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UMI
A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF THE FIRST CYCLE ENGLISH TEST (FCET) FOR BURKINA FASO SECONDARY SCHOOLS

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

Joachim Zabramba, M.A.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University
2000

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This study investigated a testing system in Burkina Faso, used for students' evaluation at the end of the first cycle of secondary schools. Most language theorists have emphasized the complexity of language learning. A very crucial component of this complex phenomenon is testing. In Burkina Faso, however, testing seems to be the concern neither of test designers, nor of testers.

This study, therefore, purported to determine the extent to which this test, the First Cycle English Test (FCET), was appropriate for measuring students' knowledge of English after four years of language learning.

Testing and teaching being generally accepted as two inseparable activities, it was necessary to look at the objectives of English teaching in Burkina Faso as publicly stated by the government. The second stage consisted in obtaining the viewpoint of language practitioners. Teachers, as well as administrators, were interviewed, some of them members of the committee in charge of the FCET test selection.

It was also indispensable to analyze samples of FCET tests in order to establish the extent to which their contents were consistent with the objectives of English teaching in Burkina Faso. The examination of these samples also sought to establish the extent to which the test was reliable and valid. In addition to the FCET samples, official texts regulating the teaching of English in Burkina Faso have been analyzed using qualitative methods.
The findings from the study indicate that most teachers are not familiar with the official objectives regarding English teaching in Burkina Faso. Teachers, however, seem to have a clear idea of what the outcomes of their teaching should be, that is, provide students with the ability to communicate in English. Yet there seems to be discrepancies between the curriculum and the officially stated objectives. Furthermore, most teachers do not seem to take the stated objectives into account in their teaching because of problems relating to teaching materials, individual class size, teacher training, and pressure from school administrations.

The findings also bring to light the lack of alignment between the curriculum and the First Cycle English Test (FCET). Most of the teachers find the FCET inadequate to assess students’ knowledge of English. The FCET, however, seems to generate a very strong washback effect on both teachers and students.

Recommendations were made by the participants for a better approach to English teaching in secondary schools. Finally, implications from the study were outlined. a model for English testing in the First Cycle was proposed, and recommendations for further studies were made by the researcher.
Dedicated
to
my late father, Jean-Baptiste.
my late brother, mba Benoît.
my wife Lydie, and my children.
Ismaël, Estelle, Joël, and Nadine
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my gratitude to my advisor, Dr. Charles Hancock, who patiently and efficiently supported this piece of work from the very beginning to the end. Each time discouragement threatened to imperil this undertaking, he was there to remind me of the challenge to answer.

I also address my sincere thanks to the other members of my advisory committee: Dr. Keiko Samimy and Dr. Shelley Wong. Their contribution to the achievement of this work was invaluable.

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I also thank Mrs. Marsha Robinson Barber who so kindly offered to proofread my manuscript.

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**CHAPTER 1**

Assessment is a human process conducted by and with human beings and subject to the frailties of human nature. However crisp and objective we might try to make it and however neatly quantifiable may be our results, assessment is closer to an art than a science (Ruth Sutton).

**INTRODUCTION**

In recent years, testing has gained interest in the field of language teaching/learning. Such a new trend finds its foundation in the belief that testing remains a crucial component of language teaching. In the past, testing had been considered as an independent activity, a system that could operate outside the framework of the teaching/learning process. New theories on language teaching/learning have contributed to reverse this view of language testing (Mirenbaum. 1995; Wiggins. 1994; Valette. 1994; Shohamy & Walton. 1992). The new approach to testing emphasizes the necessity to integrate several skills in a testing system rather than isolating skills, pulling them out of the context of use, and applying them to situations irrelevant to real life communication.

The purpose of this study was to examine an evaluation system used in schools in Burkina Faso (former Upper Volta) since independence in 1960. The system under scrutiny relies mainly on a test that constitutes the only instrument used to assess students at the end of the First Cycle, that is, of the first four years of Secondary School. This test has become an intrinsic element of the educational system in Burkina Faso. It is crucial therefore to be acquainted with the system itself before examining the test as such. In
order to do so, it may be necessary to proceed first to a brief description of the background in which this system was established.

Historical Background

In order to understand the educational system in Burkina Faso (formerly called Upper Volta), it is essential to look at the historical context in which such a system was set up. Burkina Faso, like all the African countries, became part of the European empire at the end of the nineteenth century, when it became the French colony of Upper Volta in 1897. As the 400-year Atlantic slave trade ended, Europeans felt the need to expand their traditional pattern of coastal trade to the interior of the continent in what Gavin (1986) called "the inland rush" (p. 359). This "Scramble for Africa", as the conquest of Africa came to be called (Khapoya, 1994), was launched after the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885. The scramble left no African country unaffected. There were two exceptions however: Ethiopia and Liberia. Ethiopia successfully resisted Italian invasion in 1896. Under the command of emperor, Menelik II, the Ethiopians defeated the Italian army at the battle of Adawa (1896) and secured their political and cultural independence. As for Liberia, founded by the American Colonization Society in 1822 to settle free US blacks, no attempt was made to conquer the territory as it was under the protection of the United States. Thus, by 1900, with the exception of Ethiopia and Liberia, the entire continent was under the rule of European countries, namely Belgium, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, and Spain.

The Conquest of Upper Volta

Upper Volta became a French territory after several moves by French emissaries in the region. The French first "secured a treaty with the Ouattara leader of Kong in 1887," then in 1888, after failing to seal a protectorate deal with the Mogho Naba (the emperor
of the Mossi) of Ouagadougou, they signed a treaty with the Peul leaders of Dori (Englebert, 1996). In January 1895, it was the turn of the king of the Gurmanche in the East to sign a protectorate with the French. In May of the same year, a French emissary was signing a treaty with the king of Yatenga. Naba Baogo (ibid.). The Bobo of Bobo-Dioulasso, despite their fierce resistance, were conquered by the French in September 1895.

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Thus, by 1896, through treaties and military conquest, the French controlled almost the entire region. The only resistance left was the Mossi king of Ouagadougou, but on September 1, 1896, two French lieutenants, Voulet and Chanoine, were sent to conquer Ouagadougou (Balima. 1996). To avoid being captured, the Mossi king, Naba Wobgo, fled from the capital to seek protection and assistance from the British in the South of the country. By February 1897, the French had total control over the region, currently known as Burkina Faso (see fig. 1.1). The French called the new territory 'Upper Volta', after the River "O Rio da Volta" (The river of return), named by the Portuguese after they used this waterway to return to the coastal area (Balima. 1996, p. 25).

Colonial rule, that was to last until the 1960s, had tremendous consequences on the evolution of African countries in terms of their politics, their economy and their culture. During that short time period of colonial rule, African societies were transformed precisely because of the respective policies used by the different colonial powers. Each colonial power applied its policies regardless of the political and cultural background of
Fig. 1.1 The Former French Colony of Upper Volta (Burkina Faso)
the colony concerned. Education, however, is perhaps the area where the transformation imposed by colonial rule had the most significant long-term impact. The next section will look at such policies in Upper Volta.

Education Under Colonial Rule

French rule in Upper Volta lasted for about sixty-two years. During that time, the French imposed their educational system that was to survive long after the colonial era. In spite of the short period of time that this era lasted, it had a pervasive impact on the organization of Voltaic society at all levels.

Under colonial rule, education in Upper Volta was characterized by a top-down process imposed by the colonial government. The system imposed was in fact nothing but a blueprint of the French educational system, intended to perpetuate the control of the colonial government over the colony. In order to implement such policies, French educational philosophy, based on the French theory of assimilation, was simply transferred to their colony without any attempt to take the local context into consideration.

Assimilation, it should be recalled, refers to French colonial policy at the beginning of their conquest of African countries. Imbued with the ideas of equality that underlie the French revolution of 1789, the French approached colonization with the challenging theory of assimilation that they intended to apply to all their colonies. Assimilation consisted in transforming the populations in their colonies into French men. It had both a political and cultural connotation in that it was an attempt to impose French political and cultural beliefs and practices on French colonies. Under assimilation, every citizen in a colony was to enjoy the same rights and the same duties as the French citizens in France.
Assimilation, however, was never applied to all the French colonies. Only in their first colony, Senegal, did the French grant citizenship to the inhabitants. Even in Senegal, only the inhabitants of the four communes of St-Louis, Gorée, Rufisque, and Dakar benefited from the prerogatives of assimilation. For other people in Senegal and the other colonies, certain criteria, such as being able to speak and read French, were to be met before a person could pretend to the title of citizen as those who benefited from assimilation were called. Because assimilation involved considerations other than pure exploitation of the colonies, this theory was soon conflicting with the motivations underlying colonization.

Such motivations were primarily economic and could be summarized as follows: exploitation of the raw material in Africa to fuel the industries back in Europe and acquisition of markets for the evacuation of the manufactured products. As a result, by 1905, assimilation was abandoned by France. In its place, the French developed a new doctrine known as association. Under the new doctrine, people in the colonies could not aspire to French citizenship. They became simple subjects, with less rights and more duties than those of French citizens.

Yet, if the economic aspects of assimilation disappeared with association, its cultural influence persisted to the end of colonial rule. As commented by the Kenyan historian, Vincent Khapoya (1994), “Obviously, the French were in Africa to ‘civilize,’ and to remake the African in their own image. The policy of assimilation required an educational system that would transform Africans into French people” (p. 121). If the French were not able to transform the people of Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso) into French people, they did impose a system that was to last until independence in 1960 and even throughout the first decade after independence.
In this system, the teaching of English in secondary school seemed to have no assigned goal other than that of complementing the colonial curriculum to make it a perfect blueprint of the curriculum in French schools. Indeed, there is no indication that there was in the interests of the French colonial masters to teach English to children in Burkina Faso. Language teaching, therefore, was planned according to the overall policies of the French Ministry of Education. No need to state that under such circumstances, the needs of the learner were not part of the policy makers' concern.

It is worth reminding that Burkina Faso is a multilingual country, with over 50 languages spoken in different regions in the country. Mooré is the language of the largest ethnic group. The speakers of Mooré, the Mossi, constitute about 52% of the population. The other national language groups are the Fulani (11%), the Bobo (7%), the Gourounsi (5.3%), the Bissa-Samo (6.9%), the Senoufo, Marka, Dioula (4.7%), the Gourma (4.5%), the Lobi, Dagari, Turka, Gouin, Tussian, Karaboro, Dian, Gan, Birifor, etc. (8.6%). The colonial language, French, was and still is the medium of instruction. In such a context, how was language planning achieved in the colonial educational system? What status was English granted in such a system?

The planning of English teaching in Upper Volta, to some extent, illustrates Philipson's (1996) interpretation of language planning. For Philipson, language planning in developing countries is more than likely to accomplish the goals of what he terms "linguistic imperialism," that is, the dominance of one language over other languages. Relating language planning to the process of decolonization, Philipson contends that "there cannot be economic and political decolonization without in the course of this process, there being a linguistic decolonization."

In the case of Upper Volta, at the time of independence in 1960, the educational authorities certainly viewed decolonization with different eyes. In the first decade or so

---

that followed independence, the educational system in Upper Volta remained unchanged. No structure was created to replace those set up by colonial authorities for colonization purposes. The curriculum in all schools remained same as the one used during the colonial era. The teaching materials were identical to those in use before independence. How could it have been otherwise since these materials were ordered from France. Textbooks were published by French publishing houses, such as Hatier. In terms of human resources, although the teachers in primary schools were natives, in secondary schools, an overwhelming majority of teachers were French. Under those circumstances, language teaching in general and English teaching in particular was doomed to follow the steps imposed by the colonial educational system.

The Foreign Language Paradigm in Burkina Faso

For secondary school students in Burkina Faso, the choice of a foreign language to comply with the curriculum is free in theory. Yet, in practice, almost all the students direct their option towards English. The reason for such a choice is multifold. Although there is no room for an extensive examination of such a paradigm in a study like the current one, it is worth outlining the factors that underlie the predominance of English as a foreign language in developing countries such as Burkina Faso.

As explained earlier in this chapter, English was introduced in secondary schools by the French who simply applied their educational system to their colonies in Africa. English, in this system, was viewed as the foreign language par excellence, and therefore, every French student had to learn English to guarantee their success in any academic career. At independence, most former French colonies maintained the French system (with the exception of Guinea and Mali), introducing more foreign languages, but still
providing English with a status that surpassed any other language by far. Yet the predominance of English as a foreign language in Burkina Faso is more than a simple colonial legacy. English as an international language has acquired a powerful status that makes Shakespeare's language a 'worldwide phenomenon'.

The new paradigm that the spread of English constitutes has been extensively examined by several researchers (Kachru, 1985; Philipson 1992; Tollefson 1994; Medgyes, 1994). The spread of English throughout the world was spurred by colonization. During the second half of the 20th century, when most European colonies became independent, the newly independent countries adopted the language of the colonizer as their official language. The new status of English conferred upon the language new dimensions that remained unchallenged throughout the twentieth century.

Thus, the number of English speakers in the world continued to increase steadily, creating what Kachru (1992) called "three concentric circles." Among these circles, Kachru distinguishes the "Inner Circle, the Outer Circle, and the Expanding Circle." The first circle corresponds to "the traditional and cultural basis of English", that is, the United Kingdom, the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The second circle refers to countries that used to be British colonies and who made English "the institutionalized language in many spheres of life, the major international means of communication" (Medgyes, 1994, p. 4). Belonging to this circle are very populous countries such as Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and Nigeria.

The third circle is made of countries that do not use English as an official language, but where English is taught in a foreign language (EFL) context. Because of the influence that English exercises over the rest of the world nowadays, English is the foreign language par excellence in these countries. That is why Kachru's "Expanding Circle" is the one with a steady growth. The influence of English is such that "the periphery-English
countries" (Philipson, 1992) have no means of resisting its thrust. As Megdyes put it, "the Expanding Circle in effect includes the rest of the world" (1994).

Burkina Faso belongs to the "Expanding Circle." As explained earlier, English is the first choice for an overwhelming majority of Burkinabe students who are engaged in secondary education. Apart from the pedagogical requirements, other considerations, such as the opportunities that English offers, dictate the choice of English by students in the educational system. The next section looks at the educational system in Burkina Faso.

Education in Burkina Faso

Education is one of the government high priorities in Burkina Faso. As explained in the previous sections, Western education was introduced to the country during colonial rule, that is, since 1897. Until the 1950s, however, the focus in education had been placed on the primary level. Ten years later, according to the figures released by the Ministry of Education (Ministère de l'Education Nationale, 1959), there were less than ten secondary schools in the whole country. The number of secondary schools began increasing with independence in 1960. In 1965, the statistical figures indicated that there were thirty-one secondary schools in Burkina Faso (Ministère de l'Education Nationale, 1965). Although the number of secondary schools had begun increasing, it was not until 1967 that the first college was created in Ouagadougou. It was then known as the Centre d'Enseignement Supérieur de Ouagadougou (Ouagadougou Higher Education Center).

The educational system in Burkina Faso is comprised of three levels: the primary, secondary and high levels. Students spend six years at the first level before they can enter secondary school, the second level. Such a promotion, however, is based on their passing the entrance examination for secondary education. Secondary school, in turn, lasts seven years. Secondary school is made of two cycles. The First Cycle consists of the first four
years and the second cycle, the remaining three years. At this level in the educational
system, some students leave after completion of the First Cycle. As a consequence, the
students in the First Cycle outnumber those in the second cycle. The medium of
instruction at all levels is French (See table 1.1 for a comparison with US system).

The educational system has inherited a centralized system imposed during French
colonial rule. All secondary Schools in the country, public as well as private schools, are
under the responsibility of the Ministry of Secondary Education (Ministère de
l'Enseignement Secondaire). The Ministry of Secondary Education is comprised of: the
cabinet of the minister, the General Board of Secondary Education, the National Board of
secondary school examinations, the National Board of examination and testing, and the
National Board of secondary school Inspectors. All these boards are located in
Ouagadougou, the capital city.

In the public school system, teachers in all secondary schools are civil servants. They
can be transferred from one area of the country to another at the beginning of each school
year. All the teachers in public schools receive the same training from the National
Institute of Education. Some teachers in private schools, however, are directly hired by
their institutions. Therefore, they may not have the basic teacher training that their
counterparts in public schools have.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>USA</th>
<th>BURKINA FASO</th>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>College/University</strong></td>
<td><strong>Université</strong></td>
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Table 1.1 American and Burkinabé systems compared
Language Policies

A country's language policies, to a great extent, determine curriculum development and actual language teaching achievement in schools. In Burkina Faso, language policies are made at a national level. The ministry of Secondary Education sees to it that all secondary schools respect these policies. One of the government requirements is that students should choose one foreign language as soon as they enter secondary school. Foreign languages such as English, German, Arabic, etc. are, therefore, required subjects for all high school students. For the implementation of the language policies, the Ministry of Education has publicly stated objectives that address the teaching of languages in general and that of English in particular. Among other things, these objectives emphasize the importance of English as a tool for international communication (See Rouamba, 1991).

In the context of Burkina Faso, "international communication" should be understood as relating to communication with the neighboring English speaking countries in West Africa (Ghana, Nigeria), but also to communication with all English speaking countries in the world. Yet, for the achievement of such objectives, the only program available is the one set up by the ministry of Education.

Sociopolitical Context of TESOL

The association of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) was founded in 1966 for the purpose of developing "the expertise of its members and others involved in teaching English to speakers of other languages to help them foster effective communication in diverse settings while respecting the language rights of individuals" (TESOL Membership Guide, p. 1). Teachers of English as a Second Language (TESL) and Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) are professionals who dedicate their efforts to the achievement of these TESOL goals.
Teachers, however. EFL teachers in particular, do not all work in the same language teaching context. It is, therefore, essential to look at the social and political contexts in which EFL is taught in Burkina Faso, and in other former French colonies in West Africa, in order to understand the reality of English teaching/testing in former French colonies.

The sociopolitical context in which foreign languages in general, and English more specifically, are taught in Burkina Faso is a very complex one. By the time the French relinquished their political hold on Upper Volta in 1960, there was no adequate preparation of the natives to manage the newly independent country in terms of politics, economy, education, and other vital sectors within the former colony.

A crucial issue, for example, was that of a national language. Now that the country was no longer a French possession, what other language, but French, could be used throughout the country. In a multilingual context of more than 50 languages, as explained earlier, that was not an easy problem to solve. This situation highlights the reason why the political authorities in the newly independent country chose French as the official language and the medium of instruction in the whole educational system. Literacy rate in 1990, that is, thirty years after independence, was 18.2% (in Balima, 1996). Literacy in Upper Volta, is generally understood as literacy in the French language. In such a low literacy context, teaching a foreign language is no doubt a big challenge. This challenge was not encountered in Upper Volta only.

Other former French colonies such as Côte d’Ivoire, Bénin, Togo, Niger, Sénégal, etc., had to face the same problems at the time of independence. In none of these countries was a study undertaken to evaluate the impact of foreign language teaching on school children, and on the peoples in general. It was on those conditions that, in Burkina Faso, as well as in other West and Central African countries (Congo, Gabon, Central African Republic, etc.). English teaching was organized at the time of independence, and in the years after independence, that is, after 1960.
Language Teaching

In the Burkinabé school system, language teaching is carried out in the framework of the school curriculum. So, English is taught like the other subjects, with a national syllabus as a collective tool for the achievement of the national objectives. The core of the curriculum is planned by the Ministry of education through the services of the National Teaching Board. The curriculum, for the teaching of English, covers the whole First Cycle of secondary school, that is, from grade one to grade four. The end of the fourth grade corresponds to the end of the First Cycle. At the end of the fourth grade, all students must sit for the end-of-first-cycle exam known as the BEPC (Brevet d'Etude du Premier Cycle). This exam is of paramount importance for students' educational career. Yet the percentage of success in the BEPC is much less than expected. For example, in 1999, out of 26327 candidates, only 34% passed the BEPC. In 1999, the percentage was lower, 32.9%.

The BEPC is a comprehensive exam, in which students are assessed in all the subjects included in the school curriculum. The final decision about students' achievement is reached by computing together every student's grades in every subject. At the end of the process, only the students whose grade average reaches ten out of twenty can graduate. The percentage of success each year is about 36%. English is a very important component of this exam. Students judge the importance of a subject in relation to its weighting in the whole assessment system. Subject weighting varies in a rating scale from five to one, which places English in the category of important subjects, with three as its rating level.
The First Cycle English Test

The English test in the BEPC exam is known as the BEPC English test (*l'Anglais au BEPC*). In this study, this test will be called the “First Cycle English Test” (FCET), both to approximate the translation of the French calling, "*l'Anglais au BEPC*" and to emphasize the fact that, to date, this test is the only one available for the assessment of students' language skills after four years of language learning. It is the only assessment instrument used at the national level for academic evaluation in the First Cycle. Its contents cover the first four years of the English curriculum in secondary schools. It is a national test for the assessment of students' English proficiency after four years of language study and is administered on the same day and at the same time all over the country. The FCET is a very important component of the BEPC, with a coefficient value of three. It is made of two sections: a written section that accounts for about 33% of the points allocated to the test and an oral one that accounts for 67%. The two sections are offered on different dates by different examiners.

The Written Section

The written section is divided into four parts: (a) Comprehension, (b) Guided Essay, (c) Grammar, and (d) Translation. The following is a brief description of the four components of the section.

The Comprehension Component

In this section of the test, students are provided with a short text (15 to 20 lines) that they will read to show their understanding of the text. The text is followed by eight multiple-choice questions with four entries each. Selecting the correct answer supposedly
evidences a student's comprehension of the message in the text. The comprehension section accounts for 20% of the points allocated to the written section (see Appendix C for test samples).

The Guided Essay

The Guided Essay section is made of three open-ended questions that are meant to check students understanding of the text through their own words. Its purpose also includes a checking of students' written performance on very specific themes presented to them through the questions. The answers to the first two questions are provided by the text. In contrast, the third question appeals to the student’s writing skills imagination capacity to write a short essay on the theme of the text. The Guided Essay accounts for 50% of the written section points.

The Grammar Component

This component seeks to evaluate the students' knowledge of English grammar. It is made of two or three questions. A multiple-choice format is used in the first question, while the following questions are transformation and/or completion tasks. 20% of the test points are allocated to this component.

The Translation Component

The last component of the written section consists of four French sentences to be translated into English. The sentences are generally short (ten words or less). They contain very specific grammatical structures that the student has to discover and render into the target language. This task requires at the same time that the student provides
evidence of his/her vocabulary skills. In sum, this component tests the student’s grammatical mastering and vocabulary knowledge. It accounts for 10% of the total points for the written test.

The Oral Section

The oral section seeks to evaluate the student’s oral performance of English. The assessee randomly selects a text in English that he reads by him/herself in fifteen to twenty minutes in order to be prepared to answer questions about the text. The test is meant to be a genuine conversation between the assessor and the assessee. the latter trying to draw from his/her repertoire of skills to maximize his/her oral performance in English. By listening to the student’s answers, the assessor is expected to be able to evaluate his/her oral skills in the target language.

The texts that are presented to the students are short (10 to 12 lines) and they treat of various themes relating to people’s everyday lives. The question/answer session with the assessor lasts from five to 10 minutes. Sometimes a lexicon is provided at the end of the text, translating into French some words that are deemed difficult for the students. As indicated earlier, the oral section accounts for about 67% of the FCET.

Problem Statement

In Burkina Faso, foreign language teaching in general and English teaching in particular is based on the objectives of the government as stated by the Ministry of Education (See circulaire No 105/MENAC/ICEDSD of December 1, 1983 in Appendix B). On March 13, 1998, a workshop on National Education in Burkina Faso was held in Ouagadougou, the capital city. The workshop was sponsored by the APSO, a national Irish Agency working in developing countries on a volunteer basis. On the occasion of this workshop, the government's objectives were outlined by the English inspector. Mr.
Pare, who was addressing a group of English teachers at the meeting. Drawing the attention of the participants on the stated objectives regarding foreign language teaching in Burkina Faso, the inspector quoted the terms of the 1983 ministerial statement that specified that the teaching of languages "should have the practical, utilitarian, and cultural character" that will provide Burkinabè children with the basic skills indispensable for written and oral communication (Rapport sur l'Atelier de l'APSO. 13 Mars 1998. p. 41).

The teaching and assessment of English in Burkina Faso, in principle, are based on these governmental objectives. It should be noted, however, that no clear mention is made of assessment anywhere in the official documents. As stated earlier, the only test designed to assess students' English proficiency at the end of the First Cycle of secondary school is the FCET. The FCET, however, does not seem to meet the criteria many theorists and practitioners of language teaching recommend for language assessment to be valid and reliable (Wiggins. 1994; Stansfield. 1994; Valette. 1994; [in Hancock. 1994]). In this regard, many teachers have expressed their concern about the suitability of the FCET to assess students' English proficiency at the end of the First Cycle. As early as the 1970s, after teachers emphasized the inadequacy of the test, slight touches were made to its form, but the contents remained the same. The current test has been in application since 1978 and no modification has been made so far.

The FCET covers all secondary schools in Burkina Faso. Given the extent to which this test affects schools in the country, its importance is unquestionable. Yet, despite the fact that it has been used for more than twenty years, no study so far has looked at the test in order to examine how appropriate it was, as an instrument, to measure students' knowledge of English at the end of the First Cycle of secondary schools. Yet the number of students that are affected by this test is increasing every year, making the concerns about this test even more serious and more legitimate.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine the extent to which the First Cycle English Test (FCET) is consistent with the publicly stated objectives of the Ministry of Education of Burkina Faso. The study will analyze the FCET in order to establish the extent to which the test responds to the government objectives regarding foreign language teaching in the country. Language teaching and testing being considered as two inseparable components of a single activity, it will be of interest to explore the way in which the two components could be integrated for the achievement of a better language teaching/learning in Burkina Faso.

The integrative approach to teaching and testing has gained a lot of force in language education theories (Schrier and Hammadou, in Hancock, 1994). The FCET is to be considered in that perspective if it is to enhance and support English teaching in Burkina Faso. The present study's objective derives from this consideration. The study will, therefore, explore how data such as the FCET can be used as a component of the overall curriculum for English teaching in Burkina Faso.

Significance of the Study

Several language theorists have argued for the integration of teaching, testing, and assessment. They posit that for an effective language learning, testing should be a crucial component in the process of language teaching (Tchudi & Mitchell, 1999; Hashway, 1998; Boyles, 1994; Davis, 1994; Long & Macian, 1994; Moore, 1994; Stansfield, 1994; Valette, 1994; Wiggins, 1994; Shohamy, 1993; 1992; Savignon, 1992: 1983). In Burkina Faso, however, testing has been viewed so far as an isolated activity in the educational process, an enterprise that lies out of the spectrum of the school curriculum. It has been
considered as an administrative routine, the purpose of which was to make a decision on students' achievement. It is used for placement purposes by determining the students who will be allowed to change levels and those who will be barred from a promotion to the next level in the educational system.

The BEPC exam in Burkina Faso clearly illustrates the power of tests (Shohamy, 1993) and in the present case, their function as important gates used to sort out the students likely to cross the bridge to the intellectual elite class. Indeed, as noted above, students are admitted to the second cycle if only they pass the BEPC. And admission to the second cycle means an open gate to further education, which provides students with more opportunities for their insertion into the elite of Burkinabè society. Yet, the BEPC also illustrates the contradictions between the highly valued status of the exam at a national level and the low profile that characterizes crucial components of this exam such as the FCET.

The FCET, as pointed out in the previous sections, is a very important component of the BEPC. It is a patent example of the principles underlying testing in Burkina Faso. Like other tests in the educational system (e.g. The Elementary/Primary Studies Certificate, the Baccalaureate) the FCET has always been considered as a summative test that could be used in any context to evaluate students' knowledge of English, regardless of the forms and contents of the test. It is viewed as a system that could stand on its own, with no reference to the teaching methods and techniques used in secondary schools.

There is no doubt that the FCET has acquired a status that makes it a crucial part of the educational system. However, in spite of the importance of this test in terms of its national status, and despite the expressed concerns from secondary school teachers and inspectors, to the researcher's knowledge, so far, the need to bring substantial changes to the FCET as a testing system has not been expressed by the educational authorities. Since the 1960s, it has been subject to a few minor changes, but to date, no attempt has been
made to carry out a thorough examination of the testing system. Such an examination may have provided suggestions for fundamental changes in the examination that would, on the one hand, coincide with the government's goals for language teaching, and meet teachers and students' expectations on the other. This is precisely one of the objectives of the current study.

Research Questions

The present research project will examine important issues that can help make the FCET a valid instrument for the assessment of language learners in Burkina Faso secondary schools. In the researcher's opinion, for a genuine examination of such issues, it is important that the following questions be investigated:

1. What are the stated objectives of the Ministry of Education regarding the teaching of English in Burkina Faso?
   a. to what extent are teachers in Ouagadougou secondary schools familiar with the national objectives
   b. to what extent is English teaching/testing in secondary schools consistent with these objectives?

2. To what extent does the First Cycle English Test (FCET) affect the overall curriculum?
   a. to what extent are the contents of the FCET consistent with the overall school curriculum?
   b. what are the Ouagadougou area secondary school teachers' perceptions of the FCET?
   c. to what extent is there an FCET washback effect on these teachers?
   d. what changes need to be made to make the FCET consistent with the English teachers' classroom instructional tasks?
3. What model can be proposed in order to make the testing of English in the Ouagadougou area secondary schools more consistent with the publicly stated English teaching objectives of the Ministry of Education?

An examination of these questions has the advantage of opening an enriching debate concerning how a better integration of English teaching and testing can be achieved in Burkina Faso. It will also provide a ground for an improvement of the FCET as a testing instrument for the First Cycle of secondary schools. Finally, the researcher has no doubt that the success of this study will be function of his ability to provide adequate answers to these questions.

Definition of Terms

Some of the terms in this study will be used with a meaning specific to the present context. For a better understanding of the report, it is essential that some definitions be provided. Such definitions pertain to the following terms:

Approach

The Webster's New International Dictionary defines approach as a "method used to implement, with view to full accomplishment." In this study, the concern is the full accomplishment of teaching. Communicative approach in language teaching is primarily concerned with students' ability to communicate in the target language.

Authentic Assessment/Testing

Authentic assessment is meant to be the opposite of conventional assessment where "tests are usually limited to paper-and-pencil, one-answer questions. Assessment is authentic when we directly examine student performance on worthy intellectual tasks"
(Wiggins, 1990, p. 3). Authentic testing seeks to evaluate the test taker in a context of language use that is as close as possible to the real world situation.

**BEPC**

BEPC is the acronym for the French Brevet d'Etudes du Premier Cycle (First Cycle Studies Certificate). It is a comprehensive examination intended to assess students' academic achievement at the end of the First Cycle of secondary schools. Its components are the different tests administered for each subject in the school curriculum.

**Burkinabè**

The adjective deriving from the country's name "Burkina" is Burkinabè. It is used for the nationality, but also to describe everything pertaining to Burkina Faso. For example, the school system in Burkina Faso will be "the Burkinabè system."

**Curriculum**

In this study, the term *curriculum* is used in its broader sense, as provided by Nunan (1988): principles and procedures for the planning, implementation, evaluation, and management of an educational program. Curriculum study embraces syllabus design (the selection and grading of content) and methodology (the selection of learning tasks and activities). Nunan specifies that "curriculum is a very general concept which involves consideration of the whole complex of philosophical, social and educational program" (p. 6).
Diagnostic Testing

Diagnostic testing is intended to provide the tester with feedback about what is needed for a specific group of learners. Its purpose is to detect the weaknesses in the learner in order to find a remedy for them. Diagnostic testing is administered at the beginning of a course so that the needs of the concerned group may be met.

FCET

The First Cycle English Test is the test of English as a foreign language that constitutes one component of the BEPC examination. In Burkina Faso, it is made of two tests that are administered separately: the written and the oral tests. The scores in the two tests are averaged to provide the final achievement score in English.

First Cycle

The school system in Burkina Faso assigns seven grades at the secondary level, that is, high school level. The seven grades are divided into two cycles. The first four years, known in French as sixième, cinquième, quatrième and troisième grades, constitute the First Cycle. The remaining three years, that is, seconde, première and Terminale grades, form the second cycle. For a student to move from the First Cycle to the second one, the BEPC degree is required.

Formative Testing

Testing that is used as part of the course assessment is called formative testing. It is an ongoing process and as such, is administered to the learners while the course is being taught. It can serve two purposes. First, to give feedback to instructors about whether students are progressing as planned by the course. Second, formative testing can inform course designers about how well the course program is being implemented.
Secondary School

In Burkina Faso, secondary school corresponds to the first seven years after primary school. The corresponding grades are: sixième, cinquième, quatrième, troisième, seconde, première and Terminale. It should be noted that in this system, grades are numbered backwards. For example, the first grade is sixième (sixth), the second grade, cinquième (fifth), etc. Secondary school is divided into two cycles known as the first and second cycles.

Summative Testing

Summative testing serves to assess how well students in classes have learned the taught material. Unlike formative testing, it occurs at one point during the course, generally at the end. It is used to evaluate the outcomes of a course or a curriculum. The FCET for example assesses students at the end of a four years' course. It is essentially summative.

Washback

Many researchers have looked at the effect of tests on students, on teachers and on instruction (e.g. Shohamy, 1994; Stansfield, 1994; Valette, 1994). This effect is termed the washback effect. Valette states that "washback occurs when it is the testing instrument rather than the statement of desired learner outcome that determines the nature of the curriculum and the course of instruction" (1994, p. 10). Washback relates to the students' effort to learn, focusing on the skills that will be tested. It also applies to teachers' attempts to relate what is taught to what will be tested and to engage their class in tasks that will be tested. As Valette put it, "teachers often feel obliged to 'teach for the test'."
Basic Assumptions

In an investigation such as the one carried out in this study, it is not possible to control all the variables involved. However, for the purpose of the study, a number of assumptions relating to these variables will be made. These assumptions will be articulated as follows:

- It is assumed that, in the long term, the teaching of English in Burkina Faso secondary schools will be based on the communicative approach.
- Similarly, for an examination of the First Cycle Test (FCET) to be of interest, it is assumed that reforms in the First Cycle English Test (FCET) have a relationship with the teaching of English in secondary schools in Burkina Faso.
- It is also assumed that English teachers and administrators will respond honestly to the interviews that will be conducted in this study.

After all these considerations, the question that may still be asked is: is this study worth undertaking? To the researcher, the need to review the testing system for the second cycle in Burkinabé schools is becoming more and more urgent as years go by. The FCET was designed at a time when there was little concern about the relationship between teaching and testing. Times have changed and new trends are predominant in foreign language research, advocating a new approach to language teaching and testing. For a test that has so much impact on a great number of students and teachers, it is essential that a basis be laid for a fundamental reform. The investigation of the FCET is to be viewed in that context.
Conclusion

This chapter provided the rationale for the study of a testing system in a foreign language teaching context. Central to this system is the First Cycle English Test (FCET). The FCET is the only test used to assess secondary school students' performance in English in Burkina Faso. Yet this test has been criticized by teachers for its inadequacy. In order to judge the genuineness of such criticism, it is necessary to answer a few questions relating to the teaching of English and the use of the FCET as an assessment instrument.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The present study examines a testing system used to assess high school students' achievement after four years of English learning. The analysis of such a summative test will require the examination of literature, studies and researches relevant to the study. Thus, this chapter will discuss issues such as testing, foreign language learning/teaching, the curriculum, evaluation and assessment, the effect of tests on learning/teaching, etc. For each of these issues, there is abundant literature that will be reviewed in this section.

Tests and Language Testing

The term test is probably the most used and the best known word in the terminology used to describe the assessment of human activity. In this regard, Mehrens and Lehmann (1987) note that the terms test, measurement, assessment, and evaluation, that describe how the knowledge of people is measured, are often used interchangeably. They define a test as "a presentation of a standard set of questions to be answered" (p. 7).

Brown (1983) makes a similar remark about the use of the word "test". He notes that everyone uses the term "test" with the feeling of a clear understanding of its meaning, and therefore seldom takes time to provide a precise definition of the word. He defines a test as "a systematic procedure for measuring a sample of behavior" (p. 8). He observes that the whole process of testing obeys a certain number of rules and considering such
rules help understand his definition of the term. Brown notes that tests are used for
decision making. Some of these decisions involve placement in academic tracks or
training programs for example. Yet for others, the purpose is to ensure ranking like in the
assigning of course grades.

Tests have become the dominant method of assessment in the various spheres of
human life. In the field of language education, however, testing remains a problem that is
yet to be solved. In most cases, language testing consists in obtaining responses to
questions that are presented to the testee. Language testing, however, should be more than
a simple question/answer exercise. As noted by Wiggins (1994), "a good test teaches the
student, revealing the actual challenges and constraints facing the would-be
communicator in the field instead of being a contrived exercise to shake out a score" (p.
72). Very few will deny the pertinence of such a remark. Unfortunately, most language
tests so far are concerned more about test scores than effective language performance.

In summary, testing is considered nowadays as a crucial component of language
learning/teaching. According to many testing specialists, a test should serve the purpose
of enhancing learning, particularly in the field of language teaching. Thus, testing and
learning/teaching are closely related. Looking at the evolution of language teaching and
learning will therefore help understand better the type of relationship that exists between
the two concepts.

Language Learning/Teaching

Language teaching nowadays is undergoing new trends. Approaches thought to
promote second/foreign language learning are being implemented. One example is
teaching with the focus on form rather than on forms (Long. 1991). Methods that were
CLL (Curran. 1972: 1976), and The Silent Way (Gattegno. 1976). gave way to
approaches that purported to be more comprehensive in terms of their relationship to language teaching/learning theories. It is therefore in the scope of this study to examine important topics such as competence (Chomsky, 1965) and communicative competence (Campbell and Wales, 1970; Hymes, 1972; Canale and Swain, 1980; Savignon, 1983; Celce-Murcia et al., 1995), subjects that have both gained much attention these last three decades or so. and communicative language teaching, a topic that became the object of large debates by second/foreign language researchers. These issues are, in the researcher's point of view, of paramount importance to language testing. They will be reviewed in this section.

Language learning/teaching is an area that has always been the concern of all researchers and practitioners involved in second/foreign language learning/teaching activities. Such an interest derives from the very complex nature of learning and the changes that took place in recent years all over the world regarding the way other peoples and their languages are viewed. As a result, language teaching/learning theories have evolved and research has gained momentum in the spheres of academic activities.

However, the evolution of theories and methods in the field of language learning has raised many questions conflicting with the traditional approaches to language learning/teaching. To understand the nature of such questions, one needs to look at the history of language learning/teaching these past three decades.

In the 1960s, language learning/teaching relied mainly on two methods: the grammar translation method and the audiolingual method. These methods were based on theories that reflected two different philosophies of language learning. Grammar translation gained popularity with the belief that language learning could be achieved through learning the grammar rules and the vocabulary needed to form sentences in the target
language. The audiolingual method on the other hand was grounded in behaviorist theories that viewed language learning as the result of the accumulation of language chunks and the formation of habits. Ellis (1997) argues that these two methods prevailed in an era when rigorous studies on language learning were still unknown.

These last two decades, however, have witnessed great changes in theories of language learning. From Dulay and Burt (1974c)'s morpheme study, new trends emerged in language acquisition research providing the field with new perspectives for a better understanding of the language learning phenomenon. Error analysis that used to be the systematic grounding for the study of learner language was no more reliable as a basis for a systematic research on language learning. The autonomy of grammar, as claimed by generative theory, was questioned by mentalist theorists. The latter, instead, laid emphasis on the role of memory in language learning and pointed to some similarities between L1 and L2 learners in language processing conditions (Ellis, 1994; Cook, 1989, 1988, 1977). Issues relating to the role of input in language acquisition became the object of large debates among language researchers (e.g. Long, 1981a; Krashen, 1985). In short, researchers began to re-locate their investigations in order to include constructs that had so far received little attention.

It is worth pointing out, however, that the turning-point in second language acquisition research was reached with Chomsky's (1965) distinction between linguistic competence and performance. Chomsky's description of what he terms competence and performance has drawn researchers' attention on some aspects of language that had been ignored in psycho-linguistics studies. In Chomsky's definition, competence refers to the knowledge of the language rules. Such a knowledge involves an explicit awareness of the
grammar rules and the grammatical structure of the target language. Performance on the other hand addresses the use of language in real life situations. This distinction has generated subsequent theories of competence and performance which were to influence current debates on communicative competence.

Communicative Competence Theories

The theories on language teaching/learning have evolved with the new trends that emerged in Foreign language research these last three decades. As pointed out earlier, Chomsky (1965)'s two critical notions of linguistic competence and performance were to open rich debates among researchers who purported to explore the psychology of language learning. Although this distinction helped gain new insight into the phenomenon of language learning, some researchers expressed their concern about Chomsky's definition of competence and performance.

Among the first researchers to respond to Chomsky's claims were Campbell and Wales (1970) and Hymes (1972). Although they do not reject Chomsky's definition, they argued that the notion of competence should be broadened to encompass both grammatical competence and contextual or sociolinguistic competence. As Canale and Swain (1980) put it, competence should incorporate the knowledge of the rules of language use.

Canale and Swain's view of language competence is provided from a sociolinguistic perspective. They claim that learners would be ineffective speakers if they do not know the grammatical rules of the target language. Their approach to language learning/teaching emphasizes the importance of these rules in language performance. They point out that grammatical competence cannot be separated from communicative competence, both types of competence being indispensable for
language production. They corroborate their view by stressing that "Just as Hymes (1972) was able to say that there are rules of grammar that would be useless without rules of language use, so we feel that there are rules of language use that would be useless without rules of grammar" (p. 5).

Wallat (1984) approaches the notion of communicative competence with similar views. She notes that "one of the most significant features of the notion of communicative competence is the fact that it deals with how individuals convey social information about the situation they perceive is being constructed at the moment" (p. 21). This notion of social information is emphasized by all communicative competence theorists.

Some theorists, however, suggest a more complex description of communicative competence. Thus, Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) argue for another dimension to communicative competence. To the commonly known four constituent components of communicative competence, that is, grammatical competence, strategic competence, socio-cultural competence and discourse competence, they add up a fifth component, actional competence. They define actional competence as "competence in conveying and understanding communicative intent, that is, matching actional intent with linguistic form based on the knowledge of an inventory of verbal schemata that carry illocutionary force" (p. 17). This view adds a new dimension to the traditional notion of communicative competence as suggested by Canale and Swain (1980), and Savignon (1983).

Savignon comments on communicative competence in a view similar to that of Canale and Swain. She insists, however, on the fact that the notion of communicative competence should be approached from a larger perspective. Such a perspective goes
beyond the fields of linguistics and psychology to encompass those of anthropology and sociology. She notes that:

it looks at language not as individual behavior but as one of many symbolic systems that members of a society use for communication among themselves. People and the languages they use are viewed not in isolation but in their social contexts or settings. (p. 10)

Savignon's claims reflect a view of language that has been traditionally overlooked by language research theories. Communicative competence, as suggested in this view, brings in new perspectives to the theory of foreign language learning. Furthermore, it has very important pedagogical implications. One example of such implications relates to the concept of communicative language teaching/learning.

Communicative Language Teaching

One aspect of language learning/teaching that has gained momentum these past two decades is communicative language teaching. Savignon (1983), quoting Canale and Swain (1980)'s survey of communicative approaches to language teaching, points out that "their purpose was to develop a theoretical framework for subsequent curriculum design and evaluation of L2 programs" (p. 35). She notes that the framework they propose identifies four components that are: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence. She concludes that these components "suggest a model of communicative competence as a basis for curriculum design and classroom practice" (p. 35). Such a conclusion clearly advocates a new approach to language teaching/learning that appeals for more integrated course design procedures.
Savignon admits, however, that "the concept of communicative competence needs to be explored in more detail" (p. 79). For the purpose of such needed investigations, she carried out studies pertaining to the field. These studies attempted to explore the way communicative competence could be promoted in a classroom. The first one reports on an experiment that she made with beginning college French students at the University of Illinois (1983, pp. 68-80). Three groups of 42 students were involved in a one-semester study: two experimental groups and one control group. Each group had four 50-minute instruction periods in French each week. They also engaged in an activity relating to French that lasted 50 minutes. As the two experimental groups were busy with this activity, the control group would go to a laboratory to practice what they had been taught in class, using audiolingual methods. At the end of the study, tests were administered to the three groups.

The results from the tests showed a difference. Students taught in a communicative method with communicative tasks as a support scored better than those taught with audiolingual exercises. Another test of linguistic competence was administered to the group taught in the traditional method and the one taught in a communicative method without communicative tasks. No significant difference between these two groups was shown (Savignon, 1983). Savignon concludes that:

The highly significant superiority (p < 0.001) of group E1 (the group that received training in communication throughout the eighteen-week period) on tests of communicative competence supports the hypothesis that communicative competence can be taught and measured from the very beginning of a college French program. It is apparent, furthermore, that without such training beginning students in an audiolingual program similar to the one referred to in this study function relatively poorly in a truly communicative setting. (p. 77)

Findings such as those provided by Savignon contribute to curriculum development in educational institutions. Such developments on the other hand will not be efficient if they are not supported by theoretical considerations and by curriculum theories.
Curriculum Theories

The school curriculum is the backbone of the educational objectives in most educational systems. It is a dynamic system that underlies the learning and teaching process as teachers and students conjugate their efforts to explore the domain of the unknown. A number of researchers have made important investigations on curriculum.

Hashway (1998) warns against a confusion between curriculum and instruction. He notes that the two terms, because of the close relationship between them, are often the object of a confusion. He nonetheless provides a detailed description of what a curriculum stands for. Referring to English (1987)'s definition, he observes that "curriculum is an internal coding mechanism that guides the work of the organization" (p. 197). He further notes that "the purpose of a curriculum is not to free the organization from its boundaries, but to enable it to function within those boundaries more effectively... and efficiently" (p. 197).

He points out that according to English, effectiveness and efficiency of the curriculum are attained by:

- defining the nature of the work to be done
- relating all of the tasks to be accomplished one to the other within the total work process or work flow called coordination
- defining standards by which work is to be measure or assessed
- defining evaluation procedures by which work results can be compared to work performed
- formulating changes in the nature of work with feedback from evaluation by revising written work instructions
- repeating the above steps until a significantly higher level of work performance is obtained on a consistent basis
Hashway's explanations provide insight into the way a curriculum functions in an institution. In his view, the curriculum serves as "a plan of action, a set of directions whose chief purpose is to guide the work of the institution, whether that work be teaching and instruction in a formal school setting or manufacturing a product in a factory setting" (p. 197). The curriculum is a tool that is used for attaining the objectives set forward by the school. Hashway warns, however, that in this manner, "curriculum becomes a means to an end and never an end in and of itself" (p. 197).

The purpose of the school curriculum is, therefore, to set guidelines for teachers to execute their teaching tasks in a way that ensures that the school objectives remain the focal point of the work. For Hashway, "the purpose of curriculum is to guide the teachers... towards common desired outcomes" (p. 199). The curriculum is therefore a tool made available to teachers for instructional goals. Quoting Van Paten, Chao, and Reigeluth (1986), Hashway argues that "the goal of instructional design is to understand and improve methods of instruction by deciding which methods of instruction should be used under given conditions to bring about the desired curricula goal" (p. 38). So, the curriculum plays a crucial role in the whole process of language teaching/learning, providing the practitioner with the necessary guidelines to move progressively towards the ultimate outcomes.

Hashway further describes the school curriculum as a family of educational systems. But the curricular system is not a static system, rather it is a dynamic one, designed to meet the goals of the group and those of the individual in this group. In such a system, the learning process is broken down into several parts and each part is "defined in terms of outcomes, how the learner expends time, and level of acceptable performance" (1998, p.15). The learning experience is specified by the system and every element in the system must be compatible with the system as a whole (1998).
Hashway specifies that in this set of educational systems, an educational philosophy is required. A philosophy that provides the learner with the opportunity of becoming an internalizor and interpreter. He argues that such a philosophy should also integrate events into a world view and define the learning environments as well as its outcomes. In this respect, three types of environmental events are to be considered: auditory events, visual events, and activities that provide the learner with learning experience, both as an individual and a member of a group.

Hashway differentiates instructional objectives from curricula objectives. While the former delineate in a specific way what should be the end products of instruction, the latter should specify how these goals and objectives will be attained and how they will be evaluated. It is noteworthy that Hashway includes evaluation in the curriculum. Evaluation relates to the outcomes that are delineated by the curriculum philosophy.

Nunan (1998) looks at curriculum from three different perspectives. He argues that curriculum can be approached first from the information about learners' needs, that is, considering how learners' needs underlie decision making in relation to the curriculum. The second perspective is in connection to assessment and evaluation. Curriculum planners will evaluate the course in term of students' learning. In this perspective, questions such as: what did students learn? did they learn what was planned in the curriculum? did they fail to learn? what did they fail to learn that was planned in the curriculum? did they learn something that was not planned? The answer to such questions will provide curriculum planners with feedback that is useful for the adoption or the improvement of the curriculum.
Assessment

Another concept that is used in the teaching/learning process is assessment. Brown (1983) gives an insightful definition of the term assessment. He defines assessment as referring "to the global process of synthesizing information about individuals so as to describe and understand them better" (p. 14). So, assessment is concerned with information about the individual being assessed (Hashway, 1998), an information that the instructor can obtain by different kinds of methods. In the framework of curriculum monitoring, this information is used for the purpose of identifying individual strengths, weaknesses and effective practices (p. 17).

One example is what Hashway terms "a curriculum information system humanistically meeting stakeholder needs" (p. 17). In this system, assessment is carried out to inform three stages of the learning process: placement, counseling and intervention phases. The placement stage concerns the learners' status in terms of their skills, styles and characteristics. The counseling stage is concerned with the attempt to gather personal information relating to the learner. Such information provides the counselor and the learner with the appropriate learning strategy for each individual. The final stage involves the formulation of a plan to remedy skill problems that are faced by the learner. In this curriculum information system, assessment involves the use of various methods in order to gather the information and make important decisions regarding the learner and the learning process. Indeed the rationale behind assessment is student learning (Backlund, 1994). It is reasonable, therefore, that assessment be sometimes based on the curriculum.

Curriculum and School-Based Assessment

Assessment in schools is often based on the school curriculum. Wood (1991) discusses the relationship between curriculum and school-based assessment. He argues that the curriculum is enriched by school-based assessment. According to him, school-
based assessment is a crucial component of the curriculum in that it establishes a correspondence between what learners are examined on and what they have been taught in school. He uses the term curricular validity, a term that he borrowed from McClung (1978) to describe the correspondence between a course assessment contents and the instruction objectives.

Wood further argues that school-based assessment will have curricular validity, given the connection that exists between teaching, assessment, and the syllabus for the course. According to him, the curricular validity will be granted by the syllabus, since it is this syllabus in principle that serves a guide for teachers, administrators and schools. He also evokes the notion of instructional validity, a notion introduced by McClung as well. He defines instructional validity as "the correspondence between what a test demands and what the instruction preceding it provided" (p. 1480).

School-based assessment is related to the school curriculum since it is the course contents that provide the material for the assessment. This relationship is underlined by Green (1975) who notes that the curriculum is materialized, not only by textbooks and courses of study, but also by expert opinion. Basing his argumentation on the rationality that characterizes the curricular approach, he points out that the validity of school tests will be measured against the validity of the curriculum. For Green then, an advantage in school-based assessments that may be lacking in other types of assessment lies in the fact that the curriculum remains the basis for the designing of the tests. There is one condition however, the curriculum must be a valid one. Then the evaluation of learners can also be valid.
One important component of the instructional process is learners' evaluation. This process, according to Brown (1983), should not be mistaken for measurement. Measurement refers to the description of the learner's performance in terms of the amount of the concept under measurement. In Brown's opinion, measurement does not provide any information about the worth or value of this performance (p. 14).

Such is not the case for evaluation. According to Haladyna (1999), evaluation has been defined as "an orderly process of collecting and using information to make an informed decision" (p. 16). In the process of evaluation, the evaluator provides the rest of the world with the quality of the learner's performance. Evaluation involves judgment in terms of how genuine or acceptable the performance of a learner is. Brown summarizes this idea by stating that "the objective description of his performance (his test score) is a measurement; my subjective judgment of its quality (the grade) is an evaluation" (p. 14).

Evaluation serves as a means to judge the attainment of instructional objectives. According to Mitchell (1992), "evaluation provides important information needed to improve every aspect of the educational process." She finds it "indispensable, not only for practical but also for sound pedagogical reasons" (p. 18). It is crucial therefore to design an evaluation system that would assess the actual achievement level of students. Thus, an ideal evaluation system will include a variety of evidence about the progress of individual students and the quality of educational programs.

Formative and Summative Assessment/Evaluation.

Evaluation can take two forms: formative assessment seeks to use the outcomes of the evaluation as new data to specify learners' needs in terms of weaknesses that need to be remedied. According to Stansfield (1994), it is "classroom assessment that permits
teachers to monitor and shape instruction while providing feedback to students" (p.53). The purpose of formative assessment, therefore, is to check whether the intended outcomes are being reached or not and whether the curriculum or the course syllabus needs modifications so that these outcomes may be reached.

Valette (1994) sees formative testing as an assessment that relates to the instructional program. In this type of testing, the tester seeks to establish a relationship between what the students know or do not know and what was expected from them. Its purpose is to make salient the shortcomings of instruction or learning, in order to be able to bring a correction while the course is still en route. As noted above, the results of such a testing will permit modifications to the instructional approach. The concerns go beyond the problems that can be encountered in a teaching situation. In short, formative evaluation is more concerned with a message to be used for instruction purposes.

Summative assessment on the other hand can be considered as a final act in the teaching/learning process. While formative testing is concerned with displayed knowledge of the subject matter at one point in time, with possible modifications to the course, summative testing, in contrast, focuses on the ultimate outcomes of the entire course. Its purpose is to make a decision about the end results of the learning, that is, the level of learners' achievement at the end of the process.

Swain (1992) provides us with one example of a summative testing that was used to check how much French students were learning in the immersion programs in Canadian schools. She comments that "the funding agencies that commissioned the evaluations... were interested in knowing how well students in the classes were learning their second language-French" (in Shohamy and Walton, 1992, p. 74). The objectives of these evaluations were concerned with providing the funding agencies, parents, and administrators with information about the actual results of French immersion programs at the end of the instruction period.
The real nature of summative assessments is documented by the following remark made by Swain about immersion programs:

Immersion programs evaluations have demonstrated that there is no long term detrimental effect on the development of the first language. ...that cognitive growth is as expected (or better); and that academic achievement in content subjects taught via the second language does not suffer relative to that of students taught the same subjects in their first language. (p. 76)

Swain's remark provides insight into the role of summative evaluation. It shows that this type of evaluation in language learning/teaching has as its goals to provide the evaluator or the instructor with the immediate results of a teaching program in order to make administrative or pedagogical decisions about the program or the learners.

Diagnostic Testing

Sometimes, it is necessary to be clearly informed of the strengths and weaknesses of the learner in order to undertake remedial actions that provide him/her with the means to overcome the latent difficulties he/she is confronted with. Such an approach, known as diagnostic testing (Wood, 1991; Hill & Parry, 1994), is mainly intended to find out the skills that are deficient in the learner in order provide him/her with the appropriate treatment.

Wood (1991) comments that deficit measurement and error analysis are the two approaches to diagnostic assessment. A deficit, he notes, pertains to a behavioral approach to learning/teaching. In this approach, deficit is defined as "failure to master one or more end-of-instruction objectives" (p. 96). Wood further points out that diagnostic assessment informs the tester of the gaps that persist with the learner, it helps diagnose the problems that constitute an obstacle to the achievement of instructional objectives.

The second approach, error analysis, attempts to analyze the learner's errors in order to determine the appropriate remedy for such errors (p. 102). For Wood, the difference
between the two approaches can be explained by the distinction made by Bejar (1984) that deficit measurement tends to emphasize response consistency and error analysis focuses on the content of items. Diagnostic testing can take place at the beginning of a course or at any time during course for formative purposes.

Norm-Referenced and Criterion-Referenced Assessment.

Assessment is sometimes described in terms of the basis for the judgment to be made about learners' achievement. Then a distinction is made between norm-referenced and criterion-referenced assessment/testing (Brown, 1983; Mitchell 1992; Hashway 1998). Brown (1983) observes that the distinction between these two types of assessment is made at the level of score interpretations. In a norm-referenced test for example, the scores are compared to those of other learners, whereas in a criterion-reference test or content-referenced (Brown, 1983), performance is interpreted in comparison to a standard that specifies how much content has been mastered by the learner (p. 23).

Mitchell (1992) defines a norm-referenced test as a "test designed to show where a given student lies in comparison to a group of peers, usually a national norm." Criterion referencing on the other hand "is testing against an expected standard (what the child ought to know at that stage of development)" (p. 5). She specifies, however, that in practice many so-called criterion-referenced tests are simply multiple-choice tests that are measured to district or state standards. She further argues that norm-referenced tests have less educational value than teacher-made tests in that they do not take into account the actual picture of a student at a given time. Rather, they compare the student's achievement to that of his/her peers through a curve that represents the spread values of the latter.

The dichotomous distinction between norm-referenced and criterion-referenced testing is also discussed by Wood (1991). He notes that the notions of criterion-referencing and criterion-referenced testing (CRT) were introduced by Glaser (1963).
He adds however that, according to Glaser himself, the distinction between the two types of testing had been previously made by other theorists such as Hamilton (1929). Glaser's understanding of criterion-referencing is also mentioned by Sizmur (1997).

For Glaser, he comments, "criterion-referenced measures depend upon an absolute standard of quality... Glaser meant that the achievement yardstick by which we gauge an examinee's performance has meaning in itself, and is essentially independent of the capability of other examinees" (p. 125). Criterion-referenced testing is therefore concerned by the student's capability as an individual learner. Any conclusions that are drawn from the test regard the examinee's capability in the skill being measured. For a complex phenomenon such as foreign language learning in which various psychological, linguistic and sociological factors are involved, criterion-referenced assessment seems a justified response to the requirements of language achievement measures.

Hashway (1998) discusses the purpose of both criterion and norm-referenced assessments as well as the problems that they present. Quoting Mills and Hambleton (1980), he points out that the purpose of norm-referenced assessments is to "facilitate comparisons among individuals (or groups) in relation to the performance of the norm group" (p. 183). He further argues that the paradigms in the selection of events are independent from the content domain which the assessment purports to cover (p. 63). He notes, however, that norm-referenced assessment remains pregnant with three major problems.

The first problem relates to measurement. A measurement obtained from a norm-referenced assessment is dependent upon the group being assessed. Norm-referenced assessment faces also a consistency problem with regard to scores obtained from different assessments. Such scores, according to Hashway, are seldom
numerically consistent. The third problem lies in the way these assessments are made. In the assessment process, some events are not taken into consideration. Yet their importance is such that their absence significantly affects the outcomes of the assessment.

Hashway also emphasizes the shortcomings of criterion referenced assessments. He points out that assessment results are mainly used for selection, classification, diagnosis, research, program evaluation and description. He cites Shrock, Mansukhani, Coscarelli, and Palmer (1986) as stigmatizing the delay of the development of criterion referenced assessment, caused by "an over emphasis on instructional practice" (p. 184). Indeed, instructional practice can be an obstacle to the improvement of assessment by relying on routine for student evaluation. Hashway speaks of a confusion describing the current situation of criterion referenced assessments. He notes that in spite of Shrock, et al. (1986)’s criticism of this type of assessment, "they add five types of criterion referenced assessment to the confusion" (p. 184). Shrock, et al. indeed suggest a classification of criterion referenced assessment that goes as follows:

**Prerequisite assessments**

used to ensure that learners have the background knowledge required for the course

**Entry assessments**

used to identify skills taught in a course that the entering student may already possess.

**Diagnostic assessments**

used to assess mastery for a given instructional objective or group of related objectives in an instructional unit.

**Postassessments**

administered after instruction to assess performance on terminal objectives.
Equivalency assessments

used to determine whether a learner has already mastered the course's terminal objectives before instruction begins (p. 184).

This classification, in fact, could compare to a description of the different types of criterion referenced assessments in terms of their purpose and of the point at which they are administered during the course. The different types of assessment described above do not show a fundamental difference and indeed, such a classification does not add much to the development of criterion referenced assessment.

Authentic Assessment

Authentic assessment is one of the most recent attempts to relate assessment to the objectives of language learning, that is, the production of language in a real life situation. (Shohamy & Reves, 1985; Wiggins, 1994; Hill and Parry, 1994). Wiggins (1994) provides a set criteria that can help to distinguish whether a test is authentic or not. These criteria include effective and creative use of language, context of real life and real problems, transparency in the test questions and tasks, interaction between tester and testee, emphasis on the consistency of student work, etc. (p. 76). In short, Wiggins advocates a type of assessment that will differ from traditional tests, not only in the test contents, but also in the way the whole testing process is conducted.

Shohamy & Reves (1985), however, evoke the problems that the concept of authenticity can entail. They note that in the wave of enthusiasm towards the development of authentic language tests, two major problems have been overlooked:

- the lack of attention to psychometric properties of authentic tests;
- a naive belief that the so-called authentic tests are really authentic.

The crux of the matter seems to be that any language test is, by its very nature, inauthentic. Inauthenticity arises because the test-taker is being asked to engage in
abnormal language behavior: not to answer a question giving information, but to display knowledge or skill. Searle (1969) addressed this contradiction by commenting that real questions ask for information, whereas examination questions call for performance. Indeed, the very nature of a test makes it difficult for assessment to be authentic in the sense of a real context of communicative language use. After all, the test taker seeks to show the tester that he/she can perform the way he/she is expected to. In real life, language is produced to impart information to or obtain information from the interlocutor.

Shohamy and Reves further discuss the issue of authenticity, arguing that even when information is sought, the communication will be inauthentic if the student knows that the tester knows the answers already, or if the questions are of a kind that a total stranger would never dream of asking at a first encounter. Questions must never be asked that would never be asked in a real-life situation. And Shohamy and Reves conclude that the best that can be achieved, perhaps, is authentic test language. If one considers that authentic real-life language is too hard to handle (Shohamy & Reves, p. 236-237).

Performance Testing

Performance testing is one of the most used modes of assessment in foreign language teaching. Mitchell (1992) defines performance assessment as:

a collection of ways to provide accurate information about what students know and are able to do or about the quality of educational programs. The collective assessments reflect the complexity of what is to be learned and do not distort its nature in the gathering process. (Page 20)

In the field of language teaching/learning, however, performance testing does not always take into consideration all the factors that come into play in learners' interaction with a foreign language. One example of such shortcomings is provided by Parry (1994) in a description of a study conducted in a Nigerian secondary school. The study attempted
to analyze the way students interacted with a text in a test context. It was a reading comprehension test. After preparing the students so that they can experience the same exam context, the researcher interviewed them individually to gain insight into these students' perceptions of the test.

The test material was samples of the national English exam administered at the end of secondary school. This exam, called the West African School Certificate (WASC), is made up of two components: an oral component and a written one. The written test was a summary and the oral one was a reading comprehension test. The researcher replicated both components and came up with the following results: first, the WASC does not assess the real performance skills of the testee. To give strength to her argument, she gives an example from the test where students displayed some ignorance at sentence structure level due to lexical difficulty. When the vocabulary is simplified, then the students show evidence understanding. She came to the conclusion that the difficulty did not lie in the structure of the sentence, but the problem was rather at lexical level (1994, p. 93). But the lexical problems increased with syntax difficulties. For a test that was meant to measure lexical skills, the validity of the instrument becomes questionable.

The second finding related to the cultural conflict between the students and the test maker. Both sides were approaching the test with different schemata, which led to different interpretation of the test contents (p. 94). The problem in understanding the text, therefore, is not of an idiosyncratic nature, but rather, is due to a difference in the students' assumptions about the contents of the reading text.

Parry points out that the test maker's authority as opposed to the test takers' subordinate position widens the gap between the two perspectives regarding the subject under discussion. She speaks of the problematic contradiction that emerges from such a situation (p. 100). Furthermore, she criticizes the way the test was constructed by underlying the lack of consistency between the text and the test questions. She specifies
that the test maker "has constructed an item for which it is impossible for even the most proficient reader to know what is the expected response" (p. 101). Parry also criticizes the test for the vagueness of the instructions to the test takers.

The conclusions of the study underline the inadequacy of the reading components of the test that leads to the poor results that characterize the WASC. The shortcomings in the test generally pertain to ambiguity in the questions, the use of a very formal language, to "a contrived use of idioms and figures of speech" (p. 110). Parry also points out that the content of the reading comprehension component "is presented from a European perspective" (p. 111). She notes, on the other hand, that the test unit designed to test summary skills reflected more accurately the overall performance skills of the students.

She makes it clear, however, that the students' difficulties are not contingent to the test alone. The students did have some problems with the language at the lexical as well as at the structural levels. These problems led to misinterpretation of meaning and misunderstanding of the passage to study.

Yet, the problems confronted by the students were not attributable to ignorance alone. Parry further argues that the students' background played a crucial role in their misinterpretation of the passage. Their schemata about reading were quite different from those of the test makers.

Such a variance correlates with the cultural difference between the testers and the testees. In order to understand the text, the students would have had to view life the way the test makers did, that, to change their own view of life associated with this test. As it stood, the students' ability to interact with the text was deemed poor. yet, as Parry points out, they did interact with the text, and some of them were "extraordinarily inventive" in their treatment of the text as instruments of communication (p. 112).
This study poses the problem of validity in testing. To what extent does the passage measure the real ability of the Nigerian students to interact with a text and give evidence of this ability in a foreign language, in a cultural context so different from that of the test makers. Validity, as Wiggins (1994) put it, has to do with communication in context. The context will vary from one group of learners to another, depending on the course objective and the context in which the course is taught. Tests, however, regardless of their validity, have considerable effects on language learning.

Test Washback

One area of testing that has received much attention from researchers in recent years is the effect of testing on language learning/teaching (Alderson & Clapham, 1997; Stansfield, 1994; Shohamy & Walton, 1992). This effect, known as test washback, can have a positive impact on language learning. Valette notes that "washback occurs when it is the testing... that determines the course of instruction" (p. 10). In a washback situation, students focus their learning on the different skills that will be tested. But students are not the only group that receives the message from the test. Teachers also heed the washback message and in so doing, focus their instruction on the skills that constitute the essence of the test contents.

Among the most ardent claims on the effect of test on teaching/learning are those of Mitchell (1992). Mitchell advocates a strong relationship between testing and teaching. She argues that the way "students are assessed inevitably affects how they are taught" (p. xviii). She emphasizes that "assessment cannot be considered separately from teaching and learning, because assessments are the motivation for both teacher and student. Changing assessment therefore impacts on the classroom, the textbooks, the professional lives of teachers, the decisions of administrators" (p. xv). Mitchell further comments on "the role of assessment as a lever to crank the system up to higher achievement" (p. xv).
Her arguments are grounded in the logic that tests represent the outcomes of teaching expected from students. Test contents, achievement tests in particular, represent samples of what teachers and administrators expect students to master at the end of a teaching period. It appears evident from this remark that assessment will play the role of a motivator for teaching and learning in a particular system.

This claim, as it will be shown later in this chapter, has important implications for the designing and administration of tests. A test becomes more than a simple instrument for assessment. Indeed, it becomes an incentive for teaching and learning and as such, should be considered as a crucial element in curriculum development. Given that predominant role of assessment in the teaching/learning process, it is essential that testing be considered as an indispensable complement to classroom instruction. In short, tests should be part of instruction, not an additional element of instruction (Wiggins, 1994).

The important role of tests in the teaching/learning process is equally echoed by Shohamy (1992, 1993). She points out that tests have tremendous power in the sense that they affect the test taker's life and forces decisions that are crucial to the instruction program, that is, the syllabus. She observes that tests are used to influence education by prompting curricular changes and syllabus modifications. Furthermore, she makes the point that tests serve as devices to impart important educational priorities to all those concerned by the educational program, that is, principals, teachers, and students.

Shohamy substantiates her claim with three studies (Shohamy, 1993) that she conducted in order to explore the issue of tests effect on learning and teaching. The first study examined a test introduced by the Ministry of Education of Israel to assess the learning/teaching of Arabic as a second language in Israeli schools. The results of the study showed that the test had an impact on 55% of the students. Among these 55%, the
great majority claim the test had a positive effect on them. They admit that it contributed to motivate them and help them put more efforts in their learning of the Arabic language.

As for the rest of the group under study, they pointed to the negative effect of the test on them, complaining that it was not beneficial at all. Similarly, teachers were differently affected by the test. Half of them claimed to have been influenced in their teaching by the test. Shohamy concluded that the test had a great impact on the language program in terms of materials and teaching for the test purpose.

Shohamy also reports on a study that examined the impact of an EFL oral test on the teaching of spoken English. Observations and interviews were conducted with a group of fifteen teachers. The group was composed of ten experienced teachers and five new teachers. The experienced teachers claimed that their classroom teaching was affected by the test. They devoted more time to oral language in the classroom, what they did not do before, and they used activities identical to those used in the test. As for the novice teachers, they asserted that the test had no effect on their classroom behavior, having been trained in approaches similar to the one used in the oral test (Shohamy, 1993).

Finally, a third study looked at the impact of a reading comprehension test on teachers, on their teaching time and on their teaching materials. It was revealed that teachers and supervisors produced new teaching material that was, in its format, a replicate of the reading comprehension test. They devoted more time to the teaching of reading comprehension and were emotionally affected by the outcomes of the test (Shohamy, 1993). The impact of the test extended even beyond the schools and the purely academic context. For example, the media and the public took a special interest in the test, and they showed more awareness of issues relating to education. The overall conclusion was that all three tests had some impact on teachers, on instruction, and on instructional materials.
On the basis of these studies, Shohamy points to the powerful role that tests can play at various levels. Thus, she claims that:

tests are powerful devices and should be treated as such. Tests are powerful in that they can provide decision makers - students, teachers, and administrators - with valuable information and insights on teaching and learning. It is the information that tests are capable of providing that makes them valuable. (p. 18)

Tests are powerful indeed. Their power derives from the social and political implications that most tests entail. In the US for example, "the National Commission on Testing and Public Policy estimates in its 1990 report... that students take 127 million separate tests in a year" (Mitchell 1992, P. 4). Yet the importance of tests is not just in terms of their number. Tests are used to make important decisions on people's lives such as decisions pertaining to the acquisition of or promotion in jobs. At school level, tests determine success or failure and by doing so, underlie decisions about a person's status in society. This is precisely why they have a remarkable influence both on learning and instruction.

Mitchell further documented this influence of tests with the following episode:

A teacher in an early childhood school in Dayton, Georgia, told a researcher: "I was petrified that my class would do so poorly that I wouldn't be back next year. So I taught what the other teachers recommended to get them ready for the test. After the test I started teaching, good teaching. The class enjoyed it and I think they learned more the last three weeks of school than they did the first six months, because I was more relaxed, the students were more relaxed, and I was able to hone in on those areas where they needed help" (1992. p. 6).

This humorous yet pertinent remark underlines the extent to which test washback effect is exercised on teachers, stressing them into teaching for the test rather than for the curriculum. In this sense, tests, to some extent, can constitute an obstacle to curriculum implementation.
In summary, tests have an undeniable washback effect on teachers, students, and administrators. They impact on classroom activities as well as on other activities and instructional materials. A test is a powerful instrument, and as such, should be handled with care.

Standardized Tests

In recent years, testing has been influenced by the generalization of standardized tests in schools, especially in the US (Mitchell, 1992; Stansfield, 1994; Alderson and Clapham, 1997). Stansfield criticizes the exclusive use of multiple-choice tests in this assessment system. He points out that the curriculum and instruction in school have benefited from this policy since there is no direct influence of these tests on them (p. 65). He acknowledges the psychometric effectiveness of standardized tests, but notes that these tests have no positive impact on teaching/learning. In the field of language learning, for example, they do not contribute to the development of the qualities that are needed for language learners to become effective language users, that is, capable of using the target language for effective communication.

Stansfield advocates the necessity of a more integrative educational system in which "productive skills tests and tests based on authentic tasks" (p. 65) will be incorporated into the curriculum. In this respect, a project such as The Ohio Collaborative Articulation/Assessment Project (CAAP) stands as an example of collaborative efforts towards a more comprehensive instructional system that will stretch from high school into college, providing foreign language students with the opportunity to continue in college the language program they had started in high school.

The CAAP is a project that involves Ohio State University and Columbus State Community College. Its objectives include "better articulation of curricula and early assessment of students" (Stansfield, 1994, p. 57). Stansfield further argues that such an
assessment is crucial in that it will provide feedback to students even before they move from high school to college. Similarly, teachers will benefit from it as it acquires a formative character. It is in the researcher's opinion that projects like the CAAP can contribute much to the implementation of foreign language teaching/learning and to the improvement of assessment as a component of instruction.

Standardized tests have also been criticized by Alderson and Clapham (1997). They argue that standardized tests are characterized by the peculiarity of the concepts, procedures, standards, and criteria that are used in their construction (p. 184). They point out that these characteristics, however, may not be relevant to classroom tests. Although standardized tests can provide valuable measures of learners' achievement, the commercial character of such tests can reduce their validity to provide reliable measures of learners' performance.

In summary, standardized tests do not meet the criteria that characterize a good testing system. They do not contribute to the enhancement of language teaching/learning in that they do not influence the development of curricula. Their contents and format are specific to their objectives and that makes them ineffective for the assessment of foreign language performance.

Validity and Test Design

One of the most challenging issues relating to assessment and testing is test design. As argued earlier, testing is more than just a question and answer exercise. The issue of testing becomes even more crucial when one considers the field of language learning/teaching. Indeed, all the difficulties underlying language assessment stem from the problems encountered in test design. No wonder the problem has become a serious concern for many researchers these last years.
Wiggins (1994) for example denounces the poor quality of tests in foreign language assessment. He advocates the construction of tests that will be challenging to students, tests that will "help students know their strengths and weaknesses on essential tasks" (p. 70). He warns against the danger of short-item tests of words and the exclusive reliance on "isolated tasks or drill-exercises" (p. 74). His view of testing is that the clue resides in test design. Students need tests that allow them to use the target language and learn more about it. He calls for reform in foreign language assessment and claims that such "reform begins... by treating each and every test we design for what it is: it should teach" (p. 71).

Yet, most tests do not display this major preoccupation. In the field of foreign language, schools are still confronted with the lack of genuine tests. One must recognize, however, that teachers are not exclusively responsible for such a situation. Most teachers do not receive training for test designs and evaluation. As Mitchell (1992) put it, "test making and grading are frequently learned on the job from other teachers and hard experience" (P. 3). Experience alone, however, cannot guarantee the construction of a good test.

Test Validity

Validity is concerned with the quality of a test. There are various reasons for wanting to measure students' status at one point in time. Students can be assessed to determine their intellectual abilities, their emotional standing, or their knowledge in a content area. For all these measurements, the most important feature is the quality of the instrument that is used for assessing purposes. A bad instrument can never provide adequate measures of what it is that we want to measure. In order to obtain adequate results, the use of a valid instrument is essential.

Test design has long been a preoccupation for researchers. For example, Green (1975) argues that a good test is the result of extensive thought, planning, and work in the
preparation of the test. He specifies that "the objectives to be measured ultimately dictate
the kind of test to be used..." (p. 19-20). He insists on validity and reliability in test
construction. Validity is concerned with the extent to which a test measures what it is
supposed to measure. It is therefore indispensable that the curriculum be the basis for the
construction of a valid test since the contents of the curriculum are in essence what the
test should seek to measure. Reliability on the other hand looks at how consistent this
measurement is. These two characteristics of a test are essential to its effectiveness as an
assessment instrument. This section will address this issue, examining successively the
notions of reliability, face validity, construct validity, and content validity.

Reliability

One quality of an assessment instrument that ... is reliability. The concept of
reliability addresses the capacity of the instrument to measure consistently what it
purports to measure. As noted by Gellman (1995), reliability refers to the accuracy of the
measures produced by the instrument. Quoting Deale (1975), Frith and Macintosh (1984)
defines reliability as the extent to which the test will give the same results if it was
administered to the same testees under the same conditions. Frith and Macintosh add,
however, that creating conditions that would be exactly the same as those on a previous
test is practically impossible.

This observation also implies that a test can never be perfectly reliable, that is, it is
unlikely that a test will produce identical results on two assessment occasions. What the
test designer can attain, however, is a situation where the factor of variability is reduced
to a minimum. Minimizing this factor is precisely what reliability is about. By
minimizing the variability factor, the test designer provides the instrument with an
essential element among the criteria of judging assessment (Birenbaum, 1995) and
determining its extent of validity. The next section will address the issue of validity.
Face Validity

According to Frith and Macintosh (1984) citing Deale (1975), face validity refers to the fact that a “test should look as if it is testing what it is intended to test” (p. 19). In other words, a test should look acceptable even to the non-specialist. For example, it should look valid and be acceptable to the test-taker (Angoff, 1988), to students and parents. As Davies (1990) has put it, “face validity concerns the appeal of the test to the lay judgement” (p. 23). Thus, face validity does not require the opinion of a professional. Yet a test needs to have face validity since, as explained above, it should be accepted by the general public. Face validity, however, is rather superficial in the sense that a test may be valid in appearance and still be a bad test. It is, therefore, essential that the judgment of a test validity takes into account factors relevant to what the test purports to measure.

Construct Validity

The concept of construct validity is used in psychometrics to describe how valid a test is for measuring a particular type of construct. Satterly (1989) has noted that construct validity is conceptually different from the other types of validity, namely face, content, and criterion-related validity. He specifies that this type of validity seeks to establish the meaning of the test-taker’s scores or to identify “the construct which is theoretically responsible for the difference between children on that test” (p. 247). Construct validity pertains to some categories of tests that intend to measure a specific type of psychological traits. Its goal is to determine what it is that the test is actually measuring (Haladyna, 1999; Davies, 1990; Wainer & Braun, 1988). In contrast, in the assessment of student performance, professional judgment seeks to determine the quality of the instrument used for the purpose of measuring the testee’s abilities in the specific area. Researchers term this requirement content validity.
Content Validity

As stated above, when the goal of the tester is to assess the abilities of the testee in a specific content area, content validity is the type that comes into play. Content validity seeks to determine whether the measuring instrument adequately measures the skill that is targeted. It is basically concerned with assessing the alignment between the test and the teaching objectives (Miller, 1985). According to Birenbaum (1995), it is essential that the assessment rubrics cover the domains about which the tester intends to draw inferences. If the test does not cover such domains, then the test lacks content validity.

Content validity is sometimes sub-divided into instructional validity and curricular validity. When the test is supposed to measure students' achievement on a specific skill, it is not only the skill domain that is concerned, but also the part of the skill covered in class during instruction. In other words, the test should assess what the testee was taught. If that is the case, then the test has instructional validity.

Another type of validation addresses the organization of teaching: curricular validity. As noted above, instructional validity results from the coverage by a test of material taught in class. Curricular validity encompasses a broader domain, that is, it is concerned with the extent to which a test matches curriculum objectives (Nitko, 1983). In short, a test system acquires curricular validity if the teaching objectives determined by the curriculum are matched by the tests assessing the outcomes of instruction. Nitko terms this quality the “curricular relevance of a test”.

To the notion of instructional and curricular validity, testing specialists sometimes introduce the notion of consequential validity. They emphasize the fact that different testing systems purport to reach different goals. According to Khattri et al. (1998), consequential validity pertains to the extent to which an assessment system achieves its
intended purposes. Validity is therefore closely related to the initial intention of the assessment system. A test that is valid for one assessment context may not be valid for another. In any case, whatever the circumstances, validity and reliability are always accounted for in the appreciation of an assessment instrument.

In fact, reliability and validity remain two components indispensable to the quality of an assessment system. It is worth noting that reliability always impacts on validity. Wood (1991) stresses the effect of reliability on validity. He claims that "validity is ultimately more important than reliability but any attempt at validation depends crucially on the reliability of the observations. If these cannot be trusted, then a misleading judgement concerning validity is likely to be reached" (p. 147).

Thus, the importance of validity in test design can never be stressed enough. In the field of language teaching/learning, any assessment program should aim to enhance the learning process. In any case, the enhancement of language teaching/learning cannot be promoted without the development of effective instruments for the measurement of language performance. Such instruments will measure many skills together, providing the students with an opportunity to show the effectiveness of their learning through the use of language for a real communication context, that is, communication as it occurs in real life.

Trustworthiness

According to Erickson (1986), the analytic approach to the examination of qualitative documentary materials requires a continuous consultation of field notes and other information relevant to the research. The analysis of such materials becomes therefore an ongoing process through which the researcher attempts to provide credibility to the assertions that are made on the phenomenon being analyzed. Erickson postulates that it is
crucial that "evidence for or against the major assertions the researcher wishes to make" be provided in order to warrant credibility to the research results (p.149). The production of such evidence will mainly rely on the information gathered from various sources and triangulated.

Constrained by the necessity to provide evidence to the reader, the researcher, in qualitative research, is bound to navigate forward and backward through the data available in order to guarantee a reliable and valid content analysis. As pointed out by Allwright & Bailey's (1994), the researcher utilizes "the value of multiple perspectives" to reach credible conclusions.

The issue of credibility is a key one in qualitative research. Huberman & Miles (1994) posit that qualitative analysis requires the researcher to achieve more integration among diverse pieces of data. Each piece provides information that the researcher juxtaposes against other sources in order to reaffirm or negate patterns of behavior that emerge from the comparison of all the data available. Denzin (in Denzin and Lincoln (eds.). 1994) speak of "the logic of the text", that is "how a text legitimates itself or makes claims for its own authority" (p. 503). Thus, trustworthiness remains the basis of a study, be it qualitative or quantitative.

Summary

In this chapter, the literature on evaluation has been explored. Researchers were unanimous on the integrative approach to testing. They have underlined the necessity to construct tests that enhance learning and test several skills at the same time. Researchers have also emphasized the crucial role of reliability and validity in a testing system. Reliability describes the accuracy of the testing instrument. Face validity is concerned with the appearance of the test. Content validity relates to the matching between a test and a specific course contents while construct validity addresses the suitability of the test.
to measure the construct that the instrument purports to measure. Researchers have noted that whatever the purpose of a testing instrument, validity should always be the primary guide to test design.
CHAPTER 3

DESIGN AND PROCEDURES

This was a descriptive study. It was based on the First Cycle English Test (FCET) in Burkina Faso, West Africa. The purpose was to explore the extent to which data such as FCET samples can contribute to the enhancement of foreign language teaching. It analyzed the extent to which the FCET meets the conditions set in the stated objectives of the government for the teaching of English in Burkina Faso. The procedures for the analysis covered the following areas: population and sample, research approach, instrumentation, data collection, document collection, interviews, procedure for data collection.

Population and Sample

The participants in the study were two different populations involved in classroom teaching/testing activities, and in curriculum development and test design. Secondary school teachers constituted the first category. For the reliability of the study, it was crucial that the views of those who work everyday in the teaching environment be heard. Teachers are, together with their students, the main clients concerned with the process and outcomes of English language teaching. The second category of clients involved in
the study do not directly take part in the teaching/testing process. However, their contribution to the actual implementation of the curriculum cannot be ignored. These are the members of the National Board of Education, of the National Testing Service, and the English language inspectors.

All the participants were from Ouagadougou, the capital of the country. The reason for the choice of the Ouagadougou teachers is founded on the reality of school distribution in Burkina Faso. Secondary schools are concentrated in cities. The two major cities, Ouagadougou, the capital city, and Bobo-Dioulasso, the second largest city, have a concentration of more than 80% of the country's secondary schools. Ouagadougou alone totals more than 50% of the secondary schools in Burkina Faso. On the other hand, the oldest and largest schools are found in Ouagadougou. Teachers from the Ouagadougou schools are, therefore, likely to be more aware of the problems relating to the teaching and testing of foreign language in Burkina Faso.

It is clear to the researcher, however, that findings resulting from data collected in one setting alone cannot be generalized to all the school settings in the country. However, such findings could serve as a basis for further investigations of the FCET, investigations that could involve more sites and that could yield more generalizable results.

The objectives of the study include an analysis of the evolution of the FCET. Experienced teachers constituted the bulk of the participants in the interviews. They are those who are informed of the educational problems in the country and who have witnessed the implementation of the new FCET formula since its appearance in the 1970's.

It was of interest, however, to have the point of view of less-experienced teachers as well. Indeed such teachers were likely to be less subject to routine practices and may provide more critical remarks on English teaching and testing in secondary schools. As for the administrators participating in the study, they could not be selected from a
different area. Indeed, in the Burkinabé educational system, they are all concentrated in Ouagadougou. As described in chapter I, the school system in Burkina Faso is centralized to the extent that all national boards are located in the capital city.

For investigations similar to those in the current study, the number of participants may an issue of importance. Anticipating some material problems that would be a handicap to such investigations, the researcher did not determine a specific number to be covered. Instead, an attempt was made to gather as much information as possible from available informants. Such an approach gave this study a case study orientation, with possibilities of follow-up investigation in the future for additional data gathering and analysis.

Research Approach

The present study used both quantitative and qualitative data-gathering processes. Interview data and documents relating to government statements on foreign language teaching were analyzed from a qualitative perspective. The data from the interviews was compared in order to determine samples that tended to be special or deviant (Paton, 1990). Such samples have been found to be rich in information and have the potential for leading the researcher to needed points of investigation that otherwise might have been left unexplored.

FCET tests samples, on the other hand, were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The advantages of a combined method has been emphasized by Denzin and Lincoln (1994). The quantitative research approach provides the researcher with rigorous statistical data but in this approach, important facets of the research
problem can sometimes be ignored. Qualitative methods on the other hand, permit more in-depth exploration of the phenomenon under study. Therefore, the use of both qualitative and quantitative processes gives more strength to a study by providing information that otherwise would have been left out.

Data Collection

Data collection took place over a two month's period, in the Summer Quarter 1999. The beginning of the Summer Quarter at Ohio State University corresponds to the last few weeks of the academic year in Burkina Faso. It is a period when teachers feel less pressure to complete their academic work and therefore, may be expected to devote time to answer interview questions and participate in the study. Summer is also the period when the researcher has time to engage in the needed field work activities of the investigation.

In addition to the interview data, the researcher collected and analyzed documents defining the country-wide objectives of the government regarding the teaching of English. Such documents are likely to be official documents as well, minutes and speeches from teachers' meetings. Test samples from the FCET of the last five years were gathered from various sources and analyzed. These samples comprised both the written and oral components of the FCET. Finally, documents from the Ministry of Education that the researcher found relevant and informative about the teaching and testing systems in secondary schools were consulted.
Instrumentation

Interview questionnaires were the main instrument for the collection of the interview data. The interviews were semi-structured in order to ensure, on the one hand, that all participants addressed the same issues in their responses and that the informants were not bound by the questions in a way that impacted their effort to provide needed information. The interviews were conducted face to face. All semi-structured interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed for subsequent analysis.

Qualitative methods of analysis were used to examine the public policies for English teaching in Burkina Faso. In addition, these methods were used to investigate the FCET as the primary instrument for language assessment in the implementation of the policies. Samples of the FCET were analyzed to identify the degree of communicative emphasis within the FCET.

Document Collection

For purposes of the investigation, documents that provided insight into objectives of the government regarding English teaching in Burkina Faso were reviewed. The most important documents were the following:

- Official documents of the teaching of English in Burkina Faso. These documents include the "circulaire No 105/MENAC/ICEDSD of December 1, 1983" (see appendix B).
- FCET test samples (see appendix C).
- Documents presenting the publicly stated objectives of the Burkina Faso government were collected from the Ministry of Education and from the Board of Education. These texts describe the objectives and plans for teaching English in Burkina Faso. (See appendix B for samples)
• Sample texts from English textbooks that are currently used in Burkina Faso secondary schools (see appendix E for a sample listing of textbooks and grammar syllabuses)

Interviews

Interviewing is one method of data collection that can provide invaluable information both in quantitative and qualitative research. In spite of the difficulties that such a method can entail (e.g., formulation of questions, elicitation of satisfactory responses from ambiguous questions), it remains a useful and powerful instrument for exploring the paradigms that surround other human beings (Fontana & Frey, 1994). Interviewing is interacting with others to gain insights into their view of the world in order to construct or reconstruct our own. This will be one of the methods in this study.

Face to face interviews were conducted with secondary school teachers in the Ouagadougou area. In addition to teachers, the point of view of the following specialists was recorded: members of the Board of Public Education, members of the National Board for First Cycle Examinations, FCET testers, test designers. Semi-structured interviews were used for all the interviews (see Appendix D for interview samples).

Semi-structured interviews, as opposed to structured interviews, have the advantage of not "imposing any a priori categorization that may limit the field of inquiry." (Fontana & Frey, 1994) As stated by Kvale (1996), openness confers upon qualitative interviews its very virtue (p. 84). Structured interviews serve the purpose of precise data collection. In the present study, precise data are not indispensable. What is important is the view of the respondents about teaching in secondary schools, about the FCET and its impact on English teaching in secondary schools.

The interviews were carried out at an individual level. Nineteen individual interviews were conducted in different locations. They were all arranged at the convenience of the
volunteering respondents. When a teacher or an administrator was contacted, s/he was informed of the project and the interviews to be conducted. He/she was insured of the protection of confidentiality of the information to be provided. Then, the time and location for that particular interview would be decided. The only suggestion made was that the setting should preferably be quiet, as the interview was to be tape-recorded.

Ten interviews were conducted in the participants' homes. The place was quiet and the discussion could be taped without any disturbance. Nine interviews were conducted in offices. Each interview lasted between 60 and 90 minutes (see Appendix D for sample questions of the individual interviews). All the interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed and cross-analyzed.

Procedures for Data Analysis

As stated above, the data gathered for the examination of the FCET were analyzed using qualitative and quantitative methods. The procedures used for this analysis involve the official documents on English language teaching and participant interviews.

First, the researcher examined the contents of the texts that specify the objectives of the government regarding the teaching of English in Burkina Faso. The purpose of this examination was to determine what was considered to be an objective in the teaching of English in Burkina Faso. This step consisted of identifying what is an objective and what is not. Nunan (1988, 61) noted that "there is disagreement about the nature of objectives and also about the precision with which they should be formulated." His focus was the objectives of a course. In this study, the focus is the country's objectives regarding the teaching of English in secondary schools.
Based on Nunan's (1988) definition, a list of objectives was made, following Tyler's (1949) classification:

1. objectives that specify what the instructor is to do
2. objectives that specify course content
3. objectives that specify generalized patterns of behavior
4. objectives that specify what learners should do as a result of instruction

(cited in Nunan. 1988 p. 62)

It should be noted that the above list addresses the curriculum rather than a general educational policy. The classification was applied to the English teaching curriculum in Burkina Faso. In the case of a government's statement of educational objectives, it cannot be expected to describe the same kind of objectives. Rather, "objectives" should be understood as broad guidelines specifying the goals for a particular activity. In the present study, the term refers more to what Nunan calls "performance objectives." that is, "objectives which specify what learners should do as a result of instruction" (p. 63). In examining the texts containing the government's statements, the focus was, therefore, on specifications of what students in secondary schools should be able to do with English, specifically what students can do with English at the end of the First Cycle of secondary schools.

Once the objectives have been determined, they were numbered and classified according to their importance. There were three categories labeled as follows:

- major objectives
- secondary objectives
- related objectives
The category with the label "major objectives" grouped all the elements in the government's statements that specifically mention the reasons why English should be taught in Burkina Faso. Those reasons should be clear for anyone to understand without further explanations.

The second category concerned objectives that come as a complement to a stated major objective. They do not constitute leading ideas in the statement. As for the third category, it dealt with objectives that come as a consequence of a stated major objective. Verification of these categorizations was ensured by Dr. Paul Rouamba of the English Department at the University of Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso). (See Appendix H for the expert's analysis).

Interview Data Analysis

The interview data constituted a major component of the study. A qualitative approach was utilized for the analysis of these empirical data. The transcribed data were cross-analyzed, with the focus on the participants' understanding of the objectives for English teaching in secondary schools and their approach to language teaching. In order to apprehend the importance of the various issues that were raised, views that were the same or similar regarding one issue were grouped together. Views that exhibited some specific features were examined separately.

Another level of data analysis consisted of analyzing the participants' perceptions of the FCET as a language test. These perceptions were identified and analyzed for triangulation purposes. Getting a multiple perspective is essential in a qualitative approach to data analysis. The rationale for the triangulation was to determine whether
different views of the same phenomenon were expressed in the interviews. For example, it was found that some teachers did not believe the FCET was an obstacle to their communicative language teaching. Others, on the contrary, found that with the FCET, they were not free to teach as they wished to. This distinction was made possible through triangulation.

Samples of the FCET

A different approach was adopted for the analysis of the FCET samples. An instrument was constructed to determine quantitatively the extent to which this test was consistent with a communicative language teaching curriculum. This instrument was based on Ellis's (1994) criteria for a communicative language teaching. These criteria are discussed in this chapter. The rationale for this approach was based on the assumption made earlier that English teaching in Burkinabé secondary schools, to some extent, uses a communicative approach. Therefore it was necessary to analyze the match between the English curriculum and the FCET in order to determine the extent to which this assessment instrument is valid.

A general approach to communicative language teaching takes into consideration the four types of competence in language performance suggested by Canale and Swain (1980) and Savignon (1983): grammatical competence, sociocultural competence, strategic competence, and discourse competence. To be added to these is a fifth type of competence suggested as a constituent component of communicative competence: actional competence (Murcia et al., 1995). In the analysis of the FCET samples, each type of competence that appears in the test was identified and grouped. A detailed examination was undertaken to determine elements of language performance that were specific to communicative language teaching.
Ellis (1994) provides a list of communicative features adapted from Allen. Frohlich and Spada's (1984) Communicative Orientation in Language Teaching (COLT). The COLT is composed of two parts: "A description of classroom activities" and "Communicative features" (p. 575). This study drew on the second part of the system, communicative features, to determine the communicative aspects of the FCET. The decision to focus on the second part was based on the fact that the present study seeks to look at the material at the disposal of English teachers in secondary school. The study does not investigate on classroom activities in secondary schools in Burkina Faso. The first part of the COLT dealing with classroom activities, it was found unnecessary to include it as a source for the analysis of the FCET.

The communicative features as provided in Ellis (1994) are categorized as follows:

1. genuine request
2. giving unpredictable information
3. comment/elaboration
4. expansion

Authenticity was another criterion for the classification of the FCET features. In this study, the criteria of authenticity are based on those recommended by Wiggins for the attainment of authentic assessment. They are broken down into nine major points specifying what assessment should or should not be (Wiggins in Hancock, 1994, pp. 75-76). They are as follows:

- engaging and worthy problems or questions of importance

This requirement indicates the need for the test to reflect the kind of task that is expected from the language user in real life.
• faithful representation of the contexts facing workers in a field of study

Wiggins advocates the use of tests that get rid of the formality that denudes language use of its spontaneous character. He recommends tasks that allow a full use of all the resources that the learner has available.

• non-routine and multi-stage tasks

This criterion deals with the necessity to get the student involved in a dynamic process resulting action through a series of decision making. In such a process, the testee decides on the type of knowledge to use depending on the circumstances of the task.

• tasks that require the student to produce a quality product and/or performance

The task that is used to measure the student's knowledge of the language should not lead to a poor performance. Quality performance should be the objective of the test.

• transparent and demystified criteria and standards

Students' performance in the test should not be hindered by unclear instructions. In other words, students' achievement should not be affected by factors other than knowledge of the language.

• interaction between assessor and assessee

A test should be an opportunity for the student to interact with the tester.

• concurrent feedback and the possibility of self-adjustment during the test

The student should be given the opportunity to correct himself/herself while the test is going on thanks to a feedback from the assessor.

• trained assessor judgment, in reference to clear and appropriate criteria.

The assessor should consider the possibility of altering the result of a first judgment, given that such judgment is not always error free.

• emphasis is on the consistency of student work
A test should attempt to explore all the language capacities of the learner. He/she should therefore be granted all the opportunities to show all possible knowledge of the language being tested.

The FCET samples have been cross-examined in the light of these criteria. The objective of such a cross-examination was to establish the extent to which these samples met the criteria of authenticity as suggested above for an authentic assessment. The results of this examination are discussed in the next chapter.

Summary

In this chapter, the procedures for the data analysis were described. The methods and techniques used to analyze the interview data, the documents, and the test samples were explained. Both qualitative and quantitative methods and techniques were used in the analysis. Criteria for communicative language teaching were borrowed from Ellis (1994) and applied to the FCET samples.
CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

The purpose of the present study was to gather and analyze information about the First Cycle English Test (FCET) in Burkina Faso. In order to achieve such an objective, two sets of supporting data were utilized. First, documents relating to English teaching and testing were gathered. Second, face interviews were conducted on the field with teachers and administrators of the Ouagadougou area. Both sets of data were analyzed and triangulated in order to ensure credibility to the study.

Procedures

The methods utilized in this study were mainly qualitative. The constant consultation of field notes and other information relevant to the research was necessary to warrant credibility to the research results. In the present study, such credibility is based on the production of evidence. Similarly, the achievement of such objectives mainly relied on the information gathered from various sources and triangulated.
Thus, constrained by the necessity to provide evidence to the reader, the researcher, in qualitative research, is bound to navigate forward and backward through the data available in order to guarantee a reliable and valid content analysis. In other words, to borrow Allwright & Bailey's (1994) terms, the researcher utilizes "the value of multiple perspectives" to reach credible conclusions. The issue of credibility is a key one in qualitative research. In the present study, credibility, to a great extent, depended on the researcher's ability to thoroughly examine the information on the FCET provided not only by the respondents, but also by all the documents relating to the teaching and testing of English in the First Cycle. Such an approach also took into account the various perspectives from the participants, according as much attention to cases that deviated from the core data provided by the majority. The data were compared and contrasted so as to elicit teachers and administrators' overall view of the FCET. Then special cases were probed for more in-depth information.

Data

This chapter examined the data in the study. It examined documents relating to English teaching and testing in the First Cycle. Such documents are statements by the Minister of Education of Burkina Faso regarding English teaching in the country and samples of the FCET administered these past ten years: sample tests from 1985, 1987, 1991, 1995, 1996, and 1997. Second, the interviews conducted with teachers and administrators in the Ouagadougou area were analyzed.
This document contains a statement made public by the Ministry of Education in 1983 in the framework of language teaching. It was publicized by the Ministry of Education and specified the raison d'être of language teaching in Burkinabé schools. It makes explicit the objectives regarding the teaching of foreign languages in Burkina Faso.

For English teaching in particular, these objectives were articulated in an official statement by the Minister in the form of a government law known as "circulaire ministériel". It should be noted that this law was revised in 1983 under the title of "circulaire No 105/MENAC/ICEDSD du 1er Décembre 1983." (See Appendix B for the original text and the translation of the document by the researcher). Quoting the circular, the English language inspector stated that the teaching of English in Burkina Faso should have "the practical, utilitarian, and cultural character that will provide Burkinabé children with the basic skills, indispensable for written and oral communication" (Rapport sur l'Atelier de l'APSO, 13 Mars 1998, p. 41).

In essence, the circular stated that the objectives of English teaching in Burkina Faso should not only involve the acquisition of linguistic knowledge, but should also include the civilization of the people whose language is taught. The letter specifies that:

English teaching objectives should be, not only the mastery of the language rules, but also and most of all, the ability to communicate naturally in the target language. Such a teaching should be practical and immediately beneficial. Every student at the end of a cycle should be able to engage in a normal conversation with a native speaker of the same school level... (circular 105, 1983, p. 1)

Although the statement of objectives regarding English teaching does not go into the detail, it provides enough insight into the intention of the government as far as the
teaching of English in secondary school is concerned. Indeed, a close look at the
document allows us to distinguish two features:

- Providing Burkinabé children with the basic skills needed for written communication
- Providing Burkinabé children with the basic skills needed for oral communication

Along with these two basic specifications, the "arrêté" emphasizes:

- Knowledge of and familiarity with other peoples' cultures
- Knowledge of other peoples' literature
- The practical character of language
- The utilitarian character of language

In view of these requirements for the teaching of English in Burkina Faso, the
researcher suggests that, in the Ministry's statement, can be considered as general
objectives those of communication. English will be taught first and foremost for the
general purpose of communication.

Yet, the statement also specifies that students will be taught the basic skills for
communication. Although there is no clear mention of what the basic skills consist of, the
researcher infers that such skills are: reading, writing, comprehending and speaking.
These are specific elements of communication. The acquisition of these skills, that is, the
ability to read, write, comprehend and speak English in a communicative way, is viewed
by the researcher as specific objectives.

Other specific objectives that appear in the Ministry's statement come as a
complementary description of the type of English that they want for the students in
Burkinabé schools. It has to be practical and utilitarian. In more explicit terms, the
English to be taught in Burkinabé schools should be practical, that is, convenient for
simple and natural every-day-life communication. Such a language should be the opposite of literary language. It should be the language encountered in people's conversations. It should be easy to use. It should be useful, and it is to be utilized as a means of communication.

The third characteristic as specified in the statement relates to the use of English as a means to teach other people's culture. Language is a crucial trait of a people's culture. As such, language opens a window to a new world, that of the language owners. Thus, the teaching of English will provide the Burkinabé students with the opportunity to explore the culture of the English speaking world.

The last category of objectives, as observed earlier, is made of constituents that are not explicitly formulated in the Ministry's statement. Such objectives, in the opinion of the researcher, can be deduced from the first two categories. Thus, one can infer that the Ministry's desire to implement practical and utilitarian English teaching in Burkina Faso entails the decision to adopt a communicative language teaching approach to language teaching in Burkinabé schools. The promotion of communicative language teaching is therefore considered by the researcher as a related objective in the statement of the Ministry of Education.

Similarly, the use of communicative teaching material is viewed as another related objective. To the researcher, it seems logical to relate the type of teaching materials used in the curriculum to the objectives for which the teaching is carried out. The use of communicative materials is therefore classified as an objective relating to the Ministry's general objective of communicative language teaching in Burkinabé schools.
Summary of Objectives and Comment

From the Ministry of Education statement, the researcher has identified general objectives, specific objectives and related objectives. The ministry's statement, however, deserves further comments. The statement, to the researcher, denotes some confusion that can lead to uncertainty about the real intentions of the government in making English part of the curriculum. This lack of clarity is noted by Rouamba (1981) who states that:

There are almost no other clear-cut aims expressed by the Educational Authorities for Teaching English as a Foreign language in secondary schools. There are actually no official decisions or statements as to what the students would be doing with the language, for instance, in social activities or in specific jobs that may request the use of English by Secondary school leavers. (Rouamba. 1981. in Kima. 1997)

Finally, it is worth noting that although the minister stated objectives for English teaching in Burkina Faso, there was no mention of how student achievement would be assessed. To the researcher, such an omission has enormous consequences. Indeed, as argued earlier, teaching and assessment should always go together. Yet, First Cycle students are administered a terminal assessment only at the end of the cycle, through the First Cycle English Test (FCET). It was, therefore, of importance to examine samples of the FCET in order to determine whether the measuring instrument and the official objectives were matching up.

FCET Samples

This section examined test samples from the FCET administered within the last ten years. The samples of the written test reflect the actual contents of the tests administered in the framework of the BEPC exam from 1985 to 1998. The samples of the oral test do not represent the actual test. Only the texts used as a support for the oral interviews are
available. These texts are not test samples, they are nothing but excerpts provided to the examiners as a working document for the face to face interviews with the candidates. These two sets of documents constituted the basis for the analysis of the written and oral FCET.

Samples of the Written FCET

This section examined samples of the FCET written test. It looked at selected samples ranging from 1982 to 1998. An analysis of these samples can help highlight the trend in the testing system in terms of its evolution in time. Indeed, a comparison of sample texts of a 10-year range can help determine the extent to which changes (if any) occurred during that period of time. After a brief description of the written FCET, the different components of the test were analyzed.

General Description of the Written FCET

The written section of the FCET, as described in chapter 1, is made of five components: text, comprehension, guided essay, grammar, and translation. The comprehension and guided essay components relate to an introductory text used as a basis for the testing process. The test materials are sealed in a large envelope and opened on exam day in the presence of the candidates. At the beginning of the session, each candidate is provided with one copy of the test. The whole session lasts two hours. No break is provided for the candidates.

When the session is over, all the copies are collected from the students and centralized at the examination grading center. Each copy is then allocated a number and the candidate's name is torn off. The part of the copy containing the candidate's name also contains the copy number. The numbered copies are distributed among the members of a scoring committee for grading. The scoring committee is made of teachers selected
from various secondary schools in the country. They are responsible for grading and evaluating the FCET test copies. Before individual members start grading their copies, the whole committee meets for a briefing about the broad guidelines regarding the scoring. Then, committee members are free to organize the grading and decide on the scoring strategies they deem best. The whole grading process takes about two or three days. The graded copies are returned to the grading center where there are matched with the names of the candidates. The scores are then recorded on the record sheet containing the names of all the candidates.

The Components of the Written FCET

The Working Text from 1996

The 1996 written FCET is based on a working text of about twenty lines long, divided into four paragraphs. It is titled “fire in a village.” It relates the story of a villager named Namaga whose house took fire as he was sleeping. His fellow villagers helped him to rescue some of his belongings before the house was completely consumed. This text constitutes the basis for two of the four components of the test: the comprehension and the guided essay sections. These two components count for 70% of the total points scored on the test.

The Comprehension Component

The first component in the test is titled “comprehension.” It is a multiple-choice question, consisting of eight entries relating to the text, with four answers each. Each set of answers includes one correct answer and three distractors. The instructions for the students read: “Choose the letter which is in front of the correct answer.” The total number of points for this section of the test is four.
This component has an objective test format. Objective tests are characterized by high scoring reliability. This aspect of the multiple-choice makes this type of test an excellent assessment instrument in some contexts. Such is the case in areas pertaining to scientific subjects, where a genuinely-constructed test can provide objective information on the actual subject matter knowledge of the testee.

The use of multiple-choice tests in foreign language evaluation, however, has been criticized by testing specialists. For example, Stansfield (1994) draws our attention on the pedagogical ineffectiveness of multiple-choice tests. He notes that these tests have no positive impact on teaching/learning. As argued earlier in this study, objective tests do not help to enhance the developmental process in the learner. They do not prompt the use of the target language for genuine communication.

Other critics have deplored the lack of "demand for reasoning or explanation" in multiple-choice tests and the fact that these tests may negatively influence students' learning methods (Frith and Macintosh, 1984). Furthermore, multiple-choice tests offer students the opportunity of guessing rather than thinking and understanding. In foreign language, like in many other fields, such an approach is not conducive to effective learning.

Another remark about this component of the test relates to the number of questions used to test comprehension. Eight questions for a multiple-choice test is generally considered insufficient. Experts generally believe that, for a multiple-choice test to minimize the effect of chance, there should be a sufficient number of questions. They recommend a minimum number of 50 questions.

At any rate, there are advantages and limitations to the use of multiple-choice questions for the purpose of comprehension assessment. It is certain that a student who read the text and understood it has more chance of picking out the correct answer. He/she may immediately discard all distractors, thus displaying a correct understanding of the
text. However, there is no evidence that a student who did not understand the text will not come up with the same answers. He/she could do so by guessing or by inferring the answer from the idea in a sentence or in a paragraph, which does not imply an understanding of the passage he/she read. In other words, one does not always need to understand a text in order to recognize what is likely to be the correct response in a multiple choice question.

This type of test, therefore, may not help discriminate between the students who had a genuine understanding of the text and those who did not. As a consequence, the success of a multiple choice test largely rests on the care with which the test was designed. The poorer the design, the easier it will be for students to recognize the correct responses without understanding the contents of the assigned passage (Gronlund, 1988).

In the case of the 1996 FCET comprehension test, an examination of the eight questions raises the following remarks. The first question, for example, relates to the villagers' reaction when they realized Namaga’s house was burning. The stem and responses for the first question are:

The people in Namaga’s village ran to...

a) wake Namaga up from sleep
b) help Namaga
c) watch the blazing fire
d) look for a shelter

Considering the answer, which is “b”, it may not be the case that a student really needs to understand the text in order to be able to realize that “the people in Namaga’s village ran to” help Namaga. Basing their reasoning on the schemata of cultural practices, the students could solve the problem without even understanding the core of the story. They are likely to know that when a hut is burning in the village, people do not run to
“watch the blazing fire”, nor do they rush out of their houses “to look for a shelter”. Thus, a correct answer on this question may not reflect the student’s comprehension of the passage. It may not reflect the student’s capacity to understand the writer’s implicit message. This is, therefore, an example of an item that may need to be refined.

A scrutiny of the second question leads to the same conclusions as above. The statement by the stem is as follows: Some people dashed into the hut to... Then, the four responses are:

a) save some of Namaga’s things  
b) steal boxes, stools, clothes  
c) replace some materials  
d) put the fire out

On the list of responses that are provided, based on what was said earlier on cultural practices, two answers are likely to be easily eliminated by the students. Indeed, the students could reason that on those circumstances, the village people don’t steal boxes, nor replace materials in the burning house. Their choice will therefore be actually on “a” and “d”, not on the basis of their understanding of the text, but on the basis of criteria irrelevant to their knowledge of English. With two choices left, the uninformed student has a 50% chance of selecting the correct answer just by guessing.

As for the third question, although it mainly tests vocabulary, it can be argued that it also tests comprehension, since vocabulary can be an obstacle to comprehension. The four responses are definitions of different types of fire. They therefore complete the stem to highlight the meaning of a “blazing fire”. However, it should be noted that understanding a word may not show understanding of the message conveyed by the sentence. If the testing of vocabulary was the intention of the test designer, then the item adequately meets the objective. As pointed out by Haladyna (1999), in a comprehension
some items might systematically ask for the meaning of words, phrases, or the entire passage” (p. 61). It is, therefore, up to the designer to make the appropriate decision concerning the test item. In any case, the necessity of a carefully planned design can never be stressed enough. Such a design is crucial to the validation of any test.

To some extent, the observations about the first four questions can be extended to the remaining questions, except for question five. For instance, the fourth item may be subject to what some researchers call “cuing”, that is, “the tendency for students to eliminate options and make educated guesses” (Haladyna, 1999, p. 45). Indeed, the three distractors: b) the hut was full of big gourds and small jars, c) green leaves were flung on the roof, d) some people came panting, may easily be eliminated by the students, given the little relevance that they show as a response to the stem “Namaga’s hut burnt completely because...” In the researcher’s opinion, question five appears as the best comprehension question in this section. None of the responses seems to give a clue that would allow an uninformed student to pick up the correct answer. For this question, selecting the correct response may reflect a genuine understanding of the passage.

On the whole, the comprehension section of the written FCET may not test students’ comprehension of the text, mostly because of the way the multiple choice questions are constructed. Thus, this section seems unlikely to test the teaching outcomes based on the educational objectives in English teaching as stated by the Ministry of Education: students’ ability to use English for written communication. The comprehension section of the written test, therefore, to some extent, may undermine the validity of the FCET as an instrument for assessing students’ written performance.
The Guided Essay

The second component of the written test is titled “Guided Essay”. As suggested by the title, this question was intended to assess the student’s ability to use the English structure, grammar and vocabulary in a coherent essay, based on the guidelines provided by the test designer. It is the most important component of the written test in terms of the number of points allocated to it. It is worth 10 points, which represents 50% of the total number of points.

Advantages generally claimed for essay tests include their capacity of assessing several components at the cognitive level, and their demand for the organization of ideas into coherent arguments (Satterly, 1989). As noted by Miller (1985) essays are used to test students’ ability to use and organize their own ideas in a clear and meaningful way. Students are free to draw on the type of information they want to use in their writing. They also decide freely on which aspects of their response they want to lay emphasis on (Gronlund, 1988). In that sense, this component of the FCET may be a strength if adequately designed.

The guided essay in the 1996 FCET is structured into three questions. The questions are based on the working text and are supposed to guide the students in the organization of their task. In the first two items, students are prompted to express and organize their ideas in relation to specific themes or paragraphs in the text. The first question prods the candidates to write about “what in the text shows that the people in Namaga’s village were ready to help their fellows in danger.” For this question, the candidates do not have to appeal to their imagination. The answers are found in the text and the candidates have to read and infer from the text what they are expected to produce as answers.

The second question seems less restrictive in that it gives the candidates leeway to explain their answers. Such answers may vary from one candidate to another, given that the question appeals to their critical thinking. In that sense, this question provides more
opportunity for the candidates to show their ability to handle the English language. The written answers to this question are likely, therefore, to produce significant writing samples for the assessors to evaluate the candidates and provide a more consequential score for the question.

The third question, however, provides more freedom for the candidates to use their knowledge of English, their writing skills, and organize their ideas as they wish. As in the preceding questions, candidates are expected to provide significant writing samples for the assessors to judge. At face value, the guided essay is certainly of great advantage for assessing students' written performance.

Yet essay questions are not without shortcomings. For example, students may not be able to adequately answer the questions because of the time constraints. Regarding the FCET in particular, students may tend to focus on the other sections and therefore devote little time to this part of the test. The most serious problem with essay questions, however, lies in the scoring. Testers may be influenced by factors irrelevant to the actual skills to be assessed. The scoring of essay questions is therefore liable to subjectivity. Satterly (1989) noted “the subjective nature of essay marking and the frequently low agreement between markers acting independently” (p. 101). As a consequence, tests based on essay questions generally tend to denote very low inter-rater reliability.

In the case of the FCET, reliability becomes an even more crucial concern as the assessors do not have written guidelines for them to inform their scoring. Therefore, they rely on their own testing skills and bias to score the three questions presented in this component of the written test. Thus, one major characteristic of the FCET is the lack of criterion-referenced measures. Now when we consider that examiners in the FCET are
appointed among teachers from diverse professional training backgrounds and different teaching experience. Low interrater reliability should not be a surprising occurrence. Since reliability plays an important role in the validation of a test, validity in the FCET is most likely to constitute a critical issue.

The Grammar Section

The grammar section of the written FCET is divided into two parts: A and B. Part A consists of four completion questions, each one testing the candidates’ ability to use the specific grammatical point that is targeted. Each question is presented in the form of a multiple choice, with a stem and four alternatives. The candidates are expected to fill in the blank with the appropriate response. For example, the sentence “Tomorrow Namaga will have his house...” is to be completed by selecting one of these four responses: to be repaired, to repair, repaired, repairs. The second question tests the use of the preposition “on” and the third, the use of the preterit, while question four attempts to check the candidate’s knowledge of the use of either/neither.

Part B is intended to test the students’ ability to use the future tense: first, the future of auxiliary verbs (can, may, must), then of regular verbs like to rain. The candidates are invited to show their grammatical knowledge by transforming four sentences in the present tense into future. It should be noted that the sentences are isolated phrases, used out of context. The maximum score for the grammar section is four points.

It appears clearly that this section is concerned with the candidates’ knowledge of English grammar. Being able to fill in the blanks with the appropriate grammatical item is supposedly indicative of how competent a student is in terms of the recognition and selection of grammatical structures. Such an approach is characteristic of the traditional language testing approach. This testing system is based on the principles of structural language teaching whose main objectives remain the student’s mastery of discrete items,
be they lexical or grammatical. As a corollary, testing in a structural language teaching context tends to emphasize discrete item knowledge. The problem, however, as pointed out by Shohamy (1995), lies in the fact that discrete point testing focuses on isolated items rather than having the test taker produce actual written sample of the target language.

The grammar section of the FCET clearly falls into this category of language testing. The question that deserves being asked is "to what extent does such a testing system comply with the officially stated English teaching objectives". Although the official statement mentions the mastery of the language rules, it lays the emphasis on the ability to communicate naturally. It appears, therefore, that the grammar section of the FCET does not seek to test communicative language as one would have expected. Then, to what extent is this section valid for measuring students’ performance skills? The answer is most likely to be: "very little".

The Translation Section

Translation as such can be an excellent integrative testing device. However, a careful design is necessary to make such a device effective. To what extent is the translation section of the FCET effective in terms of performance assessment?

The translation section of the FCET is made of four sentences in French, to be translated into English. The sentences are not related and are presented out of context. They are short sentences containing a grammatical difficulty that the candidates have to resolve. In the 1996 sample, the first sentence highlights the use of "belong to", while the second illustrates the absence of the future form with temporals introduced by words such as "when". It should be noted that such temporal phrases in French are followed by the future. Given the complexity of this rule for French speakers, one can infer that the
designer's intention was to check for students' awareness of the difference in structures between the French and the English sentences. However, being able to answer these questions do not necessarily produce evidence of the candidate's ability to use English for communication purposes.

The translation section is also designed to check the lexical skills of the testee. Yet, although the knowledge of vocabulary is essential to the use of language for communication, a good score in this section may not indicate the ability to use English for communication purposes. Thus, a candidate that masters the grammatical structures and has a set of memorized lexical items available may well come up with an excellent score in the translation section and still be unable to communicate with an English speaker. From the perspective of the official objectives, such a candidate will be considered as a failure. The translation section, therefore, to some extent, weakens the validity of the FCET as a testing instrument.

To summarize, the 1996 sample of the written FCET is structured as follows: Text. Comprehension. Guided essay. Grammar, and Translation. In comparing the test of 1996 with those of different sessions of the FCET, it appears clearly that the format has remained unchanged since 1982, at least for the samples examined in this study. The only noticeable changes concern the contents of the different components.

Sample Texts for the Oral FCET

General Description of the Oral FCET

The following description of the oral assessment is based on two different information opportunities offered to the researcher. The first source of information is derived from the researcher's own participation in the FCET administration when he was teaching in secondary school in Burkina Faso. The researcher would then administer the
FCET like other secondary school teachers, from 1972 to 1988. The second information opportunity was created during the data collection period. The researcher went to an examination center during an actual session of the FCET in the summer of 1999. The researcher was allowed to observe an interview between an examiner and a student for about five minutes. At the end of the observation, the researcher noted that there had not been any variation since he left secondary school. Thus at face value, the FCET remained the same as it used to be ten years from then.

As explained in chapter 1, the oral test is the major component of the FCET. In terms of evaluation, the score in the oral test outweighs that assigned to the written section. The format for the oral section of the FCET is the same for all the students. It can be described as an oral interview based on a pre-prepared text. At the beginning of the exam session, all the examiners are provided with a set of texts, generally twenty short texts or so. The texts are presented to the students when they come in for the oral test. The oral test texts are prepared during the school year and kept secret until exam day.

The examiners that administer the FCET oral test are recruited among the secondary school teachers exercising all over the country. They are informed of their participation in the FCET during the school year. There is no special training for examiners. neither do they receive specific instructions regarding oral interviews.

Students are interviewed individually. They are allowed to take notes during their preparation time. When their turn comes, each student randomly selects a text from the set presented by the examiner. The student is then allowed ten to fifteen minutes to read the text and get acquainted with its contents while the examiner is interviewing a different student.
The interview itself consists of a question/answer interaction between the assessor and the assessee. For some of the questions asked, the answers can be found in or inferred from the text. The assessor also asks questions that do not necessarily relate to the selected text. The examinee is allowed to consult his/her notes to answer the examiner's questions. His/her oral performance will be evaluated from this interaction with the examiner. The latter then decides on the score to be assigned to the student and records the grade on his/her record sheet.

The Scoring System

The scoring system in the FCET exam is the same as the system used in all the secondary school. The range of points that a student can afford varies from 0 to 20. The average of 10/20 represents the passing grade. The score of 20/20 is a perfect score, but in practice, students can never reach such a score in English. The score of 18/20 is excellent and 16/20 is very good. Students are never given a 0/20 grade. the examiner always giving the student the opportunity to say something in English or at least to read a few sentences from the examination text. Some students, however, earn grades less than 5/20.

As outlined earlier, the oral test represents two thirds of the FCET total scores. The score earned by a student in the oral test is therefore doubled for the final grade computation. Thus, while the score in the written test is 20, the oral test score is doubled, the total points becoming 40. The final FCET grade is the sum of the written and oral test scores. So the total score for the FCET is out of 60. This score will be computed with the scores in the other subjects in the curriculum and an average grade is computed for each student. This grade will determine whether the student has passed or failed the exam.
Examiners do not participate in the calculation of grades. They just report the grades on grade sheets and hand them to the computing committee. The oral test is overall the entire responsibility of the examiner and no control is exercised on the way the test is administered.


In this section, the oral test for the 1987, 1995, 1996, and 1997 FCET was analyzed. As stated earlier, looking at samples of the FCET administered at different periods within approximately ten years helps shed light on the trend in the evolution of the FCET these last ten years. These data materials, prepared for the oral FCET, were made available to the researcher during field work (see Appendix C for the test samples). They are extracts from diverse sources, provided to the examiner as a support to the oral interaction with the candidates.

The 1987 text, titled *Marvellous hands*, is thirteen lines long, divided into two paragraphs. It demonstrates how precious human hands are. The second paragraph states that for criminals, hands can be unfortunate parts of the body because they provide fingerprints that can help detect criminals. There is no indication of the source of this text.

The sample text for the 1991 FCET provides information about mosquitoes. It concludes with a piece of advice on how to get rid of mosquito nests around the home. It is a very short text (one paragraph) and no indication of its source is given.

Two samples from the 1995 test are analyzed: the first text, titled *Smoking, think for yourself*, is an account of how a young football player, named Joseph, took to smoking and began losing his athletic capacity. He recovered when he stopped smoking and could return to his football team. The text is fourteen lines long and no clue is provided about its source.
The second text, in contrast, is much shorter (7 lines). It is an excerpt from *People* by Houdart & M. Sevan. It relates the story of a boy, Nino, who complains about his situation after his parents divorced and he is constrained to live with his grand-parents. He is frustrated at not having people to talk to.


The first document, *The state of the world’s children*, presents the situation of children in the regions of Africa south of the Sahara, raised in poor families. Issues such as malnutrition, lack of education, drought, military conflicts and AIDS are raised to explain how precarious the life of children living in these regions is. At the end of the text, two footnotes are printed. The first footnote translates the word “era” into French. It reads: “an era = une époque”. The second footnote specifies the source of the document.

The second text reports on the anecdotal story of two blind men in the capital city of Burkina Faso (Ouagadougou) who suddenly became rich in winning a horse race bet. No source is indicated for this text and there is no word explained.

The document titled ‘Money and marriage’ is a short text (eight lines) telling the story of a girl who was complaining about men being all the same. She was complaining that men are always concerned about money when it comes to marriage. The girl’s name is Carol. Her fiancé is George Watts, and her father is Mr. Yates.

The last text is eight lines long. It describes a blind man carrying out his daily job thanks to his dog, thus earning his living in spite of his physical impairment. At the end of the text, two footnotes translate two words into French. They read: Broom = *balai*; Mop = *serpillère*. 

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Summary

Samples of the working texts for the oral test were presented in this section. The texts are short (between seven and fifteen lines) and deal with various issues of interests. They constitute support texts for assessors to design their instrument. There was no actual testing instrument for the researcher to examine.

Authenticity Issues

As explained earlier in this chapter, Wiggins (1994) argues that authenticity constitutes one characteristic of a good test. He then provides a list of criteria of authenticity listed in chapter 3. Applying these criteria to the FCET oral test support texts can help determine whether these texts are authentic texts utilized for the purpose of communicative testing.

The first criterion for the determination of authenticity in testing materials relates to the questions discussed in the test. Wiggins posits that they should be "questions of importance". Regarding the FCET texts, it could be argued that the themes that constitute the basis for the excerpts can be of importance. The excerpts themselves, however, may be of little interest to the candidates, especially in the testing context. Clearly the preoccupation of the candidates is the test. It is not money, marriage, smoking, or the state of world children as described by the exam texts. It would therefore be far fetched to assert that the oral texts are authentic in Wiggins's sense. The other criteria of authenticity are articulated as follows:

- spontaneous language and multi-stage tasks
- quality performance
- transparent criteria
- interaction between assessor and assessee
• concurrent feedback and possibility of self-adjustment
• trained assessor judgment
• emphasis on consistency

Regarding the application of the FCET, the presence of these criteria depends largely on the approach used by the tester to conduct the interview. Indeed, for the present study, there were no sample questions available to inform the analyst on the way such an interview is conducted. However, it can be inferred from the description of the oral test procedures that many of these criteria are unlikely to be met in the FCET test.

For example, it seems illusory to expect spontaneous language in such a testing context. The candidates are conscious that the examiner is expecting them to perform in a certain way. They know the questions that are asked are not real information questions since the examiner knows the answer to the question. Although a trained tester may manage, at some point, to turn the interview into spontaneous language, for most examiners, it will remain a question-response interaction.

Similarly, the nature of the interview does not allow the attainment of what Wiggins terms “multi-stage tasks”, that is, getting the testee involved in a dynamic process. In such a process, the testee makes decisions concerning the task at hand as it happens in real life problem solving situations. In the case of the FCET, the formal character of the assessment procedures makes such “multi-stage tasks” a chimerical enterprise. In short, the criteria of authenticity as defined by Wiggins are hard to realize in a testing context similar to the one characterizing the FCET.

Evaluation criteria in the FCET oral test

One strength of a testing system relates to the criteria on which the evaluation process is based. As observed in previous chapters, such criteria should aim to integrate the various skills that the testee is expected to master so that the outcomes of the testing
reflect the holistic approach recommended by a number of language testing researchers. Haladyna (1999) recommends the use of a performance checklist where the different skills to be tested are listed, which makes it easier for the tester to check whether the student was able to perform the skills being tested or not. Basing his/her judgment on the checklist, the assessor can then work out a grade that corresponds to the performance of the assessee.

One example of scoring scale is the scale of Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) levels provided by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). The OPI uses the following ranking system:

- superior
  - advanced
  - advanced plus
- intermediate:
  - high
  - middle
  - low
- novice:
  - high
  - middle
  - low

Such guidelines were necessary for the assessment of proficiency in the US testing system. As pointed out by Shohamy (1992), there is no national curriculum in the United States. Yet, language tests currently play such an important role in the promotion of foreign language learning in the U. S. that it was necessary to provide assessors with a testing procedure for the assessment of proficiency. The guidelines offered by the ACTFL are intended to provide more inter-rater reliability to language tests by allowing more consistent scores.

Although the FCET has been the only national test for First Cycle students for about 30 years, there is no such policy for oral proficiency assessment. As explained earlier, the FCET testing system does not provide guidelines for examiners. Instead, each individual
examiner resorts to strategies of his/her own. He/she just uses their testing skills to work out a way of evaluating the oral performance of students. There is no common set of criteria made available to them for the purpose of student evaluation. In the absence of such written criteria, each examiner has no other choice left than appeal to his/her own approach to evaluation in order to construct his/her own grading system.

One immediate consequence of such an approach to testing may be a low level of interrater reliability within the FCET testing system. Each examiner is likely to approach the evaluation of students' performance with an idiosyncratic understanding of what he/she views as important features in language performance. Considering the way the oral test is administered, there is room for bias to supersede objectivity in the evaluation process. Yet, the use of a checklist would have helped to solve some of the evaluation problems the FCET examiners have to face.

Another problem resulting from such a testing context relates to students' awareness of the skills they are expected to show a mastery of. Students go to the FCET test with different learning backgrounds. As explained in chapter one. English is taught in different learning contexts in secondary schools. Some students belong to public schools, others to private institutions. Teachers sometimes have a different training background. Such a situation may lead to an imbroglio in which neither assessor nor assessee know of the scoring criteria to be applied.

In summary, this section examined samples of the FCET written and oral tests administered over a period of ten years. Samples of the written test were available for analysis. However, there was no actual sample of the oral test, since each teacher assessor is responsible for the procedures in his/her oral assessment. Only the working texts for the
oral interviews were available for examination. The samples of the written FCET were shown as displaying some elements of interest, yet unmistakable limitations were detected in the design. The most important limitations were: the inappropriate design of the comprehension component, the lack of guidelines for evaluating the guided essay, and the discrete item testing of the grammar component.

Interview Data Analysis

Interviews are commonly used in qualitative research. As an instrument for data gathering, they provide valuable insight into participants' perceptions of events, enabling the researcher to come up with consistent information making the research more creditable. In this study, the researcher's goal was to elicit English teachers' perception of a national test, the FCET, in the context of the Burkinabé language teaching system. Nineteen teachers and administrators were interviewed. The nineteen participants provided information about teaching English as a foreign language in general and about the FCET as a test for the assessment of First Cycle students' knowledge of English. The main themes that were addressed in the interviews were organized into four sections relating respectively to (a) the participants, (b) English teaching objectives, (c) the FCET, (d) recommendations.

The Participants

Teachers

As indicated in chapter 3, the participants were 8 male and 7 female teachers exercising in public and private schools in the area of the capital city, Ouagadougou. They work as full time teachers in public institutions and part time in private schools. The lack of teachers for secondary schools accounts for this dual occupation of English
teachers. Five male participants were administrative specialists working in different services of the Board of Education. One of these participants is an inspector in the office of secondary school inspectors. Two participants work in the office of national testing services. (Direction des Examens et Concours [DEC]), one is a vice-principal in a secondary school in Ouagadougou and the fifth administrative participant is an English teacher and a former member of the National Institute of Education.

Reactions to the Interview

All of the participants were enthusiastic about the interviews. This is not surprising as the sample was exclusively made of volunteers. Most of them seemed quite happy to talk about their experience and their views of teaching and testing in secondary schools. Some declared that being given this opportunity to speak about the problems that encountered in their profession somewhat boosted their moral at a time when they needed such a support. Some respondents reacted as if this was the occasion for them to address their concerns to the educational authorities. A few of them admitted that this was the first time they were offered the opportunity to talk about English teaching, an activity that had become an intrinsic part of their life.

During the interview itself, different reactions were observed. Some respondents were happy to talk about a topic that they found crucial and that they don’t often have the opportunity to talk about. They expressed it through body language (smile, apparent impatience to answer the question, nodding of the head, etc....). Sometimes the respondent would express his/her relief through actual words as mentioned above. Such was the case of one participant who declared that:

"this opportunity brings many ideas to my mind. We don’t have these opportunities to think about English teaching in Burkina Faso. In our different meetings, nothing is done; even the inspectors don’t come to the teachers to ask them how their teaching is in class (T8)."
Such a reaction testifies to the fact that research on the FCET is not a useless enterprise. A couple of respondents, however, seemed to be rather defensive once the interview started. They gave the impression that they were being tested themselves and therefore had to find the “correct answer” in order to pass the test. They were trying to be very careful not to expose themselves as teachers who did not do the “right thing” in class or teachers who did not know about the “right way” of testing students. In sum, they gave the impression that their answers were not as spontaneous as the interviewer expected them to be.

Sometimes, they seemed to forget that confidentiality was guaranteed. They were therefore reluctant to answer the questions spontaneously, as if they were afraid that their views would be reported to the educational authorities. The interviews, however, were overall satisfactory and they produced the data expected for the current study.

Participants’ Perceptions of English Teaching in Burkina Faso

Teaching Experience and Job Satisfaction

The teaching experience for all teachers ranged from six to 27 years, except for one teacher whose teaching experience is three years. The majority of the participants (11 out of 19) have taught for more than 12 years. Four teachers have practiced for more than 20 years, three for six years and one teacher has taught for three years only. Table 4.1 gives an overall view of the participants’ profile.

Most of the participants stated that they came to the teaching profession out of love for children and for teaching. However, with the exception of two participants, the teachers admitted that they were disillusioned and that they’d rather consider themselves as dissatisfied teachers. For example, T15 explained: “I came to the teaching profession out of love, but right now things have changed. I have quite different feelings from what I
had a few years ago." Some participants admitted that they were disappointed by the material reward that the teaching job provided teachers with. For many, however, it was the moral side that they found disheartening. They stated that the plethora in classes, the lack of teaching materials and the pressure from administrators forced their love for teaching out of their hearts.

These realities of English teaching in secondary schools are summarized by T5 in these terms:

The teaching of English is difficult in Burkina Faso. We are confronted with many problems. Students are not motivated any more. Classes are crowded. programs and books do not allow to teach adequately. to tell the truth. I cannot say that I am satisfied with my position as an English teacher. The teaching of English in Burkina has become frustrating.

This statement reflects the respondent’s long teaching experience. Indeed. T5’s 28 years of teaching makes her a precious source of information on various aspects of the teaching profession. As she spoke, the frustration could be read on her face. She suddenly turned gloomy and tense. She began speaking with a drawling voice and the voice produced a sound different from what was heard so far. One could feel her pain as she voiced her concerns. At the same time, she seemed to be relieved by being given the opportunity of sharing these concerns with someone else. She had in front of her a colleague who wanted to listen to her, with whom she could share her experiences.

Thus, the general feelings expressed by the respondents were ones of disillusionment and discouragement. Yet they expressed the hope that the educational authorities would seriously examine the conditions under which English teaching was carried out so that teachers would eventually nourish better feelings about English teaching.
Table 4.1 The Participants: gender and years of teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T</th>
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<th>Y</th>
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<td>F</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: T = Teacher participant
      G = Gender
      Y = Years of teaching
Teacher Training

Several participants reported that teachers come to the teaching profession without adequate training. As for in-service training, it has become almost non-existent. One participant complained that "we are left like orphans. We don't have any training" (T8). This type of frustration was reported by several respondents. For example, T3 expressed her frustration caused by the lack of assistance that she expected from the educational authorities. She bitterly observed that she had been teaching for six years but had never had a class visit. "I feel abandoned to myself", she said. It was this lack of pedagogic support that led to teachers' frustration as some respondents noted.

The participants argued that teacher training in Burkina Faso was even more crucial because, in an EFL environment, most of the time, the only input students can benefit from was exclusively generated by the classroom teacher. It was therefore crucial for the teacher to have the theoretical and technical knowledge to prompt student intake of the target language.

Teacher training was also reported to be particularly important because of the variation in teacher background. As explained earlier in this study, secondary schools teachers had different training experience, depending on whether they were recruited by the government or by private institutions. This situation explains perhaps why T3's desperate appeal was echoed by other participants. Thus, one female teacher noted that adequate training was crucial to communicative language teaching. She explained:

We are readily criticized but no suggestion is made to us. For example, when we ask the inspectors to give typical lessons for us to draw on, the request is systematically denied. New teachers are expected to teach things that they never learned. They have to learn from other teachers, but teachers are not specialists. (T4)"
This participant was addressing not only the problems that teachers had to face in terms of in-service training, but also the lack of support once new teachers started exercising in secondary schools. Such an expression of disappointment was a regular occurrence among the interviewees.

The participating teachers also pointed out that in-service training had been completely abandoned, that the pedagogical meetings where English teachers used to exchange teaching experience and reinforce their theoretical basis were not held anymore. The issue of teacher training in the educational system was perceived by all as a crucial one. They all regretted that English teachers were left unattended and that they were not even given the opportunities to meet as they used to do in the past. To most of the participants, teacher training remained the basis for the success of English teaching in secondary schools.

Teaching Materials

Teachers also underlined the handicap that the lack of teaching materials creates in English classrooms. They pointed out that teaching materials were becoming more and more scarce and that even the few that existed were unattractive. One respondent complained about the quality of the materials available. According to him, students cannot be motivated in using such materials. He commented that the books were not appealing by lack of pictures, and that there was "no lexicon, no vocabulary that could help the student work on his/her own. "When the student does not know a word, he can do nothing by himself", he said (T10).

Such a comment, in fact, raises the issue of motivation. How do you motivate students to learn English in a teaching context similar to the one in Burkina Faso secondary schools? For T10, the problem will be solved by providing the students with materials in sufficient quantity and of good quality. Other participants made similar
remarks. For example, T4 observed that "in order to meet the defined goals, that is.
teaching for communication, we need to be provided with adequate means." The issue of
materials was summarized by T15 in those terms: "We need visual aids. We don't have
them nowadays. We just have a piece of chalk, a blackboard and pupils." This remark
highlights the frustration teachers are dragged into by the lack of teaching materials in
language classes. Yet, even when the materials problem is solved, one question remains:
how do you teach communicative language in classes that sometimes take up to 120
students?

Class Size

The plethora in First Cycle classes was another preoccupation that teachers put
forward during the interviews. Several participants observed that English classes could be
as big as 80 to 95, and sometimes even 120 students. It was reported that classes in
Ouagadougou were the most crowded ones compared to schools outside of the city. In
terms of public vs. private schools, the former were described as those where classes
averaged 90 students. It is noteworthy that out of the 15 teachers who participated in the
interviews, only one teacher stated that his class usually ranges from 11 to 30 students.
He was a teacher in a private school in Ouagadougou. To the participants, class size was
definitely an important issue.

English Teaching Objectives

Participants' Perceptions of English Teaching Objectives

The participants perceived language teaching as an activity that sought to provide
students with the ability to communicate in the target language. They viewed the
objectives in secondary school English teaching as providing students with the skills that
will enable them to communicate in an English speaking environment. Students at the end of the First Cycle should be able to communicate with an English speaker at home or in an English speaking country. One participant, however, added that English teaching in Burkina Faso also serves diplomatic purposes. For her, the teaching of English serves the government’s objectives of international relationships.

Participants’ Awareness of the Official Objectives Regarding English Teaching

As stated in chapter one, teaching and testing are two educational activities that should go hand in hand. The primary goal of this study was to examine the First Cycle English Test and explore the ways in which this test could be improved for the enhancement of English teaching in Burkina Faso. In order to be able to conduct an adequate analysis of the FCET, it was essential to obtain information about teachers’ awareness of the official objectives regarding the teaching of English in secondary school. It is crucial that teachers be thoroughly informed of the government's objectives in order to rationally coordinate their teaching and testing of English at the level of the First Cycle. Indeed, a difference in English teaching objectives between the government and the practitioners in charge of the implementation of language teaching may result in conflicting expectations.

One of the interview questions therefore sought to elicit teachers' awareness of such objectives. The interviewees were asked the following questions: “Have you heard about statements of the Ministry of Education regarding the teaching of English?” Out of the 19 participants, only five had heard about these objectives (see table 4.2). Among these five, many had obtained this information on the occasion of teachers' meetings.

Another question the participants had to respond to was whether they had seen a document containing the official statement on these objectives. As expected, only one teacher among the more experienced ones had seen such a document. It was clear.
therefore that, concerning the official statement of the government, teachers in secondary schools relied more on what other teachers said than what they actually saw themselves.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Teachers</th>
<th>What do you think ETO should be?</th>
<th>Have you heard of the official statement?</th>
<th>Have you seen the official statement?</th>
<th>Is there a match between objectives &amp; curriculum?</th>
<th>Do you think teachers take ETO into account in their teaching?</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
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<td>No</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Com</td>
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<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Com</td>
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<td>No</td>
<td>Y/N</td>
<td>Y/N</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Com</td>
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<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>Com</td>
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<td>No</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2 Participating Teachers: Perceptions of teaching objectives

Note: The official Statement = publicly stated objectives
ETO = English Teaching Objectives
Com = Communication
N/A = Participant did not answer
Is CLT possible in an EFL context?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Teachers</th>
<th>Is CLT possible in an EFL context?</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Yes, but</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>No</td>
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</table>

Table 4.3 Communicative Language Teaching and EFL

Note: Yes, but = Respondent did not provide a clear answer
N/A = Respondent did not answer
English Teaching Objectives and the Curriculum

The participants were asked whether they believed there was a match between the curriculum and English teaching objectives in secondary schools. Out of the nineteen participants, only one believed the English curriculum matches up with the objectives. The other participants considered that there was no match at all. One major contradiction that was highlighted by the participants was the almost exclusive teaching of grammar in English classes. Teachers spent most of the time teaching grammatical rules and language structures, they said. As one participant put it, "we are obliged to teach grammar. The oral part is neglected. Yet this is where we should have laid more emphasis." (T3)

Another participant insisted on this contradiction, deploring that "in the present teaching conditions, it is hard to teach English for communicative purposes. Classes are plethoric and we spend the time teaching English for the written section of the FCET. What we basically teach is grammar." (T5) The participants made it clear that they were aware of the contradictions between the curriculum and the objectives. but they were powerless in terms of what they could do to remedy such flaws.

If grammar teaching is the primary activity in secondary schools. how is teaching assessed? What instruments are available for the assessment of English in the First Cycle? To the knowledge of the researcher. assessment policies are left to the appreciation of each school. Within schools, each individual teacher is responsible for the evaluation of his/her students. There is no instrument available for assessment in secondary schools and there is no common approach to assessment and evaluation. Yet, effective communicative English teaching should have provided for valid testing instruments available to all secondary schools. For many years. the only instrument available has been the FCET. To the participants, how valid is this instrument? The next section will explore this question.
Participants’ Perceptions of the FCET as the Assessment Instrument

The current FCET has been used as a performance test for more than twenty years to assess First Cycle students English at the end of their cycle. The present study sought to assess the theoretical relevance of the FCET in the framework of the educational system in Burkinabé secondary schools. As noted by several researchers (e.g. Patton, 1986; Guba and Lincoln, 1994) theories are not constructed for the sole purpose of testing through before a research. Theories are also grounded in research. They are built from the findings that the researcher makes in his or her efforts to explore and describe the phenomenon under study.

For the present study, the judgment of the participants on the FCET was crucial to the formation of a testing theory in the Burkinabé context. Such a judgment was provided through the interviews conducted by the researcher in an attempt to answer this question relating to the FCET: “To what extent is the FCET a valid and reliable testing instrument for assessing students’ knowledge of English?” The participants provided insight into these issues.

The participants’ assessment related to several aspects of the FCET. An overwhelming majority of teacher participants (13 out of 15) also criticized one section of the written FCET, the comprehension question. The comprehension component seeks to test students’ comprehension of a written text, using a multiple choice format. Most of the participants found this component useless. They argued that most students do not even take the time to read the comprehension text. According to these participants, students just proceed to a random selection of the answers, relying on the chance factor to achieve a few points on this section. One participant added that the comprehension component did not test students’ comprehension of English, but their comprehension of a text. “If a student cannot answer a question about a text”, he explained, “it does not mean that he does not understand the language. It may be just that he does not understand this
particular text. That 's all'' (T10). Because of the importance of the chance factor in this section, it was nicknamed the "lottery section". Some teachers stated that given the way it is designed. "the multiple choice part does not make sense" (T12).

It should be noted, however, that some participants recognized the advantages of objective tests. For example, one teacher addressed a vehement attack at this section of the FCET. stating that it was the way the test was designed that was to be blamed. "Take the multiple choice question test". he said. "it is a good testing system. but not in the way it is done in the FCET." He went on to make points about other components of the test:

As for the guided essay. nothing is guided. They just give you a topic. and they say: "answer". They ask you questions that you have to answer. then they give you an essay question to write about. What is guided in this sort of questions? Nothing is guided. (T11)

Thus, the participants made a critical evaluation of the FCET. expressing their disapproval of the different components of the written section. Not only did they address criticism at the design of the test. they also expressed their disapproval of the scoring system in the FCET. Some of the complaints against the FCET point to the fact that the test does not really measure what students have learnt in class. One participant believed that:

it doesn't mean anything to have this sort of test. First of all. you don't need to be good to succeed in this test. I mean it is not a test to test the level of the pupil... again this is a problem of objectives because we don't know what we are teaching the pupils English for. (T11)

The issue raised by the respondent was one of reliability. Does the FCET consistently measure students' English performance? For T11. the answer to this question is no. Reliability in the FCET would rule that good performance be rewarded by a good score. According to T11. a good score on the FCET does not necessarily reflect good performance.
For other respondents, the issue in the FCET is not just one of reliability. T2, for example, views the FCET as a bad assessment instrument for other reasons. For her, the FCET has a negative impact on students: "Secondary school learners do not take this test seriously," she observed. "Students are not interested in English anymore." She believed that students neglect the FCET because of the flaws that the test has conveyed for many years. One of the flaws, she continued, is imbedded in the way the scores are distributed. The written part of the FCET is scored half the oral one. And she concluded that "maybe we should change the way we design the test."

Construct Validity Issues

As argued in chapter two, construct validity is a key component in the validation of a test. Regarding the FCET, construct validity seemed to be one of the concerns of the participants. Many participants have noted some inconsistency between the actual work done in class and the requirements of the FCET. To T4, for example, the discrepancy in the FCET in terms of the time spent on grammar teaching and the absence of oral practice is in patent contradiction with the principles of language testing. As a consequence, she further commented, teachers and students are often disappointed by the test results. She noted that there was no correlation between the time spent on written activities and the results of the written FCET. Thus, students' performance on the written part of the FCET is not better than their performance on the oral one.

One respondent stated that the FCET was the sum of all the contradictions found in the language teaching/testing system in secondary schools in Burkina Faso. She believes that these contradictions put both teachers and students in an uncomfortable position. Teachers are embarrassed to talk about the FCET to students, she said. She calls the test "a salad that creates such a confusion that teachers hesitate to discuss the topic in the
presence of students” (T5). This metaphor refers to the unclear design of the FCET that makes the test confusing to the point that it becomes like a preparation of salad, with a mixture of food and seasoning. The end product leaves the beholder confused, uncertain of the various components of the dish.

Interrater Reliability Issues

Some participants found that the FCET was designed in a way that prevented it from achieving its purpose which is testing communication. T6 stated that this was particularly true for the written section of the FCET. She commented:

 Testing communication for the written test means that you want to see if the pupil received the message given at the test by the text. Can you see through the questions that you have a message that you want to check if the person has received, a message given by the text, exactly as it is? testing is checking the comprehension of the language.

As for the oral section, the most seriously criticized flaw was the lack of criteria for the assessment of students’ performance. The participants pointed out that inter-rater reliability was very low. As observed by T6, “the mark given to the pupil will vary very much from one teacher to another because you have to put a specific objective and a specific means of testing the oral ability of the pupil...” She further noted that “this test is subjective. There are no objective criteria for the evaluation.” Thus, each teacher is bound to find his or her own ways of establishing assessment criteria.

As commented by one respondent, “the lack of clear guidelines for the oral exam entails different ways of testing students. Each teacher has his way. Yet it is the same exam. Something is wrong” (T14). Indeed, all the participants admitted that they use their own criteria to assess students’ oral performance because there are no established objective criteria available for examiners to use.
T14 postulates that the inadequacy of the FCET is actually related to the questionable teaching system which itself is flawed because teachers do not receive adequate training, either in terms of pre-service or in-service education. "We need to change the whole system," he says. "We teach grammar basically and we expect the students to communicate fluently." Communication fluency is also poorly treasured because, as T1 notes, "the themes used in the test are not covered in class." Such an observation sheds more light to the contradictions between the curriculum and the FCET. In sum, the FCET lays emphasis on one aspect of language that is the least taught in class, that is, oral performance.

The Scoring System

The most recurring criticism made to the FCET concerned the scoring system. An overwhelming majority of the participants made a strong indictment at the way students were tested and evaluated, both in the written and the oral sections of the FCET. They pointed to the unbalance among the four components of the written section, and particularly the lack of guidelines for scoring each of these components. Similarly, they made it clear that the lack of criteria for scoring the oral FCET was a serious problem that undermined the validity of the FCET.

The Written Section

The written section, as described earlier, is made of reading comprehension, guided essay, grammar mastery and translation questions. The most problematic aspects of this section related to the distribution of points. For example, the participating teachers noted the inadequacy between the time spent teaching grammar in class and the weighting of
the grammar component of the FCET. Out of the 20 points allocated to the written test, the grammar component is worth 4 points only. One participant, however, was quite happy with the point value of the grammar section. She even suggested to decrease the points in the grammar section and add them to the comprehension section (T6).

The Oral Section

The same concern was expressed by T8 who noted that students are confused as to the aspects of the language that should be granted more attention. He commented:

You see now, the pupils believe that if they pass the written test, they can get a good mark. It is not right. The reality is that if you pass the oral test, you get more marks than when you succeed in the written test. The students don't know that the oral test weighs more than the written one... That is why they don't speak English when they leave the classroom.

In sum, teachers reported that the weighting system in the FCET is not consistent with the teaching content in secondary schools. Indeed, the syllabus and the methodology used by teachers emphasize the assimilation of grammatical rules and provide little room for oral activities. Students are therefore inclined to neglect oral performance and largely rely on the written section of the FCET to pass the test.

This situation brings to surface the issue of reliability and validity. Reliability in a test, indeed, requires that consistency be reflected in the results produced by the administration of the test. In the case of the FCET, reliability is unlikely to be high when there is little alignment between teaching and testing. How would students achieve good scores when emphasis is laid on written activities in class while the focus in the FCET test is oral performance? Furthermore, teachers have different training backgrounds and class size varies from one school to another. Most importantly, no guidelines are provided
for assessors to use. It should not be surprising, therefore, that assessors appeal to various evaluation strategies in the FCET. In such an assessment context, variations in students’ performance are likely to emerge and significant variations in test scores become inevitable.

There is clearly a problem of content validity that is posed in the FCET testing system. Indeed, one would wonder how the FCET could satisfy the requirements of validity and reliability without securing consistency of test results. As noted earlier in this chapter, the principles and the procedures underlying the FCET inevitably lead to questioning its content validity. Frith and Macintosh (1984) posit that “to have good content validity a test must reflect both the content of the course and the balance in the teaching which led up to it” (p.19). Such a requirement, surely, is not always met in the FCET since, as pointed out by several participants, teachers teach written English and the FCET tests oral performance.

Thus, several participants perceived evaluation as essential to the achievement of a better English teaching/testing system. As shown in previous sections, most of the participants provided a negative opinion on the teaching and testing systems in the First Cycle. The FCET was under criticism. Participants noted that something needed to be done about the prevailing system.

Divergent Opinions About the FCET

The participants’ perception of the FCET, however, did not all seem to be identical. Though not a majority, some divergent opinions were voiced. For example, T8’s view of the FCET was more lenient. For him, the written section of the FCET is satisfactory. He noted that “it’s a summary of all the studies the candidates studied from the first year to the third year. I think it is a good way of asking questions.” It must be noted that this participant’s judgment was based on the fact that the FCET reflected the written
curriculum. The various components of the written section, according to him, represent what teachers do in class with their students. He admitted, however, that the distribution of points between the written and oral sections is in contradiction with the actual classroom instructional processes. He noted that devoting more time to written English and granting more points to oral English undermined the goals of the FCET.

Another supporter of the FCET was T9. He found nothing to criticize in the FCET. When asked why he believed that the FCET was a good instrument for the assessment of First Cycle students' English, he spontaneously answered that “I think it is objective. The oral part tests the capacity of the students to communicate in English. “It is a good test,” he concluded.

A more lenient opinion was that of T10. He did not question the validity of the FCET. Although he found that the FCET as an instrument was not perfect, he specified that the test could still be used by teachers for the purpose of language performance assessment. “It’s up to the teacher to find ways to test the student’s communicative ability” he said. It must be noted that the respondent is particularly referring to the oral part of the FCET. For this respondent, however, the two parts of the FCET complement each other.

FCET Effect

Many participants pointed out that the FCET had a strong effect on both teachers and students. The FCET indeed constitutes a crucial component of the BEPC, which makes English teachers feel the obligation “to teach for the FCET,” as they put it. They made it clear that for both students and teachers, particularly in the last two years of the First
Cycle, the focus was so much on the FCET that there was little time left for communicative language teaching. They insisted that “Students don’t care about English if it does not relate to the exam” (T1). A summary of teacher reactions to the FCET is found in table 4.4.

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<tr>
<th>Do you teach for the FCET</th>
<th>Is the written FCET an obstacle* to CLT</th>
<th>Without the FCET would you teach differently?</th>
<th>Do you think there is an FCET effect on students?</th>
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Table 4.4 Teacher Reactions to the FCET

**Note:**

Obstacle = Problems encountered in teaching because of the FCET.
The participants reported that they had no other choice but to teach for the FCET. As one participant put it:

We are obliged to do what is tested at the exam. We start training the students as soon as they start English to get familiar with the types of questions that are asked at the exam. If we teach something else than what is tested at the exam, we won’t have any students. They only come to the English course because of the FCET (T3)

What the respondent was emphasizing in the above remark related to the impact of the FCET on teaching. Teachers focus their teaching on the items tested in the FCET. They initiate the students to the testing system as early as the first years of secondary school. To this respondent, the students themselves are so test-oriented that they would come to class only under one condition: that the content of the teaching reflects the test items found in the FCET.

Thus, the teachers admitted that they were working under pressure because of the FCET. They reported that under those circumstances, the officially stated objectives of English teaching could not be taken into consideration. T5 explained that “in troisième, both the teachers and the students are tense. Everybody is just concerned about the test.” The same opinion was expressed by T4 who explained that “the students try to see if the syllabus is covered. So we are obliged to focus on this program, on what is tested in the FCET.” One participant insisted on the link between the FCET and the BEPC examination. He commented:

This form of test does influence students’ learning. It has a considerable impact simply because the pupils know that at the end they are tested, and they would get marks. And the marks would be added to other marks. And if they have a low mark, then it will reduce their chances of being successful in the BEPC examination (T7).
To the participants, therefore, the FCET had an impact on English teaching and learning in the First Cycle. There was consensus on the importance of the FCET and its impact on the curriculum. One participant declared that he taught for the exam, that the first thing to consider was student success in the examination. “We teach with regard to that,” he said. “and then the rest comes after. In 3e the focus is the examination” (T10). Then, he further commented that the power of the FCET made it hard for teachers to focus on “those things that are necessary for communication.” Most participants observed that the FCET precluded the implementation of communicative language teaching. They pointed out that for both students and teachers, particularly in the last two years of the First Cycle, the focus was so much on the written FCET that there was no time left for communicative English teaching. The participants were referring to the time spent on teaching the written components of the FCET. The oral component, therefore, was neglected for the reasons described above.

Thus, the participants were unanimous on the effect of the FCET on all the parties involved in the teaching/learning process. In order to secure a better success for their students, some teachers resort to colleagues to give the students an opportunity of hearing other speakers of English. T8, for example, appeals to his “colleagues to come and take them [his students] so that they can see how different teachers, women and men, talk the language.”

Although all the participants acknowledged the strong FCET effect on their teaching, T11 noted that teachers can still find ways of practicing an objectives-oriented teaching. He postulated that the danger in focusing on the FCET only came from the fact that students may face difficulties in the future when they have to use English in real life or for academic purpose. He, therefore, made efforts not to forsake the communication objectives of English teaching, while trying to make his students familiar with the conditions of the FCET.
In summary, the participants observed that the written FCET precluded the implementation of communicative language teaching. They pointed out that for both students and teachers, particularly in the last two years of the First Cycle, the focus was so much on the written FCET that communicative English teaching/learning was neglected. So, the written FCET has such a considerable impact on English teaching in the First Cycle that the test seems to be a problem for the implementation of communicative English teaching.

Alignment Between FCET and Curriculum

Teaching and testing are two school activities that should always go hand in hand. The necessity of such a connection were underlined earlier in this study. Several researchers have emphasized this requirement (Standfield, Valette, and Wiggins in Hancock (1994), Shohamy (1992), Wesche (1992). The researcher in this study found it crucial, therefore, to obtain the perception of the participants on the connection between teaching and testing in the context of English teaching in Burkinabé schools.

One question that raised almost unanimous reaction related to the consistency between the school curriculum and the contents of the different components of the First Cycle English Test (FCET). When the participants were asked whether they found any contradiction between the FCET contents and the curriculum. 86.6% of the 15 teacher participants reported that there were many contradictions between these two components of the teaching/testing system in Burkina Faso secondary schools. These contradictions range from the lack of teaching materials to implement the curriculum to the high score allocated to the oral section of the test. The contenders of this view pointed to the fact that the oral section of the FCET was given more weight while the actual teaching allowed no time for communicative language practice. "The most obvious contradiction," declared T4. "is the coefficient. The oral test is scored two times higher than the written one when
we spend most of the time teaching grammar." (T4) In sum, most of the participants seemed to view the FCET as an assessment instrument that needed to be reformed.

However, 13.3% (2/15) of the respondents found that there was no contradiction between the FCET contents and the curriculum. One respondent, T9, justifies his answer by pointing out that there was no contradiction since "the different components of the FCET are taught in class."

It should be noted that this contradiction between the emphasis laid on writing in class and the prominence of the oral test scores has been criticized by 40% of the respondents. It seems paradoxical indeed that teachers should devote most of their time teaching grammar and doing written exercises in class when the FCET accords more weight to oral performance in the evaluation process.

Other points were raised as evidence of the discrepancy between teaching and testing, with the FCET as the only instrument for evaluating students' performance at the end of the First Cycle. T11 observes that "after only four years of learning English, to ask a student to translate from one language to another. I think it is absurd." Yet the problem does not seem to be just a curricular one. For example, T12 underlined the lack of clarity in the curriculum. "It does not provide the students with the opportunity to communicate," he commented.

In summary, different views were provided by the respondents regarding the curriculum and the FCET. For the majority of participant teachers, the discrepancies between the curriculum and the FCET remained a serious problem for the implementation of English teaching objectives in secondary schools in Burkina Faso. They observed that in such conditions, the attainment of communicative language teaching becomes unrealistic. They therefore made suggestions for the improvement of the teaching/testing system in the field of English language education.
Administrators’ Data Analysis

In this section, the data gathered from the second group of participants were examined. Four administrators constituted this group that participated in the study. They were all male administrators (see Table 4.5). The interviews with these participants were conducted in the Summer Quarter of 1999. The interviews were taped in their respective offices, then transcribed. Three of the participants used to be English teachers before taking over their administrative job. Their teaching experience is, respectively, ten, sixteen, and twenty-two years. The fourth administrator used to be a teacher, but has never taught English.

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Table 4.5 Participating administrators: gender, experience, perceptions of objectives

Note:  
G = Gender  
TEx = Teaching experience  
ETO = English Teaching Objectives  
Heard. Seen = heard or seen the official document  
O = C indicates the match between objectives and curriculum  
T+ETO = Teacher takes objectives into account  
EFL+CLT = Possibility of communicative language teaching in EFL context  
Com = Communication  
C & R = Communication and Research  
N/A = Participant did not answer  
Y/N = Answer is not clear
Reaction to the Interview

The reaction of this group of participants, to some extent, was similar to that of the participating teachers. All the interview questions were spontaneously answered and the same enthusiasm transpired the interview session. Like the participant teachers, they expressed their satisfaction at participating in the study and voiced their hope that their contribution would be useful to the search for solutions to the problems that English teaching was facing in Burkina Faso.

Official Objectives Regarding the Teaching of English

The participants in this category had a unanimous view of the official objectives regarding the teaching of English in secondary schools. They reported that English was a "work tool" that the government wanted every student to be provided with so that he/she could easily adjust to an English speaking environment. A1, for example, asserted that the official objectives "seek to provide the student with the ability to communicate with anglophones orally or by writing." Another administrator further commented that:

English teaching is also concerned about the future life of the person who earns a degree. There are also international relations that are very important. Also, English is indispensable for research in many fields: pharmacy, agriculture, etc. It's very important." (A2)

In light of these responses, it appeared that the participants were quite clear about the official objectives regarding the teaching of English in secondary schools. The researcher, however, sought to know how these administrators were informed of these objectives. The inquiry revealed that two of the four administrators had seen the official document stating the objectives regarding English teaching in Burkina Faso. One of them was clear about the document under scrutiny. He specified that the official objectives were consigned in the official letter produced by the ministry of education and titled "circulaire
No. 105/MENAC/ICEDSD du 1 Décembre 1983.” In his response, he was quite confident and referred to this letter in a way that let appear clearly that he was quite familiar with its contents. In contrast, the other administrator admitted that although he had seen the document like all the other official documents mailed to him, he had not paid close attention to its contents.

As for the other two administrators, they bluntly declared that they had never heard of such a document, not to speak of seeing it. Thus, when reporting on the government’s objectives, these participants were just extrapolating, using phrases such as "I believe the government wants students to...". "I assume that the government...". Such evidence that even among administrators, not everyone was knowledgeable of the official objectives sheds light into the actual situation of English teaching in secondary schools. If administrators had little awareness of the government’s stated objectives regarding English teaching, then it should not be of a great surprise that teachers, as shown above, were uninformed of the same objectives. In the Burkinabé school system, administrators are. indeed, the middlemen between the government and language practitioners. That is the reason why their opinion on the curriculum was also investigated.

English Teaching Objectives and Curriculum

The participating administrators generally reported that the curriculum in secondary schools did not match the official objectives regarding English teaching. Various reasons were put forward to explain this view: first of all, it was pointed out that because of a lack of teachers, students did not benefit from the same type of input in their schools. So some students would begin the term without an English teacher, while their peers in other schools would have English lessons as soon as the first term. This situation, however, prevailed only in schools located outside of Ouagadougou.
The discrepancy between the curriculum and the official objectives regarding English teaching was also reported to pertain to the way teaching was carried out in secondary schools. To A1, the curriculum was inconsistent with the objectives stated by the government. "If oral performance is the primary objective regarding English teaching", he said, "then the focus in teaching should be on the oral aspects of the language. In reality, it is just the opposite. The curriculum emphasizes written English." This absence of match between the curriculum and the objectives has also been underlined by A3.

A3 believed that there is a salient contradiction in the implementation of the objectives and that the teaching methods could not help to meet these objectives. "We teach literary texts only... Even the vocabulary taught in class is too academic and too formal for the students to be interested in communicating among themselves or with other people", he said. "Now language is not literary texts only; it is a means of communication and communication is not literature alone." A3 was referring to his own experience at the time when he was still practicing as an English teacher. His observations concerned the contents of English syllabi and the predicament in which students would find themselves in at the end of the course, when the time comes for real communication to take place. In other words, this participant was pointing to the lack of alignment between the official objective of "practical English teaching" and the literature-based teaching in class.

Another aspect of the discrepancy between the curriculum and the objectives related to the lack of teaching materials in schools. One of the participants noted that without the appropriate materials for English teaching, there is no possibility of attaining communicative language teaching. Another participant supported the same view, arguing that not only the materials were lacking, but even when there were some teaching materials available, they were not satisfactory. As a result, after the first two years of the
First Cycle, students are not motivated to learn English. He recognized, however, that “some efforts were made after 1973, but they were not sufficient.”

In sum the administrators were very critical of the contradictions between the curriculum and the stated objectives of the government. They acknowledged, however, that communicative language teaching (CLT) was attainable in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context.

For example, A1 reported that although many difficulties could be encountered, CLT is feasible, provided the students are offered adequate teaching. “With an adequate teaching. I mean a teaching that laid emphasis on oral communication” he said. “the students should be able to achieve good performance in English.”

A3 also noted that communicative language teaching is achievable in Burkinabé secondary schools in spite of the difficulties that both teachers and students had to face in the process. He cited, as adverse variables, the impossibility for students to communicate in English once they were out of the school setting. However, when students had the opportunity to speak English, they became anxious that they may make mistakes; as a consequence, they would give up. A3 reported that such roadblocks could be lifted by providing the students with opportunities such as English clubs where they could overcome their complex and feel confident expressing themselves in English. He added that teachers played a crucial role in the attainment of communicative language teaching and that their initiative could help compensate for the adversity of the EFL context.
How Participating Administrators View the FCET

The interviews offered the four participant administrators an opportunity to voice out their perceptions of the FCET as an assessment instrument. Thus, one participant reported that this instrument was adequate for the assessment of First Cycle students. He noted that, so far, the FCET was the best. He admitted that he did not know of any other way of testing, but that he was ready to see another testing system experimented in the First Cycle.

As for the other respondents in the group, they chastised the FCET for the inconsistency between the test and the objectives in the first place, and the disparity between the requirements of the FCET and the actual teaching of English in the First Cycle. For example, A1 questioned the instructional validity of the test. He observed that the FCET did not always test what was taught in class. He blamed this flaw on teacher shortage, which made it impossible for all the schools to provide students with the same amount of input during the school year.

A1 also pointed out that a revamping of the current test was necessary. For him, the "comprehension questions" section should be made of just four questions as opposed to eight questions in the present format. He justified this modification by the fact that "most of the students waste time on this section, when the section is worth just four points." He then proposed a ranking of the different sections of the test as follows: grammar, translation, guided essay, comprehension. "The grammatical question is not related to the test" he said, "so the students should work on this question even before they see the accompanying text."
He made the same remark about the "translation" section. To him, only the "guided essay" related to the text. So the students should start the last two sections only when they had completed the first two. "Otherwise" he said, "as soon as the students read the text, they become anxious. They say to themselves: 'it is too difficult.' And they are stopped." To A1, those were some of the reasons why many students performed poorly.

Other administrator participants added similar remarks, insisting that the number of multiple-choice questions should be shortened. They observed that more focus should be placed on the aspects of the test where the students have to process the language, using their cognitive abilities. In sum, the administrators advocated changes that would give English teaching a more communicative dimension.

A2 criticized the FCET for reasons different from those presented by the preceding respondent. He perceived the FCET as a simplified method of testing that did not require any kind of reflection from students. He called it "a kind of lottery where students just have to choose between a, b, c, or d." He added that due to the multiple-choice section in the test, the FCET questions were too long and paper consuming for the administration. He concluded that "although I know nothing about English, I know the FCET denotes flaws at the level of student evaluation."

A3 was straightforward about his dissatisfaction with the FCET. Like A1, he observed that students were sometimes tested on material not covered in class. This last point raises the issue of instructional validity of the FCET. To what extent could the FCET be used to assess students if the test does not address the content area that was covered in English classes? This was a serious concern for A3. He believed that there were many changes to be made in the instrument. He suggested that the FCET should be revised thoroughly in order to make this test an effective instrument for the measurement of students' achievement. He'd rather have the students tested on practical use of the language such as "writing a letter or answering the phone". "These are very simple
things", he said, "but they are more important than the literary texts used in the FCET." In sum, most of the administrators perceived the FCET as an ineffective instrument for the assessment of students' knowledge of English in the First Cycle.

The administrators admitted, however, that the FCET had a great impact on both teachers and students. Students, they noted, just learn English for the FCET, and "passing the test is their only focus, especially when they are in the terminal grade of the First Cycle." The participants' judgment was based on trends that they had observed in schools. They reported, for example, that during the school year, students based their study of English on FCET samples of previous years. In other words, students studied the different components of the written FCET in order to become familiar with this testing system.

Yet, the effect of the written FCET was not only on students, they observed. Teachers take into account the concerns of students, particularly regarding the FCET. "If teachers don't focus on the FCET", A1 said, "they won't have any student to teach. Students learn English for the FCET. Without the FCET there will be no motivation left, and you cannot teach a student who is not motivated." Thus, to the participant administrators, the FCET had an influence over students who just learned English for the test. The participants also reported that teachers were equally influenced by the FCET. They pointed to the fact that teachers had no choice but to take their students' concerns over the test into consideration, which made them focus their instruction on the written FCET only.

Summary

This chapter has summarized the analysis of the data in the study. The data were mainly official statements from the Ministry of Education, English syllabuses, samples of the FCET, and individual interviews. Each set of data was examined using qualitative
methods. The analysis of the official documents relating to English teaching objectives in the First Cycle provided insight into the government's policies regarding language teaching in Burkina Faso. The interview data have brought to light the participants' perceptions of English teaching/testing in secondary schools. The participants expressed their concern for a better development of the testing system in secondary schools in Burkina Faso.
CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

The current study described a testing system, the FCET, used by the Ministry of Education in Burkina Faso (West Africa) for the assessment of secondary school students at the end of the First Cycle. The test has been used since the country's independence in 1960. Since then, in spite of a few modifications in the format of the test, no real change was achieved regarding the system as a whole.

It may be worth reminding that the FCET is one component of the BEPC examination. As explained in chapter one, the BEPC, in the French system, is the degree earned at the end of the First Cycle. It opens the door to several jobs, such as primary school teaching, nursery positions, etc. Most importantly, it opens the door to Second Cycle for further studies. A student who does not earn the BEPC degree cannot have access to the Second Cycle.

The study sought to establish the extent to which teachers in the Ouagadougou area were informed about the officially stated objectives regarding English teaching in secondary schools in Burkina Faso. Another focus of the study was the extent to which the FCET affected the overall curriculum and had an effect on teachers and students. Finally, the study explored recommendations that would help improve the FCET testing system and enhance English teaching/learning in Burkinabè secondary schools.
The participants were fifteen teachers of English practicing in secondary schools located in the Ouagadougou area and five administrators working for the Ministry of education. The participating teachers were six female and nine male professionals serving in public and private schools in the capital city or in the neighboring areas. Official documents relating to English teaching were examined and samples of the FCET, both written and oral, were analyzed. Interview data were also utilized to explore the participating teachers' perceptions of English teaching in secondary schools and of the FCET as a testing instrument for the assessment of students' performance at the end of the First Cycle.

Summary of Findings

Research Question 1

What are the stated objectives of the Ministry of Education regarding the teaching of English in Burkina Faso?

The investigations revealed that the only document containing the official statement on the objectives of English teaching in Burkina Faso was a circular published in 1983 by the Minister of Education, titled "Circulaire No 105/MENAC/ICEDSD du 1er Decembre 1983."

The Circular No 105/MENAC/ICEDSD of December 1, 1983

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The data also revealed that only teachers with at least 15 years' experience had heard about these objectives. The conclusion that can be drawn from such facts is that the government's objectives regarding English teaching in Burkina Faso are becoming more and more hazy and that teachers hired over the past ten years or so (less than 15 years' teaching experience) had little opportunity of becoming aware of these objectives. This also denotes the deteriorating situation of English teaching in Burkina Faso, emphasized by many participants. As years go by, teachers become uncertain about their tasks and the training provided to face these tasks turns poorer and poorer. Those are the conditions in which English teachers are working in the First Cycle.

Alignment Between Curriculum, Teaching, and Objectives

The participants, in general, emphasized the lack of alignment between the curriculum and the objectives regarding English teaching. Among the two groups of teacher and administrator participants, 73.7% (14 out of 19) stated that there was no alignment while only 10.5% (2 out of 19) believed that the curriculum and English teaching objectives matched up. As for the remaining 15.8% (3 out of 19), they did not express an opinion. Most participants founded their judgment on the fact that English syllabi in secondary schools were structural while the primary purpose of English teaching was communication. They reported, therefore, that this discrepancy was a serious obstacle to the attainment of communicative language teaching.

Most of the participants also noted that teachers in general did not take the ETO into account in their teaching activities. Out of the fifteen participating teachers, five respondents (33.33%) reported that teachers were guided by ETO, and therefore, emphasized oral performance in their teaching activities. The remaining 66.66% stated that they did not consider English teaching objectives once in class. It appears, therefore, that the main preoccupation of teachers is the program, tests and examinations. Pressure
is exercised on teachers both by the administration and by the students in terms of how far they cover the school program and how updated they are in relation to other teachers in the same school or from other schools. The pressure from the administration comes also in the form of requirements regarding the number of inclass tests and quizzes to be administered each term. Students are concerned about how ready they are to face national examinations. In this context, the participants noted that teachers could not effectively apply methods and techniques conducive to communicative language learning.

Research Question 2

To what extent does the First Cycle English Test (FCET) affect the overall curriculum?

Alignment Between FCET and Official Curriculum

The findings from the study suggest that there is little content alignment between the FCET and the official curriculum. The FCET focuses on the oral performance of students. The oral section of the FCET is weighted twice as much as the written one. This may constitute evidence of the discrepancy between the FCET and the official curriculum.

Teaching materials do not look appropriate for communicative language teaching.

Teachers' Perceptions of the FCET

The overall results generated by the interview data denote participants' dissatisfaction. More than 84% (16 out of 19) of the participants consider the FCET as a bad instrument for the evaluation of First Cycle students' English. The participants reported that the FCET is dominated by routine practices that hardly address the requirements of an effective assessment system.
They also reported that the time spent on grammar teaching and the absence of oral practice are in contradiction with the principles of the FCET. These contradictions put teachers and students in an uncomfortable position. Teachers and students are often disappointed by the test results. Although the curriculum provides time mostly for written activities, there is no correlation between the time spent on these activities and the results of the written FCET. Thus, students' performance on the written part of the FCET is not better than their performance on the oral one.

Twenty-six per cent (5/19) of the participants, however, view the FCET as a satisfactory assessment instrument. In this respect, the study has also brought to light the fact that some teachers and administrators were not updated on the development of theories and practices in the field of language teaching/testing. Their perceptions of the FCET seemed to reflect the lack of information on the theories underlying some educational activities such as testing. Thus, some participants did not seem to realize the possibility of an alternative to the FCET as a testing system.

Another finding from the study is that some administrator participants tended to judge the FCET through one of its components only. They see the whole testing system as a multiple-choice test. Thus, they call the test “lottery” because of the multiple-choice component, when the multiple-choice section is just one section out of four.

FCET Effect on Teachers

The data revealed the powerful effect of the written FCET on secondary school teachers. It appeared that the test was highly valued to the extent that students and teachers concentrate all their efforts on its preparation. As a result, it becomes a problem to communicative language teaching (CLT), thus contradicting the objectives of the government regarding English teaching in secondary schools. Teachers are conscious of this discrepancy, yet they have no means of getting rid of the roadblocks disseminated in
the curriculum because of requirements such as the mandatory number of assignments and tests dictated by the administration, and deadlines imposed for covering the course syllabus.

Both students and teachers consider the FCET as the first priority. Teachers teach to the FCET, their only concern being the success of their students. In public schools, having a great number of students pass the FCET is crucial to the renown of the school; in private schools, success has even more implications in terms of the renown and the financial implications that renown entails for such schools.

Because of the FCET, administrators exercise pressure on teachers, urging them to give many assignments in plethoric classes. As a result, teachers spend most of their time grading papers instead of teaching. Such a pressure is detrimental to the enhancement of English teaching. In addition to the pressure from the administration, students equally exercise pressure on teachers. Thus, teachers are caught in a teaching dilemma, uncertain about their duties as English practitioners. The FCET is the only concern of school administrators, students. and teachers as well. Teachers are caught in a system that they do not approve of, yet they have little maneuvering power for effective change.

In short, the FCET seems not only inadequate for student assessment but may also constitute an obstacle to the achievement of communicative language teaching (CLT). Thus, teachers claimed that they would have taught differently if there were no FCET. They would have used different methods, techniques, and materials and they claimed that they would have felt more comfortable in their teaching.
Findings from FCET Samples

The analysis of FCET samples has yielded the following results: For 17 years, the format of the FCET has not changed. The FCET components need to be redefined in order to make it an effective performance assessment. For example, the question of test selection for the written FCET is posed. Some questions are badly designed and therefore the final selection of the exam question should be made by a professional or a group of professionals, rather than by the head of the testing department who may not know about English testing as is the case presently.

The Written FCET

Findings from this study indicate that the written section of the FCET needs modifications to meet the requirements of effective testing. The shortcomings that emerged concern the following components of the test:

The Comprehension Component

The comprehension component seems inefficient as a mode of assessment. The number of questions (8) cannot minimize the effect of guessing. As a result, students generally proceed by guessing. For this reason, this section was nicknamed the lottery section.

Furthermore, considering the way some questions are constructed, it is not clear if answering such questions will provide consistent information to make a judgement on genuine comprehension of the text by the assessees. This component is unlikely to test the teaching outcomes based on the educational objectives in English teaching as stated by
the Ministry of Education. It does not appear to assess students' ability to use English for written communication. Therefore, the comprehension section of the written test, to some extent, undermines the validity of the FCET as testing instrument for assessing students' written performance.

The Guided Essay

The guided essay is problematic in that there are no guidelines available for assessors to inform their scoring. Teachers are likely, therefore, to come up with a significant variation in their scores on the three questions presented in this component. Thus, the lack of criterion-referenced measures will entail low interrater reliability. This component of the written FCET, therefore, may not provide a solid foundation for the validation of the test.

The Grammar Component

The grammar section of the FCET falls into the category of language assessment based on discrete point testing. Such an assessment focuses on isolated items rather than evaluating actual written sample of the target language produced by the student. This testing system does not seem to comply with the teaching objectives officially stated by the Minister of Education. Although the official statement mentions the mastery of the language rules, it lays the emphasis on the ability to communicate naturally. It is not obvious that the grammar section of the FCET tests communicative language. To what extent, then, is this section valid for measuring students' language skills? The answer is most likely to be: "very little".
The Translation Component

The translation section may not demonstrate the student’s ability to use the language for communication purposes. A candidate may come up with a good score in this section and still be unable to communicate with an English speaker. From the perspectives of the official objectives, the translation section is inappropriate because it does not respond to the needs of effective communicative language teaching/learning. This section, therefore, contributes to undermine the construct validity of the FCET as a testing instrument.

The Oral Section of the FCET

The oral section of the FCET seems to represent the most consistent segment of the test. It provides the students with the opportunity to demonstrate their performance skills. However, findings from the study revealed a number of problems in this oral section in terms of performance assessment; these can be summarized as follows:

- Lack of curricular validity: the curriculum does not provide for communicative language teaching (CLT). Various factors contribute to create obstacles to CLT. Such factors include the size of classes, the inadequacy of teaching materials in terms of their quantity and their quality, the lack of student motivation, and the pressure from the school administration.

- Low instructional validity: teachers cannot engage in CLT activities because of the obstacles outlined above. Class size, inappropriate and insufficient material, difficulties in stirring up student motivation, all these factors constitute roadblocks for teachers in their endeavor to implement CLT.

- Low interrater reliability: teachers evaluate students’ oral performance without any written guidelines for a more objective assessment. The criteria used by assessors may not be the same.
• Low consequential validity: the lack of alignment between the FCET and the curriculum, the inappropriateness of some of the FCET components, and the lack of clearly articulated criteria for the evaluation of students’ performance constitute barriers to the achievement of the test purposes.

Recommendations from Teacher Participants

The interview data yielded results that can be articulated as follows:

• Ensure the enhancement of English teaching/testing in the First Cycle by effectively implementing the objectives regarding English teaching in secondary schools.

• Find ways of prompting the process for a reform of the teaching/testing system in Burkina Faso. A first step consists in making teachers/testers conscious of the connection between teaching and testing in order to achieve effective communicative English teaching in secondary schools.

• Redefine the role of the English inspectorate in order to facilitate a more dynamic interaction between English language inspectors and teachers of English.

• Lay more emphasis on teacher training so that teachers can be equipped with the necessary skills for the implementation of effective English teaching in the First Cycle. The participant teachers were unanimous on how urgent the need for teacher training was. They acknowledged the value of training as the foundation for effective language teaching.

• Reduce individual class size. In order to minimize the problems encountered in the implementation of English teaching objectives (ETO), the participants recommended that language classes should be made less plethoric.

• Provide schools with more teachers, which will contribute to the reduction of individual class size by making it possible to split up large classes.
Sensitize all parties concerned, that is, teachers, school principals and administrators so that joint efforts should be made to help find a solution to the problem of teaching/testing in secondary schools.

Recommendations from Administrator Participants

In an attempt to explore possible solutions to the problem of English teaching in secondary schools, the administrators made recommendations that mainly concern the curriculum, the acquisition of teaching materials, and the FCET written section.

The Curriculum

A revision of the curriculum is necessary to remedy the inconsistency between the curriculum and the objectives. It is desirable to set up a curriculum that emphasizes oral performance rather than written performance. The curriculum should provide for a teaching that matches the official objectives regarding English teaching in secondary schools. It is, therefore, crucial to design a curriculum that promotes effective teaching. For such goals to be achieved, it is necessary to organize a national forum of English teachers to examine the curriculum and propose changes that would be submitted to the Ministry of Education. The results of such a brainstorming would be of great value for the enhancement of language teaching in secondary schools.

Teaching Materials

In order to achieve effective communicative language teaching, schools should be provided with the appropriate materials for communicative language teaching. Such materials would be effective only if they favor a dynamic approach to language teaching.
The FCET

The written section of the FCET needs to be revised. The emphasis should be laid on the aspects of the language that appeal to the student's ability to use English for the purpose of written communication.

Summary of Recommendations from Participants

The recommendations made by the participants ranged from a few modifications of the FCET to drastic changes in the whole teaching/testing system. The recommendations aimed to help ameliorate the teaching of English as a foreign language in Burkina Faso and render the FCET a better instrument for the evaluation of secondary school students at the end of their First Cycle. The main areas that these recommendations addressed were: the curriculum, teacher training, teaching materials and class size.

Implications of Findings

The findings from this study have implications for the teaching/learning and the teaching/testing process in Burkina Faso secondary schools. These implications concern the following areas:

The Curriculum

Most of the participants in this study reported that the curriculum presently in use was structurally based. There is a need, therefore, to design a curriculum that is consistent with the stated objectives of the Ministry of Education. Such a curriculum will focus on communicative language teaching, providing for syllabi that allow the use of methods and techniques conducive to oral performance. It is essential to provide secondary schools with such a flexible curriculum that takes into account the needs for a communicative approach to English teaching. In this respect, the administrators in secondary schools
should let English teachers organize and plan students' assessment according to the needs of communicative language teaching. Teachers will determine the type and the number of assignments on the basis of such needs, not on the basis of a predetermined number imposed upon them by the administration of the school. Ultimately, the curriculum should cover the material assessed by the First Cycle English Test (FCET).

Instruction

In light of the objectives of English teaching officially stated by the Ministry of Education in the circular of December 1983, instruction in secondary schools should lead to the acquisition of oral performance skills. Findings in this study testify to the contrary. It is crucial, therefore, that teachers apply methods and techniques that will focus on oral performance. Instructional strategies could include activities the goals of which will be the development of functional skills in terms of communication. Such activities could be led in the classroom or outside of the classroom.

One example of an outside-of-classroom activity is real communication with English speaking people in real life, or school projects involving interaction with English-speaking people. English clubs can also provide such an environment for real communication. These activities appeal to the student's competence in negotiating meaning in face-to-face encounters and in solving real communication problems. Teachers could coordinate such activities, facilitating the creation of portfolios or school diaries by their students.
Teacher Training

One important finding from the study relates to teacher training for secondary school teachers. Teachers enter the profession with very little training or no training at all. It is imperative that teachers go through effective training in order to be able to implement the objectives of the Ministry of Education regarding English teaching. Both pre-service and in-service training are necessary for this implementation to become effective. In-service training allows teachers to keep up with the assumptions and the theoretical developments in communicative language teaching/learning and testing. The findings from this study have brought to light the lack of special training for teachers in the field of testing. On top of the general training provided to teachers appointed to secondary schools, training in performance assessment is indispensable to make the inseparability of teaching and testing an undeniable reality.

Materials

The issue of teaching materials was shown as crucial by the findings from the study. Schools are poorly equipped in terms of teaching materials, both in quantity and in quality. The objectives of communicative language teaching command that communicative materials be designed for secondary schools. The use of communicative materials will ward off the lack of alignment between the teaching objectives and the curriculum. Teachers should be trained to produce teaching materials, which will help to solve the problem of material acquisition that most teachers have to face.
Testing

Another critical issue that emerged from the findings is that of testing. The study has revealed that testing did not draw the attention of education authorities in Burkina Faso. Yet, for the enhancement of the teaching/learning process in secondary schools, testing should become part of the priorities in language programs. The existing instrument, the FCET, needs to be revamped in order to meet the requirements of an effective performance assessment instrument. Clearly defined criteria are needed for assessors to use for the evaluation of students at the end of the First Cycle. One set of criteria will apply to the written section of the test. Another set will address the oral section of the FCET. The use of such criteria will contribute to improve interrater reliability within the FCET scorers, which, in turn, will grant more validity to the test.

Recommendations

The present study was to answer the following research question: What model can be proposed in order to make the testing of English in the Ouagadougou area secondary schools more consistent with the publicly stated English teaching objectives of the Ministry of Education? The findings from the study suggest that the testing system in secondary schools be provided with a model of testing that will be in line with the officially stated objectives of the Ministry of Education. The following model is a short-term instrument that could be used while a more comprehensive instrument is being designed in the framework of the eventual reform of the testing system in Burkina Faso.
Assessment Model for First Cycle Students’ Evaluation.

Written FCET

In the proposed mode of assessment, two components of the current FCET have been canceled: the Grammar component and the Translation component. The written FCET will be made of the other components, that is, Comprehension and Guided Essay. The current FCET had the students apply rules of grammar in a contextless task. To the researcher, it seems more appropriate to assess students’ use of grammar rules through the Guided Essay, in a context close to a real written communication situation.

Similarly, the Guided Essay will serve to test the language features traditionally assessed through translation. Such features are: vocabulary, grammar, syntax, spelling. In addition to these features, the proposed model of testing introduces the assessment of coherence in the expression of ideas. In this model, the student plays a more active role in terms of performance. Thus, it will be the student trying to find his/her way out, appealing to his/her writing skills without being imposed the type of vocabulary to use, or specific grammar rules to apply. To the researcher, such a task is more communicative than having the student simply translate sentences already constructed by someone else.

Each one of the two components will be treated in sixty minutes and the maximum number of points to earn will be ten each. The Comprehension section will be evaluated using a multiple-choice format as is the case in the current FCET. There will be, however, a difference in the number of multiple-choice questions. The students will demonstrate their comprehension of the passage by answering fifty questions. Each question item will consist of one stem, two distractors, and one correct response.
The Guided Essay will be structured into five questions, each question being marked out of two points. The new format is presented in table 5.1.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension:</td>
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<td>10 pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guided Essay</td>
<td>5 questions</td>
<td>10 pts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td></td>
<td>20 pts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1 Format for the written FCET

Scoring

A scoring guide will be provided to every assessor. This guide will essentially give directions to the assessors as to what they should be looking at in the assesses' answer sheets. The assessors will evaluate the students by answering the questions relating to the following aspects of language:

- content: does the content match up with the essay item
- comprehensibility: can the reader comprehend, are ideas clearly expressed?
- accuracy (form): is the writing sample without grammatical mistakes, mispellings? Are all the words English words?
Follow up Activities Relating to the Test

The model is to be implemented over a period of two years. Feedback from teachers and students after each FCET session will be synthesized by the National Board of Education and sent to secondary schools and to the Ministry of Education. A committee will be appointed to examine the two sets of feedback report. The committee will suggest whether the new format should be adopted for a long-term use, modified, or replaced.

The Oral FCET

Findings from the study indicate that the oral section of the FCET is the part of the test that responds most to the educational objectives of the Ministry of Education in terms of English teaching/learning. The stated objectives, as it was shown in this study, emphasize the fact that students, at the end of the First Cycle, should be able to communicate with native speakers in English. In the proposed model, the oral section will, therefore, be reinforced with clear guidelines for the use of assessors. Each oral assessor will be provided with a list of scoring rubrics to be used for the rating of the candidates. The purpose of such a document for oral assessment is to maximize objectivity in grading, and therefore to guarantee reliability and validity of the assessment system.

Scoring Procedures

The scoring rubrics will consist of five items: vocabulary, grammatical accuracy, comprehensibility, fluency, and comprehension. The following scoring procedures will be used by the assessors:

- Vocabulary: listen for the appropriate use of words
- Grammatical accuracy: listen for accuracy in the use of grammatical structures, in the application of grammar rules.
- Comprehensibility: determine whether the student's speech can be easily understood or not.
- Fluency: respond to the question "does the candidate speak without hesitations? does he/she use connecting words, strategic fillers, natural pauses, etc."
- Comprehension: does the student understand the questions? does he understand the conversation with the examiner?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>excellent</th>
<th>good</th>
<th>average</th>
<th>inadequate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary (4)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensibility (6)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluency (10)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension (10)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2 Summary of the Rating Scale.

Note: The five rubrics will be computed into 40 points, using four scales: excellent, good, average, inadequate.
Explanation of Scores

The vocabulary section is given less weight because this rubric just represents the knowledge of words. Indeed, vocabulary is not only the knowledge of words, but also the knowledge of their use, i.e., the 'know how'. Now this 'know how' is measured in the fluency rubric, which automatically gives more weight to the fluency section.

Similarly, comprehensibility is scored '6' because it is also measured through the evaluation of fluency and grammatical accuracy. Comprehensibility results from the application of grammar rules and the production of fluent language.

As for the high score for comprehension, it can be justified by the fact that comprehension is a basic element in communicative proficiency. The speaker needs to understand in order to respond using his vocabulary and grammatical knowledge. In other words, a speaker may well know the meaning of words and the rules of grammar but if he/she cannot understand his/her interlocutor, this knowledge becomes useless.

Evaluation Criteria

These criteria, at each one of the four levels, can be used for the evaluation of the five rubrics:

Vocabulary:

1. expands his/her answers adequately using own words
2. answers using adequate vocabulary
3. answers using the words in the question
4. has a lot of difficulties finding the words
Grammar:
1. answers without any grammatical error
2. answers with very few grammatical errors
3. answers with some grammatical errors
4. answers with many grammatical errors

Comprehensibility:
1. expresses him/herself very clearly
2. it is a little difficult to understand him/her
3. it is very difficult to understand him/her
4. only a few words can be understood

Fluency:
1. has a smooth speech flow, with natural pauses
2. pauses sometimes in the wrong place
3. uses too many pauses and in the wrong place
4. pauses after every word

Comprehension:
1. understands questions clearly
2. understands questions with some difficulties
3. understands the questions with a lot of difficulties
4. hardly understands the questions
Other Considerations

In light of the findings from this study, a number of recommendations for the enhancement of teaching/testing in secondary schools can be made, both for the short term and the long term. These recommendations address the curriculum, teacher training, instruction, and testing.

In the Short-Term

Teacher Training

In terms of pedagogical needs in the short term, teacher training is the area that should be taken care of. In-service training was ensured in the past through English seminars. Resuming these seminars will help to provide teachers of English with some theoretical basis in terms of language teaching/testing. Such meetings will also give opportunities to the participants to share their experience regarding teaching/testing strategies, as well as methods and techniques relevant to the different teaching contexts. It is particularly crucial to provide training in testing for English teachers exercising in secondary schools.

Instruction

One finding from this study concerns teachers’ lack of information about the official objectives regarding English teaching. There was also an indication that teachers, for various reasons, did not take these objectives into account in their instructional activities. It is important, therefore, that teachers be informed of these objectives, and that efforts should be made to incorporate these objectives into their curricular activities. This implies the use of communicative tasks in class and the prominence of oral communication over written communication.
Testing

In the field of assessment, it is urgent that the FCET assessors be provided with written guidelines and objective criteria for scoring both the written and the oral sections of the FCET. Regarding the oral section specifically, it is essential to design scoring rubrics to be used for the face-to-face interviews. These guidelines and scoring rubrics should be provided to teachers in secondary schools and to those participating in the organization of FCET tests.

The study has shown shortcomings in the comprehension component of the FCET. This component was found to be the most problematic segment of the FCET. While studies are conducted, and before the appropriate changes are institutionalized, it seems relevant to cancel the comprehension section of the test, while taking the necessary steps for a total reform of the entire testing system.

Regarding the FCET, a short-term measure to be considered addresses the test selection system. It seems appropriate to set up a committee for the final selection of the test to be administered. Such a committee will be made of trained teachers, having the expertise to select the best tests for FCET yearly sessions.

Another identifiable need that emerged from the study pertains to the provision of a written report on students’ assessment by the FCET. The report will be a synthesis of the procedures for the assessment of candidates and the problems encountered in the administration of both the written and the oral tests. The document will thoroughly outline the procedures followed by the tester, the reaction of the candidates, the outcomes of the assessment process, and recommendations for future exam sessions. The report will be made available to secondary schools, to the Ministry of Education and to all curriculum developers and syllabi planners. This document could be used for diagnosis purposes and for the improvement of the FCET design.
In the Long-Term

Measures to be taken in the long term relate to the curriculum, the FCET, and the material organization of teaching/learning and testing. Findings from the study suggest the lack of alignment between the curriculum and the officially stated objectives regarding English teaching. Firstly, it is important that the objectives regarding English teaching in Burkina Faso be clearly stated and made available in secondary schools. These objectives should be formulated, not only in terms of language teaching, but also in terms of students' assessment and evaluation.

Once the objectives are clearly stated, the curriculum can be consistently designed. For the enhancement of English teaching, it is essential to design a curriculum that meets the requirement of communicative language teaching and testing. Such a curriculum will provide for communicative syllabi and for the time needed by teachers for the implementation of the curriculum.

Another long-term consideration pertains to individual class size. The study indicates that classes in secondary schools are plethoric. For an effective communicative language teaching, it is imperative that class size be reduced to enable teachers to engage in communicative tasks and activities conducive to effective learning. As explained earlier, the Ministry of Education stated what English teaching objectives should be. Teachers should, therefore, be allowed the time and the freedom to carry out the type of teaching they believe is most appropriate for the implementation of these objectives.

Yet, the lack of teaching materials could jeopardize all efforts towards the implementation of these objectives. It seems therefore of great importance to equip classes with the adequate teaching materials, particularly textbooks for teachers and students. Such materials should respond to the requirements of communicative language
teaching. Teachers, trained in material design, could contribute to make these materials available in the secondary schools, not only in terms of quantity, but also in terms of their quality.

General Recommendations

For the objectives of the Ministry of Education to be better implemented, there is the need for communication between this institution and its various education departments. Thus, feedback from boards of education, from testing departments, and from secondary schools should provide the Ministry with the information needed to undertake education and testing reforms in secondary schools in Burkina Faso. One such source of feedback is the written report on the FCET and its impact on English teaching/learning in secondary schools.

Finally, there is the need to make the English Inspectorate services more dynamic. The study data have shown that teachers are not quite happy with the role played by the Inspectorate. Teachers expect to improve their skills through the services of the English Inspectorate. These services should, therefore, be made effective by providing inspectors with the material needs for the achievement of inspection tasks.

Implications for Further Study

The purpose of this study was essentially to investigate the First Cycle English Test (FCET). Replications of the study could be conducted, using interview data from a different geographical area in Burkina Faso. The data gathered were documents relating to English teaching objectives, to samples of the FCET, and to interviews in the Ouagadougou area. Further investigations could be made, involving interviews with more
teachers from different secondary schools areas in Burkina Faso. This will provide more valid data on the FCET. Furthermore, confirming the interview data with information from a survey on the FCET could make the results more consistent in terms of teachers’ and students’ perceptions of the test.

More importantly, data missing in this study and that needed close examination include students’ perceptions of the FCET. Students are the prime stakeholders of the FCET. As such, their opinion should be highly valued for any evaluation of the test.

Another area of investigation that deserves attention is the oral interview. In the present study, no oral interview was analyzed because the researcher had no opportunity of observing an actual interview for the assessment of students’ oral performance. Yet, observing actual interviews could provide insights into the interactions between assessor and assessee. Such observations are crucial for future investigations of the First Cycle English Test.

Limitations

The significance of this study has been explained earlier. Its scope, therefore, should have been extended to include more schools from various areas in the country. Similarly, interviewing the largest number of secondary teachers would have granted more validity to the study. Yet, the researcher was not able to achieve such objectives. The study was therefore limited in the following ways:

1. The interviews were conducted with teachers in the Ouagadougou area, so the opinion that is expressed in this study is that of the Ouagadougou area teachers only. Even in this area, it is only the opinion of those the researcher was able to interview.

2. The perceptions of students regarding the FCET were those reported by teachers. There was no actual interviews of secondary school students by the researcher.

4. The stated objectives of the Ministry of Education that are examined in this study are those that were stated publicly through official government documents.

These limitations, however, should not impact on the contribution of the study to the improvement of the testing system for foreign language teaching in Burkina Faso. This study should therefore be considered as a step towards a reform of the FCET in Burkina Faso.
REFERENCES


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APPENDICES
Appendix A

Interview Samples
Interview Questions

Name:
Date:

School: public:
       private:

Language:
       English:
       French:
       Both:

I. Demographic information

1. We are ready to start, so can you tell me your name first?
2. How long have you been teaching English?
3. In what school do you teach?
4. Have you always taught in public/private schools?
5. What level do you teach?
6. What size are the classes you teach?
7. Are you happy with your teaching? Tell me about it.

II. Objectives

8. What do you think should be the objectives of English teaching in Burkina Faso?
9. What are the official objectives regarding English teaching in Burkina Faso?
10. Have you heard about statements of the Ministry of Education regarding these objectives? Tell me about it.
11. Have you seen documents relating to these statements? Can you tell me where?
12. From what you have read or heard, what are the differences/similarities between these objectives and your objectives regarding English teaching?
13. Do you think the First Cycle curriculum matches these objectives? Tell me about it.
14. In your opinion, do teachers in general take these objectives into account in their teaching? What makes you say that?
15. How do these objectives match the needs for communicative language teaching?
16. Do you think communicative language teaching can be attained in a foreign language context? Tell me about it.
17. Do you usually participate in the national exams? Which ones?

III. The FCET

18. What do you think of the First Cycle English Test (FCET)?
19. In your opinion, which parts of the FCET test the ability of students to communicate in English?
20. What contradictions can you see between the FCET contents and the curriculum?
21. Is there a match between the contents of the FCET and your teaching of English? What makes you say that?
22. Does the FCET influence your teaching? Can you tell me why?/why not?
23. How can the FCET help you implement the objectives of the Ministry of Education?
24. Is the FCET your focus when you teach? Why?/Why not?
25. Does the FCET constitute an obstacle to your teaching? Does it prevent you from teaching the way you would have wanted to teach English? Tell me about it.
26. Would you have taught differently if the FCET had not been there? Tell me about it.
27. In your view, does the FCET influence the English learning of First Cycle students? What makes you say that?
28. What feedback do you usually get from students about the FCET?

IV. Recommendations

29. What changes would you bring to the FCET in order to have a match between teaching and testing?
30. What assessment instrument would you replace the FCET with if you could?
31. What recommendations can you make regarding the teaching and testing of English in the First Cycle?
32. Do you have anything to add to what has been said so far?
I. Demographic Information

1. My name is ... and my maiden name is ...

2. I have been teaching for nearly 22 years. I started in 1975.

3. I teach at Lycee Mixte.

4. I have taught in both public and private schools but I am mainly a public school teacher.

5. I teach all the secondary school levels, that is, from 6e to Terminale.

6. The classes are big. They are sometimes as big as 70 or 80 students.

7. Well it depends. I can say that at the beginning of my career, I was more enthusiastic about teaching than now. I like teaching. I really enjoy teaching and speaking the English language, but the conditions in Burkina Faso are tough. We are not in a position to play our role of English teachers fully. There are many problems as you probably now.

II. Objectives

8. When I teach English, no matter the class, my first purpose is to draw the pupils' attention to a new culture, to new means of communication and I use more materials than what is usually given in the classes. I've got books and tapes that I take to class with me. And I use other things to make them like the culture and the language that they are learning. I use plays, poetry. the students like it. So I think that teaching English in Burkina Faso should aim at this, that is communication. When you go out of the country, you know that English is an international language.

9. The government and our administration and everything concerning the policies in education, they say that they need English for communication because the country wants to keep in contact with English speaking countries. And it wants the citizens, when they are educated, to get a certain level of ability in communication in this language. It is also out of the desire of the government to maintain good relationship with America and for the assistance they expect from this big developed country. So teaching English is also for our country, for our development, that is the target of our government.
10. Yes I have heard about them, we are reminded of them on the occasion of seminars.

11. Yeah, a few years ago, we received a letter from our ministry describing the teaching of English. If I try somewhere I can even find something about the goals and objectives of government for its teaching of foreign languages.

12. The objectives actually are very similar. It's only when it comes to the means to achieve these objectives that there is disagreement. It is contradictory. We are obsessed by the curriculum and we neglect the real objectives of English teaching.

13. It's a kind of ambition if you think that all the population will speak so many languages at the same time. Usually the citizen here copes with many languages at the same time. The mother language and French which is compulsory for everybody if you go to school. starting from the primary level you have to speak French and use it when you go to university. Now English is not spoken. Now to answer your question. I am tempted to say no. The teaching of English here is certainly more for academic purposes. What we see through the school materials and classes lead to thinking that English is taught for academic purposes, for the diplomas that the children are obliged to take if they want to get a good position in the civil service, and for other things, mainly for academic purposes, and just because the country puts it as something compulsory for every student.

14. I am not sure if all the teachers take the objectives for English teaching into account in their teaching. And this is where the problem lies. Does every teacher understand that the teaching of English is mainly for communicative purposes? I doubt.

15. The problem I can see is when it comes to the political objectives. Because in that case, I don't think that communication is really the primary objective. The government wants to please some countries, to have a good relationship with these countries. So it does not really matter whether the language is taught for communicative purposes or not.

16. It depends on the particular educational policy of the country. We are in a context where everybody in the country speaks at least two languages. Trying to teach so many languages such as Spanish, Italian, German, etc.. is not good for the country. They have to select some languages and reject the rest. We don't have money to spend for the teaching of these languages. If we focus on just one or two languages, it is possible to attain communicative teaching in this context.

17. Yes. I have always participated in all the national exams. The BEPC and the Baccalauréat as well.

III. The FCET

18. I think the test has changed since the beginning. At the beginning, the pupils were scared of the FCET. They were not prepared. they were not familiar with the cultural contents of the test. So it was difficult for them to answer the questions. Then we changed
it into the present test. For example the multiple choice section needs some improvement. It's also good to give the child a certain ability in choosing things even in everyday life. But not all. It's not valid if you are testing and you are sure that the answer given doesn't prove anything. It takes just something at random. He doesn't know if it is true or false. It is a kind of improvement in the teaching of English, but it also needs improvement to make it more valid as a test for communicative purposes.

We have many sides of the problem, many aspects of this problem. First the way it is taught, the way the children receive the language does not allow them to achieve the communication expected from them. And then the way the test is planned does not totally achieve its purpose of testing communication and nothing else. That's the problem. Testing communication for the written test means that you want to see if the pupil receives the message given at the test by the text. Can you see through the questions that you have a message that you want to, you want to see if the person has received the message given by the text, exactly as it is. Test is comprehension of the language.

Then the oral test. This is really a very big problem. When you speak of the oral test, the same pupil can receive, or the mark given to the pupil will vary very much from one teacher to another because you have to put a particularly specific objective and a specific means of testing the oral ability of the pupil, but this is not done. This test is subjective, there are no objective criteria for the evaluation.

19. I think both the written and oral parts can test the ability of the students to communicate. The comprehension and the essay test the comprehension of the language and the ability of the pupil to use the language. The oral part tests the ability to speak, to communicate, but the problem here, as I said, is the evaluation. There are no objective criteria of evaluation.

20. We have been arguing about this exam and many teachers react to the way if we teach for communicative purposes, then we should match the test to our purpose of communication. There are attempts but I doubt if we are really successful in making everybody see that this exam, this test is for communicative purposes. In reality, there is a contradiction. But I will say yes and no. Because reality always goes beyond what we plan. It is a problem at the level of the teachers and of the policy of education of the country. The reason is that the policy is certainly given to a group of people to manage it to change and alter things to make it beneficial for everybody.

21. Yes, there is. Because in 3e the focus is the exam, because we want to make sure the our pupils pass the FCET, we make sure that all the sections that are tested at the FCET are covered in class. The purpose for teaching English in 3e is the FCET, so the exam first and the other objectives next.

22. Yes, when we teach in 3e or 4e, we teach really English for the purpose of the FCET. we train the students for this particular test. We aim at succeeding a test, that is all. We don't care about anything else.
23. Well, the FCET as such can help implement these objectives. For example, in the written test, the comprehension and the essay test the comprehension of the language and the ability of the pupil to use the language. But the translation cannot achieve these goals. There is also the grammar part. Why not if it is well done. But even then the grammar part is not... I am sure that even the people speaking English themselves are not good at grammar. In grammar, you have to learn things that are not really specific to the language, created by grammarians.

24. In 6e and 5e, not really. But in 4e already. I try to prepare the pupils to take the FCET successfully. And in 3e, when we are in class, we are conscious of the test at the end of the year and that's why the test can fit what has been prepared. In 3e the real purpose of the teaching is the exam. So we don't have time even for real communication. But we do not care to see if the test is really valid for communicative purposes. We are concerned with keeping pace with the curriculum. We want to finish with the grammar curriculum, to finish with a certain corpus of vocabulary, to finish with, to finish with, and we don't even have time for other things. So the exam is the real objective of teaching English in 3e.

25. Yes the exam becomes an obstacle to the teaching of English for communicative purposes.

26. Of course if they take off this exam, the teaching will change. When we teach in 6e and 5e, it is different.

27. Yes. As I said, in 3e, the only concern in teaching English is the FCET. So the students learn for the exam. They want to pass the BEPC and they learn English for that. In 6e and 5e, maybe there are not under the influence of the BEPC. But from 4e, they begin to work for the examination.

28. Students generally complain that the test is too hard, that some sections in the test is just what they call "lottery"

IV. Recommendations

29. For the written test, I'd say that it is OK. I did not really look at it. But the number one problem is the translation from French to English. I don't like it and I don't think that at their level they can translate fluently from French to English. The comprehension section is OK. I like it. I would decrease the mark given to grammar and increase the mark given to comprehension. Also, for the comprehension question test, I think the number of questions should be decreased. As for the oral test, I'd have liked the inspectors to give particular means for every teacher to know exactly what to do at the oral test so that the marks given test the same things.

30. For the oral test, I tried to design my own testing file to propose to my colleague teachers and I brought it to Bobo. Teachers say they don't even know how to test the
pupils at the oral exam. They say we should see if they can communicate, if they understand, etc. but how can we test that? The testing system should be improved. I gave them my own plan, that they have to go through seven points instead of just taking a text, talking and then when it is finished, try to remember what did he or where is he weak. what was good or... This is a very big problem. and the mark is subjective. if you don't design something that is objective for your testing.

31. I don't agree with the teaching of languages for purely political reasons. It is a waste of money. We should simply keep in view our own interest and future. What we need, what we want to get, etc. For example, we can find an African language and use it as the language for communication and save money for development. So what I would recommend is that the government makes sure that the make the material means available for the elite to be able to learn English and use it.

32. I will just encourage you in your project, it shows that everyone of us is concerned with the problem of English teaching in Burkina Faso.
I. Demographic information

1. Je m'appelle …

2. J'enseigne l'anglais depuis 1972 (27 ans) avec une interruption d'une année en 1974-75 où je suis allée en Angleterre pour un stage.

3. J'enseigne au Lycée Zinda

4. J'ai enseigné dans le privé aussi, mais c'est surtout dans le public que j'enseigne

5. J'enseigne de la 6ᵉ à la Terminale

6. Les classes sont pléthoriques il faut le dire. J'ai eu des classes qui atteignent 80, 90, et même 95 élèves.

7. L'enseignement de l'anglais est difficile au Burkina. Nous sommes confrontés à de multiples problèmes. Les élèves ne s'intéressent plus à l'anglais. Les classes sont bondées, les programmes et les livres ne permettent pas d'enseigner comme il faut. Vraiment pour dire la vérité, je ne peux pas dire que je suis satisfait de ma situation de professeur d'anglais. L'enseignement de l'anglais est devenu frustrant au Burkina.

II. Objectives

8. Normalement l'enseignement de l'anglais au Burkina devrait permettre aux élèves de pouvoir communiquer avec des ressortissants de pays anglophones, notamment notre voisin immédiat, le Ghana. En plus de cela, l'anglais étant une langue internationale, il est normal que cette langue soit enseignée dans nos écoles.

9. C'est surtout lors des séminaires que l'on nous rappelle ces objectifs. Il y a par exemple des objectifs politiques. L'anglais est une langue internationale, une langue de communication très très importante, utilisée dans les forums internationaux. C'était donc bon que nos élèves qui seront peut-être les décideurs de l'avenir puissent apprendre cette langue pour pouvoir s'intégrer dans la communauté internationale. Dans le cas du Burkina Faso, en Afrique de l'Ouest, nous avons même un voisin anglophone, le Ghana, donc ça c'est un objectif utilitaire. Les enfants doivent apprendre l'anglais pour pouvoir communiquer avec les anglophones qu'ils rencontreraient. Il y a aussi cet objectif.
pédagogique, c'est une matière de l'enseignement. En tant que tel il est prévu qu'on enseigne l'anglais aux enfants pour qu'ils puissent passer les examens.

10. Oui. comme je l'ai dit, c'est lors des séminaires qu'on évoque ces objectifs-là. A savoir qu'il faut que les élèves du Burkina soient dotés d'un minimum de bagage linguistique qui leur permette de communiquer avec des anglophones, notamment avec nos voisins.


13. Franchement, quand je suis en classe, et je sais que c'est le cas de beaucoup de mes collègues, je suis préoccupée par le programme. Finir le programme à tout pris. voilà. Et compte tenu du caractère pléthorique des classes, il est difficile d'accorder le programme avec la réalisation des ces objectifs. On ne peut pas suivre efficacement chaque élève pour qu'il puisse s'exprimer. Donc en réalité, le programme d'anglais ne s'accorde pas du tout avec ces objectifs. Comment peut-on apprendre à parler à une classe de 90 élèves? Avec des livres qui n'attirent pas du tout? Voyez vous-même.

14. Les enseignants ne peuvent pas s'en tenir à ces objectifs. Même s'ils les prennent en compte, c'est surtout le FCET leur préoccupation. C'est pourquoi ils sont tendus. Et puis les élèves sont devenus pragmatiques. Ils veulent réussir. c'est tout. Donc entre eux et les enseignants, la communication ne passe pas. l'information ne passe pas. pourquoi? Peut-être que les professeurs même sont perdus. Il y a les séminaires. mais qu'est-ce que ça nous rapporte? Rien. Il faut attaquer le mal à la racine. il faut qu'on réfléchisse sérieusement sur l'enseignement de l'anglais. Jusqu'à présent, nous n'avons pas saisi l'essentiel pour que ce soit efficace, pour que nos objectifs soient vraiment atteints.

15. Là c'est un autre problème. Une partie des objectifs effectivement vise un enseignement de communication. Il s'agit des objectifs politiques que j'appellerai les besoins réels. C'est-à-dire pouvoir communiquer avec des interlocuteurs de la langue anglaise, que ce soit ici. au Ghana. ou lors des rencontres internationales. Par contre, les autres objectifs, à savoir les objectifs pédagogiques, ça ne facilite pas tellement l'enseignement de l'anglais comme langue de communication. On veut tout simplement ajouter une matière au programme. on veut finir le programme. on veut que les enfants démontrent ce qu'ils ont appris en classe. Cela ne cadre pas tellement avec un enseignement qui a pour objectif l'utilisation de la langue comme moyen de communication.
16. Oui on peut le faire, mais tout juste à l'intérieur des 4 murs de la classe. On peut essayer quand même de communiquer avec eux effectivement, mais en parlant peut-être... ne pas trop se coller au livre. D'autre part aussi on ne peut pas faire autrement, puisque il y a le programme. Moi je trouve que l'anglais au 1er cycle, c'est un peu trop lourd. Et en définitive, ils ne savent pas écrire, les notes à l'écrit sont catastrophiques. Ils ne savent pas parler, donc en définitive on n'obtient rien. Aussi il y a le fait que si l'on se contente seulement de parler sans support écrit. Il y a un danger: c'est comme si on ne faisait pas grand'chose. Et il peut avoir des digressions et il n'y aura rien de commun entre les élèves. Il ne faut pas oublier que c'est une matière. L'enseignement de l'anglais est difficile dans les pays francophones en général. Mais j'insiste sur l'allègement du programme.


III. The FCET

18. Dès la classe de 5e, on commence à préparer les élèves pour le FCET. Quant au contenu, je pense qu'on met beaucoup l'accent sur la grammaire. La grammaire c'est 4 points et le thème c'est 2 points. Il y a une contradiction. On met l'oral coefficient 2, et le "guided essay" jusqu'à 10 points. Hors si on n'apprend pas à l'enfant à s'exprimer, 10 points c'est pas facile. Et pour ça il faut la grammaire, le vocabulaire. Finalement il y a une salade qui fait que les professeurs sont genés, ils sont mal à l'aïse et les enfants s'en rendent compte.

19. C'est l'épreuve orale. C'est là où l'enfant a l'occasion de montrer qu'il comprend et qu'il peut répondre oralement. Mais souvent c'est la déception. Les enfants sont faibles, c'est le constat.

20. Les autorités ont voulu mettre l'accent sur le parler, en dotant l'épreuve orale d'un coefficient deux fois plus élevé que l'écrit. Malheureusement dans les conditions actuelles c'est difficile d'enseigner l'anglais pour la communication orale. Les classes sont pléthoriques. Nous passons plutôt le temps à enseigner l'anglais pour les épreuves écrites. On n'a pas le temps. Donc il n'y a pas tellement de rapport entre les objectifs et le programme. Il y a une contradiction. Nous enseignons surtout la grammaire.

21. Le problème qu'il y a ici, comme je l'ai dit plus haut, c'est la contradiction entre l'importance qui est accordée à l'oral du FCET et la pression qu'on a en classe à cause du programme et qui ne permet pas de pratiquer l'anglais oral. On ne fait pratiquement que l'écrit. Dans les classes de 6e et 5e, j'essaie de composer mes textes, mais en classe de 3e, le focus c'est le FCET. Donc du côté écrit oui. Depuis la 5e d'ailleurs je commence à initier les enfants au multiple-choice par exemple. Mais comme je l'ai dit, on n'a pas le temps, ni les moyens d'enseigner l'oral en classe.
22. Normalement en classe, la priorité devrait être l'enseignement de l'anglais. Mais en réalité, aussi bien au niveau des élèves que des enseignants, notre objectif c'est que les élèves puissent maîtriser ce qu'on leur apprend pour pouvoir se débrouiller à l'examen. L'objectif c'est donc le FCET, le BEPC. Mais même cet objectif pédagogique n'est pas atteint. Pour les élèves, l'essentiel c'est de réussir au BEPC. Ils n'ont pas tellement conscience que l'anglais est avant tout une langue de communication. Donc le FCET influence beaucoup.

23. Le FCET actuellement n'aide pas à atteindre les objectifs de l'enseignement de l'anglais. S'il y avait concordance entre le FCET et le programme, peut-être ce serait possible. Pour que le FCET puisse aider à atteindre les objectifs du ministère, il faut que les enseignants puissent faire pratiquer beaucoup la langue en classe ou ailleurs. Comme ça le poids qui est donné à l'oral d'anglais au BEPC aura un sens. Sinon c'est contradictoire. On met l'accent sur l'oral et on ne peut pas enseigner l'oral. Même l'objectif pédagogique que le FCET vise, c'est-à-dire le BEPC, n'est pas atteint. Nous faisons tout pour qu'ils réussissent bien. Mais ça ne va pas. Les enfants ont de mauvaises notes, surtout à l'écrit.

24. Ah oui. On est orienté uniquement vers l'examen. En tout cas 90% des professeurs dont dans ce cas. En classe de 3e tout le monde est tendu: les professeurs, les élèves. Tout le monde est concerné par le FCET uniquement. Mais les élèves ne sont même plus tendus parce qu'ils baissent les bras. Il y a un désintérêt. Ils ne s'intéressent plus à l'anglais. Parce qu'ils voient vraiment que ça ne va pas. Ils n'auront pas de bonnes notes. Donc ils négligent l'anglais, ils négligent le professeur, et l'atmosphère dans la classe, ça ne va pas. Ils ne voient pas l'utilité de l'anglais. Pour eux c'est une matière comme les autres.

25. Le programme nous est imposé. Et il y a le programme du FCET bien sûr. Donc je ne peux pas enseigner comme je l'aurais voulu. Je dois obligatoirement faire trois devoirs dans le trimestre dans des classes de 90 élèves. Donc on passe le temps pratiquement à préparer et à corriger des devoirs. Et il faut finir le programme. On ne peut donc pas enseigner en mettant l'accent sur la communication comme il l'aurait fallu. Comme je l'ai dit le focus c'est le FCET. C'est pourquoi d'ailleurs il y a la tension. C'est dommage. D'autre part aussi, on ne peut pas ne pas tester les élèves. On ne peut pas enseigner l'anglais sans l'inclure à l'examen du BEPC. L'anglais est aussi une matière, il ne faut pas l'oublier.

26. C'est certain. S'il n'y avait cette tension-là causée par le FCET, j'aurais mis l'accent sur l'expression orale. J'aurais orienté mon enseignement vers d'autres activités, des activités qui permettront aux enfants d'apprendre à s'exprimer en anglais, à communiquer les idées, à écouter et comprendre. J'aurais insisté sur le développement des "communicative skills".
27. Ah oui. Les élèves, comme je l’ai dit, sont devenus pragmatiques. Ils n’apprennent que ce qui va leur servir à l’examen. Leur objectif c'est la réussite au BEPC. Donc quand ils apprennent l’anglais c'est presque uniquement pour le FCET. De toutes les façons l’anglais ne les intéresse plus. donc apprendre l'anglais pour l'amour de l'anglais ça n'existe plus. C’est peut-être en 6e et 5e. et même peut-être tout juste en 6e qu’on peut encore rencontrer cet enthousiasme qu'ont les enfants apprendre l'anglais. Après ça c'est fini. C'est ça.

28. Les élèves pensent que l'anglais est difficile, donc ils ont tendance à faire le minimum pour préparer le FCET. Ils ne s'attendent pas à de bonnes notes. Et effectivement les notes sont toujours minables.

IV. Recommendations

29. Moi je pense qu'il faut repenser la distribution des points au niveau de l'écrit. Je pense qu'on met beaucoup l'accent sur la grammaire. Il y a une contradiction entre le nombre de points attribués d'une part à la grammaire et au thème (4 pt et 2 pt = 6 points), et d'autre part les points de l'oral qui est coefficient 2. et le "guided essay" qui a jusqu'à 10 points. Hors si on n'apprend pas à l'enfant à s'exprimer. 10 points c'est pas facile. Et pour ça il faut la grammaire, le vocabulaire. Donc même à l'écrit, la forme ne permet pas à un élève qui ne peut pas s'exprimer oralement de s'exprimer par écrit. Hors en classe, c'est surtout la grammaire qui est enseignée. Finalement il y a une salade qui fait que les professeurs sont génés. ils sont mal à l'aise et les enfants s'en rendent compte.

30. Je pense que là il s'agit surtout d'un problème global qu'il faut chercher à résoudre globalement. Le FCET en tant que tel. je n'ai pas grand'chose à lui reprocher sauf que tel qu'il est actuellement, j'aurais pondéré les points à l'écrit autrement. J'aurais diminué le point du "guided essay". C'est donc avant tout un problème concernant l'enseignement même de l'anglais. Le test en découle. Pour le moment je ne pense donc pas que c'est un problème d'instrument. J'aurais donc changé le système d'enseignement avant de songer à l'instrument nécessaire à l'évaluation des enfants. Voilà ce que je pense.

31. Compte tenu du fait que les objectifs mettent l'accent sur la communication orale, je pense que la première des choses à faire, c'est alléger les programmes et peut-être faire un programme commun pour tout le monde, parce que quand on fait le choix des textes au BEPC. il faut que ça porte sur un sujet que les élèves ont effleuré. Sinon il y a une question de vocabulaire. Ensuite, la formation des enseignants. ce n'est pas ça. Les élèves professeurs se plaignent de leur formation. Ils ne sont pas satisfaits. Si eux-mêmes ne sont pas bien formés. qu'est-ce que tu vas apprendre aux enfants? Même au niveau de l'inspection d'anglais ça ne va pas. La création de l'inspectorat d'anglais est partie sur de fausses bases. L'enseignement de l'anglais est dans une situation déplorable. Il faut une réflexion sérieuse au paravant. Je pense qu'on peut passer une année ou deux. à discuter. chacun réfléchit, on brasse les idées et tout. A un moment donné on se réunit pour voir ce qu'on peut faire, ce qu'on ne peut pas faire. ce qu'on doit faire. ce qu'on ne doit pas faire. et ensuite maintenant dans une dernière étape. essayer de brosser un programme. Sinon. si
on fait ça à la hâte, ça ne peut pas marcher. Ce pourrait même être plus catastrophique. La réforme de l'anglais est une nécessité, mais il ne faut pas réformer pour réformer aussi.

32. Je pense que je t'ai énuméré tous les problèmes qu'on rencontre. J'ai dit tout ce qu'on pourrait faire pour atténuer cette situation.
1. Demographic Information

1. We are ready to start, so can you tell me your name first?

I am ...

2. How long have you worked in the National Board of Education?

Well it used to be called INE. Institut National de l’Education. I started working there in 1978, and then I went to studies for two years in Britain. I came back to work at the National Institute until 1983, afterwards I was sent back to secondary school. So I could say that I worked in the National Institute of Education two years firmly and I did two years studies in between.

3. What job were you doing before you came to the Board?
Before I went to the National Institute I was a teacher, a full time teacher at Lycee Philippe Zinda.

4. What were your responsibilities in the Board?

At the National Institute of Education, we were responsible for organizing the English section of secondary education and we were responsible mainly for the in-service training and also we were responsible for designing teaching materials. These are the two main things I was responsible for.

5. Were you happy to work with the Board? Tell me about your experience in this Board.

Yes I was very happy to do this job because it was really what I aimed at when I was a teacher in secondary education because you see it meant training teachers and because I have a lot of experience in teaching, and because I wanted to share this experience. I found that the National Institute of Education was the proper place in order to have my views across to the other teachers. And because I was nominated as a language coordinator, I found it very useful and it made me feed a lot in the domain of TEFL, reading on theories, methods and techniques of teaching English as foreign language. This gave me enough confidence and enough knowledge to put to use in the other teachers.
II. Objectives

6. Did you sometimes discuss the problem of English teaching with other members of the Board?

As we were responsible for this section, we used to discuss a lot about language teaching. And later on we had a third person who was an English language advisor called Alex. When he joined the team we were strong enough as a team to discuss problems related to the teaching of English in the country.

7. What do you think should be the objectives for English teaching in Burkina Faso schools?

Well I think the objectives should be teaching English as a language of communication. We should try to teach the language in the schools, bring the pupils to use the language as a means of communication, not as a topic like the other subjects in the curriculum that are taught in a way that the pupils are not really going to use these things in their lives. For instance mathematics, they are not going to use mathematics, the theories, the principles or whatever in mathematics are not used in life. But English is used in the communication and if the pupils were able to use the language communicatively, that would be a major asset because once they go outside the francophone zone, it is English, they should be able to communicate easily.

8. What are the official objectives for English teaching in Burkina Faso?

Well I think originally, going back to the colonial period. I think English was introduced as a subject like the others. French, mathematics, and whatever, and this comes into the curriculum and it was tested just to get an exam paper like the Brevet d'Etudes, the BEPC and the Baccalaureate, but the aim was not clearly established by the authorities in these days. And nowadays I should say, I think the educational authorities are now aiming to the teaching of English as a language of communication, this is what they see today as a major objective.

9. Have you heard about statements of the Ministry of Education regarding these objectives? Tell me about it.

Oh yeah. I've heard about such statements. They roughly state that English teaching should provide students with a means of communication, that English should be taught as a language of communication. Well I think this information has been imparted, particularly with the inspectorate. The inspectors must have got the objectives clearly defined. But I can't really say that I followed these things after I left the National Institute of Education. Before that I wrote something in my dissertation about teaching objectives.
10. Have you seen documents relating to these statements? Can you tell me where?

I remember seeing a document that was written long ago. I think in the 1950s, but this was something not really a clear definition of objectives of teaching the language. But it was a sort of statement for the teaching of English as a subject, and later on, with the language teacher association, there has been a statement. I mean something written about the objectives but I can't still remember having seen this.

11. From what you have read or heard, what are the differences/similarities between these objectives and your objectives for English teaching?

Well in terms of objectives, I don't think there is really a difference. The problem comes when we start considering the implementation of such objectives. Otherwise, both my objectives and those of the government are very similar. That is provide the students with a new language that they can use. After seven years' learning of English, students should be able to communicate with English speakers.

12. Do you think the First Cycle curriculum matches these objectives? Tell me about it.

Now this is a very difficult question to answer but my own opinion is that there is a discrepancy between these things. Lots of teachers have been trained in language teaching, particularly in Britain or the US or have got lots of inservice training, and a lot of theories in language teaching have been imparted, have been taught or presented by experts, particularly American and British language advisors. And nowadays if we look at the number of people who've been taught in the country, who spent seven years education in the secondary schools, you could see that still there is a very limited if not tiny impact of English in the society. And this shows that either people are not interested in using the language or they are not proficient enough to use it, or is it because we are in the French, a francophone environment and therefore the language not being spoken in the country people don't use their English.

But still when you see the number of people coming to the university language center or the American language center or other people asking for English and you would see lots of international agencies, NGOs, people working in these NGOs would go to the American language Center to learn English. This clearly shows that the way English has been taught in secondary school does not match with the objectives. If the objectives were to use it as a language for communication. I think lots of people should nowadays be able to, you know, speak English fluently and shouldn't have need to enroll in universities or language centers to learn English. And you could even see that lots of officials, people working in the ministries, lots of them can't use the language properly. So this means that there is a mismatch somewhere. In the first cycle, that is, from 6e to 3e, the curriculum may match, may I say, may match. But I notice that the students when they come up to Terminale, the level goes down. Which means that there is something somewhere in the system that does not work properly.
13. In your opinion, do teachers in general take these objectives into account in their teaching? Why do you say that?

To tell the truth, I don't think so. When I began teaching English, I did not know the objectives of teaching English in the country. I think there are very few teachers who can really speak about objectives in teaching. I doubt if teachers keep this in mind. Although I am sure that they all think they should teach in English and that of course what they expect the pupils to do is to use the language for communication. But I don't think they keep it in mind every day before they start a lesson. Personally I never think of the objectives when I am in class. Even at the beginning of the year I don't even think of that. I know of course that what I have to do is use the language from the beginning of the hour till the end and not speak French, because of course this would be counterproductive. Whereas using the language for teaching would increase the listening performance of the students.

14. How do these objectives match the needs for communicative language teaching?

The objectives are clearly defined. Even the syllabuses are very good. If you look at the syllabus in 3e, it's OK. From year 1 to year 4, it's fantastic. Now when you see the use of the syllabus and the outcomes, there is a mismatch. There is something wrong. I think the blame should be put on the teaching itself. Let's say teachers are no longer well trained. Since the ELT advisor left the inspectorate, I haven't heard of inservice training sessions organized by the inspectorate. It's now the inspectorate that is responsible for that. For organizing seminars for inservice training. And if this is not done, regularly, let's say at least twice a year, then the teachers, those who have not been trained properly, will not know the new theories in language teaching and will keep teaching the way they were taught. I think this is one of the major problems because the teachers are not very well trained. They are not equipped enough, not only in terms of theories but in terms of materials. Lots of teachers cannot find books or journals to read and keep up with the new development in language teaching. I think training is very important, the training is the aspect that I would blame, the lack of training.

15. Do you think communicative language teaching can be attained in a Foreign language context? How is it possible?

Well it is very difficult to use it as a means of communication in an environment which is totally, not even totally French because we have our own mother tongues and people in the villages speak their own mother tongue and it is very difficult for a foreign language to get a better status in such a linguistic environment. That is absolutely difficult. But what I am saying is that although the linguistic environment is not favorable to a foreign language to get rooted in the country like English for instance, although it is very difficult for it to be implanted in the country and be used widely as in Nigeria or in Ghana. I mean it is impossible in our days to have people to speak English like that. there is still something that should remain. I mean after seven years learning of a foreign language, people should be able to communicate with the language. But that is not the case. Even at
the university here. that is a clear indication of what I am saying. lots of students in the other departments like Physics. Chemistry. Medecine. School of law. or even in the Humanities, at the French department or History and Geography. the first year students. when you speak English with them it is as if they had never. well this is a bit exaggerate, lots of them are unable to follow. They can't even understand what you are saying. So this means that there is a mismatch somewhere in the educational system particularly in secondary education. that the objectives are not met. The objectives are clearly stated. using the language as a means of communication. They come up to university. they are still unable to talk. And even within the English Department. this is terrible. first year students if you interview them. you should try to see the interview will not be conducted easily. because quite a lot. I mean many students are unable to communicate. Well in theory they can understand what you are saying. but the fluency in communication as you say. communication means hearing and speaking. Well but the speaking factor is not really. is not good.

III. The FCET

16. Are you happy with the FCET? Why?/Why not?

I was happy with the new system when I was teaching. Before it was the grammar translation method that was used in those days. Pupils had the text to translate from English into French. I think it was around 1976 or 77. that the first cycle English test was changed. Which introduced a more valid test I should say. more valid than the previous one because the previous one was rather something subjective. Because the correction was subjective in that the student could understand the text and not be performant enough in translation because this is a skill. translating is a particular skill. You may understand very well and be unable to translate correctly. But later on this was replaced by a more objective test and I think the new system was very objective.

17. Which parts of the FCET test the ability of students to communicate in English?

If I look at this. in terms of written communication. I would say that the first part. the text itself is very important and is good because you have one text. drawn from somewhere like here we have an interview. this a dialogue. that is good because it allows the teacher to test the reading comprehension of the students. Then this is still writing. and the comprehension questions which show the understanding if they really understood the text. this is good. the guided essay would test the writing ability of the student. and then the grammar and the translation into English. which also would be very objective testing. a way of testing the knowledge of the student in grammar and in translation. But as a whole. I cannot say that the students are able to communicate in terms of speaking. Because nothing here shows that you can speak the language. it's all written. The written examination can show whether the students are able to communicate in writing. The oral part. I think this is also one of the changes in the exam which was brought in 1976/77 I can't remember exactly. But this way the oral examination used to be conducted was not really good because what the student had to do was to study a number of texts
with their teacher in class and then the same text was given at the examination and the
student had to read and then had a sort of conversation with the examiner and that was it.
So some students were able to memorize answers, memorize lots of things and then
perform well. But the new system would give texts unknown to the student. About twenty
of very short texts, stories or whatever, unseen, unprepared, and this really tests the ability
of the student to understand, first the understanding and the dialogue which would follow
between the examiner and the candidate would also measure the student's capability of
conversing fluently in the language.

18. What contradictions can you see between the FCET contents and the curriculum?

There is a contradiction in terms of objectives. We are aiming at using English as a means
of communication therefore the objectives, or learning outcomes, what should the student
be able to do at the end of four years' teaching? We should normally be able to test the
fluency. There is no system that could say how fluent a person could be, but still by
listening to somebody you could measure the capability of this person to communicate in
the language. So that's what I am saying, the mismatch is there. Objectives are given and
when you test a pupil at the oral exam we see that the objectives are not met. Lots of
pupils are able to understand the text, you start asking questions about the passage that
they have read, no problem, they can answer, but once you move away from the text and
you get into some sort of talk, about anything in life, then you see the stark reality. So the
objectives are not met.

19. In your view, is there a match between the contents of the FCET and your teaching of
English? What makes you say that?

N/A

20. In your opinion, how can the FCET help implement the objectives of the Ministry of
Education?

Well it does of course. I think the testing just shows the educational authorities the level
that the pupils have reached in language learning. But as I say, because the language is
not used in daily life, it is very difficult to know if the pupils are able to use the language.
Once the testing is over, once the examination is over, it is finished nobody speaks
English in daily communication. But as I say, it can help in terms of curriculum. It can
help implement the curriculum because testing has one quality, the students know that at
the end of the year they will be tested and therefore they will get prepared for that. So it's
some form of motivation that it gives to pupils to learn the language.

21. Does the FCET constitute an obstacle to teaching? In your opinion, can it prevent
teachers from teaching the way they would have wanted to teach English? How?

I would say it facilitates. It's not at all an obstacle. It's rather some form of incentive that it
gives students to learn the language.
22. In your opinion, would they have taught differently if the FCET had not been there? Tell me about it.

I think they would. Personally, I would have taught differently if there were no FCET. Being a language teacher, I would've aimed at having the pupils communicate. We would have done very little writing, but not... whether the grammar is respected or not. I would have aimed at some form of communication providing, let's say communication would be something say, not focused on form, but rather content. If the pupil is able to get his meaning across, that's it.

23. Do you think the FCET influences the English learning of First Cycle students? Why do you say that?
Yes this form of test does influence. It has a considerable impact simply because the pupils know that at the end if there are tested, and they would get marks. And the marks would be added to other marks. And if they have very bad, a low mark, then it will reduce their chances of being successful in the BEPC examination. So from that at least I think it will influence the learning.

IV. Recommendations

24. Have you ever made recommendations about the FCET to the Board of Education?

The FCET was newly introduced so it was just being implemented. Today however, I still have some recommendations to make. As I said first, if you want the language to be used as a means of communication we'll have to change the format of the test. If I have to do an oral exam, I will not come with a text or the text can be a support. But I think if we want to emphasize the oral aspect much more, we should introduce in the educational system a strategy. The strategy I would give is, from year one to year four, we will speak in class. Just speak. Have topics about anything in life: health, transport, communication, computers, death, wedding or whatever. These are topics that could be discussed in class. Particularly at the 3e class level.

Then I would say, we would record a number of topics to be given at the exam. And we would say to the students, "you have quite a number of topics, choose any topic which you'd like to speak about. Then we'll discuss. This will test the communication ability of the student. Or the teacher gives a topic of his own choice. Then we say to the student "talk about marriage. talk about food. or drinking. so he has ten minutes to get prepared because the ideas won't come to you if it is on the spot. so give him ten minutes to get ideas. That would be straight. Or negotiations. or let's say, bargaining for instance. What I mean here is that it's not a way of getting the student stuck. It's rather a way of starting a conversation. The conversation could start on food. and then go on to wars. or fighting. But the most important thing here is how the teacher conducts the discussion with the student because that's the most important thing.
25. What changes would you bring to the FCET in order to have a match between teaching and testing?

N/A

26. What assessment instrument would you replace the FCET with if you could?

As I had started saying, I would suggest that the oral exam be conducted differently by giving a topic that the students will prepare for ten minutes. They will sit and get prepared and then you will have a real conversation which could be on the same topic and on anything at all. Because that could lay more emphasis on speaking than writing, because up to now, the focus is on writing.

27. Do you get feedback from students about the FCET? Tell me about it.

No actually I've got no feedback at all. This is the first time I see the subject. Well the feedback we could have is during the exam, particularly if you have your own children taking the examination. But you could also have feedback through the media, because in the newspapers and radio sometimes they give a few reports on how the exam was organized. They would even interview some candidates but as far as English is concerned I've never heard any feedback in the mass media, which is very bad actually.

28. What recommendations can you make regarding the teaching and testing of English in the First Cycle?

Another recommendation as far as testing is concerned. I would say we need to train the teachers. Up to now, I don't think any teacher has been trained sufficiently in designing tests for the BEPC examination. I've never seen any seminar or inservice training organized for this specific purpose. Even when we were at the INE we had never focused on that. And this is very important. I think teachers need to be trained in testing, how to design a test. I even made a survey for a research article on teaching vocabulary and I asked the teachers a questionnaire how often they've been trained in designing tests for the BEPC examination. For the BEPC examination. Out of 20 respondents. I got about 18% have never been trained in designing tests for the BEPC examination. So this a clear indication that the system needs changing. I mean particularly at the school of teacher training which is at Koudougou. They need to lay more emphasis on the testing of English whether written or oral.

29. Do you have anything to add to what has been said so far?

I can't say that ... everything is integrated. It's language teaching, has to be written as well as spoken. But because we are laying emphasis on communication which is oral communication mainly. then the oral aspect should have more weighting than in the writing. I think the written part is graded higher than the oral. So we could say again, there is a mismatch.
1. Je m'appelle ...

2. Je suis à l'inspection du secondaire depuis 1990

3. Avant de venir ici j'étais enseignant dans le secondaire. J'ai enseigné dix ans. Je suis allé ensuite en stage de formation et c'est à l'issue de ce stage que j'ai été nommé inspecteur d'anglais.


5. Le travail à l'inspection n'est pas facile. Nous sommes confrontés à des problèmes d'ordre matériel. Nous ne sommes que deux pour encadrer un très grand nombre de professeurs exerçant sur toute l'étendue du territoire. Le nombre est très insuffisant.

II. Objectives


8. Les objectifs officiels sont en fait ceux relatifs à l'enseignement de toute langue étrangère. Il s'agit de permettre à l'élève de pouvoir communiquer par écrit et oralement avec les anglophones.

9. En fait de déclaration, c'est ce qui est contenu dans la circulaire No 105/MENAC/ICEDSD du 1er Décembre 1983. Dans cette circulaire, il est dit que l'enseignement des langues "devrait avoir un caractère pratique, utilitaire. et culturel". L'objectif est avant tout la communication.
10. Oui, il y a surtout la circulaire dont je viens de parler, qui delimité les objectifs pour l'enseignement non seulement de l'anglais, mais de toutes les langues étrangères.

11. Comme je le disais tantôt, l'enseignement de l'anglais devrait viser avant tout la communication. La possibilité pour les élèves de communiquer avec des anglophones. L'arrêté parle de "caractère pratique..."

12. Je ne crois pas parce que l'accent est beaucoup mis sur l'écrit. Alors que pour communiquer avec les anglophones il aurait fallu mettre l'accent plutôt sur l'oral.

13. Je ne pense pas que beaucoup de professeurs prennent ces objectifs en compte. Ils sont plutôt préoccupés par le programme à finir et par le BEPC à la fin de l'année.

14. Les objectifs tels que formulés dans la circulaire en fait visent l'enseignement pour la communication. Il y est question de caractère pratique. Qu'est-ce que ça veut dire. Que l'élève qui a appris l'anglais devrait être en mesure de comprendre un anglophone et de se faire comprendre par lui. Mais en réalité, dans les classes je ne pense pas que c'est ce qui se passe. Les professeurs comme je le disais sont focalisés sur le programme plutôt.

15. Je pense que c'est faisable bien que ce soit difficile. Bien sûr dans un environnement francophone où de langue nationale, cela pose quelques problèmes. Cependant je pense qu'avec un enseignement adéquat, un enseignement qui mettrait l'accent sur l'oral, les élèves devraient pouvoir s'exprimer convenablement en anglais.

Le FCET

16. Satisfait c'est trop dire. On fait tout pour que ce soit satisfaisant, mais il y a quelques problèmes. Par exemple on arrive pas à concilier les objectifs de l'enseignement de l'anglais avec le test d'anglais au BEPC. On ne teste pas toujours ce qui a été enseigné. Cela est du au fait qu'il y a des élèves qui arrivent en 3e sans avoir le niveau. Le niveau n'est donc pas respecté. Ce n'est pas toujours de leur faute. Parfois il manque des enseignants.

17. C'est la partie orale. Mais même là il y a des problèmes.

18. Les contradictions que l'on rencontre concernent l'application du programme d'enseignement. Il y a des établissements qui commencent les cours sans avoir l'effectif des enseignants au complet. S'il y a suffisamment de professeurs de français par exemple, le directeur commence les cours même s'il n'y a pas de professeur d'anglais. Donc certains élèves arrivent au BEPC sans avoir vu tout ce qui est testé dans le FCET. Il y a donc contradiction entre le contenu du FCET et le niveau réel des élèves. A l'examen, c'est le même test pour ceux qui ont fini le programme et ceux qui ne l'ont pas fini. C'est ainsi qu'au FCET on rencontre de très bonnes copies, mais il y a surtout de très mauvaises copies. des notes qui avoisinent 0.5 puis 7. C'est comme ça. On est souvent déçu. Mais quand on confectionne les sujets, on ne pense pas à ces irrégularités.
19. Oui, il y a un programme que les enseignants suivent de la 6e à la 3e. Normalement il devrait y avoir un match entre l'enseignement et le test d'anglais au BEPC. Malheureusement on n'arrive pas à concilier les deux, l'enseignement et les objectifs. Sinon on devrait tester l'étudiant sur ce qu'il a déjà vu, sur ce qui a déjà été enseigné. Mais comme je l'ai déjà dit, il y a des élèves qui n'arrivent pas voir tout ce qui est prévu par les programmes. Des élèves arrivent donc en 3e avec des lacunes.

20. En partie seulement. Etant donné que les objectifs du gouvernement comprennent également l'application des programmes, donc l'examen du BEPC, on peut dire que ces objectifs sont en partie atteints dans le FCET. Mais les objectifs à long terme, je ne pense pas. Puisqu'au long terme c'est la communication qui est visée.

21. Je pense que pour certains enseignants oui. Mais je dis souvent aux professeurs de ne pas se cantonner au BEPC car il y a des élèves qui arrivent en 3e sans avoir eu de professeur d'anglais ni en 6e ni en 5e. En général les professeurs suivent le programme de 3e, mais à côté ils peuvent également éviter de se cantonner au BEPC. C'est ce que je leur dis souvent. Mais il faut aussi dire que sans le FCET, l'enseignement de l'anglais serait pratiquement impossible. Je dirai même que ce ne serait plus la peine que les professeurs d'anglais aillent en classe. Les élèves leur diront qu'ils perdront leur temps puisqu'ils n'ont pas l'anglais au BEPC. Ils ne viendront même pas au cours.

22. Je pense que oui. Ils prennent en compte les doléances des élèves. Je leur dis souvent d'ailleurs de ne pas tenir compte uniquement que du BEPC. Ce qui est sûr, c'est que si l'anglais était supprimé au BEPC, les élèves ne seront plus motivés pour apprendre la langue et cela constituera un problème pour les enseignants. C'est difficile d'enseigner un élève qui n'est pas motivé.

23. Même si nous ne sommes pas en classe, nous entendons les commentaires des professeurs ou des élèves. Souvent on entend des élèves dire "ah. monsieur. telle ou telle classe a fini le programme, nous on n'a rien fait d'abord. Et ça c'est tout à fait normal, ils ont le BEPC en tête. Le BEPC d'abord. Leur attention est focalisée sur le BEPC.

Recommendations

24. N/A

25. Il faut changer l'enseignement et le test. On ne peut pas continuer à enseigner et à tester de la même façon. Ce n'est pas possible. On est obligé de changer, d'adapter le niveau de l'enseignement au niveau des élèves. Tout le monde se plaint du niveau des élèves. Mais qu'est-ce qu'on fait pour changer le niveau des élèves. Il n'y a pas grand chose.
Il faut qu'on revoit le système d'enseignement de l'anglais. Même le testing il faut qu'on revoit ça. Il faut qu'on se rencontre avec les professeurs à un séminaire pour discuter de la question.
Par exemple la partie écrite, la première partie "comprehension questions", si l'on devait modifier, je dirai que cette partie devrait peut-être comporter quatre questions. Pourquoi? Parce que la plupart des élèves perdent le temps sur cette partie. C'est bien mais il ne faut pas que les élèves passent tout le temps à lire le texte, alors que ça ne vaut que quatre points. Pour moi si l'on devait modifier, il faudrait que l'on mette la partie "grammar" en tête, deuxième partie le "translation", troisième partie "guided essay", la quatrième partie maintenant "comprehension".

La partie grammaticale n'a rien à voir avec le texte. Cette partie couvre les classes depuis la 6e jusqu'en 3e. Donc un élève regulier devrait être en mesure de traiter cette question-là. Donc il faudrait faire ces exercices-là avant même de voir le texte. Maintenant après, ils peuvent voir le "translation". Là aussi c'est pareil. C'est une révision, l'élève peut traduire sans même regarder le texte. C'est au niveau du "guided essay" qu'il faut commencer à lire le texte. Sinon dès que les élèves lisent le texte, ils sont paniqués, ils se disent que c'est difficile. Mon souhait est donc que le "comprehension questions" soit plus court et que le "guided essay" comporte plus de trois questions.

Concernant le texte même, il y a parfois des problèmes au niveau du choix. La commission choisit le texte en présence de certains professeurs, et après l'examen, il y a des professeurs qui se plaignent que le texte était très dur, que ça dépasse le niveau des élèves.

Quant à la partie orale, c'est la pierre d'achoppement. Il n' y a pas de règle précise. Chacun a ses critères d'évaluation. On teste l'élève oralement pour voir s'il est en mesure de communiquer avec un Américain, ou bien s'il peut se débrouiller s'il part dans un pays anglophone. C'est surtout ça. Si l'élève arrive à répondre à la question, même s'il y a des fautes, au moins il a compris. c'est l'expression qui ne va pas. Malheureusement actuellement, on teste beaucoup de choses à la fois. Non seulement on exige que l'élève réponde correctement. il faut le vocabulaire correct, la structure de la phrase correcte. l'expression correcte. c'est difficile. On teste beaucoup de choses à la fois. Et un seul examinateur ne peut faire ça à la fois. Donc ça ne peut pas être objectif. Il y a trop de disparités. Un professeur peut poser des questions de grammaire à l'orale. C'est un peu déplacé. L'idéal serait qu'il y ait au moins deux examinateurs à l'orale. Comme ça au moins on peut s'entendre sur la note. Sinon à l'orale c'est trop compliqué. On demande trop aux élèves.

En Angleterre par exemple, il y a des tests pour des étudiants en français, où l'on demande au candidat de répondre en anglais. Ici si l'on propose ça, on va dire mais à quoi ça sert? Mais en fait qu'est-ce qu'on veut? On veut tester le niveau de compréhension de l'élève. Ici on met beaucoup l'accent sur la grammaire, le vocabulaire, l'intonation. alors c'est compliqué. Demander à un élève de traduire une phrase du texte, ce n'est plus de la compréhension, mais plutôt de la grammaire. Si l'on demande à un professeur conservateur ce qu'il en pense. il va dire non. Alors qu'il faut absolument un changement. Il faudrait qu'il y ait un séminaire autour de cette épreuve-là.

26. Je dirai tout simplement qu'il faudrait un instrument où l'élève sera jugé par sa capacité à s'exprimer, à démontrer qu'il a compris la question de l'examinateur. Même s'il fait des fautes dans son expression, pour moi ce n'est pas grave. Pourvu qu'il comprenne son interlocuteur et qu'il puisse se faire comprendre. C'est ça la communication.
27. Oui, parfois on entend les élèves dire que le texte du FCET n'est pas de leur niveau, que c'est très difficile. Mais comme je l'ai déjà dit, le choix se fait en présence de professeurs, donc de personnes qui sont en mesure de dire si le texte est du niveau d'un élève de 3e ou non.

28. Il faudrait que les élèves sachent que l'anglais est important. Il faut le leur dire, leur faire savoir que l'anglais va leur servir non seulement à l'avenir, mais aussi dès à présent. Il faudrait revoir le système d'enseignement de l'anglais ainsi que le système du testing. C'est pourquoi je disais tout à l'heure qu'il faudrait un séminaire avec les enseignants pour traiter de la question. Cela est très important.

29. Je ne pense pas que j'ai quelque chose à ajouter. En fait il n'y a rien de nouveau pour toi dans tout ce que j'ai dit. Toi-même tu as enseigné longtemps, donc tu sais de quoi je parle et je pense que nous sommes d'accord sur l'ensemble de ce que j'ai dit.
Appendix B

Samples of the Written FCET
The Examination

At the end of the third year I took the examination for my proficiency certificate. We were told that a minimum of sixty per cent was needed in our marks for technical and classical subjects, and that the engineers living in Conakry would be our examiners. Then the school gave a list of the forty candidates who appeared to have the greatest aptitude. Fortunately I was one of them.

I was absolutely determined to pass my examination. I had studied hard for three years; I had never forgotten the promise that I had made to my father, nor the one that I had made to myself; I had always been among the top three, and I had some hopes that things would not go very differently in the examination. Nevertheless, I wrote to ask my mother to go and see the marabouts and obtain their help. Was I being superstitious? I do not think so. I simply believed that nothing could be obtained without the help of God, and that if the will of God is something decided in advance, it is possible that our actions may have their influence on that will. And I felt that the marabouts would be the natural intermediaries for me.

Adapted from The African Child by CAMARA Laye
I/ COMPREHENSION

Write down on your answer sheet the letter that is in front of the correct answer.

1) The boy was
   a) not determined.
   b) good at school.
   c) unfortunate.
   d) unable to follow.

2) The author
   a) was not motivated at all.
   b) did not care about the exam.
   c) wanted to pass.
   d) had never studied.

3) The author wrote to his mother because he
   a) rejected the marabouts' help.
   b) missed his mother.
   c) promised to write to his father.
   d) wanted her to consult the marabouts.

4) What is the writer's philosophy? His philosophy is that
   a) God does not exist.
   b) God does not help people.
   c) marabouts can help.
   d) marabouts have no power.

5) "Things would not go differently" means that the author was
   a) certain of his success.
   b) certain of his failure.
   c) not sure to pass.
   d) not different from the others.

6) Which of the following statements is not true in the text? The author
   a) asked his mother to see marabouts.
   b) worked hard.
   c) thought that marabouts were bad people.
   d) remembered his promise.

7) In the sentence "We were told a minimum of sixty per cent was needed in our marks for technical and classical subjects..." what does we refer to?
   a) examiners.
   b) engineers.
   c) author and the other pupils in his class.
   d) teachers.

8) To be superstitious is to
   a) believe in supernatural powers.
   b) be afraid.
   c) remember God.
   d) be faithful.
II/ GUIDED ESSAY (10 pts)

1) What shows in the text that the author was a good pupil? (2 to 3 lines) 2 pts
2) Who did the school choose to take the exam? (2 to 3 lines) 2 pts
3) Do you believe that marabouts have real powers? Justify your answer. (8-10 lines) 6 pts

III/ GRAMMAR

A/ Write down on your answer sheet the letter which corresponds to the correct answer.

1) The letter ...... yesterday
   a) was sent c) was to send
   b) has been sent d) should send
2) The examiner made us ..... the exercise
   a) to do c) do
   b) doing d) done

B/ Fill in the blank with the appropriate word: Fell - Feel - Fall - Felt

3) Yesterday I ..... into a deep well.
4) When my new book was stolen I ............... angry

C/ Use the superlative in the following sentences.

5) I was one of (bad) candidates.
6) My sister (intelligent) pupil in her class.

D/ Complete with: whom - who - which - whose

7) The cat ...... I saw yesterday was black.
8) This is the pupil ...... bicycle was stolen.

IV/ TRANSLATE INTO ENGLISH

1) Tu devrais apprendre tes leçons.
2) Nous travaillons depuis ce matin.
3) J'ai fini mon exercice il y a trente minutes.
4) Si tu avais bien travaillé tu aurais réussi.
My own grandfather had nine wives of whom two were his favourites and of these two he preferred one to the other. This created complications but further difficulty arose. The discrimination by grandfather showed between his wives also extended to their children.

Among my uncles, sons of my grandfather, there was trouble and rivalry.

When a goat, cow or sheep was killed for eating, the sons of favourite wives would receive bigger pieces of meat than the rest.

There were three of my grandfather's wives he liked noticeably less than the rest and treated them accordingly. Their children suffered the same way.

One of these three had a son who was her only child and the others had two sons each. The one with only one son was treated worst of all and eventually she ran away and went to Nairobi where she had a difficult life. Her son, too, ran away from home. He went to a mission school. There, he became a Christian and was educated... He was then quite happy. When the sons of the unfavoured wives heard of their half-brother's adventures they, too, ran away and joined him at his mission school.

The two sons of the third unfavoured wife did not go away.

Instead, they built their mother a hut about two miles away from grandfather's home. They worked hard and became wealthy. Other people in the neighbourhood liked and respected them, which embarrassed grandfather.

Considerably as his disfavour was known, he would therefore invite them on important occasions, but they would never go to him. They were happy with their own independent way.

The sons who were favoured at home were given every opportunity and assistance. They disliked their three half-brothers who had gone to a mission school. They were however less critical when they spoke of the two half-brothers who were successful and were living separately with their mother.

From Child of two worlds
MUGO GATHERU
1. Choose the correct answer. (4 pts)

My grandfather liked better
a) All his wives.
b) two of his wives.
c) One of his favourite wives.
d) none of his favourite wives

2. Why were my uncles rivals because my grandfather?
   a) didn't love them equally.
b) preferred none of them
c) was interested in eating meat
d) discriminated cows, goats and sheep.

3. The best parts of the meat were given to.
   a) the two favourite wives' children
   b) the unfavoured wives' children
   c) the grandfather himself
   d) my mother's favourite.

4. One of grandfather's wives left because
   a) she had only one son
   b) she was well-treated
   c) she was ill-treated
   d) she had another husband

5. The first unfavoured wife's son
   a) stayed at home
   b) ran away from school
   c) had a difficult life.
   d) joined the missionaries

6. The three unfavoured wives had.
   a) two children
   b) three children
   c) five children
   d) nine children

7. Grandfather was embarrassed because
   a) People in the neighbourhood disliked his sons.
b) the neighbours liked the boys he disliked
c) All his wives had their own houses.
d) All his sons were given assistance.

8. My half-brother is
   a) my mother-in-law's son
   b) my uncle's son
   c) my father's brother
   d) my step-mother's son.

II - GUIDED ESSAY (10 pts)

1. Did grandfather treat his wives the same way?
   why? (2-3 lines) (2 pts)

2. What were the reasons of grandfather's embarrassment? (2-3 lines) (2 pts)

3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of a large family (8-10 lines) (6 pts)
III - GRAMMAR

A) Write on your answer sheet the letter that is in front of the correct answer (2 pts)

1. Your book is not different ———— mine
   a) of
   b) from
   c) with
   d) for

2. I'd like ———— all my questions
   a) that your answer
   b) you answered
   c) you to answer
   d) you will answer

3. They didn't buy ———— cows
   a) not
   b) any
   c) some
   d) no

4. I ———— to my uncle's seven days ago
   a) go
   b) am going
   c) shall go
   d) went.

B. Put the verbs in the correct form (1 pt)

5. He (play) football when we arrived yesterday
6. when the exam (be) over I'll go to my village

C. Turn these sentences into the passive (1 pt)

7. This man can repair your car
8. Somebody told the pupils to wait outside

IV - TRANSLATE (2 pts)

1. Les mères des enfants quittèrent le village
2. C'est le pire des grands-pères que j'aie jamais vu.
3. Tu aurais dû épouser une seule femme
4. Que ces jeunes gens sont forts!
Appendix C

Samples of the Oral Working Texts
One night Mr Balogum, who was unmarried, came home very late, when it was already dark. When he got to the front door of his house, he put his hand in his pocket, but his door key wasn't there. He felt for it in all his other pockets and he looked in his bag, but still he couldn't find it. All the windows were shut and his servant, who was always in the house at night, was away visiting his old father. So Mr Balogum found a big stone and threw it through the window which was by the door. Just as he was putting his hand through the hole in the glass, he heard a voice which said: "Who are you? What are you doing?" At once Mr Balogum turned round and saw a policeman standing and looking at him.

Families of the past and present.

In the past, when more Americans lived on farms, the typical family had many children. In a farm family, parents and their children often lived with grandparents. Often, too, uncles and aunts lived nearby. But when industry became more important than agriculture in American life, families became smaller. Industry requires workers who are ready and able to move off the land and to move again whenever necessary. Large families cannot be moved from place to place as smaller families can.

Today, because of industrialization, a typical family will be required to move even more often than now, so families will be even smaller. The typical family may remain childless and consist only of a man and a woman.
Mr and Mrs Yates had one daughter. Her name was Carol, and she was nineteen years old. Carol lived with her parents and worked in an office. She had some friends, but she did not like any of the boys very much.

Then she met a very nice young man. His name was George Watts, and he worked in a bank near her office. They went out together quite a lot, and he came to Carol's house twice, and then last week Carol went to her father and said, "I'm going to marry George Watts. Daddy. He was here yesterday".

"Oh, yes," her father said. "He's a nice boy, but has he got any money?"

"Oh, men! All of you are the same," the daughter answered angrily. "I met George on the first of June and on the second he said to me, "Has your father got any money?"

---

Handicapped People can do useful work

Joseph Emmons can't use his eyes. He's blind. He has a trained dog named Buster that leads him where he wants to go. Buster sees for Mr Emmons. He's called a seeing-eye dog.

Although Mr Emmons has a handicap, it isn't a big problem. He has a useful job and he earns his own money. Mr Emmons sells brooms and mops to people in this part of the city. He has worked every day except Sunday for forty years.

Mr Emmons gets up at 6 a.m. every morning and eats breakfast with his wife. Then he leaves the house at 7 a.m. He holds Buster and walks from house to house. He carries his mops and brooms with him. While he talks to people, the dog sits and waits. The people choose a broom, and then they pay him.

Broom = balai
Mop = serpillière
Appendix D

The Circular of December 1. 1983

(Original Document)
Si, depuis quelques années, la Haute-Volta tente de remettre en cause son système d'enseignement à l'École Primaire par l'étude et l'implantation progressive de la Réforme, cependant il convient de reconnaître qu'au niveau de l'enseignement secondaire, exception faite des quelques petites modifications apportées aux programmes de l'enseignement du Français, des Sciences Naturelles, de l'Histoire et de la Géographie, tout se passe encore à peu près de la même façon qu'à la veille de notre indépendance proclamée depuis 1960, soit il y a un peu plus de vingt ans. Il faut que cela change. En effet, on ne saurait trop insister sur l'inadaptation de l'École néo-coloniale aux besoins réels de notre pays, en général et, plus particulièrement, à l'attente et aux aspirations légitimes de notre jeunesse. Cette École improductive et coûteuse, s'avère, après coup, inefficace, insincère et frustrante.

En ce qui concerne plus précisément le cas de l'enseignement des langues vivantes dans nos classes, tout en reconnaissant que depuis un certain moment quelques petites tentatives ont été entreprises par ci ou par là pour le rendre plus rationnel et mieux adapté aux besoins du temps nouveaux, je me dois cependant de dire que ces efforts louables sont restés plutôt épars, insuffisants et mal exploités par manque de cohésion et de directives précises. C'est pourquoi, en raison du processus engagé depuis la Révolution Populaire du 4 août 1983 et principalement depuis le discours d'Orientation du 2 octobre 1983, le Gouvernement du C.N.R. a décidé de rompre radicalement avec les pratiques anciennes de l'enseignement.
de type traditionnel et livresque pour se tourner résolument vers l'utilisation des méthodes Nouvelles plus efficientes parce que libératrices de la personnalité. Désormais l'Enseignement des langues vivantes : allemand, anglais, arabe, etc, devra viser essentiellement, outre la connaissance et une certaine familiarité avec la civilisation et la littérature des peuples dont la langue fait l'objet de l'étude, l'acquisition d'une compétence linguistique certaine. Ce qui veut dire que l'objectif de cet enseignement doit être non seulement la maîtrise des règles de la langue, mais aussi et surtout le pouvoir de parler normalement dans la dite langue. Cet enseignement devra avoir un caractère pratique et immédiatement profitable. Tout élève arrivant en fin de cycle devra pouvoir soutenir une conversation normale avec un locuteur natif de son niveau d'étude. Je demande donc aux Chefs d'Établissement d'inviter tous leurs professeurs de langues vivantes de tous les niveaux à tout mettre en œuvre afin que leur enseignement tende désormais à rendre leurs élèves aptes à la communication quel que soit le niveau de la classe. Cela ne sera pas toujours chose facile compte tenu des effectifs des classes et l'insuffisance des matériels pédagogiques, mais ce n'est pas une chose impossible avec un peu de bonne volonté et beaucoup de détermination. Je compte sur la disponibilité des uns et des autres, pour mener à bien cette œuvre gigantesque de la rénovation.

La Patrice ou la Mort, Nous vaincrons.

Appelations :
- D.C.G.T.S.D.
- G. Langues I.C.E.S.D.
- I.C.E.S.D.

Emmanuel Mardia BADIOUARI
Translation into English of the "Circulaire No 105/MENAC/ICESD du 12 Décembre 1983"

Circular #105/MENAC/ICESD providing general guidelines for the Teaching of Foreign Languages in Burkina Faso.

Ministry of National Education, Arts and Culture

Ouagadougou December 1, 1983

No 105/MENAC/ICESD.

The Minister of Education, Arts and Culture

To: Comrades, Heads of Public and Private Secondary Schools

Subject: The Teaching of Modern Languages in Secondary School

If Upper Volta has been attempting to reconsider its teaching system at Primary School level by studying and gradually setting up the Reform, we must admit that at the level of secondary education, apart from a few minor changes in the French, Natural Sciences, History and Geography curricula, everything is still almost the same as in the eve of our independence proclaimed since 1960, that is, a little more than twenty years ago. That must change. Indeed, we cannot insist enough on how inadequate the neo-colonial school is for the real needs of our country in general, and more specifically, to the legitimate expectations and aspirations of our youth. That unproductive and costly school system turns out after all to be inefficient, disfunctional and frustrating.

Regarding the case of modern language teaching in our schools specifically, while admitting that recently, in some areas, a few attempts were made to make it more rational and more adapted to the needs of modern times, I must say, however, that these commendable efforts have remained rather sparse.
insufficient and badly directed due to a lack of cohesion and specific instructions. That is why, because of the process started since the Popular Revolution of August 4, 1983, and particularly since the Orientation address of October 2, 1983, the CNR government has decided to thoroughly break away from the former practices of traditional and bookish education, in order to turn toward the use of new and more efficient methods, capable of enhancing personality. In the future, the teaching of modern languages: German, English, Arabic, etc., besides knowledge and a certain familiarity with the civilization and the literature of the peoples whose languages are being studied, should essentially seek to acquire a positive linguistic competence. Which means that the objective of such a teaching must be, not only the mastery of the language rules, but also and most of all, the ability to communicate fluently in the target language. Such a teaching should be practical and immediately beneficial. Every student at the end of a cycle should be able to engage in a normal conversation with a native speaker of the same level. I therefore request that the heads of schools urge all modern language teachers in their schools, at all levels, to do everything they can so that in the future, their teaching seeks to provide students with the ability to communicate, whatever the form level. It will not always be easy given the size of classes and the lack of pedagogical materials, but with a little bit of good will and a lot of determination, it is not impossible. I count on the dedication of all, in order to carry out this gigantic renovation task.

The Fatherland of Death. We shall overcome!

Emmanuel Mardia Dadiouari
1  The Origin of Fishes

At the beginning the sun appeared in the sky surrounded by his children, as the moon does at night. But the heat was so terrible during the day that men could hardly leave their huts, and they found it impossible to look for food. Thus they were dissatisfied with their lives.

The moon thought about this. Then she went to see the sun.

"Our children are causing us trouble," she said. "Men are complaining about them. Let us each gather our children into sacks and throw them into the water."

Having said this, the moon collected white pebbles and gathered them into a sack, making the sun believe that the sack contained her children. So the sun gathered his children into a sack, and followed the moon to the river, where they threw their sacks into the water.

But when night came the sun saw that the moon was surrounded by all her children. Furiously he said:

"You have deceived me. To-morrow I shall take my children back!"

But when the sun took one of his children out of the water, it died. The second also died, and so did the third. They still shone, but they could no longer see their father. So the sun, fearing that he might kill them all, left them in the water.

Since then the sun hates the moon. He pursues her every day and he sometimes catches her.

1. bridgin
   2. a biad
   3. surrounded
   4. cam plainin
   5. brity
   6. kan teind
   7. sueariasi
   8. died
   9. so shone

A Fim story (Dahomey).
Notes
To complain: to express dissatisfaction.
pebble: small, round stone found in streams or on the seashore.
to deceive: tromper.
to fear that: to be afraid that.
to hate ≠ to love.
to pursue: to follow with the intention of catching.

Words to remember

- to be born [bo:n]: naître = birth [bo:r]: la naissance.
to live [liv]: vivre = to be alive [o'laiv]: être vivant, en vie = life [laiv]: la vie.
to die [dai]: mourir = to be dead [dəd]: être mort = death [deθ]: la mort.
- to live a happy life: mener une vie heureuse.
to die a glorious death: péir de mort glorieuse.

Beware!
Ne pas confondre

- hard (adj. et adv.): dur, fort, vigueur, etc.
  ex. | A diamond is a hard stone.
  ex. | It is raining hard.
- hardly (adv.): à peine, ne ... guère.
  ex. | I can hardly see it.

Faux amis
1. to deceive: tromper (Fr. découvrir: to disappoint).
2. troubles: ennui, soucis (Fr. troubles: disturbance, disorder).

Fish (as)
Le mot "fish" (comme le mot "fruit"), ne prend pas la marque du pluriel,
saut s'il s'agit d'espèces différentes de poissons.

Grammaire

1. PROPOSITIONS DEFINITIVES * Précis § 68.
   They found it impossible to look for food.
2. IMPÉRATIF * Précis § 1, 2 and 3.
   Let us each gather our children...
3. FAIRE + INFINITIF * Précis § 15.
   ... making the sun believes that the sack contained her children.
4. TRADUCTION DE ne ... plus * Précis § 119.
   They could no longer see their father.
5. DU DE REMPLACEMENT * Précis § 21.
   The sun appeared ... on the moon shines at night.
   The second also died, and so did the third.
Exercices

1. Questions.

2. Transformer les phrases ci-dessus de la façon suivante:
   It was impossible to look for food — they found it impossible to look for food.
   1. It was terrible to work in such heat. - 2. It is exciting to live in a foreign country. - 3. It will be difficult to get used to the language. - 4. It was easy to get a job. - 5. It was impossible to understand the text.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>She made</th>
<th>the sun believe that they were her children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>he made</td>
<td>she believed that he had a sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>she made</td>
<td>I believe that she was a film star</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can make</td>
<td>he believes anything</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he made</td>
<td>I follow them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>they made</td>
<td>we left the hut immediately</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Traduire.

5. Faire cinq phrases à l'aide du tableau ci-dessous.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>He feared</th>
<th>that he might kill them all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to fear</td>
<td>to catch a cold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to fear</td>
<td>to deceive him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to fear</td>
<td>to deceive him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to fear</td>
<td>to cause trouble</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to fear</td>
<td>to have an accident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to fear</td>
<td>to die</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Faire une phrase avec au moins les mots ou expressions suivants:
   to be born. to die. life. death. hardly.

7. Traduire.

   Can you imagine a story to explain the origin of man or woman, or birds, or fire, or thunder?
The wind was still blowing hard. Early in the morning one of our men cried out "Land!", and we had no sooner run out of the cabin to look out, hoping to see where in the world we were, than the ship struck upon a sand-bank and in a moment the sea broke over her in such a manner that we all expected to perish immediately.

We had no idea where we were or upon what land we had been driven, whether an island or the mainland, whether inhabited or not inhabited; and as the rage of the wind was still great, though rather less than at first, we could not expect the ship to hold much longer without breaking into pieces, unless the winds, by a kind of miracle, should suddenly change. We sat looking at one another, expecting death at every moment.

Robinson Crusoe and the ten other men decided to put the lifeboat to sea and try to reach the mainland.

After we had rowed about a league and a half, a raging wave, mountain-like, came rolling from behind us and took us with such fury that it overturned the boat at once, separating us from the boat as well as from one another and giving us hardly any time to say "O God!", for we were all swallowed up in a moment.

Nothing can describe the confusion of my thoughts when I sank into the water for, though I swam very well, I could not deliver myself from the waves so as to breathe. Finally that wave, having driven me, or rather carried me, a great distance towards the shore, went back and left me upon the land, half dead with the water I had taken in. I had so much presence of mind, as well as breath left, that seeing myself nearer the mainland than I expected, I got upon my feet and tried to run as fast as I could before another wave should return and lift me up again. But I soon found it was impossible to avoid it, for I saw the sea come after me as high as a great hill and as furious as an enemy which I had no means or strength to fight against.
Notes

No sooner... than: à peine... que.
to strike (struck, struck): to hit.
upon: on.
to break (over): (in the text) to come suddenly and violently (over).
her: the ship (the English nearly always use “she” instead of “it” for a ship).
to be driven: (in the text) to be pushed.
a league: une lieue.
to swallow up: engloutir.
to breathe: respirer, souffler; breath: souffle.
to get upon one’s feet: to stand up.

Words to remember

The sea was quite smooth [smu.ô] when the sailing-ship left England for the
Far East; but a few days later it became very rough [râf]. When she was sailing
past the Cape of Good Hope she was driven off her course [ko:s] by a very
strong wind and one of her masts [maısts] broke. The sailors tried to cast
anchor [’asoks] but it was too late; the ship struck a rock and sank almost
immediately.
S.O.S.: Save Our Souls.

Beware!

Ne pas confondre

hard (adjectif): a fisherman’s life is a hard one.
hardly (adverbe): the wind was still blowing hard.

Grammaire

1. PROPOSITIONS INFINITIVES ♦ Précis § 69.
   We could not expect the ship to hold much longer.

2. EMPLOI DE should AVEC CERTAINES CONJONCTIONS ♦ Précis § 66a.
   ... unless the winds... should suddenly change.
   ... before another wave should return and lift me again.

3. Each other, one another ♦ Précis § 138.
   We sat looking at one another.
   ... separating us from the boat as well as from one another.

4. VERBES DE PERCEPTION ♦ Précis § 71.
   I saw the sea come after me.

5. REJEU DE LA PRÉPOSITION AVEC LES RELATIFS ♦ Précis § 146.
   ... as furious as an enemy which I had no means or strength to fight against.
Exercises

1. Questions.

2. Transformez les phrases ci-dessous de la façon suivante:
   It was impossible to look for food — they found it impossible to look for food.
   1. It was terrible to work in such heat. - 2. It is exciting to live in a foreign country. - 3. It will be difficult to get used to the language. - 4. It was easy to get a job. - 5. It was impossible to understand the text.

   She made | the sun believe that they were her children
   she made | she believed that he had a sister
   she made | I believe that she was a film star
   I can make | he believes anything
   I made | I follow them
   they made | we left the hut immediately

4. Traduire.

   He feared | that he might kill them all
   to fear | to catch a cold
   to fear | to deceive him
   to fear | to cause trouble
   to fear | to have an accident
   to fear | to die.

6. Faire une phrase avec chacun des mots ou expressions suivants:
   to be born, to die, life, death, hardly.

7. Traduire.

   Can you imagine a story to explain the origin of man or woman (or birds, or
Appendix F

Syllabus Samples for First Cycle Students
BURKINA FASO

MINISTERE DES ENSEIGNEMENTS SECONDAIRE, SUPERIEUR ET DE LA RECHERCHE SCIENTIFIQUE

DIRECTION DES INSPECTIONS DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT SECONDAIRE

GRAMMATICAL SYLLABUS FOR FIRST CYCLE ENGLISH

6ème - 3ème

NOVEMBER 1990
This syllabus is a condensed and simplified version of the *Programme Grammatical du Secondaire (6e - 3e)* published several years ago.

The syllabus is grammar-based and is intended as a guide for teachers rather than as a definitive list of grammatical structures that must be taught. The order of presentation of the structures within each year does not indicate the order in which they should be taught. *English for First Year* and *English for Second Year*, written by teachers under the aegis of the English Inspectorate are based upon this syllabus.

Teachers' comments on this syllabus will be welcomed and account will be taken of them when further editions are prepared.
6eme

1

VERBS

1.1 A few REGULAR VERBS in Affirmative

• Interrogative

• Negative

• Interrogative-Negative

in SIMPLE PRESENT TENSE (Habitual actions)

• PRESENT PROGRESSIVE TENSE (Action now)

• SIMPLE PAST TENSE (Preterite)

• IMMEDIATE FUTURE TENSE (Going to + Infinitive)

1.2 A few IRREGULAR VERBS (+ be, have (got), can, must, go, do) in Affirmative &c. as in 1.1 above.

• SIMPLE PRESENT TENSE

• PRESENT PROGRESSIVE TENSE (had, have (got), can, must)

• IMMEDIATE FUTURE TENSE (not, can, must)

• SIMPLE PAST TENSE (only be, have, go, do) in Affirmative

1.3 IMPERATIVE Affirmative and Negative

1.4 SHORT FORMS Affirmative and Negative as follows:

• SIMPLE PRESENT/SIMPLE PAST (be, have, do)

• SIMPLE PRESENT only (can, must)

1.5 THERE IS / THERE ARE

2

PRONOUNS

2.1 PERSONAL

• Subject

• Direct/Indirect Object

2.2 DEMONSTRATIVE (This/That is: These/Those are)

2.3 POSSESSIVE (mine, your, his, her, ours, theirs)

2.4 RELATIVE (that)

3

NOUNS

3.1 PLURAL (-s/-es)

3.2 POSSESSIVE (N + 's)

3.3 COUNTABLE/NCOUNTABLE

4

PREPOSITIONS

4.1 in, under, on, behind, in front of, between, to, at

• from, out of, into, with

4.2 sit, stand up

5

ADVERBS

5.1 INTERROGATIVE (Where, When, How, How many/much ?)

6

QUANTIFIERS

6.1 much, many, a lot of (optionally: a few, a little)

6.2 too much/many

6.3 too - Adjective

6.4 Adjective + enough

6.5 some/any

7

ADJECTIVES

7.1 POSSESSIVE (his, her, its, their, our, my, your)

7.2 COMPARATIVE (-er, more, as ... as)

7.3 INTERROGATIVE (What + N ?)

7.4 DEMONSTRATIVE (this, that, these, those)

7.5 INTERROGATIVE POSSESSIVE (Whose + N ?)
1.1 More REGULAR/IRREGULAR VERBS

in SIMPLE PRESENT TENSE
PRESENT PROGRESSIVE TENSE
SIMPLE PAST TENSE (with ago, last ..., in 19...)

1.2 REGULAR/IRREGULAR VERBS

in PRESENT PERFECT TENSE (with since, for,
PRESENT PERFECT CONTINUOUS TENSE; just, not yet)
CONDITIONAL TENSE (if-clauses - Ist & 2nd types)
FUTURE TENSE (shall/will)

1.3 DIRECT/INDIRECT SPEECH (Affirmative & Interrogative)
1.4 PASSIVE VOICE
1.5 -ING FORMS as verb & as Noun
1.6 INFINITIVE with to (after like, prefer, start, begin)
1.7 INFINITIVE without to (after let, make)
1.8 QUESTION TAGS
1.9 CAN/MUST (equivalents be able to, have to)

2 PRONOUNS
2.1 REFLEXIVE (myself, etc. as needed)
2.2 RELATIVE (wh-, whom, which)

3 NOUNS
3.1 FORMATION from Verbs (-V + er)

4 PREPOSITIONS
4.1 over, off, round, back, among, beside, through, along, around, away

5 ADVERBS
5.1 FREQUENCY (usually, sometimes, often, never, always)
5.2 FORMATION of REGULAR FORMS (-ly)

6 ADJECTIVES
6.1 all, the whole, every

7 ADJECTIVES
7.1 DOUBLE COMPARATIVE (-er and -er, more and more)
7.2 SUPERLATIVE (-est/most with of and in)

8 EXCLAMATIONS
8.1 what + Adj + V (What beautiful flowers!)
8.1 what a + (Adj) + V (What a beautiful cassava!)
8.1 aren't
8.1 isn't + Subj + Adj (Isn't he intelligent?)
VERBS
1.1 PRESENT TENSE with Future meaning (You'll see him when he comes)
1.2 PAST FREQUENTATIVE TENSE (I used to play football)
1.3 PLUPERFECT TENSE
1.4 IMPERATIVE (Negative) (Don't let's go home)
   - Direct (* Negative) (I told him (not) to go)
   - Insistence (Do bring me a mango!)
1.5 MODALS (may/might, should/ought to ...)
1.6 PASSIVE (Dative) (He was given a book)
   (Progressive) (A school is being built)
1.7 INDIRECT INTERROGATION (Tell me where he is)
   (why he is here)
   (when he is coming)
   (how he is coming)
   (what he is doing)
   (if he is coming)
1.8 -ING after Prepositions (before going)
   (after coming)
   (without eating)
   (on leaving)
   (while sleeping)
1.9 VERB + Preposition (e.g. to laugh at)
   (care for)
   (be afraid of)
   (pleased with)
   (willing to)

NOUNS
2.1 ADJECTIVAL (the young, the old, the poor, the English)
2.2 FORMATION in -ness

PRONOUNS
3.1 One (e.g. one another, oneself, one's own)

DETERMINERS
4.1 Own (e.g. my own), each

AGREEMENT/DISAGREEMENT
5.1 So do I; so is he; I think so; neither/nor do I

COORDINATION
5.1 E.g. Go and get it; he came and told me

SUBORDINATION
7.1 NON-DEFINING RELATIVE CLAUSES (i.e. never with that)
7.2 Which (= ce qui/ce que)
7.3 All (that)
7.4 A time when; a place where; the reason why
7.5 CONJUNCTIONS (until/till, while, as soon as, so as to, in order to)

EXPRESSIONS OF TIME (for /vs/ during)

ADVERBS
Position
VERBS

1.1 MODALS (need/dare)
1.2 OBLIGATION (I must leave here at 6)
1.3 INFINITIVE without to (after see, watch, hear, listen, make, have, let, must, can, may, might)
   with to (after ask, tell, understand, teach, explain, find out, know, wonder, advise, show, forget, learn. All with how to, some with to)
   after Passive (She was heard to say ... He was made to sing)

1.4 REVISION - Indirect Speech
   - ing forms
   - Progressive/Simple Tenses
   - Perfect/Simple Past Tenses
   - Pluperfect Tense
   - Perfect Progressive Tense (+ since, for)
   - Future time
   - Conditional Tense
   - Passive Voice

NOUNS

2.1 POSSESSIVE (A friend of his/mine &c.)
2.2 DEMONSTRATIVE (e.g. that of ...)

QUALIFIERS

3.1 ELSE
3.2 a of distribution (e.g. twice a week: 10 miles an hour)
3.3 REVISION - some, any, no
   - comparison of Adjectives

AFFIXES

4.1 Revise and expand prefixes and suffixes

ELLIPSIS

5.1 I'd like to; If you want to
5.2 So he is; So I am
5.3 REVISION - I don't either
   - So is he; So does he
   - Question tags

COORDINATION

6.1 Yet, however, still, as well as

SUBORDINATION

7.1 REVISION - Relative Clauses
7.2 UNEXPRESSED RELATIVE (e.g. A pen to write with)
7.3 CONJUNCTIONS (whenever, wherever, since, although, unless, whether ... or)

INTERROGATIVES

8.1 Alternative forms (e.g. What are you doing it for ?)

EXCLAMATIVES

9.1 REVISION of forms already taught.
Appendix G

Expert's Analysis

I must first say that this classification of the objectives of TEFL in BF is very much appealing. However, there are a few things which I think need close attention.

1. Definitions

The researcher wrote, lines 4 and 5 parag. 1: "What I call objectives refers to government goals...." I am inclined to think that the term "goal" or "aims" would be a more appropriate term for government statements regarding educational policy. As he explained, they tend to be vague. They are broad, general statements which educationalists will have to break down into general and specific objectives. Indeed, the statements in the first circular letter are vague and show no clear-cut line to follow. What is given in the official texts stands in my eyes as aims, not objectives. Even the objectives or rather "wishes" or "intentions" expressed in the APSO workshop report, 1998 are general. I would tend to classify them as "General objectives" because of the precision made about the need of teaching English with emphasis laid on the "practical, utilitarian, and cultural" aspect of the language. A syllabus designer who has such objectives in view can then work out specific or performance objectives that go in line with the wishes (or general objectives) of the government.

2. As far as the revised version of the "circulaire 105" is concerned, one remark is to be made: the researcher considers the 3 aspects "practical, utilitarian, cultural" of the "arrêté"
as general objectives. I fully agree with that. This is seen in my remarks in (1). However, in the analysis on the following pages the researcher recognizes that the "English to be taught in Burkinabé schools should be convenient for simple and natural everyday-life communication. To the researcher, such language should be the opposite of literary language, i.e., language encountered in people's conversations". The criticism stands, but it should not be forgotten that one of the objectives of teaching English is for curriculum purposes (training for BEPC/BAC) as designed by the French, the educational system in Burkina Faso being a carbon copy of their own! This form of curriculum primarily focuses on the written and literary forms of the language and stands in contradiction with the conversational language objective wished for by the 1998 curriculum designers.

Unfortunately, nothing has been done to re-examine the BAC in order to conform with the newly designed objectives. The BEPC/BAC syllabuses or course books should be re-designed to meet with these objectives.

3. So, my classification would be the following:

a) Aims of TEFL: teaching English for communication

b) General Objectives:
   - Focusing on teacher: teaching methods, techniques and procedures:
   - Focusing on leaner: listening, reading, writing, and speaking (I call the researcher's attention on the fact that the listening skill is not attended to as it should)
c) Specific/Performance Objectives:

These are statements made by the teacher about what he expects the pupils to be able to do at the end of a particular class hour as regards the four language skills.

Dr. Paul Rouamba
Modern Languages Department
University of Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso)
Appendix H

List of Secondary Schools in Burkina Faso (1999)
ETABLISSEMENTS D'ENSEIGNEMENT SECONDAIRE GENERAL PUBLICS
ANNEE SCOLAIRE 1997-1998

ENSEIGNEMENT GENERAL LONG (Baccalauréat A-C-D)

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B/ ENSEIGNEMENT GENERAL COURT (B.E.P.C)

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**COLLEGES COMMUNAUX**

1. C.E.G. de Komsiga
2. C.E.G. de Loumana
3. C.E.G. de Mogtédo
4. C.E.G. de Diapangou
5. C.E.G. de Padéma
6. C.E.G. de Gassina
7. C.E.G. de Soubakagniédougou
8. C.E.G. de Tcheriba
9. C.E.G. de Gassan
10. C.E.G. de Ya
11. C.E.G. de Absouya
12. C.E.G. de Boudry
13. C.E.G. de Guiha
14. C.E.G. de Soaw
15. C.E.G. de Mâné
16. C.E.G. de Kroomen
17. C.E.G. de Boussoé
18. C.E.G. de Quarkove
19. C.E.G. de Béguedo
20. C.E.G. de Arinda
21. C.E.G. de Banaa
22. C.E.G. de Bondé
23. C.E.G. de Kîlde

**II - ETABLISSEMENTS MUNICIPAUX**

1. D.E.G. de Tar-kodogo  Sixième Troisième  Tar-kodogo
2. D.E.G. de Pâa        Sixième Troisième  Pâa

**IV - ETABLISSEMENTS PRIS EN CHARGE PAR L'ÉTAT**

1. Collège SAMCRA Moise Macheix  Sixième Troisième  Guaga
Appendix I

Human Subjects Protocol Approval Form
APPLICATION FOR EXEMPTION FROM HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE REVIEW

All research activities that will involve human beings as research subjects must be reviewed and approved by the appropriate human subjects review committee, or receive exemption status, prior to implementation of the research.

Principal Investigator: Hancock, Charles R.

Academic Title: Professor

Department: School of Teaching and Learning

Campus Address: Arps Hall, Room 333

Co-Investigator(s): Za bramba, Joachim

Protocol Title: A descriptive study of the First Cycle English Test (FCET) in Burkina Faso Secondary schools

EXEMPTION STATUS: __APPROVED__ DISAPPROVED

DATE: 11/30/99

Chairperson

** Principal Investigator must submit a protocol to the appropriate Human Subjects Review Committee.

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO INVESTIGATORS: Exempting an activity from review DOES NOT absolve the investigators of the activity from ensuring that the welfare of human subjects in the activity is protected and that methods used, and information provided, to gain subject consent are appropriate to the activity.