each band has a description of the quality and sometimes quantity of either the productive or receptive performance of the testee. In line with this proposition, the research used a band scale in addition to objective answers to evaluate the speaking competence of the study subjects. The band scale incorporated some level of accuracy in so far as the utterances were intelligible.

Teaching of the Speaking skill

Most teaching of this productive skill is aimed at helping the learner to develop ability to express oneself intelligibly, that is, oral fluency. This starts with articulation of speech sounds which are influenced by physiological fitness. The speech organs have to be physically fit. Malformations would lead to problems in articulating certain sounds. The sounds are not articulated in isolation rather they are linked into words and sentences. In addition, the supra-segmental features of stress and intonation also have to be used appropriately to give the correct meaning. As such, the sub-skills of sound articulation, sound linking, speech flow, stress and intonation need to be developed.

Difficulties in articulation arise due to already acquired speech habits in the first language. Articulation of the various vowels and consonants in English is of paramount importance. Mispronunciation of the phonemes affects semantic distinction

between words. For example, tin /tin/ and teen /ti:n/ or bin and pin.

Competence in the speaking skill encompasses knowledge of the sounds and their combinations to form words. Knowledge of the phonemic environment and its influence in actual articulation is important. Articulation features such as palatalization, nasalization and aspiration need to be noticed as well as cases of consonant clusters and silent letters.

A proficient language user needs to speak the language with the appropriate speech flow. This is achieved by the use of appropriate stress, intonation and sound linking. Stress and intonation pose special challenges to second language speakers of English. Whereas these may be less serious than challenges caused by incorrect articulation of sounds, in some cases they can cause confusion and even interfere with meaning of an utterance.

In the teaching of the speaking skill, the teacher should aim at helping learners attain fluency and accuracy in speech in order to communicate and interact. The teacher is the most vital and resourceful model for the learner in oral communication skills. This may be both in pronunciation and coherent use of language structures. The teachers of English, therefore, must themselves be able to pronounce English sounds and words correctly since learners are likely to copy them.

Difficulties in Testing the Speaking Skills

Testing the ability to speak is a most important aspect of language testing. However, at all stages beyond the elementary levels of mimicry and repetition, it is an extremely difficult skill to test as it is far too complex a skill to permit any reliable analysis to be made for the purpose of objective testing:

i.   Questions relating to the criteria for measuring the speaking skill and to the weighting given to such components as correct pronunciation remain largely unanswered. It is possible for people to produce practically all the correct sounds but still be unable to communicate their ideas appropriately and effectively. On the other hand, people can make numerous errors in both phonology and syntax and succeed in expressing themselves fairly clearly. Furthermore, success in communication often is much on the listener as on the speaker.

ii. In many tests of oral production, it is neither possible nor desirable to separate the speaking skill from the listening skill. Clearly in normal speech situations the two skills are interdependent. It is impossible to hold any meaningful conversation without understanding what is being said and without making oneself understand at the same time. However, this very interdependence of the speaking and listening skills increases the difficulty of any serious attempts to analyze precisely what is being tested at any one time. It is for this reason that the study focused on speaking only.

iii. The spoken language is transient and it is impossible without a tape recorder to apply such procedures as in the marking of composition where examiners are able to check back and make assessment at leisure. It is almost essential to record the examinee because of the difficulty of simultaneous administration and assessment and because in a large examination this is the only satisfactory way of

coordinating standards. The examiner of an oral production test is working under great pressure all the time, making subjective judgments as quickly as possible. Even though samples of speech can be recorded during a test, the tape recording by itself is inadequate to provide an accurate means of reassessing or checking a score, since it cannot recapture the full context of the actual situation including all the paralinguistic and non verbal cues that enhance effective communication. All these are so essential to any assessment of the communication that takes place.

iv. It is difficult altogether to avoid reading aloud but it is not satisfactory to select one passage from a reader to listen to 30 examiners.

v. An oral test also normally includes "conversation" with the examiner skilfully and tactfully administered, this can be an excellent test. There are pitfalls for the inexperienced; it is easy for the examiner, anxious to put the examinee at ease to do much of the talking. It is almost as easy for the examinee to launch out into monologue. Even if conversation is successfully maintained, it is difficult for the examiner to lure his victim into using a wide range of spoken forms, as he would wish. The inherent difficulty is that the initiative rests with the examiner. The test would be much better if the two involved would change places because then the examinee would be asking the questions, making the encouraging noises, expressing polite surprise, enthusiastic agreement and so on. Yet another (though not inseparable) difficulty in oral testing is that of administration. It is frequently impossible to test large numbers of students because of the limited time involved. It is not difficult to appreciate the huge problems relating to a test situation in which thousands of students have to be examined by a handful of examiners each student being tested for a period of say 10 or 15 minutes. Although the use of language laboratories for such tests can make it possible to administer more reliable oral production tests to large numbers of students, the actual scoring of the tests has not been so easily solved. There is also the high cost involved in the establishment of language laboratories.

Statement of the Problem

Speaking is central in life. This is a fact that cannot be overemphasized. The ability to speak English is a valued skill particularly in an education system in which English language is the medium of communication. Speaking as a skill is used more than writing in the day-to-day communication.

In Kenyan secondary schools, majority of the students are second language (L2) speakers of English language. Many of these students come from cultures that depend more on oral mode of communication as opposed to writing. As a result of this, one would expect them to be more proficient in oral communication. On the contrary, this is not the case. Speaking in English has posed so many challenges. Effective and accurate speaking in English involves appropriate pronunciation, stress and intonation, rhythm, etiquette, interpretive reading and delivery of written speeches among others. This factor forms the thrust of this investigation and it is even more critical when speaking is done in a second language. This is because language

involves culture. The learners have to adapt to a new language culture; how it is used socially in all spheres of life.

English being a second language to most Kenyans, majority have problems in the listening and speaking skills [1]. The unique problems that learners have arise from the wrong forms of spoken English which have become institutionalized in society. The wrong forms result from the influence of mother tongue and/or the first language. It has been observed that most school leavers, university graduates, practicing teachers of English and those of other subjects do not speak English fluently, accurately and appropriately. This fact has been expressed by a number of scholars, educators, government officials, employers, politicians and journalists [10].

Professor Eshiwani [11], the then Vice Chancellor of Kenyatta University, addressing freshmen also observed that university graduates are unable to express themselves in good English. The British Council Report [12] and others, on the teaching of language skills, also conclude that the skill of speaking is second to that of listening in terms of neglect in the teaching of the four language skills. The reasons the reports give for this trend are that oral skills are not tested by KNEC and secondly language teachers do not get enough guidelines from the course books on how to teach the skills. This scenario has undergone a slight change since the revision of the curriculum in 2002. However, from the researcher's experience in many classroom practices, the speaking skill has not been accorded the attention it deserves.

The current syllabus [1] now emphasizes speaking and recommends an oral examination at the end of the four-year secondary English course. However, KNEC is still assessing oral skills using a written mode of testing. Response to the oral skills section of English Paper 101/1 has been in writing. The areas dealt with are pronunciation, prosodic elements, accurate and effective listening, speech presentation, rendition of oral narratives, reciting poems, etiquette, use of correct register, negotiation skills, turn taking and the use of non-verbal cues that enhance communication. Indeed, the use of spoken English can only be promoted in schools by incorporating an oral test into the overall testing requirements. This can be a valuable additional means of improving oral abilities.

Lee [13] identifies tests as the driving force behind learning. This fact applies to the Kenyan situation as well. Many teaching and learning activities are geared towards excellence in national examinations. Given that the teaching approach used is Communicative Language Teaching, Lee is right to suggest that the tests in a communicative syllabus should be adjusted to be more communicative and to incorporate evaluation of oral abilities. A number of pitfalls have been identified in the testing practices even with the revised curriculum. The tests used to evaluate speaking are new and purport to address the objectives for the teaching of speaking but are in fact almost similar in design and therefore effect to those, which they replace. The course content is truly communicative and oral oriented but the tests particularly for speaking and even listening are as they have been. This is unfair to students who study according to one set of parameters during class time while preparing for a test based on differing principles.

The problem addressed in the study was the use of written tests in the assessment of the speaking skill. The researcher

proposes that oral tests of communicative competence be designed [13]. If the aim of teaching speaking is to promote oral skills in the target language, then it seems reasonable that this ability should be at the heart of the testing. Such tests will definitely conform to the learning goals set for the students and taught in the learning programme. The tests would also have a positive wash back effect on the whole English course for oral skills in general and speaking in particular. Failing to test oral production practically has resulted into inaccurate assessment of students and negative wash back effects on the teaching of oral skills. As such, it was necessary to ascertain through research whether or not indeed written tests are valid in assessing the speaking skill. A comparison of scores attained by individual candidates in written and oral examinations of the speaking sub-skills tested would further be used to establish the relationship between the two sets of scores and, therefore, the extent to which the current written mode of testing used is a valid measurement and an accurate way of establishing speaking proficiency of users of English language at the secondary school level.

Furthermore, there are very few (if not none) publications (especially research based) that provide a justification, evidence or support for the current mode of testing speaking. It became necessary to carry out an investigation into this aspect of English Language Teaching.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was carried out in secondary schools within Eldoret Municipality using correlation research design. The study involved collection of two sets of measurements and computation of the coefficient of correlation between these two sets of measurements to determine the magnitude of relationship. On the average each school has two streams. Students' population was found to be approximately forty-five per class. This gave a total of 1080 students from the twelve schools. Records available at the Uasin Gishu District Education office (2009) indicated that the Municipality had thirty-three (33) secondary schools at the time of the study. Out of these, sixteen (16) were public while seventeen (17) were privately owned. In order to get a representative sample for the study, the thirty-three schools were stratified into national, provincial, district and private schools. There is only one national school, which was purposively sampled. The remaining thirty-two (32) had the following distribution: six provincial, nine district and seventeen private schools. Stratified random sampling was used to select two provincial schools, three district schools and six private schools. This formula yielded a sample of 400 participants who were equally distributed among the 12 schools resulting into an average of 30 students per school. This figure further apportioned to the streams in each school resulted into 15 students per stream. In summary, 12 schools and 360 students were involved in the study. Simple random sampling, specifically the lottery method, was used to select students to take part in the study. These were Form 4 students. They were chosen because they had undergone adequate instruction in the revised English language curriculum. The two achievement tests used in the study, namely a written production test and an oral one, were criteria-based. The tests assessed whether or not the students possessed the sub-skills of rendition of oral narratives, syllabic stress, intonation, contrastive

stress and all the skills involved in conversation. The test takers were expected to clearly display their competence levels. The examiner or scorer would then identify the level and score accordingly. The tests were thus designated as tests for mastery. In such forms of tests, the teaching of content is based on the concept that students are different primarily in the speed at which they learn rather than in the amount they can learn. Thus the amount is fixed for all learners but the rate is allowed to vary [14]. The syllabus takes care of the amount of content to be taught.

Accordingly, the researcher set certain criteria, which guided assessment of levels of performance. The mean scores attained in the overall marks of both tests as well as the means of the individual sub skills were categorized. The test items used in the study were both the objective (test items have only one correct answer) and the subjective type in which correctness is relative.

The study used two types of tests:
1. A written test (response to written questions was in writing) which is the current mode used by KNEC.
2. An oral test (response to written and oral questions was oral), which was modelled in line with KCSE French oral examination. The rationale here was that the acquisition of French language as a second language (L2) or a foreign language (FL) is not far removed from that of English.

The tests were set in consultation with experts in English language education at Moi University and Kenya National Examination Council (KCSE) French and English language examiners. In the selection of tests for data collection, the evaluative criteria considered desirable for a good test, i.e. validity, reliability and usability were considered. The scores for each test from the 360 participants were entered into separate mark sheets. During the entry of the written scores, it was discovered that some participants did not attempt all the questions. These were a total of 19 and were considered unusable data and as such were eliminated. The data was quantitative-marks attained in two tests. The remaining 341 sets of marks were subjected to the Statistical Package for Social Sciences and the Stata computer program for analysis. Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were used to compare the variables under study. Inferential statistics like the Pearson's product moment correlation was used to establish the degree of association between the scores attained in the two tests. The t-test of correlated means was also used to measure the significance of the difference between the means of the two tests. Further, the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) the f-test was used to compare the means and test the hypotheses.

III. RESULTS

Relationship between the Scores of the Written Test and those of the Oral Test

The research sought to establish whether or not there is a relationship between the scores of the written test and those of the oral test of the speaking skills tested. This objective was achieved using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation test. The SPSS computer program was used to find out the relationship between the variables under study. The degree of linear

correlation is represented quantitatively by coefficient of correlation. Table 1 below presents the correlation values between the overall marks of the written and the oral tests. There are also correlations among the various speaking skills items tested in the study.

Table 1. Correlation of Scores: Sub-skills and Overall Marks for Written and Oral Tests

		Rendition		Syllabic Stress		Intonation		Contrastive Stress		Conversion		Total	
		Written	Oral	Written	Oral	Written	Oral	Written	Oral	Written	Oral	Written	Oral
Rendition	**Written**	1.000											
	Oral	0.802	1.000										
Syllabic Stress	**Written**	0.274	0.324	1.000									
	Oral	0.235	0.302	0.758	1.000								
Intonation	**Written**	0.063	0.129	0.098	0.159	1.000							
	Oral	0.125	0.187	0.138	0.180	0.785	1.000						
Contrastive Stress	**Written**	0.367	0.387	0.384	0.296	0.296	0.045	1.000					
	Oral	0.331	0.342	0.349	0.289	0.116	0.142	0.663	1.000				
Conversion	**Written**	0.347	0.399	0.286	0.356	0.187	0.247	0.220	0.282	1.000			
	Oral	0.418	0.468	0.373	0.433	0.224	0.281	0.307	0.346	0.820	1.000		
Total	**Written**	0.707	0.687	0.671	0.611	0.335	0.375	0.536	0.528	0.732	0.748	1.000	
	Oral	0.625	0.732	0.566	0.636	0.356	0.456	0.487	0.534	0.710	0.852	0.910	1.000

Table 1 presents a positive correlation between the total scores attained in the written and the oral tests. The correlation value was 0.910, which is a very strong positive degree of correlation. The individual speaking skills test items also all exhibited positive correlations of varying degrees. Some were very strong and others comparatively weaker. A clearer illustration is presented using scatter diagrams. From the diagrams it was observed that the scores for the two modes of testing generally showed tendencies of high scores on one variable being accompanied by high scores on the other and low scores on one also accompanied by low scores on the other. Thus the variables came out as highly correlated even diagrammatically. It is evident pictorially that most of the scores cluster around the best-fit line.

However, it is worth mentioning that from the presentation in the scatter plots some outlier scores were noted. These needed careful consideration as special cases because they exhibited unusual exceptions to a general pattern. They were 49 cases out of 341(14.36%). Some of the outlier scores were as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Scores of Written and Oral Tests

Written test	Oral test
23(77%) A-	18(60%) B-
22(73%) B+	17(57%) C+
22(73%) B+	15(50%) C
17(57%) C+	11(37%) D
16(53%) C	10(33%) D-
13(43%) C-	07(23%) E

The above score combinations reveal that there were some testees whose scores did not correlate as closely as the general pattern appeared. For example, the pairs 23 out of 30 which translates to 77% grade A- and 18 out of 30 which is 60% grade B- also 22(73% B+) and 15(50% C) have quite substantial grade differences. The scores were four grades apart. The same can also be seen in some of the average as well as the low scores

mentioned above 17(57% C+) and 11(37% D) are five grades apart.

Further analysis of the various speaking skill items tested also revealed varied degrees of correlation. The highest degree of correlation was on the conversation item, which had a correlation of 0.82. This was followed by intonation with 0.79, syllabic stress 0.76, contrastive stress 0.66 and lastly rendition 0.60. These patterns are also more clearly visible in the scatter grams below.

The patterns in the rendition and conversation test items were singled out for more scrutiny. This was because the two items had more verbal expression in both modes of testing compared to the other items. The items, therefore, offered adequate room for the study subjects to display their verbal abilities and competence. The scatter diagram on rendition revealed subjects who did not score in the oral test but had up to half the total marks in the written test. There were also those who scored the maximum marks in the written test but did not do the same in the oral test. This was also an indicator that the written test scored better marks even in the individual test items.

In the conversation test item, the general pattern of a high degree of correlation between the written and the oral test scores was displayed. The correlation value between the written and oral conversation scores was 0.82. However, there were a number of outlier values worth mentioning. The conversation test item was marked out of 12. There were subjects who registered scores that deviated strongly from the general pattern. A few cases to mention were as shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Scores that deviated strongly from the General Pattern

Written	Oral
8.5(71%)	03 (25%)
10(83%)	06 (50%)
11(92%)	07 (58%)

These score combinations were strong indicators that much as in the general there was a strong positive correlation between the scores, there were a number of entries that did not conform to this general pattern.

Hypothesis Test

The hypothesis tested stated that there is no relationship between the scores attained in the written test and those of the oral test. To test this hypothesis the statistical significance of the magnitude of the relationship (the correlation coefficient) between the means of the two tests was computed using the SPSS computer programme. The mean of the written test was 16.9581 and that of the oral test was 14.7214. The correlation coefficient was $r = +0.910$. The P value was 0.000, which was less than the significance level of 0.05. The null hypothesis was rejected and it was concluded that there was evidence of an actual relationship between the written and oral test scores. It was a strong positive relationship.

IV. DISCUSSION

Analysis of the relationship between the scores attained in the written test and those of the oral test revealed that there was a strong positive correlation between the scores of the written production and those of the oral production of the speaking sub skills tested. There was a correlation value of $r = 0.910$ between the total scores of the two modes of testing. The correlation values between the written and the oral production scores of the various sub skills also had high positive correlation values. Rendition had $r = 0.802$, syllabic stress $r = 0.758$, intonation $r = 0.785$, contrastive stress $r = 0.663$ and conversation $r = 0.820$. In non-numerical language the figures mean that scores of a individual in one type of test can be used to predict their score in the other test. One who scores highly in the written test is likely to score equally highly in the oral test.

Fraenkel and Wallen [15] posit that correlations between 0.40 and 0.60 are often found in educational research and may have theoretical or practical value depending on context. They continue to argue that when a correlation of at least 0.60 or higher is obtained, individual predictions that are reasonably accurate for most purposes can be made. The correlations of over 0.85 indicate a close relationship between the variables correlated and are useful in predicting individual performance.

The magnitudes revealed by the analysis agree with Fraenkel and Wallen's [15] propositions and are sufficient enough to make it possible for one to predict either the written or oral ability of the learner if a score on the other variable is known. Accordingly, one could argue that using the written scores of students, it is possible to predict the speaking ability. This perhaps is the assumption that has been guiding the criteria used to select those who take English language studies in institutions of higher learning. The Kenya National Examinations Council uses the written mode of testing English language in secondary schools and the grades are assigned basing on this. The written test scores are used for selecting students. The Examinations Council as well as the universities are not bothered about oral competence.

It is of great importance to note the outlier values amidst the very high positive correlation values. These are clearly displayed in the scatter grams. These outlier values raise a concern regarding prediction. It may be advisable not to take wholesome assumptions that the written production scores can be used to predict oral ability. Cases in point identified earlier included 23(77%) in the written production, and 15(50%) in the oral production, 17(57%) and 11(37%) in the written and oral test scores respectively. If one were to use the written production scores to generally make predictions of the oral ability, it would surely be misleading. It is for this reason that a practical test of oral production should be conducted to ascertain the real oral ability of students at the end of their four-year secondary level English course. Barasa [16] also proposes this. The occurrence of the outlier values is a clear indicator that the minimum university requirement of grade C+ for those who register for English language studies is very risky. It is clear from the study findings that some of the testees with that grade and even higher have very weak speaking ability.

The disparities displayed by the findings allude to the concerns raised by Ong'ondo and Barasa [10] in the statement of the problem. These results are in support of the fact that it is

possible that school leavers, university graduates and even practicing teachers of English and of other subjects do not speak English as expected. The written test score results used might be responsible for the inaccurate evaluation. There is need for high speaking ability by those who have undergone the four-year English education at the secondary school level. It is generally accepted that a number of factors would contribute to low speaking ability in some individuals. Some of these factors among others would be lack of physiological fitness.

Another factor is the difficulties in articulation resulting from already acquired speech habits in the first language. This is also referred to in the background of the study as the wrong forms that have been institutionalized but that notwithstanding, the national goals of education, the general and specific objectives of teaching English in general and speaking in particular have to be met to a large percentage if the education system is to be judged as successful. National goal of education number three states that education should promote individual development and self-fulfilment. In relation to this goal, one of the secondary education objectives refers to acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes for the development of the self and the nation. The general objective for teaching English that relates to this clearly states that at the end of the four-year course the learner should be able to speak accurately, fluently, confidently and appropriately in a variety of contexts. Broken further, the specific objectives of teaching the various sub-skills of speaking have to be achieved. Indeed, one who acquires a strong speaking ability and communicates effectively makes a favourable impression of themselves.

V. CONCLUSION

From the research findings discussed in this paper, there is clearly a correlation between the scores attained in the two modes of testing. The magnitude of correlation (0.910) means that scores in one mode of testing could be used to predict scores in the other. However, the presence of a sizable number of outlier scores raises a concern over this general prediction. It can be concluded from these outlier values that there are a good number of students whose oral ability are way below their written ability. This finding is very important as it implies that there are learners for whom it would be misleading to use the written ability to predict the oral proficiency. This revelation leads to the conclusion that in order to establish a learner's language proficiency, both the written and oral production examinations should be done. This would yield a more accurate judgment of a learner's communicative competence.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

The selection criteria for pre-service English language teacher trainees should be reviewed. As revealed by the study, the spoken ability or competence may sometimes not be accurately predicted by scores attained in a written examination. Those trainees selected on the basis of their written scores should be subjected to an oral production test whether at certificate, diploma or bachelors degree level. During training emphasis should be put on the speaking skill. This is because the teachers themselves should be competent if they are to adequately instruct the learners to develop the skill. The teacher has to be a good model if they are to supply the correct input for the learner. This should be particularly so at the primary school level before the wrong forms are institutionalized. The primary school level is also a stage in language acquisition before the learners go beyond the critical age that is before or at puberty. The trainee teachers should meet certain set standards before they are allowed to go out into the field.

REFERENCES

[1] Kenya Institute of Education, Secondary English Syllabus vol. 1. Nairobi: Jomo Kenyatta Foundation, 2002.

[2] D. Larsen-Freeman, Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching (2nd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

[3] S. Bax, "The end of CLT: A Context Approach to Language Teaching." ELT J., vol. 57, Issue 3, 2003, pp. 278-287.

[4] N. S. Prabhu, "There is no best method-Why?" TESOL Quarterly, vol. 24, issue 2, 1990, pp. 161-176.

[5] B. Kumaravadivelu, "TESOL methods: Changing Tracks, Challenging Trends." TESOL Quarterly, vol. 40, issue 1, 2006, pp. 59-81.

[6] B. Kumaravadivelu, Understanding Language Teaching; from Method to Postmethod. New Jersey, USA: LEA Publishers, 2006.

[7] D. Nunan, (editor), Practical English Language Teaching. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003.

[8] J. B. Heaton, Longman Handbooks for Language Teachers; Writing English Language Tests. Longman, 1985.

[9] S. Kathleen, Testing speaking. Erick Education Resources Information Centre, 1996.

[10] C. O. Ong'ondo, and L. P. Barasa, "Impact of Drama on Communicative Language Teaching." The Educator, vol. 1, issue 1, 2006, pp. 161-191.

[11] G. Eshiwani, "University "Graduates are Unable to Express Themselves in Good English." Daily Nation. Nairobi: Nation Media Group, 1993, May 7.

[12] British Council Report, Teaching English as a Foreign Language. London: Routledge, 1992.

[13] W. K. Lee, Task based approach to oral communication testing of English as a foreign language. Seoul: Hanshin Publishing Company, 1991.

[14] C. J. Weir, Communicative Language Testing. New York: Prentice Hall, 1990.

[15] J. R. Fraenkel, and N. E. Wallen, How to Design and Evaluate Research in Education. Boston: McGraw Hill Higher Education, 2005.

[16] L. P. Barasa, English Language Teaching in Kenya; Policy, Training and Practice. Eldoret: Moi University Press, 2005.

AUTHORS

First Author – Oriwo Sophia Atieno is an experienced teacher of the English language and Literature in secondary education. She obtained her Master's Degree in Language Education from Moi University in 2011. She is currently affiliated with the Department of Curriculum Instruction and Educational Media, School of Education, of Moi University and teaching at the Hill School Secondary School in Eldoret, Kenya. E-mail: saoriwo@yahoo.com