WASHBACK EFFECTS OF THE CAMBRIDGE PRELIMINARY ENGLISH TEST AT

AN ARGENTINEAN BILINGUAL SCHOOL

by

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(Under the Direction of Linda A. Harklau)

ABSTRACT

Internationally, commercial standardized English tests have greater influence than ever before on EFL programs as measures of student learning, school accountability, and proficiency. One of the most prominent is the University of Cambridge ESOL exams series. Businesses, universities and schools around the world evaluate students´ language competences based on this exam. Numerous studies have considered exam impact, or *washback*, upon curricula and teachers' general approaches to managing exams. More extensive and detailed study is required to understand the impact such exams have on daily classroom practices and interactions between teachers and students.

This study documents the overall English language program at one Argentinean bilingual school and examines, in particular, the effects the Cambridge ESOL exams upon its curricula, its teachers and upon language learning. This ethnographic research represents broad-based observations, conducted over three years, and a focused five-month investigation of the Cambridge Exams' impact on teaching and learning at this bilingual school.

The analysis reveals both positive and negative washback effects. Preparation for Cambridge Exams serves to hone students' grammatical awareness and their abilities to negotiate

test specific tasks such as "reading for specific information" or "writing an extended answer, showing control and range of language." The exams also provide a structure that organizes the curriculum and motivates both teachers and students. However, Preliminary English Test preparatory texts used at the school work to restrict classroom interaction and limit extended output from students. The exam stifles conversation, debate, oral and written argument, and analytical skills. According to second language acquisition research, these activities produce both stronger language learners and better equipped citizens.

A highly effective and broad based K-6 bilingual curriculum produces 6th and 7th grade students with remarkable communicative abilities, comfort in the L2 and eagerness to use the language for academic and social purposes. Beginning in grade 7, when Cambridge test preparation becomes the program goal and curriculum, through grade 12, most students fail to progress in the sorts of communicative and analytical language abilities they will need in future higher education and professional settings. In short, the Exam works against the language development the institution aspires to foster.

INDEX WORDS: English as a foreign language, testing washback, bilingualism, communicative competence, language classroom interaction

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DEDICATION

To My Family and Friends

I thank my parents, Thomas and Carolyn, for being educators at school and at home. I appreciate their love, support, prayers, patience and belief throughout this doctoral program. I am so glad they took me to live in Central America when I was five; that experience began this journey and made my profession possible.   To Wesley, Ben, Don, Russell, Spencer and Tesoro and Chris and Regina, thanks for all you have taught me, for the laughs and for friendship.   I am eternally grateful to my sister, Lynn, for her assistance, unwavering support, love and caring during the dissertation, the doctoral program and always.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Outside the U.S., particularly in urban centers, bilingual immersion schools are a

common approach used to address a society's foreign language education needs (Swain and

Johnson, 1997; Kinberg, 2001).   Such schools typically feature half-day instruction in students'

native languages and half-day in the foreign language; often the target language is English

(EFL). (Kinberg; Baker, 2001; (Cummins, 1998; Johnson and Swain, 1997).

Many of these bilingual immersion schools as well as the academic programs, such as

universities, or career institutions such as private companies or government agencies to which

students wish to gain entry, desire competent language users. These institutions will often

evaluate students' or candidates' competence by their performance on standardized English

language exams, such as the University of Cambridge ESOL Exam series. In this research

context --Buenos Aires, Argentina-- passing the First Certificate Exam aids in university

admissions, allows students to exempt or proceed to higher level university English courses, and

serves as a representative benchmark for area employers who require Spanish-English bilinguals

for their businesses. The Certificate is also a credential for admissions to British universities and

programs. Finally, years of test use for both these pragmatic motivations as well as the prestige

associated with gaining entry into such programs and positions has given the test series

considerable fame, notoriety and prestige in Argentina.

This dissertation identifies *Colegio Prestigioso* one such Argentinean Spanish-English

bilingual school, which, like the majority of its kind in Buenos Aires, incorporates and

encourages the Cambridge ESOL exams into its educational program.   This school, like many

similar EFL institutions in Argentina and around the world, must balance preparing their students to become highly competent communicators with promoting passing or better scores on international language exams. I will argue that both dimensions of the school's English educational mission and the goals of the Common European Framework and the Cambridge ESOL PET are compromised through the ways that 7th-Form teachers and students negotiate preparation for the PET, given at the end of that school year.

<div align="center">Background</div>

Language Testing Washback

Language tests, like any tests, are used to determine education and employment options in many countries (Cheng, 2004, pp.5-6; see also Crystal, 2003). In addition, educational officials and administrators often implement national or system-wide exams in order to effect educational change. (Cheng and Curtis, 2004; see also Shohamy et. al., 1996). This power and influence has led language educators and researchers to evaluate test influence in language education (Baker, 1991; Cheng, 1998; Shohamy, 1993; Shohamy et. al., 1996). Cheng and Curtis have underscored that testing and teaching are interrelated (2004, p. 7).

One way of researching testing is by observing and documenting the influence or impact testing has upon teaching and learning. This phenomenon is labeled ***washback*** (Alderson & Wall, 1993; Cheng and Curtis, 2004). Perhaps a clearer way of observing washback is by noting "that teachers and learners do things *they would not necessarily otherwise do because of the test*" (Alderson and Wall, 1993, p. 117).

A washback study can be used to explore a variety of questions and topics, including, but not limited to:

- Curriculum alignment
- Teaching methodology

- Test training and familiarity
- Text proximity teaching modifications (See also Alderson and Wall, 1993; Shohamy, et. al., 1996; Watanabe, 1996; Alderson and Hamp-Lyons, 1996)
- Individual teaching styles or approaches on preparation effectiveness (Alderson and Hamp-Lyons (1996, p. 290).

Elite Bilingualism in Argentina

The history and program descriptions of bilingual educational programs and schools in South America have recently been the focus of several noteworthy publications in the U.S. Mejia (2002) describes various types of elite bilingualism such as language schools, international schools and immersion programs throughout the world. In this text, she identifies Argentina as a major language center that developed as the result of several large and diverse immigrations throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries. The bilingual schools, *colegios bilingües*, of Buenos Aires, Argentina, represent one of the oldest, richest and most successful models of foreign language education in the Americas (De Mejia, 2004; Banfi and Day, 2004 ; Kinberg, 2001).

Banfi and Day (2004) recount the transition of the country's *colegios bilingües* from community bilingual schools intended to preserve immigrants' linguistic and cultural heritages in their new homeland to present-day Spanish-English bilingual schools intended to prepare young people, especially those from affluent families, for study and work in a new global market.

The School: El Colegio Prestigioso

While studying in Buenos Aires during the summer of 2003, I learned of *El Colegio*, a full-time bilingual immersion school, from a colleague who worked at the institution. I visited the school one day, met the English program director and observed a class of 7th grade students. Their language abilities surpassed those of many language majors at the state universities with which I had had experience.

Prestigioso is a Pre-K through Secondary 5 (U.S. 12th grade) institution. It is a partial

immersion model in which students from grades K – Sec 5, take courses in Spanish every

morning and in English three afternoons per week, totaling 12 hours of instruction in the second

language, the local standard for bilingual schools according. Teachers at *El Prestigioso* conduct

classes in English and urge their students to use more and more spoken English in class as they

progress through school. From grades K-6, English courses include emphases on language arts,

literature, projects, science, history and language/structural study. In the 7th form, the final year

of primary school, students continue to study literature and language, but considerable class time

is also given explicitly to grammar and vocabulary review and preparation for the Preliminary

English Test, the first in the Cambridge ESOL series.

Exam preparation instruction must focus upon rules, structures, and usage because the

test assesses this knowledge. The test also features aural-oral components, but these are not the

most dominant sections of the exam. I became interested in investigating how teachers

negotiate the Cambridge series of exams and other aspects of language learning in their foreign

language instruction.

<div align="center">Research Questions</div>

The primary research question guiding this study was: **What are the *washback* effects**

of the Cambridge ESOL exams upon English language learning and teaching at an

Argentinean bilingual school? This dissertation addresses three sub-questions:

1. How does the Preliminary Test of English (PET) affect the 7th-Form English curriculum at *Colegio Prestigioso*?

2. How does the PET affect what and how teachers at *Colegio Prestigioso* teach?

3. What impact does the PET have upon teacher-student oral interactions during English classes?

Data collection for this project took place between August 1, and December 22, 2006 at *El Colegio Prestigioso* in Buenos Aires, corresponding to the school's spring semester and the term in which students take the Cambridge exams. I conducted class observations, general logistical observations, teacher, student and parent interviews from the 7th and final year of primary school (7th form) during which students take the PET exam and the second and third years of secondary (2nd and 3rd years), when students take the First Certificate Exam (FCE). Using Grounded Theory Methodology, I have analyzed and theorized about the significances of a foreign language curriculum driven by high-stakes standardized testing.

Research Implications

Argentina's bilingual schools have a long and successful history of producing competent, bilinguals. Previous literature has provided broad descriptions of elite bilingual immersion programs in South America and of the *colegios bilingües* in Argentina. To date, there have been no in-depth qualitative studies of an individual school, its program, its curriculum and daily learning. This dissertation will describe such an institution and how language learning occurs there.

Likewise, testing washback studies have often looked at global or institutional level test impact. Few, if any, have closely examined qualitatively the impact of an international standardized language exam upon teacher-student interactions in an EFL classroom. This research will add to the corpus of washback studies.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This dissertation research traverses two areas of scholarly inquiry, elite bilingual

education in the South American context and language testing. This chapter will address the

literature of each of these fields in turn.

Elite Bilingualism

Elite bilingual education is a type of bilingual education program whose participants

already enjoy stability and stature from their first language and pursue the study of a second

language for enrichment, increased status, and additional academic, professional and economic

opportunity. This section will discuss the socioeconomic and educational aspects of elite

bilingual education. It will also consider this type of bilingual education in the South American,

and particularly Argentinean contexts.   The section will proceed with sections on global English,

concepts and models, elite bilingual education, and elite bilingual education in Argentina.

Global English

Talk of English as a global language at the turn of the millennia is common, almost taken

for granted (Crystal, 2003; Hornberger, 2003). Crystal questions and problematizes the general

assumptions the public often makes about the global nature of English because everyone in the

world does not speak English nor does every nation regard it as an official language (p. 2). In his

treatise, he explores more specifically and profoundly the meaning and implication of English as

a global language.

On one hand many native speakers of English, for example in the U.S., may assume a global use of English but then question or complain about uses and changes in English. Crystal takes the position that once people have learned a language, they "have a share in it" and therefore have "the right to use it in the way that they want" (pp. 2-3).

Crystal defines and explains global language status as a language having "a special role recognized in every country" (p.3). This role, of course, does not imply a country or region's adoption of a "foreign" language as a mother tongue as essentially occurred in Latin America with Spanish. Crystal asserts, "[t]o achieve such a status, a language has to be take up by other countries around the world. They must decide to give it a special place within the communities, even though even though they have few (or no) mother-tongue speakers" (p. 4)

The status is conferred by either adoption as an official language or by priority as a foreign language for study. "English is now the language most widely taught as a foreign language – in over 100 countries, such as China, Russia, Germany, Spain, Egypt and Brazil – and in most of these countries it is emerging as the chief foreign language to be encountered in schools, often displacing another language in the process" (p. 5).

Among the reasons a language may become a favored foreign language are: "historical tradition, political expediency, and the desire for commercial, cultural or technological contact. Also, even when chosen the 'presence' of the language can vary greatly, depending on the extent to which a government or foreign-aid agency is prepared to give adequate financial support to a language-teaching policy." (Crystal, 2003, p. 5).

Why might people need a global language?   The need for a global language is rooted in the need for a *lingua franca* or common language for communication in a situation in which bilingualism or trilingualism is insufficient due to the number of distinct peoples, groups and

languages in a community, region, country, or in the instant case, the world. Occasionally, a

powerful indigenous language may emerge, as with Mandarin Chinese (Crystal, 2003, p. 11).

More often, though, "a language is accepted from outside the community, such as English or

French, because of the political, economic, or religious influence of a foreign power" (Jenkins,

2003).

> The need for a global language is particularly appreciated by the international
>
> academic and business communities, and it is here that the adoption of a single
>
> lingua franca is most in evidence, both in lecture-rooms and board rooms, as well
>
> as in thousands of individual contacts being made over the globe (p. 13).

According to Crystal (2003), the legacy of English as a global language has been and

continues to be shaped by: global media, international travel, education, diplomacy,

international commerce, and international safety and people's language choices in response to

these realities (pp. 86-122; See also Brutt-Griffler, 2002). As we will see later in this section,

elite bilingualism is motivated by certain people's responses to and choices in some of these

factors (Baker, 2001).

Pennycook (2001), a critical applied linguist, frequently challenges traditional applied

linguistics and sociolinguistics on the grounds that they disregard "an understanding of class,

state, and power as they relate to language [that] can give us a far more critical understanding of

language planning" (Pennycook, 2001). He views as simplistic and naïve Crystal's (1997)

treatises on global English that propose that "the benefits of English as a global means of

communication" and the preservation of less prestigious, indigenous languages are not in

conflict.   Pennycook argues that "social, cultural, political, and economic forces" cause people

to abandon their languages for the more global, and economically beneficial ones—a posture he regards as in opposition to real language planning and preservation.

Concepts and Models

      Bilingualism and biliteracy. An important dimension of studying bilingual educational programs is the concept of *biliteracy*, "the degree to which literacy knowledge and skills in one language aid or impede the learning of literacy knowledge and skills in another" (Hornberger, 2003). Against the backdrop of abundant literacy and bilingualism literatures that have given little attention to and provided fewer models for understanding biliteracy, Hornberger (2003) integrates and unifies both areas through a *continua* model for researching and understanding the complexities of biliteracy, as well as literacy and bilingualism.

      Her model centers upon the areas of language *context*, learner *development* and *media* of language and asserts that biliteracy and bilingualism are not best understood and represented by opposites like first versus second language. Instead she characterizes these as "theoretical endpoints on a continuum of features" (p. 5). The context, development and media areas interrelate to describe the "complex whole" of biliteracy. This interrelatedness helps language educators to identify "the degree to which literacy knowledge and skills in one language aid or impede the learning of literacy knowledge and kills in the other" (p. 25).

      The model works from the three areas—*biliterate contexts*, *biliterate media*, and *biliterate development*. (Hornberger, 2003). Each area features three dimensions, or sets of continua, for a total of nine (9) biliterate continua in all.

      Biliterate context entails the continua of *micro and macro* language use, *oral and literate* language use and *monolingualism and bilingualism (p. 6)* These contextual continua, in concert, inform us about the biliteracy of language users in a particular situation. For example, if students

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in a bilingual immersion program typically write and read in the L2, the biliterate context analysis would indicate "the macro, literate, and bilingual ends of the continua" (pp. 3-4, p. 14).

The *biliterate development,* or in other words the communicative competence of an individual, is reflected in three continua: production and reception; oral and written language; and the L1 and L2 transfer continuum (pp. 14-15). Utilizing studies by Pica et. al. 1989; Swain, 1985; and Hornberger, 1988; Hornberger challenges the traditional notions that "oral language development (listening and speaking) precedes written language development (reading and writing) and that receptive skills (listening and reading) precede productive ones (speaking and writing)" (p. 15). Likewise, the *oral-written continuum* serves to capture the principle that "many literacy events occur embedded in oral language use" (Hornberger, 2003, p. 16; See also Heath, 1982). The final developmental continuum, *L1-L2 transfer*, addresses the ways in which linguistic development in one language can be aided by knowledge and capacities in the other as well as the ways that one language, especially the L1, can interfere with L2 development (Hornberger, 2003, p. 17).

Thirdly, *biliterate media,* that is the media encountered in the two languages, operates on the continua of simultaneous to successive language exposure; similarity and dissimilarity of structures; and divergent to convergent language scripts (Hornberger, 2003, p. 7). The following description characterizes the simultaneous-successive exposure dimension: "A child who acquires two languages before age 3 is doing so simultaneously; one who acquires one language before age three and the other after age three is doing so successively" (p. 23). There can be differing degrees of L1 literacy before, and even after, L2 acquisition (pp. 23-24).

The linguistic similarity and dissimilarity of the L1 and L2 can affect biliteracy (Hornberger, 2003). Hornberger refers to Niyekama's assertion "that learning to read a second

language that has no linguistic relation to the first language (e.g. Asian or Pacific language speakers learning European languages) will be 'quite different' from learning a second language that is related to the first language (e.g. French and English)" (p. 24).

The final media dimension concerns the convergence-divergence of the scripts in the two languages. Generally, script commonality facilitates transfer, though divergent scripts may be helpful if the learner is "learning to read in two languages at the same time" (Hornberger, 2003, p. 24).

In much of the literature that follows concerning immersion education, elite bilingual education and role of these programs in the South American context, few explicit references to Hornberger's biliteracy model will be made. Nevertheless, virtually all of the components or dimensions she presents, and more importantly the ways in which these continua function together to describe bilingualism and biliteracy are easily identifiable in the descriptions that follow. Her model is not only helpful, but necessary for grasping the integrated and complex nature of the features of distinct types of bilingual education programs and their potential effectiveness for producing bilingual language learners.

In closing her explication of the continua model, Hornberger asserts, "the more the contexts of learning allow [language learners] to draw upon *all* points of the continua, the greater chances for their full biliterate development" (p. 26; See also, Spezzini, 2004).

Immersion Education. Immersion education, along with developmental language maintenance (heritage language) and dual language bilingual education, is a type of "strong" bilingual education, that is intended to promote bilingualism and biliteracy in a student's first and second languages at school (Baker & Prys Jones, 1998). Though immersion education is only one small part of the spectrum of bilingual education, immersion programs and its off-

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shoots represent a significant part of bilingual education in international settings.   This section

first reviews Swain and Johnson's influential immersion education prototype and then briefly

describes varieties of immersion programs.

Swain and Johnson (1997) identify immersion education as one type of bilingual

education and propose a set of features that define immersion programs(Swain & Johnson,

1997).   Their characterization of immersion education has become a model, if not a benchmark,

bilingual education scholars reference when evaluating types of bilingual education (Banfi &

Day, 2005).

The concept of immersion education has most often been associated with the Canadian

French immersion programs, to be discussed further later in this paper. (Baker, 2001; (Genesee,

1998; Heller, 1994; Kinberg, 1996). Instruction in a second or foreign language was common in

Medieval Europe (Latin), has long been the norm in Muslim countries (Classical Arabic), and

was typically employed by Western powers in the regions they colonized (Swain and Johnson,

1997, pp. 1-2).   Parents and school board officials at the St. Lambert school in Canada labeled

their program "immersion". Reporters, researchers and language educators have since applied

the immersion label to other like programs as well as their variants (pp. 2-3; See also, Genesee,

1998).

Swain and Johnson have suggested four major uses of immersion education. One,

immersion in a foreign language such as English in Hungary or Japanese in Australia. Two,

immersion for majority-language students in a minority language, such as French in Canada (p.

4). Three, immersion for language support and for language revival, for example programs in

the Basque country of Spain to revive the Basque language prohibited during the Franco regime

(p. 5). Four, immersion in a language of power: "[i]n the postcolonial era, the language of the

former colonizer has in many cases been retained as a second language medium of instruction" (p. 5). Additive bilingualism, that is that develops the L1 and L2, is a requisite for the immersion program label.

The following are the core features Swain and Johnson attribute to a prototypical immersion program.

1. The L2 is a medium of instruction.
2. The immersion curriculum parallels the local L1 curriculum.
3. Overt support exists for the L1.
4. The program aims for additive bilingualism.
5. Exposure to the L2 is largely confined to the classroom.
6. Students enter with similar (and limited) levels of L2 proficiency.
7. The teachers are bilingual.
8. The classroom culture is that of the local L1 community. (Swain & Johnson, pp. 6-7)

Swain and Johnson have proposed the following applications for their prototype.

> By matching programs against these features, bilingual educators can determine, trivially, the extent to which their program is an immersion program as defined here, and less trivially the kinds of opportunities, constraints, and problems a program than matches these criteria might face as a consequence (p. 6).

Immersion education programs are a prominent part of the elite bilingual education Mejia (2002) addresses and which will be discussed later in this section (See also, Banfi, 2004).

Models of Immersion Education. Kinberg sets forth two models of immersion education, *full* and *partial* (Kinberg, 2001; Baker, 2001). In *full-immersion* programs, "students are exposed to the target language during the entire school day, except for native language arts instruction" (26; See also, Baker, 2001 and Swain and Johnson, 1997). Under the full immersion category, there are several sub-categories. The *Conventional Immersion Model* describes programs for majority-language students learning a minority language. Native speaker or second-language dominant teachers instruct students in subject content via the

students' second language (p. 26). This conventional model includes Early Immersion

Programs (EIPs) and Late Immersion Programs (EIPs).

In EIPs students begin their immersion education in kindergarten or first grade. This

early start is based on the assumption, supported by research such as Johnson & Newport's 1991

study that people learn languages better as children (p. 27). Only upon reaching Grade 3 do

children in these programs begin studying language arts in the L1. Target language instruction

continues through junior high or high school. (Kinberg, pp. 26-27). The LIP instructional format

is almost identical to that of EIP, except that it begins in junior high or high school.

One alternative to "conventional immersion" is the *two-way immersion model*. This

model still provides target-language content instruction but does so meeting the needs of two

different groups of native speakers, for example native English and Spanish speakers (p. 27).

The two sets of native speakers attend all classes together. Division of the use of Spanish and

English may be by subject, by days, or by teachers. This model strives to facilitate language

proficiency in both languages for both groups (Soltero, 2004).

A second alternative to conventional full-immersion models is the double immersion

model. Here, a native speaker of one language receives content instruction in two *other*

languages at school. A commonly cited example is a Hebrew day school in Quebec in which

native English speakers were taught in Hebrew and in French (Kinberg, 2001; de Mejia, 2002).

Partial immersion models are another major category of immersion education models.

Research outcomes on immersion programs have varied. Also, some school systems cannot fund

or schedule full immersion. Therefore, some have implemented partial immersion programs.

One format offers instruction in the native language and in the target language – each for part of

the school day (p. 30). A second format uses one language for certain subjects and the second

language for others.   Another partial immersion option uses two instructors in the same class, each speaking a different language throughout the school day (Kinberg, p. 30).

Elite Bilingualism

       Elite Bilingualism as a Global Phenomenon. Bilingualism and bilingual education take on many forms (Martin, 1997).   One variety of program might be one in which new immigrants to a country take classes in both their native language and their new country's language. Another version of bilingual education includes programs in which indigenous language speakers attend schools wherein they learn formally and use both their native language and a second, socially dominant (majority) language (Ovando *et al.*, 2003).   Both of these examples have something in common; they are forms of bilingual education for groups who are typically socially, financially and politically marginalized. Both groups are learning a second language because their own language is not valued by the larger society (Christian & Genesee, 2001).

       By contrast, many people around the world place a high priority on learning a second language when their first language already affords them security and status in society (Lin, 1996; Paulston, 1975). The world of the 21st century is interconnected. We think about politics, economics and communities in global terms (Tollefson, 1991; Fishman, 1978). Multinational companies, educational collaborations, and international entities like the United Nations have produced a mobile, multicultural, and multilingual workforce. The children of these employees have grown "accustomed to interacting on a daily basis with speakers of several world languages and to constructing academic knowledge bilingually or multilingually".

       Even students beyond this group desire multilingual education: "school-based language learning [is] a key means throughout the world of acquiring foreign or second languages for the purposes of further education, government service, political participation and employment"

(Tollefson, 1991; See also Baker, 2001, p. 427). Bilingual education motivated from such considerations is called *elite bilingualism* (Marti & al., 2005).

De Mejía (2002) describes five different varieties of elite bilingual education programs: finishing schools, language schools, international schools, European schools, and Canadian Immersion styled programs. Below are brief synopses of the first four, all of which are exclusive options available only to the very wealthy or those in prestigious international or diplomatic positions. The fifth and final variety, immersion programs, are still elite but have become a common model the upwardly mobile middle class has utilized to provide bilingual education for its children (de Mejia, 2002). The history and explanation of the Canadian immersion programs is longer due to its relevance to elite bilingualism in South America.

Finishing Schools. Finishing schools are programs, generally for women from extremely wealthy families, intended to refine participants for social life by providing broad cultural experiences (Webster's Third International Dictionary, 1986). These schools, most in Europe, feature classes in arts such as cooking and painting, language and in activities such as skiing.

Language schools. Language schools are private enterprises providing language instruction for individuals wishing to learn a language while living abroad in a country where the language is spoken. Typical students are international business travelers, students preparing for graduate study abroad, or vacationers (De Mejía, 2002). Though traditionally private, some universities and U.S. and British governmental agencies support language schools as well. University affiliated programs often help potential graduate students prepare for the TOEFL or other university requirements related to entering a U.S. university (pp. 9-13).

International Schools. These private, prestigious schools serve the children of internationally mobile businessmen or diplomats, or the children of affluent nationals who

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appreciate the diversity these schools provide that perhaps national schools do not (Hayden &

Tompson, 1998; Baker & Prys Jones, 1998; and Carder, 1991). The majority of such schools

provide instruction in English. In the past, many attendees were native English speakers. Today,

populations are diverse, making the schools multilingual environments. Some international

schools in Central and South America are formally providing instruction in various languages

(De Mejía, p. 21).

European Schools. These schools, located within Europe, are somewhat similar to

international schools in that they were created to educate children of foreign civil servants

working abroad: "[t]he curriculum [has been] based on a synthesis of the curricula in operation

in the six original states of the European Economic Community (France, Belgium, West

Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands)" (De Mejía, p. 22; See Baetens Beardsmore,

1995; Baetens Beardsmore, 1993; Baetens Beardsmore and Swain, 1985). These schools

promote school unity, language competence and intercultural contact by mixing students of

different language backgrounds during activities. European schools are not exclusively

maintenance, transitional or enrichment bilingual programs per se; they feature aspects of each of

these. In the first couple of years of school, instruction is in a student's first language, with a

second language studied as a foreign language. Gradually throughout primary and then

secondary school, the second language becomes a language for content instruction. Therefore,

these are bilingual, even immersion schools of a sort (Baetens Beardsmore, 1993; and De Mejía

pp. 23-25).

The Canadian Immersion Program. For a variety of political and social reasons, during

the 1960s, Francophones in Quebec began to gain access to professional positions and of greater

social and political stature than before (Heller, 1994). The English speakers were not bilingual

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and feared loss of opportunity, status and social control for their children. Thus, they wanted

their children to develop bilingual abilities. Against this backdrop, in 1965, the first French-

immersion school was established in Montreal—St. Lambert (Baker, 2001).

During this time, French speakers were concerned that bilingualism would be

problematic for them, if the English speakers became bilingual while French speakers did not.

As a result, in 1969, the Quebec government – via the Official Languages Act – recognized

French and English as official languages, and the government funded educational programs for

both languages (Baker, 2001; Kinberg, 1997).

Since the establishment of St. Lambert, the number of French immersion programs has

grown dramatically. In 1977-78, 37,835 Canadian students were in French immersion programs.

By 1998-1999, this number was 317,351 (De Mejía, p. 28; Swain & Johnson, 1997).

French Immersion program students are members of the middle and upper middle

classes. It is common for acceptance to the programs to be based upon IQ levels. Entry

is on a volunteer basis. De Mejía sites Swain's three principles needed for a successful bilingual

education program:

1. *First things first*: students require a sound basis in L1 to acquire the L2

2. *Bilingualism via Monolingualism*: classroom language use is monolingual

3. *Bilingualism as a Bonus*: instilling in students the advantages of bilingualism

(Swain, 1983).

The original programs were total immersion. The L2 was used for Kindergarten through

second grades; students received only two 35-minute English Language Arts sessions daily. By

the end of primary school, students received 50% of their content instruction in the L2. (Lambert

& Tucker, 1972; See also Kinberg, 2001; and Baker, 2001). The model of bilingualism practiced

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in Canada is distinct from that practiced at international schools, which promotes and utilizes

multilingual environments. (De Mejía, 2002; See also, Baker, 2001; Heller, 1994). Students who

complete secondary school in immersion programs normally develop native-speaker reading and

listening abilities in the L2. They do not, however, develop speaking and writing skills at the

native level (Baker, 2001).

Summary of global bilingualism. De Mejía looks at attempts to meet the needs of middle

and upper middle class students who live in bilingual or international contexts, related to their

parents' social statuses (pp. 30-31).   These programs are prestigious and educate via languages

recognized throughout the world. This education helps students with entry into U.S. and

European universities as well as positions of prestige and power in their home countries and

around the world. (De Mejía, 2002). In closing this section, Mejia reminds us that,

> in discussing the spread of elite bilingualism we need to bear in mind the dynamic
>
> relationship between tendencies, such as globalism and internationalism without losing
>
> sight of the importance of local and specific contextual factors in the creation of different
>
> modalities of educational provision (De Mejía, 2002; See also, Hornberger, 2003).

Elite Bilingualism in Argentina

Argentina, home to an estimated 35 million people, is located in the continent's southern

peninsula (Baker & Prys Jones, 1998, p. 456). The country was originally colonized by the

Spanish, who intermarried with the indigenous peoples in the area. Argentina experienced

several waves of European immigration during the 19th and 20th centuries: "[t]hus, French,

German, English, Welsh, and Italian were quite widely spoken as community languages at the

beginning of the twentieth century" (Solberg, 1970). As will be illuminated below, the diverse

linguistic landscape fostered the bilingual schools that represent elite bilingual education in Argentina.

Colegios Bilingües in Argentina. Bilingual schools, or *colegios bilingües,* are in the broadest strokes schools which teach content via two languages. Banfi and Day (2004) emphasize that this sector of schools is characterized by considerable variation. (Banfi & Day, 2004). A generic bilingual education definition, drawn from Garcia (1997), "'involves using two languages of instruction'" (Garcia, 1997; Ovando et al., 2003). Banfi and Day suggest that the meaning of "bilingual school" in Argentinean society is more particular. *Colegios bilingües* refers to schools that originated in immigrant communities; these schools "teach content through the medium of two languages," such as Spanish and English or Spanish and Italian (p. 66). Banfi and Day further clarify their definition by indicating that the schools they include meet the Johnson and Swain Immersion Education criteria (Johnson and Swain, 1997). Though there are over 150 bilingual schools in Argentina, researchers have not published much "regarding how these institutions originated and function" (Banfi & Day, 2005, pp. 66-67).

Commonalities and variations in bilingual schools. Applying Baker and Prys Jones (1998), Banfi and Day suggest that Argentinean bilingual schools strive for bilingualism, biliteracy and biculturalism (2005, p. 67). They write, "this is a strong form of bilingual education which aims to produce students who are proficient in two languages, biliterate in those two languages and familiar with both cultures involved" (p. 67).

Until just a few years ago, foreign curricula were extracurricular, with respect to the national Argentina curricular requirements. Today, "it is the foreign curriculum, delivered in the foreign language, that is perceived by society as the most distinctive feature of the schools and this provides their competitive edge" (Banfi & Day, 2005, p. 67). This shift demands bilingual

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faculty, either bilingual teachers or two sets of monolingual teachers. In either case, staffing, even at these prestigious, private institutions is often a challenge due to low salaries, compared to private companies who also require qualified bilingual educators and translators.

As these institutions are fee paying, they are able to provide internationally published texts and computer labs, resources difficult for public schools to offer, especially in light of the 2001-02 economic crisis (Banfi and Day, 2005, p. 67).

Even among this fairly similar grouping of schools, there are some noteworthy differences. For example, the St. Andrews Scots School was founded in 1838 within the Anglo-Argentine community (Cortés-Conde, 1994). Other schools may be just decades old, having converted into bilingual institutions in the last few years. Given the socioeconomic level of the student populations, all of the colegios bilingües fit de Mejia's (2002) category of elite bilingualism (de Mejia, 2002; Banfi & Day, 2005). Even so, attendance fees may vary considerably, depending on the prestige of the school. There are also three legal designations for these schools: foundations (non-profit) operated by a board of trustees, schools privately owned by an individual or group, and others legally-formed as companies. "As private educational institutions they are all regulated by the relevant section of the Ministry of Education, or equivalent, of their jurisdiction, i.e. the Provinces and City of Buenos Aires (see Federal Law of Education No. 24195/93" (p. 68).

School curricula can vary as well. For the Spanish curriculum, "the schools are governed by the Argentine national curriculum requirements emanating form the Federal Law of Education, the *Contenidos Básicos Comunes*, produced by the Ministry of Education and curricular directives from their Provincial governmental jurisdictions" (Banfi & Day, p. 68).

However, foreign language and international curricula are under the discretion of the institutions themselves.

Another difference among schools is the presence of foreign staff. Only institutions with sizeable budgets or foreign government assistance can afford to hire international staff. Most bilingual schools are staffed with bilingual nationals (Thomas, 1999). Banfi and Day (2005) point out "that teacher training in Argentina, although very progressive in the training of foreign language teachers, has not provided training options which could have, as an outcome, teachers specifically trained for teaching in bilingual schools" (p. 68). One aspect of this training issue is that most teacher-raining occurs in the public sector, while these schools private. Furthermore, "a component that is usually missing from the formal training of all these individuals is specific reflection on bilingualism and bilingual education and the teaching of content through the medium of a foreign language" (pp. 68-69). It is uncommon to find teachers both trained as English language teachers and teachers of subjects like biology. Therefore, schools face the challenge of using a biology teacher who can merely speak English or an English teacher who may not be well trained in biology.

One source for improved bilingual education initiatives and teacher training is the English Speaking Association of the River Plate founded in 1975. Most bilingual schools in and around the Buenos Aires and Montevideo, Uruguay areas are members whose staffs participate in and contribute to training programs and other English-related events (de Mejia, 2002).

The Evolution of Bilingual Schools: From Heritage to Dual to Global. The most common type of bilingual school in Argentina is the English-Spanish bilingual school. Therefore, Banfi and Day (2005) treat them as representative of the development of bilingual schools in the country. Many English-Spanish bilingual schools began as "Heritage" schools, such as St.

Andrews. Italian and German schools of that era also existed. Argentina witnessed tremendous European immigration at the turn of century.

> The Heritage schools aimed at providing an education for the children of
>
> immigrants, in some cases for the immigrants themselves, and in others, those
>
> who were Argentine-born but had grown up within the immigrant community
>
> where the language spoken was not Spanish (p. 69).

Instruction in the heritage schools was initially in the native language. For example, instruction in Spanish at the St. Andrew's Scots school began only three years after it was founded. Parents and immigrant community members aspired to provide their children with an education similar to what they would have received in their native countries (p. 70).

Oddly, the number of heritage schools was unrepresentative of a given immigrant population: "The number of Italian bilingual schools is negligible in relation to the fact that 39% of foreigners in Argentina in 1914 were of Italian origin, compared to only 1% who were of British origin. Currently there are only six Italian schools and 100 English-Spanish bilingual schools" (Banfi & Day, 2005, p. 70) Banfi and Day attribute this paradigm to the national and international hierarchy of languages that valued English over those of other immigrant communities (Crytal, 2003; Pennycook, 2001),

Though immigration slowed dramatically during the first half of the 20th century, the number of bilingual schools still grew, especially English-Spanish schools because the schools transformed. St. Andrews, for example, had begun accepting "non-English-speaking children and, at the same time, was experiencing loosening times with the close-knit, homogenous founding community, altered by intermarriage and generational separation with the original immigrants (Escuela Escocesa San Andres, 1988, p. 76)" (p. 70).   Banfi and Day apply

Lindholm-Leary (2001) concept of "Dual Language Programmes" to describe the result of the transformation – "in the sense that there was a combination of language minority and language majority children in different proportions at different stages, but gradually tending towards an increase in majority language children" (p. 70; See also, Ovando, et. al., 2003).

National education reform passed in 1884 which required more instructional hours in Spanish, a requirement that led to a parallel curriculum format that remains the norm today (Banfi and Day, 2005). Schools implemented dual departments and managerial systems for overseeing the Spanish and English aspects of education respectively.

As immigration decreased and bilingual schools increased during the 20th century, Dual Language model became the norm. By century's end bilingual school students were native Spanish speakers whose learned their second language completely at school. Only a small percentage of students were itinerant internationals.

English language displacement. Cortes-Conde (1994) investigates and explains why an internationally and even nationally prestigious language in Argentina, English, has become the victim of language shift. An Anglo-Argentine community has enjoyed a sizeable and important presence in Argentina since the early 20th century. The British decline in power, in general, and of the community in Argentina, in particular, following the Second World War and later the Argentine-British conflict over the Malvinas islands in 1982 has led younger generations to seek social and linguistic acceptance as Argentines by using Spanish, even at home with parents of British decent. English's status has value:. "[i]t is a language that Argentines of all backgrounds recognize to be of major importance in the international arena, and the Anglo-Argentines are willing, as are many other Argentines, to pay for it with cash, but not with estrangement" (p. 37).

The 1990s, the years of the Menem administration, were marked by rapid privatization and internationalization of the Argentine economy. With this shift, the numbers of internationally mobile families and students grew. With the economic crash of 2001-02, however, this population diminished as well (Banfi & Day, 2005, p. 71).

Present State of Bilingual Schools. Banfi and Day (2005) have identified the current era for bilingual schools as the "global language period" or the era of "Global Language schools" (Banfi and Day, 2005). Bilingual schools are responding to globalization. International travel and communications technology modified the cultural traditions that had been the mark of the Heritage School stage: "[t]he change was in the purposes and diversity of the links that imprinted an international outlook on the educational offering of the schools. The schools now aim to provide a broad educational programme that prepares children to take part in the decision-making stratum of a globalised world" (p. 72; Crystal, 2003).

This perspective has led to more English-Spanish bilingual schools on the landscape, greater English emphasis at schools with other linguistic orientations, and an emphasis on international accreditations such as the Cambridge University ESOL and IGCSE exams as well as International Baccalaureate diplomas (p. 73). These exams and diplomas are precisely the steps that provide entry for these upwardly mobile students to gain entry into the prestigious schools and professions to which they aspire (de Mejía, 2003; Banfi and Day, 2005; Crystal, 2003).

Summary and Implications

In the South American context, and in specific countries like Argentina, the nations' demographic and linguistic histories as well as the demands and opportunities of globalization have helped to select the languages people learn at home and at school and the ways in which

they learn them. Elite bilingual education is a type of privileged education that members of upper middle and upper classes can use to learn internationally valued languages to improve their educational and professional opportunities. English has long been and continues to be the international language that most of those in a position to do so wish to learn.

Scholars such as De Mejía and Banfi and Day have established the broad historical and linguistic contexts of *colegios bilingües* in Argentina. This dissertation, an extended, institutional-level study of one such school adds significantly to their studies by describing the day-to-day operations of one such bilingual school and by carefully examining the ways in which the school develops students' English abilities and participates in the societal requisites for well-trained English learners.

<div align="center">Language Testing Washback</div>

There are a variety of reasons and contexts for which knowing someone's language ability is important. For example, a university in an English speaking country may need to determine if an international student possesses the abilities to succeed academically in the institution. Certainly, employers in a variety of contexts need to be able to count upon a language interpreter (Hughes, 2003). For such reasons, all manner of schools, language learning institutions, and even governments use language tests. However, these language tests can also have power that reaches beyond such seemingly benign purposes as those mentioned above:

> [T]he decisions that may be made about the [language] test takers on the basis of their test scores may directly affect them in a number of ways. Acceptance or non-acceptance into an instructional program, advancement or non-advancement from one course to another, or in a career, employment or non-employment, are

all decisions that can have serious consequences for test takers" (Bachman &

Palmer, 1996, p. 32; See also Shohamy, 1993; 2001).

Therefore, *language testing* is a topic of much interest, debate and even controversy in the

professional field of language education. (Bachman & Palmer, 1996).

Consideration of the possible impact of language exams upon activities in language

classrooms has been a topic within the field of applied linguistics since at least 1968. (Davies,

1968). Within this field and among many language educators, the notion developed and spread

that tests, especially major standardized or national public language exams, shaped or could

shape the type of learning that occurs in language learning classes (Shohamy, 1993). The term

that describes this phenomenon is *washback*.

This section of this chapter will provide a context for discussing washback, provide

definitions and descriptions of it, discuss how washback is observed in research and in

classrooms, and finally entertain the questions of whether and how might washback be a tool or

resource for language learners.

The section will not review every washback study since 1993, when scholars began

exploring the phenomenon in language education. It will, however cover the variety of studies

conducted, the types of tests frequently studied, the voices who regularly contribute to the

conversation about language testing washback, and the connections and contributions of this

dissertation to this field of research.

Context for Washback Discussion

Tests. Washback is about testing, but even the term "test" can require clarification. Some

testing scholars generally equate *tests* and *assessments* (L Cheng *et al.*, 2004), while others (A

Hughes, 2003; Wall, 1997) distinguish them, construing *assessment* as a broader term and *test* as

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referring to "formal tests".   Since the language testing and washback scholars to be discussed

herein use "test" to refer to large standardized, international or government run exams, the term

test will hereafter refer to formal tests as Hughes describes.

Washback is a term and topic most often addressed within the literature of the applied

linguistics sub-field language testing but is discussed in texts on language teaching as well

(Alderson & Wall, 1993; Hughes, 2003). Language testing has as a research goal attempting "to

arrive at a model of language ability that can provide a basis for describing and assessing this

ability for a given individual or group of individuals at a given stage of development, using a

given norm or standard of target language use as a point of reference" (Bachman *et al.*, 1998). In

contrast to SLA, which centers more upon interlanguage process and development over time,

language testing focuses upon the *results* of language acquisition—consequences at a particular

time in the development (p.2).

Test Impact. The term *washback* has been identified by some language testing scholars,

for example Wall (1997) as being synonymous or interchangeable with the concept of language

impact, with most electing to use *washback* due to its familiarity (Cheng & Cohen, 2004).

Others, most notably Bachman and Palmer (1996), distinguish test impact from washback. For

Bachman, tests have "impact on society and educational systems and upon individuals within

those systems" (p. 29).   To him and to most other applied linguists and language testing

researchers, washback is more limited –referring to a test's impact or influence upon learning

and instruction in a language classroom (Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Cheng & Curtis, 2004; Wall,

1997.)   Due to the clarity provided by this distinction and the common usage, this paper will

regard washback as test impact or influence on teaching and learning (Cheng & Curtis, 2004).

Stances and Terms. Also meriting notice is the stance taken, if not assumed, in most of the language testing literature on washback. McNamara identifies this stance as he argues for the social nature of language testing and assessment (2001). Some of the language testing scholars to be presented here, for example Bachman & Palmer (1996) and Shohamy (2001), discuss issues of authority, power, and values behind testing generally and specific tests. A few others may make passing reference to those themes. Most however, take for granted to a large degree the existence and roles of the tests and consider their work advocating washback as a way to improve language teaching, rather than criticizing testing more broadly.

With the matter of these stances in mind, several terms will arise frequently in the studies that follow. Meanings of most these terms could be, and in fact have been, argued over (Lyon, 1996) by linguists and language educators. As such a discussion is beyond the scope of this paper, I will attempt to provide some generic definitions of key terms as presented in the *Dictionary of Language Testing* (Davies *et al.*, 1999).

- **language/linguistic competence** – normally refers to knowledge of the formal linguistic system…as opposed to the application of this knowledge in language performance (p. 110).

- **proficiency** – a general type of knowledge of or competence in the use of a language; also performance as measured by a particular testing procedure (p. 153).

- **communicative language tests** – Tests of communicative skills, typically used in contradistinction to tests of grammatical knowledge (p. 26).

- **task** – what a test taker is required to do during a test or part of a test, such as note-taking from a spoken test, participating in an interview or role play, reading a text and answering comprehension questions (p. 196).

- **performance-based test** – A test in which the ability of candidates to perform particular tasks, usually associated with job or study requirements, is assessed. Performance tests (also known as authentic tests or direct tests) use 'real life' performance as criterion. They are attempts to characterize measurement procedures in such a way as to approximate non-test language performance (p. 144).

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The studies to be addressed herein discuss these terms and washback in relationship to a common group of tests. These include the University of Cambridge ESOL exams such as the First Certificate of English (FCE) and the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) (Cambridge ESOL, 2009)**,** the U.S. TOEFL exam**,** as well as national government instituted public school exams in countries like China, Japan and Israel.

Validity. Validity and *reliability* are characteristics of test that help those who look at the results of test to know what the results actually tell (Allison, 1999). According to Hughes (2003), "a test is said to be valid if it measures accurately what it is intended to measure" (p.26; See also Messick, 1989). Hughes applies this concept to the language context.

> We create language tests in order to measure such essentially theoretical constructs as 'reading ability', 'fluency in speaking,' 'control of grammar,' and so on. For this reason, in recent years the term *construct validity* has been increasingly used to refer to the general, overarching notion of validity (p. 26).

Reliability is the idea that the same test given under as nearly the same conditions as possible, but on a different occasion, will yield very similar results for test takers.

Validity and reliability are often linked in the literature not only because they are such essential concepts, but also because they can affect each other. For example, in an attempt to make a test more reliable, the test questions or format could reduce the number of language structures to be used; however, doing so could diminish the validity of the test for determining whether the language learner could execute the task in a real context (Hughes, 2003, p. 50). I describe these terms here as a point of reference for the discussion of Messick's concept of validity later in this section.

Alderson and Wall. In their seminal work on language testing washback, Alderson and Wall (1993) describe the origins of the washback concept and briefly review some of the central scholarship that made washback such a commonly used, but undefined and unexplored, concept

within applied linguistics. They identify Vernon (1956), Davies (1968), Madaus, (1982),

Alderson (1986), (Morrow, 1986), Pearson, (1988), and Hughes, (1989) as some of the

prominent educational scholars who contributed the general discussion of examination influence

upon classroom activities. Vernon (1956) believed that public examinations shifted the

instructional focus to subjects and items the exam covered. By contrast, Morris (1972) and

Swain (1985) considered exams useful for effective curriculum implementation. Morrow (1986)

linked test validity to washback. Fredericksen and Collins (1989) similarly invented *systemic*

validity: "a systemically valid test is one that induces in the education system curricular and

instructional changes that foster the development of the cognitive skills that the test is designed

to measure" (1989, p. 27).

    Messick: Construct validity. Almost universally, language washback scholars ground or

link the premise of washback to Messick's (1989) seminal work on validity and specifically

construct validity.   Messick (1996) explains his view of the connection between validity and

washback. Due perhaps to the lengthy description and complexity of the description, most

washback scholars simply state or assume the idea of construct validity and attach washback to

it. Here, summarizing Messick's (1996) own validity-washback explanation, I will attempt to

articulate the concepts of Messick's work on validity that are most relevant to an understanding

of washback and washback research.

    Messick explains test validity through the framework of *construct validity*, a broader,

more complex idea of test validity.   He asserts that *validity* is a judgment or qualification of the

"appropriateness of interpretations and actions" based upon test scores or assessment

evaluations, or otherwise stated "what do the scores mean?" (p. 245; Messick, 1989). Therefore,

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validity is a *construct* that administrators or other groups within society create (Messick, 1996; Shohamy, 1993).

      Construct validity includes six contributing parts: content, substantive, structural, generalizability, external and consequential.   Attention to each of these areas minimizes "the test deficiencies and contaminants that stimulate negative washback, thereby increasing the likelihood of positive washback" (242-243). Messick defines washback as "the extent to which the introduction and use of a test influences language teachers and learners to do things they would not otherwise do that promote or inhibit language learning" (241). He, therefore, associates washback with the consequential aspect of his concept of construct validity. This consequential aspect of validity includes:

> evidence and rationales for evaluating the intended and unintended consequences of score interpretation and use in both the short- and long-term, especially those associated with bias in scoring and interpretation, with unfairness in test use, and with positive and negative washback effects on teaching and learning (from Messick, 1989, cited in Messick, 1996, p 251).

    A common assumption about washback is that the introduction of a new test can cause behavioral and attitudinal changes in teachers and students that in turn yield positive overall educational outcomes. Messick (1996) questions this assumption, especially with regard to test validity, because "a poor test may be associated with positive effects and a good test with negative effects because of other things that are done or not done in the educational system" (p. 242)   A test could effect: what but not how a teacher teaches; teacher, but not student behavior, or even both, but improving nothing. Therefore, to demonstrate washback one would have to

show a that a change is a consequence of testing, rather than of other educational practices. (p. 242).

Authenticity and *directness* in test criterion generally yield beneficial washback because these features "minimize *construct under-representation* [too narrow] and *construct irrelevant difficulty* [test not direct enough] to the test" (242). For this reason, language testers, researchers and many language educators, encourage performance assessments as an alternative to multiple choice tests (242). The idea is to have test criterion represent as "authentically" as possible the actual language abilities students are trying to develop. (p. 241). When language learning activities and test preparation are virtually the same, test preparers, administrators and language educators have effected ideal positive washback (pp. 242-242).

Consequential validity is complex, involving test content, the learning context, and the people in that context (p. 251). Evidence of consequential validity is best obtained "by means of classroom observations or questionnaires documenting changes in teacher and learner behavior associated with the introduction of the test" (p. 251). Classroom observations and questionnaires "documenting changes in teacher and learner behavior associated with the introduction of the test" are effective tools for obtaining evidence of consequential validity. (p. 251)

Defining and Describing washback

What is washback? Well before Alderson and Wall's (1993) work on washback, the concept was already associated with the influence of tests upon the activities in language classrooms. Cheng and Curtis' recent definition, "influence of testing upon teaching and learning" does not sound radically different (2004, p. 3). Alderson and Wall's critique of the term, and the literature that employed it, markedly changed scholars' understanding of the concept and launched a new direction for language testing research. Virtually all washback

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studies since ground their research in the principles of Alderson and Wall (Wall & Alderson, 1993) articles and in Messick's (1989) concept of construct validity.

Alderson and Wall's first goal was to define and describe washback more precisely. They began with a general hypothesis, The Washback Hypothesis, which they asserted represented the fundamental assumption for this area of study: "that teachers and learners do things *they would not necessarily otherwise do because of the test*" (p. 117). They challenged the simplistic notion that "poor" tests yield negative washback and "good" tests yield "positive" washback stating, "that a 'poor' test could conceivably have a 'good' effect if it made teachers and learners do 'good' things they would not otherwise do: for example prepare lessons more thoroughly, do their homework, take the subject being tested more seriously, and so on" (p. 117). In short, almost all tests could be credited with "beneficial backwash" if it made teachers and students work harder.   By contrast, any test might produce the negative effects of student test anxiety or teachers' fear of results (pp. 117-118).

To overcome ambiguous and simplistic approaches to washback, Adlerson and Wall proposed, based on the language testing literature and discussions with language teachers, fifteen specific, investigable *Washback Hypotheses*.   These hypotheses focused upon language teaching, course content, methodology, sequence of learning, degree and depth of teaching, participant attitudes, role of test consequences, reach of impact upon learners and teachers (pp. 120-121). Some examples include: "(1) A test will influence teaching"; "(4) A test will influence **how** teachers teach"; "(8) A test will influence the **rate** and **sequence** of learning"; "(11) A test will influence attitudes to the content, method, etc. of teaching and learning"; and "(15) Tests will have washback effects for **some** learners and **some teachers**, but not for others" (p. 121). These researchers challenged others to investigate potential cases of washback and

seek evidence for it (p. 121).   Each of these hypotheses were considered during this dissertation research and will be addressed later in the findings chapters.

Washback: Good or bad? A fundamental issue in the literature is whether washback should be regarded as a good or bad proposition (Cheng & Curtis, 2004; Wall, 1997). Davies (1968) has long been a proponent of positive potential of "good tests" upon education; a good test "should be simple, its syllabus should be teachable and its effects should be beneficial" (Wall, 1997, p. 292). On the other hand, Madaus (Madaus, 1988) has long been a strident opponent of tests and measurement-driven instruction. Wall summarized his views as follows:

> the power of tests is a perceptual phenomenon, the higher the stakes attached to a test the more it will distort the teaching process, past exam papers eventually become the teaching curriculum, teachers adjust their teaching to fit the form of exam questions, test results become the major goal of schooling, and the agencies which set or control examinations eventually assume control over the curriculum" (Wall, 1997, p. 292)

Davies (1968) expressed concerns about a narrowing of educational focus because "testing devices had become teaching devices" (From p. 125 cited in Cheng and Curtis, 2004, p. 9).

For those convinced of positive outcomes, an underlying premise of washback is that tests can, and perhaps should, "drive teaching and learning" (Cheng and Curtis, 2004, p.4). Therefore, washback has also been labeled *measurement-driven instruction* (Popham, 1987 in Cheng and Curtis, 2004).   The form of assessment and the curriculum that shapes instruction should connect or overlap. Shepard (1990, 1993) has labeled this connection as *curriculum alignment*.

Observing and Discovering Washback

   Early empirical studies. As noted earlier, few general education studies and or language

testing studies prior to Alderson and Wall's work provided empirical, verifiable evidence of

washback effects (1993). . Smith (1991) conducted a qualitative work on the effects of ITBS test

scores upon teachers and their classrooms.   Using teacher interview data and classroom

observations, Smith demonstrated that negative teacher sentiments following one year's test

score publications led teachers to modify their instructional programs, reducing the time of

regular instruction and narrowing the curriculum (p. 123). Wesdorp (1982) studied the

introduction of multiple-choice language tests in the Netherlands. Results from several non-mcq

measures contradicted the presumed loss of teaching quality or student language proficiency.

The new test format had produced little washback. Hughes (A. Hughes, 1988) reports on the

changes and outcomes that occurred at foreign language school in Instanbul. The school's

purpose was to provide a year of English instruction to prepare students for university study at

Bogazici University, in which instruction was in English. After years of receiving students

inadequately equipped with the English proficiency for their studies, the university designed a

proficiency exam students would be required to pass to gain admission.

   As a result, the center and its faculty modified its curriculum, selected new tests, and used

new teaching styles.   During the first year the test and innovations were in place, the number of

students passing the Michigan exam rose significantly. Moreover, university faculty reported

that the English abilities of students who entered university after the test and related changes

were implemented were greatly improved over those of previous years' students. Hughes

suggests that the consequences of the test produced the innovations and improved proficiency

levels. Alderson and Wall note that Hughes' research does not demonstrate exactly how or why

proficiency levels rose (1993, p. 126).

Prominent Washback Studies

       Alderson and Wall: Sri Lanka. In the late 1980s, the Sri Lankan Educational Ministry

implemented significant curriculum changes, adopted new textbooks and supported teacher-

training initiatives for its English as a second language program. To ensure that these changes

would be taken seriously, "they were accompanied by an examination which reflected the nature

of the new textbooks" (Wall & Alderson, 1993, p. 43). The test was a new version of the O-level

exams Sri Lankan students take upon completion of the 11th grade. Alderson and Wall were part

of a team of faculty at Lancaster University who evaluated the implementation and impact of

new O-level exams in Sri Lanka. They evaluated the test's validity and reliability and measured

its washback effects upon classroom teaching via observations (p. 44).   Here, Alderson and

Wall rightly introduced and emphasized the value of classroom observations for this field of

research. Several studies which will be reviewed in this section utilized classroom observations.

This dissertation research, though, completed longer-term and more extensive class observation

than most other washback studies.

       Positive washback would be indicated if "teachers [were] teaching the way the textbook

designers and exam team wanted them to" (p. 45). Negative washback would be indicated if the

textbook and exam forced teachers into a conflicted approach to teaching. For example, "[s]ome

aspects of the new textbook's approach might be sacrificed if the teachers felt these were not

efficient means of preparing the students" (p. 47). During a typical "round" of observations,

teachers who used the textbook, relied on its content, and were not influenced by the exam.

Teachers who did not use the textbook, focused lesson content on the exam.   The issue of

alignment between test purposes, materials and teaching practice figures prominently in this dissertation, as the Cambridge ESOL standards, defined by the Common European Framework, the PET exam producers and the test preparation text publishers aspire for alignment and positive washback. While 7th-Form teachers at Colegio Prestigioso embrace the PET and focus almost exclusively on the content, topics and grammatical structures the PET covers, they simultaneously embrace teaching that is in conflict with the communicative emphasis of the CEFR.

In observations during the third term of the year, when the test is administered, researchers noted "a 'narrowing of the curriculum' as teachers finish or abandon their textbooks and begin intensive work with past papers and commercial publications to prepare their students for the exam. At this point there is obvious exam impact on the content of the teaching" (pp. 61-62). Class observations revealed what teachers did, but not why. The researchers thus supplemented the observations with questionnaires and interviews. Their conclusions regarding washback were that exam influenced content; teachers emphasized "parts of the text they feel are most likely to be tested" (p. 67). The test did not affect teaching methodology, largely because teachers were not trained to negotiate the new texts and their teaching approaches in relationship to the exam (p. 67-68). The present dissertation research verifies and extends Alderson and Walls study since at *Colegio Prestigioso* it demonstrates that curriculum can be narrowed during and entire academic year, or even a series of years, during which national or international standardized language exams are taken.

As a result of their review of washback research and their own early studies, Wall and Alderson became strong advocates for qualitative approaches generally, and classroom observation specifically, to support teacher and student interviews in washback studies, in order

to document and demonstrate empirically the effects of tests upon teaching and learning in language classrooms (Alderson & Wall, 1993, p. 127; Wall & Alderson, p. 68).

Shohamy: Israel. Shohamy (1993) not only added to the body of empirical studies of washback, but she also became a voice for a critical view of tests in the washback literature. She studied the implementation of three new national language tests in her home country of Israel. The tests included an Arabic as a Second Language Test for students in grades 7-9, an oral English exam for 12th grade students , and an L1 Reading exam for fourth and fifth grade students (p. 4).

Shohamy states that her research "is rooted in a broader view of construct validity, one that claims that construct validity encompasses aspects of test use, the impact of tests on test takers and teachers, the interpretation of scores by decision makers, and the misuses, abuses, and unintended uses of tests" (p. 1; Messick, 1989).

Shohamy is interested in the questions "Can the introduction of tests per se cause real improvement in learning and teaching?" and "*How are test results used*?" (p. 4) She collected data on the three tests via document analysis, class observations, interviews, and questionnaires.

Regarding the Arabic test, observations revealed that for four to six weeks before the test, teachers abandoned the teaching of new material, use of textbooks and contextualized language instruction. Classes focused only on test material (pp. 6-7). Questionnaires and interviews indicated that the number of years of teaching experience and time teaching shaped whether teachers thought the test changed their teaching. Younger teachers felt they had been trained with techniques to address the test (p. 10). This was the pattern when the test was first introduced. Later, new textbooks modeled to the test reshaped teaching so that teaching and

testing became the same. So, ultimately, the Ministry of Education successfully modified instruction through test implementation (p. 11).

The English oral test for 12th graders caused teachers to shift their classroom activities exclusively to test-type tasks such as oral interviews, role plays, describing pictures. Again, younger teachers, familiar with oral language instruction, would depart from the test format for practicing oral activities much more than veteran teachers (p. 12). Results for adaptation to the Reading test were similar.

From her research, Shohamy concludes that all tests have some impact, but that the impact is complex and changes over time. Tests draw attention to areas previously not focused upon. Instruction has a tendency to become testlike; if teachers are not trained in teaching "normally" when focused on new areas, "teachers turn to the test as their single source of knowledge regarding instruction" (16). When teaching does become testlike, the tests become the curriculum.   She states, "[i]n these two examples tests were not only used to manipulate and control education; they also became devices through which educational priorities were communicated to principals, teachers, and students" (3).   This dissertation considers whether and to what degree Colegio Prestigioso teachers rely solely upon the test and test preparation materials as the basis for instruction during the 7th-Form year.

In 1996, Shohamy, Donitsa-Schmidt and Ferman (E Shohamy *et al.*, 1996) examined the question of longer-term effects of washback as a follow-up study of the tests implemented in Israel. The study considered the Arabic as a Second Language test and English as a Foreign Language Oral test first studied by Shohamy (1993). The reading exam had been discontinued and was therefore not part of this research. The researchers investigated these questions: Is introducing changes through tests effective?; Can the introduction of tests per se cause real

improvement in learning and teaching?; and How are test results used by teachers, students, and administrators? (p. 299).

For each of the tests, the researchers used student questionnaires, structured interviews with teachers and national ASL and EFL inspectors, and analysis of Ministry instructions about the tests. The data collection centered upon these categories: classroom activities and time allotment; the extent to which the test has generated new teaching materials; the degree to which students and parents are aware of the existence and content of the test; perceived effects of test results; the extent to which the test has changed the prestige and position of the areas tested; perception of test quality and importance; impact of test on promoting learning; and how the various language inspectors view the role, status and impact of the test (p. 303).

Interestingly, results were quite different for the ASL and EFL tests. ASL impact had diminished. It no longer had the status it did, and teachers no longer dedicated special time to conduct test-specific preparation for the test. Even though teachers disliked the test, "some teachers believe that the test should continue to be administered as its power helps learning and, although unsubstantiated, some students perceive the test as having a potential impact on their future success" (p. 312)

In contrast, the EFL exam has had a positive washback effect: "numerous oral teaching activities in the classroom are introduced, time allotment has increased, much new courseware has been generated, a high awareness of the test is evident, and the status of the subject-matter in the school has increased significantly" (313). As with the ASL test, many teachers do not like the test per se but support its continued use because it maintains an educational focus on oral proficiency. (p. 313).

Inspectors for both tests valued and endorsed the tests much more fully than the teachers did. The authors argue that they "use the test both as a means to improve matters and as a device by which they control the system" (p. 314)

The researchers conclude that the study demonstrates that washback is complex and can be unstable, affected by these factors: low vs. high stakes test, language status, purpose of the test, format of the test, and the skills tested.

Alderson and Hamp-Lyons: TOEFL Prep classes in the U.S. Alderson and Hamp-Lyons (1996) investigate "common claims that the TOEFL exerts an undesirable influence on language testing" (p. 280). They accomplished this by observing and interviewing two TOEFL teachers at a U.S. language institute and comparing and contrasting their classes and methods for TOEFL preparation courses and those of other TEFL/TESL courses they were teaching (1996). The researchers devised and used 12 variables to measure factors such as the amount of time devoted to testing, teacher versus student speaking time, explicit references to the exam, and class atmosphere. Analysis demonstrated that teachers dominated speaking and discussed the exam in TOEFL classes. However, comparison and contrast of the two teachers revealed that the differences in the two teachers' styles and methods were "at least as great as the differences between TOEFL and non-TOEFL classes" (p. 290). In short, one cannot merely credit or blame a test for class activity (p. 290).

Alderson and Hamp-Lyons pose the question, "Can a test be held responsible for the ways in which some teachers teach toward it?" They answer by suggesting that factors such as teacher style and preparation, student demands, lack of institutional training, class size, and TOEFL preparation methodology responsibility (teacher, institution, textbook producers, testing agency?), may have as much or more to do with the teaching as the test does (p. 295). The

researchers assert: "Our study shows clearly that the TOEFL affects both *what* and *how* teachers teach, but the effect is not the same in degree or in kind from teacher to teacher, and the simple difference of TOEFL versus non-TOEFL teaching does not explain *why* they teach the way they do" (p. 295). This dissertation will test these assertions by considering the what, how and why *Colegio Prestigioso* teachers teach. Moreover, it is reasonable to assert, in a test-rich context such as Buenos Aires, that teacher preparation itself, and the type of instruction that follows from it, could itself be influenced by the test or test series. Test washback effect could include these elements.

Alderson and Hamp-Lyons suggest that even if a test such as the TOEFL features "discrete items focusing below the discourse level" that this format in and of itself does not preclude teachers from teaching using a more discursive, communicative method (295). They conclude that administrators, material writers, and the instructors in the instant case produced the washback observed, not the TOEFL exam (p. 295). They, thus, warn against simplistic washback assertions in ESL/EFL learning environments (295), though I am not clear as to how they distinguish the roles of these elements from the test itself. This dissertation will consider the reasonableness of these scholars' assertion of teaching in a format quite different from that represented in the exam, and if so, how such instruction would work.

They offered two qualifiers to Alderson and Wall's original Washback Hypotheses:

- a test itself is not guaranteed to yield positive or negative washback

- "Tests will have different amounts and types of washback on some teachers and learners than on other teachers and learners" (295-296).

Watanabe: University admission exams in Japan. Watanabe (1996) conducted a washback study to investigate Japanese universities' use of English exams for admissions and the potential negative backwash upon English as Foreign Language instruction at lower levels of the educational system. Japan's educational system is one in which major institutionally driven standardized exams are an essential part, used largely for entrance or selectivity to higher institutions or positions in the society. English as a Foreign Language is a core subject for junior high, high school and university students. University admission requires earning a competitive score on the admissions exams, which includes an English exam (Watanabe, 1996).

Due to Japan's long history of using the grammar-translation method in English education, English exams at various levels have had a G-T orientation, which language education administrators and language teachers in schools have maintained has rendered ineffective the attempted transition to more communicative approaches to instruction (Watanabe, 1996). Following Alderson and Wall's (1993) call for more empirical evidence of washback, Watanabe conducted classroom observations.

Prior to the class research, however, Watanabe (1996), verified the presence of G-T questions on university exams. His analysis determined that G-T questions were a part of more public university exams than private university exams. Therefore, he conducted research at two sites corresponding to this distinction. Preparation for a specific university's exam is too specific a task for public secondary English teachers to manage; their students might be applying to any number of schools. Therefore, students attend after-school schools, called *yobiko*. *Yobiko* offer various classes tailored to different university's exams. Watanabe observed two teachers. Teacher, A, prepared students for national university style exams in class A while preparing students for a particular private university's exam in class B, while the second teacher, B, taught

the same types of classes, C and D. Again, the national university exams featured more G-T

questions than the exam at the private university. Each course featured five 90-minute class

meetings.

Watanabe recorded data using a description sheet to record class events, a cassette

recorder and a stop watch. In these article, he reports findings on G-T in the teaching of reading.

His baseline predictions were:

> 1.) For the first teacher, course A would be more GT oriented than B
> 2.) For the second teacher, course C would be more GT oriented than D
> 3.) The GT orientation would be the same in courses A and C
> 4.) The GT orientation would be the same in courses B and D   (p. 325).

Watanabe reports that "teacher B, who was different from teacher A when teaching for the non-

GT target exam course became similar to teacher A in terms of the activities relating to

translation and grammatical explanation when he was teaching on the GT-oriented target exam

course. Teacher A did not change the way he taught on either course" (p. 330). In short, teacher

A always explained grammar and translated, no matter the course while teacher B did not. So,

"why does washback happen to some teachers, but not to other?" Watanabe explains that the

teachers' educational backgrounds, their beliefs about effective teaching methods, and the

differing proximity of the courses to the respective exams could account for these differences.

His research counters the contention that the grammar translation forces it upon teaching.

However, arguably the teachers' distinct beliefs and approaches to teaching are attributable to a

greater or lesser connection to and experience with G-T as language learning approach, a

difficult model to avoid in Japan given its long history and continued place in university exams

and public school classes.   In chapter 5, this dissertation considers similarities and differences

in teachers' approaches to language instruction and to what degree teacher differences effect differences in instructional or methodological approaches.

Hamp-Lyons: TOEFL Prep-texts in the U.S. Following her TOEFL study with Alderson (Alderson & Hamp-Lyons, 1996), Hamp-Lyons (Hamp Lyons, 1998) uses the TOEFL as a subject to pursue questions about the role of textbooks in test washback. As a high-stakes English test with a format distinct from "current instructional practice in English language teaching," the TOEFL could be expected "to have considerable impact onto teaching and learning" (p. 330). If TOEFL preparation texts aid teachers in helping improve their English abilities, the textbooks could contribute beneficial washback (p. 330). The challenge is that this "requires the inclusion of appropriate content carefully designed to match learning needs and sequence and planned to support good classroom pedagogic practices; it also requires keeping close sight of what is appropriate in test preparation practices and what the demands of the test itself are" (p. 330).

Hamp-Lyons believes that the TOEFL is more likely to yield negative washback effects upon English language classes. To support that assertion, she analyzes five prominent TOEFL preparation texts and guides on the market, draws some implications from the contents, and raises some ethical concerns related to English language teaching and the role of the TESL/TEFL profession in regard to TOEFL preparation. Chapters 4 and 6 of this dissertation will use the connections between the CEFR, the PET, PET preparation guides and classroom activities to evaluate whether the PET produces negative or at least conflicting washback on language classes at *Prestigioso*.

Each book contains practice tests exercises, grammar exercises for selected grammar points, a tape and tape script, and an answer key, and a score well (p. 331). The textbooks

center upon test-taking strategies and mastery of language structures, lexis and discourse semantics. Hamp-Lyons relates the test-prep text content to the teaching task as follows:

> Because the books are built around the model of the test and because the test is not intended to reveal or reflect a model of language in use, even if it is built upon one, teacher and learners find themselves teaching—and trying to learn—discrete chunks of language rules and vocabulary items without context or even much co-text. TOEFL items are selected for their psychometric properties, which is entirely appropriate for a test within this paradigm, but it has nothing to say to a pedagogy (p. 332).

Since neither the test nor the prep guides follow any language order or grouping, teachers face a serious challenge in creating a syllabus that students can follow or from which they can learn. As if this were not enough, these texts provide little diagnostic assistance for teachers or students, compromising further the usefulness of taking repeated practice exams.

Hamp-Lyons raises the ethical concerns about this form of test preparation based on an ethical baseline of "boosting scores without mastery" as educationally indefensible and "coaching merely for score gain" as ethically questionable (1998, p. 334). Moreover, since prepbook companies cannot reprint actual old exams, their practice tests may lack some actual test properties (p. 334).

She recommends that the TESOL profession consider "how much time and student energy are diverted from mainstreams, well-designed language classes, built around appropriate curricula and materials for the proficiency level of the students, into unproductive, test-mimicking exercises" (335). The author points out that no study has been conducted demonstrating that TOEFL courses improve TOEFL scores. This merits study since so many students operate on the belief that the courses help.

Hamp-Lyons raises important questions about teaching focused upon preparation for standardized language exams and, in particular, the effects of teachers and students use of ready made exam-preparation materials. While her warnings about education that leads to improved scores without "mastery" and about test preparation materials can be designed with no logical syllabus in mind seem reasonable, the PET preparation materials in the current study demonstrate that even in heavily test-focused preparation texts, broader context and content for study can be achieved.   I will address this issue in chapters 5 and 6 of this dissertation.

Hayes and Read: IELTS in New Zealand. The IELTS, the International English Language Testing System, is an international exam created and administered through the University of Cambridge. Its design and purposes are similar to those of the U.S. TOEFL. The test is used to help students prepare for and to gain admission to universities in England, Australia and New Zealand, by testing language proficiencies in academic English. Hayes and Read (Hayes & Read, 2004) conducted a washback study of two IELTS preparation courses at two universities in New Zealand. The test purports to encourage "a positive washback effect, in the sense of encouraging candidates to develop their language proficiency in ways that will assist their study through the medium of English" (p. 98). The general approach of the research was to examine and compare two IELTS prep courses at two universities.   Course A was designed to be specifically a test prep course that featured lots of practice testing, review and listening exercises and test-specific strategies. Course B approached the test more generally and focused on developing academic language skills and familiarizing students with the test.

Hayes and Read proposed four research questions:

1. What are the significant activities in an IELTS preparation class, and how can they most usefully be recorded and classified?

2. What differences are there between a course which focuses very specifically on IELTS preparation and one that includes other learning objectives related to preparation for academic study?

3. How do the teacher's backgrounds and perceptions influence the way that the courses are delivered?

4. Is there evidence of student progress during the course towards greater proficiency in English for academic study?

The researchers investigated these questions through the use of teacher and student questionnaires, pre- and post-testing, class observations and teacher interviews. For observations, researchers used one instrument designed to record elements of communicative language teaching and another designed to record IELTS test and task activities in classes. During observations, researchers determined that it was also important to document: discussions of test-taking strategies, teacher-student interaction, class materials, homework and class atmosphere.

According to teacher-interview data, Teacher A, who taught the specific test-prep course, indicated that her course had little to do with developing students' academic language abilities and preparing them for academic work, while Teacher B, who taught the broader class, saw the class as improving students academic language abilities and preparing them for university level academic work. So, one interpretation of this data is that the broader language preparation approach to the test relates more closely to test objectives and with the academic skills needed for entering tertiary level study and other academic tasks than the course focused precisely on the test. Arguably this interview data supports the idea that perhaps course B reflected the type of washback test creators imagined.

Hayes and Read conclude that their study revealed washback effects at School A, but that these were not "the kind of positive effects envisaged at the outset of the study, in the sense that

the teacher and students were narrowly focused on practice of the test tasks" (2004, pp. 110-111). Pre-post tests revealed only modest improvements among students, but these courses were fairly short, only four weeks in duration.   Two concerns about this study are a potential lack of specificity about how the researchers determined washback, bearing in mind Alderson's and Messick's criteria, and the authors' failure to consider washback at School B.

The current dissertation research does not involve the comparison of two different approaches to standardized test preparation. Nevertheless, the discussion chapter of this dissertation will consider to some extent whether a broader or narrower approach to test preparation is what the CEFR framers and PET test producers conceived and the possibilities of a broader approach to test preparation at *Colegio Prestigioso*.

Cheng: English Certificate in Hong Kong. In 1994, the Hong Kong Examinations Authority, within the Department of Education, implemented a national-level innovation in English as a Foreign Language Instruction by revamping the Hong Kong Certificate in Education Exam (HCKEE) for English. In their fifth year of high school, most high school students in Hong Kong take the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination in English. It is one of many tests in a system driven by selection through exams. From 1994 through 1996, Liying Cheng conducted one of the largest and most thorough language washback exams to date (2005; 1998).   She documents the washback effects upon teachers and students as a result of the exam overhaul.   Cheng's research addresses three major research questions: 1. What strategies did the Hong Kong Education Authority use to implement the examination change?;   2. What was the nature and scope of the washback effect on teachers' and students' perceptions of aspects of teaching towards the new examination?; and 3. What was the nature and scope of the washback effect on teachers' behaviors as a result of the new examination?   Her comprehensive study

featured qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis.   The study consisted of surveys designed to determine teachers' and students' perceptions of the new exam.   She also conducted baseline and major study class observations of teachers and students negotiating the new exam. She followed class observations with teacher interviews.

The HKEA, a powerful educational administrative body, aspired to create positive washback that would "narrow the gap between what happens in the exam room and the real world" (1998, p. 279). Washback is an explicit goal for the HKEA and their language education program. The body hoped to foster an integrated and task-based approach to language teaching and learning; it operated from the principle that material and abilities not tested would not be taught (p. 280).

The HKEA significantly modified two sections, Papers III and IV of the exam.   In Paper III, *Integrated listening, reading and writing*, students "select from and …make use of the information they hear or read in order to carry out a variety of short tasks" and "process information by selecting and combining data from both spoken and written sources in order to complete various writing tasks" (p. 281). Paper IV was switched from *Guided Conversation* to *Role Play and Group Discussion*. Evaluation was task-based assessment that is based on "how well candidates complete the tasks" (p. 281).

Cheng's (1998), through the use of surveys, investigates the exam modifications' effects upon students' perspectives on their class activities and learning strategies. Cheng (1998) studied two cohorts, the 1994 group that took the old English exam and the 1995 group that were part of the changes and which took the new exam.   She gave each group a survey designed to determine "the intrinsic relationship between the examination change and the learning process" and compared the results (p. 280). The surveys featured two parts. Part I addressed student

demographics and the students' learning contexts (p. 281). Part II addressed "students' attitudes towards teaching and learning activities inside and outside their English lessons" (p. 282).

Based on comparisons of the two groups' perceptions, teachers' English use in classes went up; teachers discussed the exams in classes less often; students attended private tutorials outside of school more frequently; and teachers talked less to whole classes and groups.

Cheng notes, "Activities such as *organizing integrated language tasks*; *organizing group work* and *explaining mock exam papers* increased from 1994-1995," while more traditional activities declined. Classes also featured more group discussions and pair work. And, students spoke English to their teachers and classmates in and out of class. She maintains that these findings indicate a "direct washback effect on classroom activities from the students' perspectives" (p. 290-91).

Students learning motivation improved based upon students' indications that students more often watched English movies and listened to English programming. However, students' preferred learning strategies changed little.

In general, students did not indicate particularly strong feelings about tests; most replies were in the middle of the 5-point Likert scale. That said, more students in 1995 indicated that tests should not be the sole indicator for grades, while fewer thought a test scores accurately reflected abilities. Cheng emphasizes that despite students' feelings they attended private tutorials even more than in the past, reflecting a need to respond the demands of a new exam (p. 296).

According to Cheng, the HKEA's shift to a task-based exam format "relates to the extended construct validity concept of test design" (297). The WHAT (the substance) of the

exam and instruction have changed, but the HOW has not. Thus, " [t]he changes in teaching

and learning have been largely superficial" (297).

To change the *how*, that is to realize the extended construct validity (the washback effect

of this integrated and task-based new examination), genuine changes in how teachers

teach and how textbooks are designed must be involved" (297)

Cheng (2005) also studies the new exam impact upon teachers and students through class

observations.   She finds, as a result of the new test implementation, that teachers shifted their

oral activities work from oral reading and communication cards to role plays and small group

discussions, foci on the new exam. Student talk also overtook teacher talk for most teachers.

However, the patterns of teacher-student interaction did not change. Nor did it "change [their]

fundamental beliefs and attitudes about teaching and learning, the roles of teachers and students,

and how teaching and learning should be carried out" (p. 227).

Cheng (1998) takes issue with one of Shohamy's frequent premises: "The idea that 'if it

is not examined, it won't be taught." Cheng regards this tenet as overly simplistic. What

actually gets taught and consequently taught is far more complicated and involves more than the

examination with the school curriculum (297).   Cheng ultimately concludes that large scale

innovations and public examinations will not foster significant educational change without buy

in, support, implementation and effort within the actual, local teaching context.

Cheng's two-year, multi-phased washback study is perhaps the most comprehensive and

most data-driven of the washback studies to date.   Her survey designs served as a model for the

surveys given to students during data collection at *Colegio Prestigioso*. While Cheng executed

regular, thorough class observations that considered teacher-student interaction as an item for

analysis, observations and analysis centered upon quantitative representations of classroom

elements and activities.   The current dissertation project, which featured many more hours of

class observation at various levels in the studied institution than Cheng's study, collected and

analyzed classroom activities and interactions qualitatively, reviewing in detail the content and

significance of these interactions.

     Bailey: Promoting beneficial washback. Of all of the topics addressed in this section so

far, the question of the value of washback as a tool, or indicator, or resource that improves

language learning for students is the most difficult to assess. As the studies described so far

attest, different tests, different contexts, different purposes are just a few of the factors that

determine if and what type of washback will occur. What have these studies yielded that

unequivocally improves language learning? With no more certainty about the phenomenon,

controlling it and using it as a tool or resource seems premature. That said, some language

testing scholars have taken steps in trying to suggest ways washback can benefit language

learners. Bailey (1996) and Wall (2000) offer proposals.

     Bailey (1996) adapted Hughes' (1993) "Trichotomy Backwash Model" in order "to

illustrate the complex mechanisms through which washback occurs in actual teaching and

learning environments" (Bailey, 1996; Cheng and Curtis, 2004, p. 12). Hughes (A. Hughes,

1993)described his model:

> The trichotomy …allows us to construct a basic model of backwash. The nature of a test
>
> may first affect the perceptions and attitudes of the participants towards their teaching
>
> and learning tasks. These perceptions and attitudes in turn may affect what the
>
> participants do in carrying out their work (process), including practicing the kind of items
>
> that are to be found in the test, which will affect the learning outcomes, the product of the
>
> work (p. 2)" (cited in Cheng and Curtis, pp. 12-13).

The Trichotomy Backwash Model

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a) Participants – students, classroom teachers, administrators, materials developers and publishers, whose perceptions and attitudes toward their work may be affected by a test.

b) Processes – any actions taken by the participants which may contribute to the process of learning

c) Products – what is learned (facts, skills, etc.) and the quality of learning

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Adapted from Hughes, 1993, Cited by Bailey (1996) in Cheng and Curtis, p. 12.

Table 1: The Trichotomy Backwash Model

Alderson and Wall's (1993) 15 focused teaching and learning hypotheses stand in stark contrast to Hughes and Bailey's global categories (Alderson and Wall, 1993; Cheng & Curtis, 2004). Nevertheless, as we shall learn below, the two models can work in concert.

Bailey (1996), like many second language educators, considers language teaching methodology in which teachers teach language for communication, centered on communicative tasks, rather than with traditional foci such as isolated grammar instruction, to be the appropriate and dominant language teaching paradigm. From that stance, she raises the concerns that many language teaching professionals have about "external-to-programme standardized tests" that are incongruent with communicative language teaching (p. 259).

To address these concerns, she endorses the Ontario Institute for Studies of Education framework for promoting communicatively based instruction and linking it with test usage. This framework suggests that language educators:

o Start from somewhere (articulate a theoretical basis)

o Concentrate on content (communicating)

o Bias for best (encouraging performance)

- Work for washback (explicitly)

(Citing Hart, Lapkin and Swain, 1987 in Bailey, 1996, p. 261).

"Working for washback" is Bailey's focus. She conceives of washback in two parts, *washback to the learner* and *washback to the program.* Synthesizing Hughes (1993) *participants, process, products* model with Alderson and Wall's (1993) 15 hypothesis, Bailey proposes a model for washback in which a test influences students, teachers, materials writers and researchers who, with the test and language objectives in mind, engage in processes that lead respectively to learning, teaching, new materials and new research results, products. These products then inform new language learning goals and the new test, which initiates the cycle again (pp 263-64).

Among potential student participant language learning activities, Bailey includes: practicing items similar in format to those on the test; studying vocabulary and grammar rules; participating in interactive language practice; listening to non-interactive language; enrolling in test-preparation courses; requesting guidance in their studying and feedback on their performance; and skipping language classes to study for the test (pp. 264-65) These could promote positive or negative backwash "depending on whether or not their use promoted the learner's actual language development" (p. 265).

To achieve washback to the program, Bailey draws upon Shohamy's (1992) "diagnostic feedback model for assessing foreign language learning," which features six steps for achieving washback to a program. These are intended to link testing and curricula.

- Achievement and proficiency (connecting school learning with life proficiency)
- Providing detailed and meaningful diagnostic results from tests
- Test feedback should inform testing
- Administrators and teachers must collaborate in test changes

o   Use and compare normative and criterion results

o   Use communicative test that feature "discourse functions, registers and sociocultural rules"

(Shohamy, 1992, p. 515 cited in Bailey, 1996, pp. 266-257).

Though Shohamy is a fierce opponent of "prescriptive, authoritative, externally imposed tests," (1992; 1993), she believes tests can be effective because "schools will strive to meet external standards and will change teaching methods to improve performance on tests" (Shohamy, 1992, p. 514 cited in Bailey, 1996, p. 267).

Next, Bailey proposes some specific ways for promoting beneficial washback. From the washback literature, she first isolates four major areas which can contribute to beneficial washback: learning goals, authenticity, learner autonomy and self-assessment, score reporting. When language proficiency is the goal, teachers and students are working in concert. However, if the test runs contrary to class activities, students will be divided in their efforts, in effect a negative test washback effect (p. 269).

Learning goals can be linked to language proficiency by having tests that are linguistically authentic. Bailey cites Wesche's (1983) explanation:

by making our tests more reflective of the kinds of situations, language content and purposes for which second-language speakers will need their skills, we will be able to make more accurate predictions about how they will be able to function using the target language in 'real life' (Wesche 1983, p. 53 cited in Bailey, 1996, p. 269).

The concept of learner autonomy and self-assessment is based upon valuing student input and effort in their own learning. Students could self-assess their abilities, for example, using a questionnaire centered on test objectives. Bailey references von Elek's explication of the strengths of self-assessment; it promotes greater learner responsibility, helps learner diagnose her

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own weaknesses, lets learner comprehend her own proficiency level, and makes her more goal

oriented (von Elek, 1985 cited in Bailey, 1996, p. 271). These capacities are consistent with

washback's need for "internal criteria for success" (p. 271). Finally, external-to-program tests

need to provide detailed score reports, even on major proficiency tests, for teachers and students

to know precisely their ability strengths and weaknesses.

Bailey summarizes her approach to "working for washback" by proposing the following

questions that local language education reformers, teachers, or researchers could use to guide

their efforts:

1. Do the participants understand the purpose(s) of the test and the intended use(s) of the results?
2. Are the results provided in a clear, informative and timely fashion?
3. Are the results perceived as believable and fair by the participants?
4. Does the test measure what the programme intends to teach?
5. Is the test based on clearly articulated goals and objectives?
6. Is the test based on sound theoretical principles which have current credibility in the field?
7. Does the test utilize authentic texts and authentic tasks?
8. Are the participants invested in the assessment processes?

(Bailey, 1996, pp. 276-77)

Bailey has posited the goal of working for positive washback, and specifically from a

communicative language teaching and task based stance. She has also proposed some principles

and processes that language educators can use to evaluate whether an exam, such as the PET, is

yielding positive feedback in the classroom. Her piece is a conceptual one, rather than a study.

However, the principles of using communicative tests that feature "discourse functions, registers

and sociocultural rules" (See also, Shohamy, 1992) and of evaluating if the test measures what

the programme intends to teach resonate with goals of the CEFR. Therefore, in the discussion

chapter of this dissertation, based on the findings, I will evaluate whether Prestigioso's use of and preparation for the PET are yielding the positive washback Bailey might invision.

Summary of Washback Studies and Their Relevance

The preceding sub-section has presented many of the major language washback studies conducted since the sub-field's conception sixteen years ago. The sub-section also connects the principles, issues and methodologies from those studies that will be further developed or challenged in this dissertation research. Alderson and Wall (1993), in their initial field-defining work, established hypotheses such as "a test will influence teaching" and "Tests will have washback effects for some learners and some teachers, but not for others," issues that shape the current research.

A number of studies including Wall & Alderson (1993), Alderson and Hamp-Lyons (1996) and Hamp-Lyons (1998) have addressed the relationships between test orientation or purposes and test-preparation materials and the relevance of these connections upon classroom instruction. This issue will be prominent in this dissertation as it will evaluate carefully, at the classroom level, the impact of a language learning framework, the CEFR, mediated through the PET exam and the published PET-prep texts teachers and students study from in their 7th-Form classes at *Prestigioso*.

Several studies, such as Cheng (2005), Hayes and Read (2004) and Watanabe (1996), challenged simplified assertions about the extent to which standardized tests (Shohamy, 1993) determine how teachers much teach, without consideration of factors such as age, years of experience, type of teacher training, and differing perspectives on how test-preparation can be achieved in a particular context. These studies have informed the analysis of class observation

and teacher-interviews, and the issues they have raised will be discussed in relationship to Prestigioso teachers and their approaches to instruction later in this dissertation.

Finally, Cheng's (2005) studied carefully the impact of the new Hong Kong English exam upon classroom interaction. The current study will address this focus from a more nuanced, qualitative perspective to portray how teachers and students talk and what they talk about as the prepare for the PET.

Language washback is a test effect on language teaching and learning that does occur in many language education settings (Alderson, 2004). It is difficult to attribute much more to the phenomenon without qualification. The various types of tests, contexts and testing motivations make washback operate differently from setting to setting. Studying the washback effects of the CEFR and the PET at the classroom level answers the call of numerous researchers who suggest that we need more washback research in more contexts (Alderson & Wall, 1993; Bailey, 1996; Watanabe, 2004).

Chapter Summary

This chapter has reviewed the academic literature in two distinct fields, elite bilingualism in Argentina and *language testing washback*. This concluding section will highlight how this dissertation research will build upon and contribute to research in each of these areas.

De Mejía (2002) and Banfi and Day (2004) have documented the rich tradition of bilingual schools in Argentina, describing their roles in the society and general characteristics of such schools. To date, however, colegios bilingues have not been studied at the institutional level. This qualitative study provides a glimpse of one such school, its program, its curriculum and daily learning. It, of course, also addresses in detail how the school, its teachers and

students negotiate the Cambridge ESOL exams, a staple of EFL instruction in the Argentinean context.

Wall and Alderson suggested in their 1993 study that in the term during which students sat for language exams, teachers modified content and materials from those typically used, in order to prepare students for upcoming tests (See also Shohamy, 1993). Their research, which included only four to five class observations over six-week period, is insufficient in scope and depth, to provide adequate insights into this type of teaching modification. This dissertation executed a more intensive and frequent class observation schedule, accompanied by contrastive pilot study data over a three-year period. Therefore, it will shed greater and more precise insight upon the test proximity issue (See Spratt, 2005).

Alderson and Wall (1993), Shohamy (1993) and Watanabe (1996) have linked teachers' distinct beliefs and approaches to teaching are attributable to a greater or lesser connection to and experiences with particular language learning approaches and test formats. Watanabe (1996) has suggested that the format and content of tests themselves have much less to do with how teachers teach than the language approach they have learned and how adept they are at managing test content in relationship to their own approaches to teaching. However, this dissertation studies three different teachers with distinct English language backgrounds, different philosophies about teaching, and markedly different personalities, whose course content and methodologies were remarkably similar, in light of the effect of the PET on the grade-level curriculum.

Hamp-Lyons (1998) study of TOEFL test-prep materials found that such materials produced negative washback effects on English class instruction. Banfi and Day (2004) have verified that Argentinean bilingual school personnel posses high proficiency levels and excellent teacher training. At Colegio Prestigioso, teachers both create curricula and supporting texts and

materials as well as rely upon Cambridge university recommended curricula and test-centered

pre-packaged series. This research will seek to verify and extend Hamp-Lyons findings

regarding test-prep materials by pursuing the following questions. In what ways are curricula and

instructional practices re-directed or compromised by the exam and its supporting texts? Does

the use of these set of exams in this context, in which teachers have more training and

presumably control than those in the Hamp-Lyons study make a difference?

Finally, the data presented in this dissertation will address specifically the impact of the

PET upon the 7th-Form curriculum, the dynamics of 7th-Form English classes at Prestigioso, and

specifically test effects upon teacher and student oral interactions.   These foci, in and of

themselves are noteworthy because washback studies have not looked qualitatively at test effects

upon classroom dynamics and dimensions as teacher talk, teacher student interactions and

student oral communication.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Research Questions

The bilingual schools, *colegios bilingües*, of Buenos Aires, Argentina, represent one of

the oldest, richest and most successful models of foreign language education in the Americas (De

Mejia, 2004; Banfi and Day, 2004 ; Kinberg, 2001). Using Grounded Theory, this dissertation

analyzed, categorized and theorized the significance of a foreign language curriculum driven by

high-stakes standardized testing. I examined the effects of basing a language curriculum upon the

Cambridge Exam series.   Two specific dimensions of test effects are *washback effects*, "the

impact tests have on teaching and learning," and *curriculum alignment*, "the connection between

testing and the teaching syllabus" (Cheng & Curtis, 2004; Shohamy, 2001; Shohamy, 1993; and

Wall, 1993).

The global research question for this study was: **What are the washback effects of the**

Cambridge ESOL exams upon English language learning and teaching at an Argentinean

bilingual school?   This dissertation will address through three sub-questions:

1. How Preliminary Test of English (PET) affect the 7th-Form English curriculum at
   Colegio Prestigioso?

2. How does the PET affect what and how teachers at *Colegio Prestigioso* teach?

3. What impact does the PET have upon teacher-student oral interactions during English
   classes?

Research Methodology: Grounded Theory

Qualitative Methods

The intent of this research was to observe and document learning process and interaction.

Both the proposed research questions and the need to document a process in action dictated the

use of qualitative research methods. Moreover, the "complex" nature of language testing

washback called for qualitative research methods (Shohamy, et. al., 1996).   Qualitative methods

have been a fundamental part of testing washback research (Watanabe, 2004; Banerjee and

Luoma, 1997; Bello-Davila, 2004; Shahomy, 2001; Shohamy, 1993; Watanabe, 2004).

Qualitative Research and Washback Studies

Drawing upon testing washback and qualitative research literatures, Watanabe (2004)

connects and provides guidelines for qualitative research and washback studies. He proposes

three general aspects of language testing washback that should guide researchers: dimensions of

washback such as specificity, intensity, length, intentionality, and value; aspects of learning and

teaching that may be influenced by the exam; and factors mediating the process of washback

being generated.

Watanabe (2004) also identifies three sets of elements that researchers can investigate to

explore test influence on teaching and learning.   A researcher may consider 1) participants, 2)

the learning process and 3) the products (Watanabe citing Bailey, 1996 and Hughes 1993).

These elements hold similarities to previous work by Alderson and Wall (1993), who had

distinguished the categories "washback to the learner" and "washback to the programme" and in

shaping and proposing their fifteen washback hypotheses to guide researchers in studies

(Watanabe, 1996, p. 21; Bailey, 1996; Hughes, 1998, Alderson and Wall, 1993).   For a

researcher, understanding where washback can occur and determining where he or she will look

for washback will shape the type of study, and more specifically the type of data collection he or

she will conduct.   For example, understanding washback effects of an exam on an English

program requires examining curricula and discussing with administrators and teachers their

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rationales for using a particular exam. On the other hand, effects of an exam upon students might require extensive periods of classroom observation followed by student interviews.

When conducting a washback study, Watanabe recommends that researchers attempt to predict what washback would look like (2004, p. 26). Towards that end, the researcher needs to determine whether and in what ways washback was intentional or not (Watanabe, 2004, p. 27; See also Alderson and Wall, 1993, p. 127). Furthermore, washback research necessitates establishing the criteria or evidence that would demonstrate the existence of washback (Watanabe, 2004).   Watanabe suggests that, "In order to prove that washback exists, it is necessary to exclude all the possibilities other than exams that may potentially influence the teaching and learning, and it is important to 'weigh the potential social consequences of not testing at all' (Ebel, 1966, as cited in Messick, 1989, p. 86)" (p. 28).   One way of approaching and "limiting for" washback is by analyzing dimensions listed above.

Observations are a central part of language washback research. The observation process includes establishing observation instruments or procedures, conducting pre-observation interviews, recording classroom events, and conducting post-observation interviews (Watanabe, 2004, p. 30). In general the researcher is attempting to discover if *what is happening in the classroom is being influenced by the exam* as well as to determine *what might not be happening, though it is believed or predicted to be happening*? (pp. 30-31).   The nature and intentionality of washback are as important as its presence.

As is common with many qualitative methods analyzing, the data in a washback study begins during the observation and interview processes (Watanabe, 2004). During and after data collection and analysis, the researcher will interpret results and draw implications (Watanabe, 2004).   Interpretations may consider:

- What implications can be drawn for teachers, students, test developers, administrators, and future researchers?

- Which action plan can be proposed?

- What would be the best way to report the results to the audience? Which audience/s? (p. 33).

While language testing washback studies commonly employ qualitative approaches and methods, few articulate a specific approach or theoretical framework for their research. The research here employed a Grounded Theory framework and methodology for data collection and analysis. The section below articulates the theory and its relevance to this research.

Grounded Theory

Grounded Theory is a well-established qualitative research methodology (Punch, 2002; See also Bogdan and Biklen, 2002). Social scientists Glaser and Strauss first proposed Grounded Theory in their 1967 work, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*; they sought "to offer the rationale for theory that was grounded—generated and developed through interplay with data collected during research projects." They were concerned about the disconnect between social science theories and empirical research (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p. 274).

Charmaz (1994) links the epistemological stance and the implementation of Grounded Theory as method: "Grounded Theory method stresses discovery and theory development rather than logical deductive reasoning which relies on prior theoretical frameworks" (p. 96). This stance leads researchers to use four strategies:

1. data collection and analysis proceed simultaneously

2. both the process and products are research are shaped from the data rather than from preconceived logically deduced theoretical frameworks

3. verification occurs via systematic comparisons between observations and settings

    4.   grounded theorists study process and participate in an on-going research process

<div align="right">(Charmaz, 1994, pp. 96-97).</div>

Punch has identified the appeal of Grounded Theory as its usefulness in "discovering concepts, hypotheses and theories" (Punch, 1998, p 169; see also Strauss & Corbin, 1994).

Grounded Theory Analysis

Strauss and Corbin have established description, conceptual ordering, and theorizing as the major, overarching goals of the Grounded Theory method and for accomplishing the goal of developing theory in qualitative research (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).   The basic operations of Grounded Theory and theory development include: asking questions, making theoretical comparisons and conducting theoretical sampling (Strauss and Corbin). Strauss and Corbin explain the functions of these operations as follows:

> *Asking questions*: "to open up lines of inquiry"

> *Making theoretical comparisons*: to determine "properties and dimensions of categories"

> *Theoretical sampling*: "Sampling on the basis of emerging concepts, with the aim being to explore the dimensional range or varied conditions along which the properties of concepts vary" (Strauss and Corbin, p. 73).

Researchers execute these global principles and basic operations conducted through a system of coding (Strauss and Corbin, p. 87; p. 101).

Punch has identified two activities that are fundamental to qualitative analysis: *abstracting* and *comparing*.   Researchers use abstraction to move from concrete data items to more general descriptive concepts; this process is known as analytic induction. Comparison is closely related to abstraction and is a fundamental exercise in grounded theory analysis:

At the first level of coding, it is by comparing different indicators in the data that

we arrive at the more abstract concepts behind the empirical data. Thus it is comparison

which leads to raising the level of abstraction, to the 'one-upping' (Glaser, 1978) so

essential to conceptual development.

(Punch, 1999, p. 209; See also, Strauss & Corbin, 1994)

Punch offers this succinct and useful description of grounded theory:

The essential idea in discovering a grounded theory is to find a core category, at

a high level of abstraction but grounded to the data, which accounts for what is central in

the data. (10)

The abstraction process occurs physically and mentally during data collection and regular (daily)

memoing through the developing, comparing and constant refining of codes.   There are three

types of coding in grounded theory analysis: *open coding*, *axial coding* and *selective coding*

(Strauss and Corbin, 1998).   Initial, or *open*, coding uses explicit, empirical information in the

data to create basic, substantive codes. This represents one level of abstraction.   During *axial*,

or theoretical coding, the researcher compares and interconnects the substantive codes to create

theoretical codes that serve as "a set of propositions."   This marks the second level of

abstraction.   Finally, in *selective coding* the researcher pinpoints a ***core category***. Strauss and

Corbin explain, "Selective coding is the process of integrating and refining the theory. In

integration, categories are organized around a central explanatory concept" (161). Building upon

the work of Strauss and Corbin, Punch describes the core category as follows:

The core category is the central phenomenon around which other categories are

integrated, and the story line is a descriptive narrative about this central phenomenon.

The story line is seen as a device which gets you started in selective coding, equivalent to

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a description of what the axial coding has produced. When analysed, it becomes your

core category (Punch, 1999, pp. 210-217).

Arriving at such a "core category" is, for Strauss and Corbin to have yielded an explanatory theory, the principle at the heart of their qualitative approach. They describe *theorizing* succinctly as follows: "What do we mean by theory? For us, theory denotes a set of well-developed categories (e.g., themes, concepts) that are systematically interrelated through statements of relationship to form a theoretical framework that explains some relevant social, psychological, educational, nursing, or other phenomenon. The statements of relationship explain who, what, when, where, why, how, and with what consequences an event occurs." (22)

The ultimate goal of the research was to generate an explanation of how teachers, students, administration and negotiate the use of the Cambridge University ESOL exams in their language teaching and learning. Grounded Theory Methodology facilitated the development of such a theory.

Setting and Participants

Preliminary Research

While studying in Buenos Aires during the summer of 2003, I learned of *Colegio Prestigioso*, a full-time bilingual immersion school, from a colleague who worked at the institution. I visited the school one day, met the English program director and observed a class of 7th grade students. Their language abilities surpassed those of many language majors at the state universities with which I had had experience.

Based upon this initial exposure, I developed an exploratory project to learn about how the program at this *colegio bilingüe* operated. In May-June 2004, I executed a general, ethnographic-styled pilot study there. My broad, preliminary research interests were learning

how the school operated and what teachers did to help their students "succeed" as English language learners. Data collection methods included daily class attendance and observation (fieldnotes), participant observation (guest lecturer), and interviews with the school's English Program Directors and teachers at different grade levels.

Review and analysis of fieldnotes and interview transcripts pointed to an interesting dynamic at the institution. Immersion programs generally endeavor to prepare their students to succeed on exams and become proficient English speakers. The Argentinean school in this project is typical in this respect. It emphasizes the Cambridge ESOL (English) Exam series, a set of internationally regarded English exams, that students at this school, and many others like it worldwide, begin taking in junior high school (7th grade) and continue taking throughout high school.

Exam preparation instruction must focus upon rules, structures, and usage because the test assesses this knowledge. The test also features aural-oral components, but these are not the most dominant sections of the exam. I became interested in investigating how teachers negotiate the Cambridge series of exams and other aspects of language learning in their foreign language instruction.

During the spring of 2005, I designed a pilot research project to investigate formally English language learning at the school, with particular focus upon its use of the Cambridge University ESOL Exams. The pilot study, executed between May 1 and June 15, 2005, explored: the language proficiencies instructors strive to develop in their students; the approaches and learning activities teachers use to develop these proficiencies; and the ways in which the Cambridge English as Second Language Exams affect the ways teachers organize and execute their classes.

The research site, *El Colegio Prestigioso*, is a Spanish-English bilingual school in an affluent section of the Argentinean capital, Buenos Aires. The facility is a former presidential residence converted into a school, just over 40 years ago. *Prestigioso* began intensive English instruction in 1992 and converted to a bilingual immersion program in 2000. The school's approximately 450 students are from the middle and upper middle classes. The school provides a complete Pre-K through 12th grade educational program, with morning classes in Spanish daily and afternoon classes in English three days per week. Students participating in the preliminary study were the 40-50 students per grade in primary grade 7 and secondary grades 2 & 3.

There are approximately 30 afternoon bilingual English faculty. Nearly 100% are Argentineans. They have been trained as elementary teachers, English teachers, or as Spanish-English translators. Teacher-participants for this study included the 2-3 faculty per grade indicated.

Finally, two administrators were also participants in this program. First is the English-Division Director who administers all afternoon academic activities, the English education program at Prestigioso. She has been on staff since the school's creation. The second is the secondary testing administrator who coordinates the logistics of the Cambridge Exams for the school.

From May 1 to June 18, I observed classes 3 hours per day each afternoon.   The classes observed were 6th grade, 7th grade, and the 1st year of high school. These grades were chosen because at the end of the 7th grade, students sit for their first of the series of exams the Preliminary English Test (PET).

From mid May until early July, I conducted 45-minute to 1.5-hour interviews with each of the teachers whose classes I had observed. Interviews were conducted in Spanish or English

depending on the preference and comfort level of the teacher interviewed. I also interviewed the

English Program Director and the Testing Administrator in late July. Interview protocols appear

in *Appendix B*.

In addition to the formal class observations and interviews, I interacted with teachers and

students in informal settings such as the teachers' lounge, school courtyard and after-school

extracurricular activities.   Teachers and administration were forthcoming and helpful with texts,

materials and school documents I needed for research.   An inventory of pilot study data appear in

Appendix D.

The Setting: Colegio Prestigioso

Colegio Prestigioso is a Pre-K through Secondary 5 (U.S. 12th grade) institution. It is a

partial immersion model in which students from grades K – Sec 5, take courses in Spanish every

morning and in English three afternoons per week, totaling 12 hours of instruction in the second

language, the local standard for a bilingual school according to area standards. Teachers at

El Colegio Prestigioso conduct classes in English and urge their students to use more and more

spoken English in class as they progress through school.   From grades K-6, English courses

include emphases on language arts, literature, projects, science, history and language/structural

study. In the 7th form, the final year of primary school, students continue to study literature and

language, but considerable class time is also given explicitly to grammar and vocabulary review

and preparation for the Preliminary English Test (PET), the first in the Cambridge ESOL series.

The Teacher-participants

At *Colegio Prestigioso*, there were three full-time 7th-Form teachers, Darla, Laura and

Janet. Each teacher was responsible for one group, or class, of students to which she taught the

classes *Language* and *Getting Ready for PET*.   Darla taught group 7A, Laura taught 7B and

Janet taught 7C.   Primary-level English classes met on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday

afternoons.   These afternoon sessions were divided into two 1 hour and 25 minutes sessions, one

from 1:30 to 2:55pm and the second from 3:10 to 4:35pm. Between them was a 15-minute

recess during which students could play freely in the schools patios under the supervision of the

primary teachers who watched them. Each week, during one of the class blocks, students had

literature class. For these classes, the teachers rotated to work with a different class group.

Darla taught literature to 7C, Janet taught it to 7B, and Laura taught literature to Darla's group,

7A.   Below are brief descriptions of each of the three teachers.

     Darla. Darla was 43 years old and had been teaching English for over 20 years at the

time of the study.   She had been teaching the 7th-Form at *Colegio Prestigioso* for at 7 years.

Therefore, she was the most experienced and served as the *de facto* leader and coordinator of the

7th-Form.

     She herself learned English by attending bilingual primary and secondary schools in

Argentina. However, at the schools she attended, the teachers were native speakers from

England, and the curriculum featured English content courses in history, geography, mathematics

and poetry. She regarded schools and programs of that type to be more advanced and more

"bilingual" than *Colegio Prestigioso*. Following high school, Darla completed a rigorous five-

year English teacher education degree at a major public university.   Her tertiary credential

certifies her to teach at the primary and secondary levels.

     Darla is a veteran teacher, with seven years teaching 7th-Form and negotiating the PET.

She possessed thorough understanding of the PET.   She knew that she was preparing students

for the PET, and faced the same syllabus demands as the other 7th-Form teachers, her calm

speech and frequent use of humor that related to students' lives as well as to test-prep materials suggested that she was comfortable managing the test in her classes. Whenever possible, even when negotiating test-prep activities, she tried to relate the class, the topics, and the subjects of reading to her students' experiences or in a comical way they could relate to.

During interviews, she did not seem at all bothered or inconvenienced by the experience. She was eager to provide candid and quite analytical perspectives on the school, the 7th-Form curriculum, her goals for her students, and the way classes operated.

Laura. Laura was 38 years old. The year of the study was her first working with the 7th-Form students. She had previously taught at Prestigioso as a secondary level teacher and had served as substitute English teacher in primary grades. She left English teaching appointments twice as Prestigioso for the births of her two children. After each, she was rehired. She had nearly 20 years of teaching experience, with some in music and most in English.

She first began learning English at the age of five in a bilingual primary school. She continued to study English intensively in secondary school. She did not study at private schools or institutes. For tertiary training, she attended a private college, for foreign language teachers training. The prestigious school featured a academically challenging and personally overwhelming program. She reported that more of the focus was on high-level English linguistic proficiency and skill. There were foreign language methodology courses, but they were not emphasized as much as language courses. Laura possessed very high English communication and overall language proficiency.

During her interview, she expressed concern both for students' overall well-being as young people, as well as their progress in English. At times in classes, a straining, pleading voice urged students to try harder and to perform better on tests and mock PET activities. On

other occasions, a low, calm, reassuring tone seemed to connote a genuine concern for her students. Also in her interview, Laura talked about how she has always demanded excellence from herself in her English language learning and in her English teaching.   She stated that she did not think I had ever observed a "normal" class nor had I seen her at her best.   In part, she attributed these sub-par [her characterization] classes to the logistical challenges of the demands of the syllabus and logistical irregularities such as students missing days from class for school related trips. Based upon numerous formal and informal conversations with her, I have the impression that my presence in her classes made her somewhat, but not overly, nervous about my research and my evaluations of her.

Janet. Janet was 50 years old, and the year of the study was her very first at *Prestigioso* and her first working with primary level students. Her path to teaching was a little different than that of the other 7th-Form teachers or of *Prestigioso* teachers in general.   During primary and secondary school, she attended a very prestigious, private British bilingual school. Upon completion of high school, she took and scored well on Cambridge's highest level English proficiency exam.   She went to university to study psychology, but ultimately needed to work. She did not complete university.   Given her high-level English skills, she was hired by and worked for many years as a flight attendant for a major American airline. She eventually left the airlines to have and raise her children.

Once her children were older, Janet returned to work teaching English classes in private companies. She then completed a teacher training program at a prestigious teacher training college affiliated with the British school she had attended.   She had taught secondary level writing at another bilingual school the year before.

The class she worked with had a reputation among the other 7th-Form teachers and even previous teachers in lower grades as a particularly challenging group in terms of behavior and commitment to English study. Class observation and her own reflections indicated that she struggled pedagogically and emotionally managing this group of students.   My presence as a regular observer was likely an additional challenge and stressor for her.

Data Collection

Data collection for this project took place between August 1, and December 22, 2006 at *El Colegio* in Buenos Aires, corresponding to the school's spring, or second, semester and the term in which students take the Cambridge exams. Class observation and interview data from the pilot study suggested that this study focus upon three grades, the 7th and final year of primary school (7th form) during which students take the PET exam and the second and third years of secondary (2nd and 3rd years), when students take the First Certificate Exam (FCE).

Class Observations

In order to document teaching and learning activities, I observed classes in the 7th-Form of primary and the 3rd year of secondary. Observations techniques were informed by Bogdan and Biklen (2003) and Strauss and Corbin (1998). I collected field notes by attending and observing a minimum of two 1hr and 20 minute class sessions per week per grade. Typically, I attended and observed four classes for each grade each week.

During classes attended, I collected extensive typed field notes using a portable electronic word processor, noting teaching approaches, activities executed, student responses, and direct and indirect references to the Cambridge exam material.

Student Questionnaires

Since washback is defined as test impact upon language learning as well as teaching, it was essential to investigate students' experiences. To elicit student perceptions of the Cambridge tests, the preparation process, and reactions to the test at the end of the semester, I administered questionnaires to all students in the 7th form as well as 2nd and 3rd years of high school. I developed this questionnaire by modifying Cheng's (2005;1998) survey for evaluating student perceptions and activities related to high-stakes exams.

I administered the questionnaires twice, once in August at the semester when the PET and First Certificate exams were administered and a second time in late November, near the end of the semester.

Interviews

Teacher interviews were conducted near the beginning and end of the research period. I conducted two (2) 45 minute semi-structured interviews with all English teachers at each grade level; there were a minimum of three teachers at each grade level. Initial interview protocols appear in Appendix B and secondary interview protocols appear in Appendix C.

As both participant teachers and I possessed advanced competencies in English and Spanish, I offered the participants the option of doing the interview in the language in which they felt most comfortable. The interview sites were most often teacher's own classrooms before or after school. Occasionally, they were conducted in an unused office or at quiet cafés near the school. These were comfortable, familiar locales for the teachers.

While the primary focus was upon teachers' instructional perspectives and methods, I also interviewed the two English program directors for their perspectives on curriculum, teaching approaches and the role of the Cambridge tests at the institution and for parental stakeholders. I

had already conducted initial 1.5 hour interviews with these administrators during the pilot study. I conducted an additional 45-minute interview at the end of the term, in early December. Follow-up protocols were based upon review and analysis of the initial interviews and data collected during the semester of research.

For interviews conducted in Spanish, I collaborated with a native, Argentinean transcriptionist in Buenos Aires and a bilingual Uruguayan transcriptionist and Spanish graduate student in Athens, Georgia, to prepare transcripts.

Additional Data

In addition to in-class observations and formal interviews, I engaged in informal participant observation before, during and after classes, around school, and in faculty lounge. Interactions occurred in either Spanish or English depending on the situation.

In addition, I attended and documented meetings such as the parent-information meeting held at the beginning of the term to discuss the test or faculty meetings in which test concerns were discussed.

Role of the Researcher

This research project is one I was well qualified and positioned to execute. For the four summers prior to the formal data collection, I lived, studied and worked in Buenos Aires.   For two of these summers, I did preliminary field work and a pilot study at the proposed research site from which I gained familiarity with the school's academic program, its faculty, students, classroom learning activities, utilization of the Cambridge exams and social context. I developed professional and personal rapport with faculty and students, a vital prerequisite for conducting the study.

Data Analysis

Data Analysis Procedures

Grounded Theory calls for the researcher to develop theory via a continual process of observing, asking questions, and making theoretical comparisons with the goal of producing a theory to explain dimensions of the researched phenomenon or setting (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). This study has attempted to develop a theory that explains the washback effects of the Cambridge exams upon language teaching and learning in an Argentinean bilingual school. Grounded Theory requires continual evaluation and coding of data throughout the research process (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

The first level of coding, open coding, began as I analyzed pilot data and preliminary interviews even before executing the formal dissertation data collection. I had also written several analytical memos regarding findings to that point. During the dissertation data collection, I regularly reviewed and coded class observations and early-semester interviews. I also compared new codes and concepts with those from the pilot data. I coded weekly during the semester of data collection. I also carefully analyzed initial interviews and compared them with in-coming class observation data in order to inform and refine the second/follow-up interview protocols. Therefore, I constantly coded, compared and analyzed data during collection.

Once the data collection period ended and I had established complete bodies of class observation data, corresponding teacher interview data, and field notes from participant observation of additional school processes and activities, I executed microanalysis, line-by-line, coding and analysis of each piece of data (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). I engaged in a process of triangulation among participant observation data, class observations, and teacher interview in

which I continually compared, questioned and criticized emerging codes and concepts from the data.

The pilot study produced data for a range of grades, from early primary through the third-year of secondary at *Prestigioso*. The dissertation data collection concentrated on the 7th-Form and 3rd-Yr classes, teachers and students since those were the years in which students sat for Cambridge Exams. Through the data analysis process, I determined that the marked transformation in the substance and format of 7th-Form classes, compared to earlier primary grades, suggested that it was in this context that washback issues were most salient.

Through this process of constant comparison and review (Punch, 1999), I identified two theoretical-level categories that connected, explained and grouped the many individual codes that emerged during the various rounds of open coding and microanalysis (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Punch, 1999). These categories were test impact upon the EFL curriculum and global trends in the 7th-Form program and upon student oral communication in the 7th-Form Language classes.

What Comes Next

In Chapter 4, I outline general study findings regarding the overall history and current practice of English instruction at *Prestigioso*, the nature of the PET exam, and the impact of the exam on the 7th-Form curriculum. In Chapter 5, I suggest that the PET Exam fosters a culture of correction, a heavily grammatical focus to instruction, and the predominant role of mock PET exams in 7th-Form Language classes. In Chapter 6, I argue that the PET fosters limited student oral output and communications in these same Language classes. Chapter 7 provides a summary and implications of the study.

CHAPTER 4

SETTING THE SCENE: THE SCHOOL AND THE TEST

In this chapter I provide an ethnographic portrait of the history and current practice of English language instruction at *Colegio Prestigioso.* I then identify key aspects of the format, development and premises of the Preliminary English Test the Colegio uses as one of its primary measures of success in creating Spanish-English bilinguals.

The Colegio Prestigioso

School Setting and History

A small, private Catholic school of 450 students, *Colegio Prestigioso* is located in the upscale residential barrio of Belgrano in the capital city of Buenos Aires. An eclectic mixture of modern boutiques, French styled buildings, free-standing homes, and high-rise condominiums forms the area's landscape. Careful observation reveals a few ornate embassies and ambassadorial residences of some smaller nations. In the blocks surrounding the school are a couple of sidewalk cafes, a few residences, a bookstore, a copy shop, and the requisite *kioscos*, all common fixtures in *porteño* neighborhoods. The central building of the *Prestigioso* campus, well barricaded within surrounding walls, in the early 20th century served as the residence of one of Argentina's former presidents.

In 1957, a group of parents who "wanted their children to be educated according to the values of Christian families and not in institutions that were largely commercial enterprises" (*El libro de los colegios*) established *Colegio Prestigioso.*   To the present day, the Parental Commission, elected annually by student parents, guides the direction and administration of the school. The official statement of the school's values and purposes proposes to offer educational

center which promotes: "a cultural tradition, a civic example, an expression of solidarity, and a testimony to humility" *(Prestigioso* Official Website*)* The pursuit and implementation of these goals are informed by the schools' interpretation of the Catholic faith.

Most public, or state schools, in Argentina are underfunded, face frequent student and faculty strikes, and deliver an inadequate level of education (La Nacion, January 13, 2008). For these reasons, virtually all families in the middle class and above in Argentina send their children to some type of private school; many without such means are struggling to send their children to private schools as well (La Nacion, January 13, 2008). Such schools number in the hundreds of them in Buenos Aires metropolitan area. *Colegio Prestigioso* is one of them. It some senses, this school could be identified as elite, as it is not open to everyone and carries a substantial price tag, $1600.00 *pesos argentinos* ($500.00USD) per month, an amount approximately 25% more than a typical salary in Argentina. Even so, *Prestigioso* not nearly so exclusive and expensive as some of the oldest, most prestigious British schools such as St. Andrews and St. Catherine's. The families who comprise the school are members the middle and upper middle class. Most are professionals, working as lawyers, bankers, accountants and the like. The rest are fairly successful business people. Many must sacrifice for their children to attend. They pay for a desirable religious and cultural environment, solid general academic preparation, strong English program, and safe, well- maintained facilities and resources. In addition to maintaining a nice property of substantial size in the Belgrano area, *Prestigioso* also owns recreational fields in the suburbs and a modest lodge in the Bariloche ski-resort area in Patagonia. Such properties are quite common for most private schools in Buenos Aires as they support physical education and recreational activities for the school.

Upon walking through *Colegio Prestigioso's* main gate, in the front of the property, immediately one marvels at the very large beautiful but understated white three-story house at the center of the campus.   In front and to the sides of this large building is a courtyard, a space that seems like a large patio because the students hang out, play board games, talk and play football (soccer) there during breaks.   This patio is also the stage for outdoor events such as the annual fashion show and graduation ceremony.

After climbing the stairs from the courtyard and entering the main hall, the ornate vaulted ceilings, hardwood floors and the large fireplace connote the tradition, the sincerity, the seriousness and warmth of the school and its members. In this downstairs area are administrative offices, the school library and a couple of utility rooms.   Upstairs are classrooms and teacher meeting rooms.

Attached the left and right sides of the original residence are three-story additions that house classrooms, used primarily as pre-K and primary classrooms. Another moderately sized patio separates the main building from smaller, multi-storied classroom buildings at the rear of the property, buildings that house the secondary program.

It is in this place that *Prestigioso's* students grow up. Most arrive at age two or three and graduate from high school inside the school walls.   Very few students leave the school early and even fewer join it after primary school. Their educations, their friends, their development, and lives center on this nurturing institution.

Colegio Prestigioso features a full-time, year-long academic program. Classes begin each March and conclude in December. The students have summer break during part of December, January and February.   The English Program is a major part of the school's larger educational program and runs throughout the school year.

English Program Development

When the school was founded in 1957, English instruction was not a major educational focus. For many years in Argentina, all schools public and private were required to offer some foreign language training for at least one period per day (Interview with Colegio Administrative Secretary). In the school's initial years, secondary-level students had only one, 40-minute period of English each day.

Between the school's founding in 1957 and 1966, the school had established primary-level English. By 1966, primary students took English for an hour and a half three afternoons per week (English Department Head Interview). In the early 1980s, English was expanded to the whole afternoon session, 2:00-4:00pm, three days per week. In the early 1990s, *Prestigioso* further extended afternoon English for primary students to 2.5 hours and initiated 1.5 hour afternoon English sessions for secondary students. In 1993, secondary students began studying English for two (2) hours each afternoon. *Colegio Prestigioso* thus expanded its afternoon English program in gradual steps over a nearly 30-year period. In 1999, *Colegio Prestigioso* began a major transition in its larger educational mission and in its English program – the transition to a bilingual school.

Transformation to Bilingual School

As noted earlier, waves of European immigration to Argentina throughout the 19th century gave rise to bilingual schools conceived to preserve European heritage languages and to develop Spanish skills of these new immigrant students. In succeeding generations, some of the British schools, such as St. Andrew's and St. Catherine's transformed into elite bilingual schools promoting British language and culture for their now native Spanish-speaking students. *Colegio Prestigioso* was not one of these schools. Its transition to a bilingual program, nevertheless, was motivated by and modeled after traditional bilingual education in Buenos Aires.

School administration, faculty and parents collaborated in the transition to and implementation of the bilingual program. In 2000, *Prestigioso* began the program. The English curriculum at the primary level was based on projects in content areas (science projects, history projects, social science projects). In Secondary, English literature, history, biology, maths, and business were now taught in English, following guidelines for the British International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE). With the bilingual program came a new schedule; all students from Kindergarten-5 through Secondary 5th Year would have English classes 3 afternoons per week for four (4) periods of 40 minutes each.

Since 2001 *Colegio Prestigioso* has been a member of the English Speaking Scholastic Association of River Plate (ESSARP), an association of bilingual schools in Argentina and Uruguay. This association sets standards for bilingual schools in the region, provides an extensive library of resources and advanced professional development for English teachers, and coordinates international exams such as the Cambridge ESOL Series.

English Program Overview and Curricula

Prestigioso has three levels for its English Program: Initial, Primary, and Secondary. The Initial level, which can began as early as age 2, features exposure to words, games, songs and basic routines in English. Kindergarten 5 (age 5) is the first year in which students experience a fully developed English curriculum for the 3 days per week, full afternoon block that is the norm for primary-level students. The Primary level consists of First through Seventh Forms. Below are two vignettes that provide some flavor of primary-level English classroom language activities.

A Third-Form class session. Eight-year olds bound into Andrea's classroom located on the 2nd floor of the main campus building. It is about 1:40pm. I greet the students as they enter

the classroom. They are settling. One student asks me in English what my name is. I answer, "David". I sit in one of the desks at the back of the classroom. Once all students are present and at their desks, Andrea says to the students, "shall we pray." In unison, the teacher and students recite a prayer in English that talks of "God making the trees, God making the mountains, and God making me."

Following the prayer, the teacher says to the group, "Today is Friday so you have a lot of invitations to go to friends' house." She also explains the opposite situation -- that friends could come to your house. The teacher calls on the students to tell where they are going. Andrea reminds them that they need to answer with "I'm going." One student states, "I'm going to Paula's". Another says "Today, Pablo is coming to my house." Several students give similar answers. Andrea reminds the students about using the possessive. "Remember that," she says.

The teacher, using topics which are familiar to and of interest to her students, builds on the "Where are you going" question with "What are you going to do at _____'s house?" Eager to talk, students raise their hands, bounce in their seats and occasionally shout answers out of turn. Students offer their ideas, "we play football", "We play card games." One student mentions a cat. The teacher pursues a line of descriptive questions about the cat. The student replies, "Anita's cat is funny, but it's lazy."

The teacher lets students try, say what they can, and then follows up with additional lines of questions based on students' answers. The teacher establishes and maintains a comprehensible context in which students can hear meaningful language and in which they can participate. The language use is simultaneously informal, personal, and academic.

The students become talkative and noisy leading the teacher and students to bring up the "yellow sun" system. The teacher and students explain the system to me together. The students

are "collecting" yellow sun stickers (in a notebook) "for behavior and speaking." If they speak English or behave properly they receive yellow suns. If they misbehave or speak Spanish, they can lose them. Students' smiles and giddiness suggest they like the system. The teacher explains that the suns correspond to a current reading unit. When they studied the solar system, they used stars. The teacher and students sing a song, in English, corresponding to the use of the stickers as well.

While the students are placing suns on a wall chart, another student stands on the desk next to where I am sitting to place the appropriate daily vocabulary cards for the day and date on a calendar at the back of the room.

Andrea says to the class, "How is the weather, today cool or warm?" "Let's read the calendar," she proposes. Collectively, the students say or read, "Today is Friday." Together, the teacher and students say "Tomorrow is Saturday." The students report that "Today is cloudy and cool." The teacher replies "so/so." She ponders, "Is it cloudy?"

Following the calendar work, the teacher and students start with the first of several activities discussing animals and their characteristics. Andrea states, "Birds can fly because they have _____ ?" The students answer "wings; feathers." She then asks, "Do birds have mouths?" The students work collectively to answer. One students says "beaks." The teacher repeats and confirms, "They have beaks." Andrea draws on the board a bird's head with a beak. She labels it "beak." When one student comments in Spanish, several students begin singing "Say goodbye to the yellow sun," a short tune that students sing in English to remind and reprimand students for speaking Spanish in class. Andrea resumes, "The dolphin and shark have (something)…" As a group, the students respond, "fin." The teacher sketches a fin on the board. The students comment that the teacher's drawing is "excellent," "beautiful." Some

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students are moving about and many are not seated. They seem to be excited about the activity. The teacher draws an elephant and talks about the "trunk" and "tusk."   Andrea suggests that some "animals have bottom." Many have – but something else.   The students answer "tail."

Next, Andrea explains a game that the students will play with picture cards. She shows part of the picture as a hint. The students are to guess which animal it might be. For example, "Is it a whale?" Andrea reminds the students, "you raise your hand" in order to have a turn to guess.

In response to the first partial picture, a student asks, "Is it a penguin?"   Andrea asks the class, "What do you think?"   Collectively, the teacher and students say "Yes it is!" The game proceeds in this pattern--the teacher calls on students.   One guesses. The teacher seeks class confirmation of the student's answer, and the students collectively state, "yes, it is."

Hands raised and out of their seats students are eager for a chance to guess.   Their behavior reflects confidence, interest, and engagement in working in English on the tasks at hand. The class continues with other related activities until the afternoon break at 2:50pm.

This vignette illustrates how students in the First through Sixth Forms of Primary School learn English in an immersion environment in which English language and structures are interwoven children's literature, history, and geography.   The curricula are organized into thematic units, such as learning about animals in the 3rd Form or the solar system in the 6th Form. Much of the work teachers and students do is centered on projects. For example, 6th Form students read and learn about Egyptian history and then construct models, like pyramids, and share their work with classmates in the form of oral class presentations.

Seventh Form, the final year of primary school, marks as major transition as students continue to study literature and language, but also begin to spend considerable class time

explicitly studying grammar and vocabulary in preparation for the Preliminary English Test, the first in the Cambridge ESOL series. Exam preparation instruction focuses increasingly upon rules, structures, and usage because the test prioritizes this knowledge. The test also features aural-oral components, but these are not its most dominant sections.

A typical day in a 7th-Form class. On this spring day in September, like every afternoon at 1:30pm, all primary level students and teachers meet in the courtyard for organization and greetings. This gathering follows students' lunch and recess after the morning session of Spanish classes. Groups of girls are chatting or playing board games on the large porch and most boys are scurrying about the tiled patio with foam *pelotas* (soccer balls) engaged in at least three different chaotic games. Teachers implore their students cease their activities – "Children, please line up and stop talking." Quieting them is no small feat. Linda, the Head of the English Department presides. Her greeting, "Good afternoon boys and girls, " resonates over the public address system marking the start of this day's English session. In unison, the students reply, "Good afternoon, Miss Linda." Linda directs teachers and students to head to their classrooms. I walk with Laura, a 7th-Form teacher, and her class. It takes us five or six minutes to walk to the back of the campus and climb the stairs of the multi-storied building to her classroom on the fourth floor.

Laura calls the class to order, yelling a bit over noisy students. Most students are chatting in Spanish; a couple of boys chase each other around the room. A couple of students come to visit my station in the back of the room, and ask me about the machine I am writing on.

The students sit in three sets of two columns together. Two students sit side-by-side in four rows. This neat linear pattern stands in contrast to the blue sweaters have been strewn over chairs and to the boys' white dress shirts disheveled from the football matches.

Laura indicates that today's work with begin with activities from the PET Masterclass text Unit 17.1, entitled "The Working World." Laura, in a firm, smooth voice reminds students to get out books. After a few minutes of settling and chatting, the students are quiet and are listening. Laura asks a student, "Can you start please?"

The teacher and students work through a couple of vocabulary activities in which students are exposed to terms like, *bank*, *instruct*, *programme* and *teach*. Students also practice forming profession names by modifying other nouns. For example, Laura prompts, "person who takes dogs for a walk. He's a dog …" A student answers "walker." Darla goes on, "we have all these jobs, people – professions. Would any of you consider becoming a dog walker?" The students emphatically and collectively respond, "no." One male student quickly adds, "it depends on the amount of money." Laura talks to students about having jobs that they may not like while studying and university. She also mentions that she knows someone who makes a lot of money dog walking.

The teacher and students continue by executing a fast-paced drill of converting "bank" to "banker" and "photograph" to "photographer" and the like. Most students appear eager and engaged. There is not, though, a lot of time or a lot of leeway in what they are expected to say.

Skipping the listening section and activities, Laura and the students move on to the grammar section for the unit. The focus is on differentiating infinitives used to connote "thinking actions" or "action purposes." Laura begins by posing the question "what do you study for?" and then answers it herself, "to get good marks, so when you go to Universal Studios, you can understand." Laura explains, "We use infinitives after certain verbs, nouns and pronouns to talk about a thinking action (T) or to talk about the purpose of an action (P)." The teacher and students complete together a grammar exercise from the textbook. Individual

students read a sentence and indicate whether the infinitive fits into the "thinking" or "purpose" category. At times, a student answers or students answer aloud collectively. Laura praises them. Laura and the students negotiate and practice together phrases like, "she called to arrange." She provides, "I called to arrange a meeting with you." A female student asks if "to arrange" works with a program. As they work through the exercise, most of the students are on task.

They continue with another grammar exercise. Individual students read their answers for the class, and the teacher affirms or corrects. Laura walks about the class as the students share. While most students are writing, correcting, marking in their books, a few boys are not paying attention. Laura scolds one boy who had not done his work at home and is not paying attention in class.

The final activity for the day is a reading entitled "What is Raleigh International?" It is a descriptive and promotional text about a humanitarian travel abroad program for young people. Laura informs students that they will complete this activity quickly because it was previously assigned as homework. She asks a few students individually if they have done it. Some say yes. She conveys to those who were absent from the previous class what they need to do to complete the assignment.

A female student volunteers to begin reading the text. Laura follows up on the section just read; her focus is structural in nature, commenting on the uses of "would like" and "would dislike." Laura states, "remember that this is reading practice for Reading Paper 3," a reference to PET exam. A male student goes on reading to the end of the passage. Laura asks the class one of the related comprehension questions next to the reading, relating it to students' experiences. Some of these are: "What part of a Raleigh International expedition would you enjoy the most?" "What activities would you find the most difficult?" "What do you think you would learn from

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the experience?" Various students respond orally. If a student's answer does not address the question or does not refer to the appropriate section of the text, Laura also explains why the answer will not work in the context of the PET exam.

This pattern continues; another female student reads and answers a question. The teacher reads the last of the four content questions: "What new skill did he [Chris] learn?" A student reads. The teacher asks the class what a "skill" is. She answers herself with "it is an ability – something you learn to do." As Laura reviews the choices for one question, she and a student discuss a choice and why it is or is not the correct answer.

A female student reminds Laura that it is break time. Laura agrees and dismisses the group. Most students bolt for the door to join their friends downstairs on the patio. A few students stay behind to chat with Laura, mostly about their schoolwork.

In this vignette, while meaning-focused area instruction continues to some extent, we see the advent of a more grammar and form-focused approach to instruction that will become even more distinct in *Language* classes in secondary school. I will illustrate in subsequent chapters how the PET changes both the content and interaction in *Prestigioso* English-medium classrooms.

Seventh-Form curriculum and language tasks. To contextualize the discussion of the PET exam's impact presented in the next two chapters, it is essential to have a sense of the types of tasks and activities in which 7th-Form teachers and students are primarily engaged. Seventh-form students at *Prestigioso* take three year-long courses: *Language*, *Getting Ready for PET*, and *Literature*. The Language and PET classes in actuality become almost indistinguishable, as both focus upon PET-type tasks, linguistic structures and grammar rules. In *Language* class, students and teachers use a text titled the *PET Masterclass* textbook, an Oxford produced

preparation textbook for the PET Exam. They also use an institutionally created supplemental booklet of vocabulary, reading and activities, called *Getting Ready for PET 2006*. Finally, they use copies of model and previous PET exams. In Literature class, students read short, modified texts designed for younger readers. Typically, students read the stories, summarize them, and then complete pre-fabricated activities at the end of each chapter that review the factual elements in the story, or quiz students' comprehension of new vocabulary words. Literature classes are not intended to provide direct preparation for the PET.

The *PET Masterclass* is a year-long textbook designed to lead students through the content and format of the PET Exam. The *Getting Ready for PET 2006* is intended as a supplement to and extra review for the *Masterclass* text. *Appendix A* offers a more detailed description of each text and provides some illustrations of text materials and activities. The language activities and grammar exercises in this text as well as the mock exams are the predominant activities in which students engage in this setting.

By secondary school, the curriculum becomes a hybrid of preparation for the Cambridge ESOL exams, in the form of Language classes, and study centered on the United Kingdom's International General Certification of Secondary Education (IGCSE) subject exams in the areas of history, literature and biology. The composite description below, based upon class observations and interviews with one of the Secondary teachers, Teresa, provides a glimpse of the educational program that 7th-Form students will ultimately experience as they move into secondary school at *Colegio Prestigioso*.

A day in Teresa's Language class. It is cool, comfortable fall day in early May. The high school students reunite slowly and begrudgingly following their lunch break. Unlike primary students, there is no formal pre-class meeting or greeting. When the 2:00pm bell rings,

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everyone heads up the stairs to the secondary classrooms in the multi-storied building just next to the *casita*. As we climb the stairs to classrooms, many of the students greet me in English.

By 2:05, all students are present and Teresa begins the class with a formal greeting and then earnestly leads the class in the afternoon prayer in English.   Then, she immediately requests that students "open the book."   Most students react quickly; they all seem to know exactly where they are supposed to be in the Language class text. It features a reading entitled, "Follow the Dolphins." Teresa says to a student, ""I would like for you to tell David what the story [is about]." It is not uncommon for Teresa to ask students summarize or review story parts previously completed in order to orient students for the upcoming lesson.   When no one volunteers, Teresa prompts the class with some information from the story. Such prompting is a common technique Teresa employs for a variety of activities.

One boy begins describing the story. As he does, Teresa interrupts him and reminds him about "setting."   At times it is difficult to discern whether her guiding and manipulating of student speech is her approach to teaching or if she feels the need to hurry students along.   When the student makes a minor error in his verb choice, Teresa corrects him by recasting his comment. A female student begins to tell about the story in a cohesive, comprehensive full sentence. Even so, Teresa jumps in and points out that she skipped something.   Typical of her discourse and interaction with students, Teresa guides or prompts students with questions to illicit the summary she expects. Some of the students are able to summarize the prior material. Students' English is accented, but not to a degree that would interfere with a native speaker's comprehension.

Teresa informs the students that she is ready to move on to Part II of the story.   Linking grammar to a communicative function, Teresa states: "When you tell a story, I want you to use

the simple past." Students and, at times, the teacher read parts of the text. She asks specific

questions to check for content comprehension and for correct language use and phrasing. The

students do not merely reply with "yes" or "no"; they describe more information from the story.

For example, one boy asks "who is the fisherman?" Another one replies, "I think the

fisherman..." Teresa remarks that they are "supposing" and that they would see in the next

section. In short, Teresa's approach to reading and reviewing a text is highly teacher directed and

controlled. It does not permit a free flowing discussion of the important content, events, and

meanings of the story.

As a part of the reading activity, Teresa reminds the class, "As usual, I want you to have

folders [notebook binders] open and ready." Teresa writes important vocabulary terms on the

green board at the front of the class. The students copy the terms and related notes into their

folders. Teresa rhetorically asks the class, "You remember phrasal verbs don't you?" Teresa

talks out the vocabulary phrases with the students. For example, she states, "If a person has

given up smoking" as a prompt for students to identify the appropriate new vocabulary term.

One of the phrases is "take off"; a nearby student talks to me about a plane taking off.

Teresa announces that "in this part [of the reading], we might find 3 phrasal verbs." She

has a student continue the passage; as the phrasal verbs arise, Teresa writes them on the board.

Then, Teresa asks the students to create examples using the phrasal verbs. As is often her

practice, she allows a student to begin to produce an answer, but then quickly jumps in to

provide so much guidance that she practically answers herself.

As students continue reading through text sections, the other students are reading along

individually. Teresa occasionally asks questions about the content and story plot. More focus

and time, however, are given to the use of the phrasal verbs. It is reasonable to interpret the

intent of reading the passage is for students to learn the grammar, rather than comprehending grammatical points to support understanding the message and meaning of the reading.

As Teresa and the students wrap up this section of the text, they return to the global themes and meaning of the section. One boy student suggests that the story the character is telling is the same – meaning that the story the old sailor is telling is similar to the young woman's situation. In short, this male student has identified that there is a story occurring within the story. Teresa promotes students' extrapolation about the story's content, "Why is the fisherman telling her?" Two students respond: "He was giving an example of his mistake," "For me, the man was giving her a piece of advice." Teresa clarifies, "His intention was to help her." This concludes the reading work. It is 2:50pm, marking 40 minutes for the first activity.

Teresa leads instruction on "time expressions" in relationship to prepositions. On the board she writes, "in," "at," and "on." Teresa reminds the class about aspects of this topic covered at the beginning of the school year. Teresa comes over to me to verify the expressions "On Christmas Day" and "at Christmas." At this point, over an hour into the class, I count 9 students who have lost focus. They are chatting, not listening to their teacher, looking around at each other.

With the three prepositions on the board, Teresa creates a graph in which the uses such as "month" "seasons" or on "Christmas Day" "New Year's" Eve are linked to the appropriate preposition for a given situation. The teacher and students practice orally these uses.
As the class hour winds down, Teresa asks me to discuss holiday traditions with which they are not so familiar. I described the basic traditions of Thanksgiving and the purpose of Labor Day. When students become chatty, Teresa threatens to take their afternoon break. At this moment, a student's chair collapses, and he falls. He states in English, "It's broken." The teacher laughs

and replies that she can see that. Teresa tells the students to revise all of today's work and makes

related assignments to be completed for the next two class meetings. The students depart for

their mid-afternoon break, during which chaos and Spanish speaking resume.

We can see in this vignette that by secondary school the Cambridge ESOL Exams and the

school's emphasis upon them determine, in large measure, the topics and content of the

Language course. This year is not an "exam year" for Colegio Prestigioso students, as they do

not sit for the Cambridge First Certificate Exam until the Third-Year of secondary. Even so,

Teresa and her students use a textbook series aligned with the Cambridge ESOL exam series.

Her classes are quite teacher centered and she talks much more often and for much longer

periods of time than the students. In nearly all of her classes, Teresa focuses on linguistic forms

over content of material. She stresses the skill of *paraphrasing*, a skill she regards as essential

for language development and one emphasized on the Cambridge exams. Even for activities and

exercises that could lend themselves to a more communicative or task-based orientation, with

Teresa and the texts used, the focus on forms and rules. While Teresa occasionally makes

opportunities for students to negotiate content to do some of the grammatical tasks, even story

telling is centered on the grammatical. Grammatical instruction seems to be Teresa's central

purpose.

In Teresa's classes, listening takes place. She speaks in complete sentences, and students

listen to her. They also to each other via class discussions, debates, question answering and

sometimes in smaller group activities. Nevertheless instructions on listening skills and

processing as language abilities are infrequently explicit. Teresa corrects via recasts and

sometimes directly.

Teresa is in her early 60s and has been teaching English since before she completed university. She learned English in a private institute – with Cambridge Exams as a major goal of her study. She not only passed the Cambridge Proficiency Exam, the highest level in the Cambridge ESOL series but also has worked with Cambridge as an administrator, proctor and tester, for many years. Teresa's own language learning background and experiences coupled with the school's emphasis on international language exams yield classroom activities centered on the structures and grammars students need in order to succeed on such exams.

Teresa is caring, reassuring, and seems genuinely concerned about her students – in terms of English development and in their personal lives. For example, she encourages them to be patient with themselves when she thinks they should and pushes them when she considers them to be not making an effort. She would say that she is attempting to develop the whole person.

The Test Context: The PET and the CEFR

In order to understand the impact of the University of Cambridge PET exam on curriculum and interaction in Colegio Prestigioso classrooms, one must also understand the history and premises of the exam. The PET is part of the suite of internationally marketed University of Cambridge ESOL proficiency exams. It was created in the late 1970s to serve as stepping stone to the First Certificate, the most commonly used certifying exam in the suite (PET Handbook, 2005, p. 3). The entire suite of Cambridge ESOL exams is linked to the levels of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

A strong historical and functional link exists between the CEFR and the Cambridge ESOL exams (www.cambridgeesol.org; Taylor and Jones, 2006). This stems from the early to mid 1990s when both the Common European Framework and an initiative to overhaul the

"Threshold-level" European adult language proficiency guidelines, were conceptualized. Cambridge ESOL participated in the development of CEFR.   Language educator and testing researcher Brian North, one of the Framework authors, verifies the strong connection between CEFR and Cambridge ESOL:

> We're really at the beginning of the process of validating the claims which are made by the examination boards about the relationship of their exams to the Framework. There is a difference between having a very good idea of what the relationship is and confirming it. Cambridge ESOL is an exception, because there is a relationship between the levels in the CEF [Common European Framework] and the levels of the Cambridge ESOL exams.
>
> <div align="right">(Interview with Brian North in ELT news, Feb 2006).</div>

The Common European Framework

 The Common European Framework was produced by a Council of Europe commissioned team to serve as a comprehensive reference and guide of language competence for professionals such as teachers, administrators, and teachers among others working in the fields of language education and assessment (North, 2000; Common European Framework, 1996). The Framework was driven by Council of Europe policy intended to improve cooperation and understanding among Europe's diverse languages and cultures. The designers of Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) aspired to provide for improved and more efficient communication and collaboration among language assessment and language teaching professionals.

> By providing a common basis for the explicit description of objectives, content, and methods, the Framework will enhance the transparency of courses, syllabuses and qualifications, thus promoting international cooperation in the field of modern languages.

The provision for objective criteria for describing language proficiency will facilitate the

mutual recognition of qualifications gained in different learning contexts, and

accordingly will aid European mobility (CEF, 1).

Although the University of Cambridge ESOL examinations preceded the development of the the

CEF, the Council of Europe's adoption of the Framework provided the impetus for Cambridge

ESOL exams to align their goals and standards.

CEF Purposes and Approach

The language learning approach the CEF advocates is what its framers identify as ***action-oriented***, recognizing that language users and learners are people must complete *tasks* within

particular circumstances and "field[s] of action" (p. 9). Such tasks may or may not be related to

language. Individual language users are social agents; therefore the action-oriented approach

incorporates cognitive, emotional and volitional resources upon which these users may draw.

The CEF summarizes its global approach to language use and learning as follows:

Language use, embracing language learning, comprises the actions performed by persons

who as individuals and as social agents develop a range of **competences**, both **general**

and in particular **communicative language competences**. They draw on the

competences at their disposal in various contexts under various **conditions** and under

various **constraints** to engage in **language activities** involving **language processes** to

produce and/or receive texts in relation to **themes** in specific **domains**, activating those

strategies which seem most appropriate for carrying out the tasks to be accomplished.

The monitoring of these actions by the participants leads to the reinforcement or

modification of their competences" (p. 9).

Based upon this broad approach, the Framework argues that general competences of an individual learner, communicative language competences, language activities, contexts and domains, strategies, tasks and texts are the major dimensions of language use and learning. Communicative language competences receive considerable attention in the description of the language proficiency scales in CEF Chapter 3 and in the Framework's discussion of the *language user* in Chapter 4. Furthermore, the PET designers identify the exam as one that "corresponds closely to an active and communicative approach to learning English" (PET Handbook, 2005, p 4). We will examine the communicative emphasis of the CEFR and of the PET more closely in Chapter 6 regarding classroom interaction.

Vertical Dimension of Language Proficiency: Common Reference Levels

The Common European Framework portrays proficiency in two dimensions, vertical and horizontal. The vertical dimension identifies the proficiency levels. The CEF adopts a language proficiency system, or scale, of six levels that are a compilation of language proficiency concepts developed over many years of practice in Europe based upon the writings of Wilkins (1978), Trim (1978), standards of the Council of Europe and contributions by the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE). These six levels, from lowest to highest are: *Breakthrough*, *Waystage*, *Threshold*, *Vantage*, *Effective Operational Proficiency* and *Mastery*. The CEF also relates the "classic" divisions of *basic*, *intermediate/independent* and *advanced/proficient* language users. If these three basic divisions are designated A, B and C, then the Common Reference Levels would be designated as follows: A1: Breakthrough, A2: Waystage, B1: Threshold, B2: Vantage, C1: Effective Operational Proficiency, and C2: Mastery.

The PET exam taken by 7th-Form *Colegio Prestigioso* students corresponds to the Threshold, or low intermediate, level on this vertical scale. The horizontal dimension defines the "parameters of communicative activity and communicative language competence" (p. 16). Discussion of this horizontal dimension will be addressed later in this sub-section and will inform this dissertation Chapter 5 discussion of PET exam impact upon curriculum and global instructional practices at Colegio Prestigioso.

Presentation of each reference level includes elaborate descriptions of what users can accomplish in the target language. They relate to particular competencies, such as "spoken language use," or for particular purposes such as "learner self-assessment" (pp. 24-29. See also pp. 222-225). Scale descriptor grids have been generated for communication activities and for communicative language competences, including linguistic, pragmatic and sociolinguistic competence (p. 25; p. 30). Within each grid are "Can Do" prose descriptions of what a language learner at a particular level can accomplish with regard to a dimension of language.

The authors accompany the presentation of the descriptor table with "an analysis of the functions, notions, grammar and vocabulary necessary to perform the communicative tasks described on the scales" (p. 33). Here below, as examples, are two such analytical descriptions, including the B1 or Threshold Level that correlates to the PET.

> **Level A2: Waystage** – It is at this level that the majority of descriptors stating social functions are to be found, like *use simple everyday polite forms of greeting and address; greet people, ask how they are and react to news; handle very short social exchanges; ask and answer questions about what they do at work and in free time; make and respond to invitations; discuss what to do, where to go and make arrangements to meet; make and accept offers*. Here too are to be found descriptors on getting out and about; the simplified cut-down version of the full set of transactional specifications in the 'Threshold Level' for adults living abroad, like: *make simple transactions in shops, post offices or banks; get simple information about travel; use public transport: buses, trains and taxis, ask for basic information, ask and give directions, and buy tickets; ask for and provide everyday goods and services*" (pp 33-34).

Level B1: reflects the Threshold Level specification for a visitor to a foreign country and is perhaps the most categorized by two features. The first feature is the ability to maintain interaction and get across what you want to, in a range of contexts, for example: *generally follow the main points of extended discussion around him/her, provided speech is clearly articulate din standard dialect; give or seek personal views and opinions in an informal discussion with friends; express the main point he/she wants to make comprehensibly; exploit a wide range of simple language flexibility to express much of what he or she wants to; maintain a conversation or discussion but may sometimes be difficult to follow when trying to say exactly what he/she would like to; keep going comprehensibly, even though pausing for grammatical and lexical planning and repair is very evident, especially in the longer stretches of free production.*
The second feature is the ability to cope flexibly with problems in everyday life, for example *cope with less routine situations on public transport; deal with most situations likely to arise when making travel arrangements through an agent or when actually travelling; enter unprepared into conversations on familiar topics; make a complaint; take some initiatives in an interview/consultation (e.g. to bring up a new subject) but is very dependent on interviewer in the interaction; ask someone to clarify or elaborate what they have just said"(34).*

The Framework does present clear and precise scale grids as well as proficiency level descriptions like those just above. Even so, the crafters of the Framework advocate using the levels as guides rather than "as if they were a linear measurement scale like a ruler" (p. 17

Horizontal Dimension of the CEF: The Language User and Communication

In all, the language proficiency scales of the Framework provide guidelines that focus on "the actions and competences required of a language user/learner in respect of any one language in order to communicate with other users of that language" (p.19). The focus, then, is not strictly speaking on language skills or knowledge but rather on one's ability to use the language effectively to communicate.

Teachers, textbook authors and examiners must all make precise elections about language activities, exam objectives and text content, but the Framework posits that it is impossible to reduce to "a pre-determined menu" the elements that should comprise any one of these particular language learning endeavors (p. 44). Nevertheless, the Framework lays out major aspects of language use and competence in the form of questions that practitioners can consider. Some examples include:

- Can I predict the domains in which my learners will operate and the situations which they will have to deal with? What roles will they have to play?

- What will be their personal or professional relations in what institutional frameworks?

- What tasks will they need to accomplish?

- What knowledge of the world or of another culture will they need to call on?

- What sort of thinks will they be listening to or reading?

- If I cannot predict situations in which the learner will use the language, how can I best prepare them to use the language for communication without over-training them for situations that may never arise?

The CFR maintains that a broad notion of **communicative language competence** is comprised of three specific sets of competences: linguistic competences, sociolinguistic competences and pragmatic competences. Linguistic competences include the knowledge of skills of *language as a system* independent of sociolinguistic elements and pragmatic functions (p. 13). Teachers' interpretation and implementation of a communicative syllabus at *Colegio Prestigioso* will be issues for analysis and critique in Chapters 5 and 6 of this dissertation. Specifically, we will examine whether a CEFR and PET declarations of communicative evaluations lead to communicative environments, instruction and learning in EFL classrooms.

The CFR authors posit that such competences constitute mechanisms and capacities that an individual, a social agent, internalizes and then draws upon for particular behaviors and performance utilizing language. They further suggest that "any learning process will help to develop or transform these same internal representations, mechanisms and capacities" (p. 14)

According to the CEF, *language activities* are the means by which a language learner activates his/her communicative language competence. *Reception*, *production*, *interaction* and *mediation* are types of activities. Reception and production may occur in isolation or serve as

components of interaction and mediation.   As interaction will be a central topic for analysis in

Chapter 6 of this dissertation, it is important to understand the CEF's understanding of

interaction.

> In *interaction* at least two individuals participate in an oral and/or written exchange in which production and perception alternate and may in fact overlap in oral communication. Not only may two interlocutors be speaking and yet listening to each other simultaneously. Even where turn-taking is strictly respected, the listener is generally already forecasting the remainder of the speaker's message and preparing a response. Learning to interact thus involves more than learning to receive to produce utterances. High importance is generally attributed to interaction in language use and learning in view of its central role in communication.

> In both the receptive and productive modes, the written and/or oral activities of *mediation* make communication possible between persons who are unable, for whatever reason, to communicate with each other directly. Translation or interpretation, a paraphrase, summary or record, provides for a third party a (re)formulation of a source text to which this third party does not have direct access. Mediating language activities – (re) processing an existing text – occupy an important place in the normal linguistic functioning of our societies" (p. 14)

For developing linguistic and pragmatic competences, interactions and experiences in "cultural

environments are necessary (p. 13).

Communicative tasks and purposes. The term **tasks**, in relationship to language learning,

has been employed in myriad ways. Scholars describing its relationship to language teaching

approaches and methodologies are well served to explain its usage. The CEF authors link the

concept of tasks to their action-oriented approach to language learning. They use *task* to refer

broadly to any activity or endeavor a human being may undertake; a task may be assembling a

tent with a group or may be reading and describing a text in a foreign language. Either task will

"involve language activities and make demands upon the individual's communicative

competence" (p. 15).

Language users engage in acts of communication with other interlocutors to meet his or

her needs related to particular situation.   The Framework identifies some of the language-using

tasks common to communicating at work or to personal identification. It does not, however, attempt to provide an exhaustive list of such purposes. Instead, it refers language professionals to literature such as *Threshold Level 1990* which details such tasks. The Framework encourages language practitioners "to reflect upon the communicative needs of learners with whom they are concerned and the, using as appropriate the full resources of the Framework model (e.g. as detailed in Chapter 7 [of the Framework]), to specify the communicative tasks they should be equipped to face" (p. 54).

The Framework raises the issue of tasks in the educational domain, specifically the need for language learners to be aware of the difference those in which they engage as language users and "those in which they engage as part of the language learning process itself," for example roleplays, classroom interactions, writing text summaries, and individual listening activities (p.55).

Framework Chapter 4 on language learners and language use concludes with 40 pages of proficiency reference scales of proficiency related to particular language tasks, scenarios or abilities. Representative examples of scale tables include: Overall oral production, Addressing audiences, Reports and essays, Compensating, Understanding conversation between native speakers, Listening to audio media and recordings, Overall spoken interaction, Information exchange, Notes, messages & forms, and Co-operating.

Communicative competences. Chapter 5 of the Framework looks more closely at the components of communicative competence. Of particular relevance to this dissertation are two topics. First, the Framework addresses succinctly the often debated issue of communication and grammar. The text points out practitioners who communication with an emphasis upon meaning, with more or less attention given to grammar. Others emphasize grammar as a means

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to facilitate communication.   The CEF states, "What is clear is that a language learner has to acquire both forms and meanings" (116).

A second relevant issue is the CEF's take on interaction. The Framework includes this topic within its treatment of functional competence. The authors maintain, Conversational competence is not simply a matter of knowing which particular functions (microfunctions) are expressed by which language forms. Participants are engaged in an interaction, in which each initiative leads to a response and moves the interaction further on, according to its purpose, through a succession of stages from opening exchange to its final conclusion" (125).

Language acquisition and teaching methodology. The CEF takes up the broad topic language acquisition and teaching in Chapter 6. In the most basic terms, the Framework briefly summarizes the range of theoretical approaches to facilitating language acquisition and learning. Some theorists have argued that human beings natural abilities with to adequate exposure to comprehensible input are sufficient to produce language competence.   Others have added to such exposure the need for active participation.   On the other end of the learning/acquisition spectrum are theorists and teachers who maintain that mastery of grammar and vocabulary, without the need for substantial communicative practice are adequate for learners to develop competence. The Framework's stance is that   "most 'mainstream' learners, teachers and their support services will follow more eclectic practices, recognizing that learners do not necessarily learn what teachers teach and that they require substantial contextualised and intelligible language input as well as opportunities to use the language interactively…." (p 140.)

The Framework makes clear that its purpose is not to advocate a particular method for language teaching and learning, but to suggest methodological options (p. 42).   The range might include explanations in the L1 and a focus on grammatical drills, controlled exposure to graded

written texts in the L2, or direct exposure to authentic L2 such engaging a native speaker or

listening to the radio.   Regarding how much time teachers and should devote to which types of

activities, the Framework provides broad categories presented as questions for teacher-

practitioners to consider with regard to their actions in creating language learning/acquisition

environments.   What proportions of class time should teachers expound a particular topic,

engage the whole class in Q and A, or have students conduct pair work?   The questions attempt

to provide the options for teachers to consider about what and how going to teach and moderate

the class. The Framework acknowledges that teachers are often obliged "to respect any official

guidelines, use textbooks and course materials (which they may or may not be in a good position

to analyse, evaluate, select and supplement), devise and administer tests and prepare pupils and

students for qualifying examinations" (141).

    Assessment. The final major topic the Framework addresses is the connection between

the scales of Common Reference Levels and the assessment of language proficiency.   The

Framework is concerned with *what is assessed* and *how performance on assessments is*

interpreted.   With these two questions in mind, the Framework can be used:

1. For the specification of the content of tests and examinations	*what is assessed*
2. For stating the criteria to determine the attainment of a learning objective:	*how performance is interpreted*
3. For describing the levels of proficiency in existing tests and examinations thus enabling comparisons to be made across different systems of qualifications:	*how comparisons can* be made (p. 178)

    The Framework is not an assessment nor does it dictate a particular type of assessment or

set of exams. It merely declares that tests should be communicative assessments (p. 178). The

CEF refers practitioners to resources that provide "the set of content specifications at the

Threshold Level produced by the Council of Europe for over 20 European languages and Waystage and Vantage in English" (p. 179).

While the Framework does not advocate any particular exams, the CEF authors explain that the levels of the proficiency scale can be associated with particular exams. For example, the PET exam corresponds to the B1, or Threshold, level. The First Certificate of English exam, the Cambridge exam following the PET, corresponds to the B2 level. The Framework offers the following system of marks, or grades, to indicate exam results: 5 – Distinction, 4 – Credit, 3 – Pass, 2 – Fail. The authors further suggest that using such a system of marks, coupled with the components and abilities that correspond to a particular proficiency level can aid in establishing "an approximate relationship between the range of standards in use in a particular sector and proficiency levels." We will see in the next few sections, Cambridge ESOL exams such as the PET utilizes such a grading system.

Cambridge ESOL, via its participation in the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE), has articulated the learners' abilities at each level through "Can Do" statements. Here are examples of ALTE "Can Do" statements for several levels, including the B1 (PET) Level.

CEFR LEVEL	Listening/Speaking	Reading	Writing
C2	CAN advise on or talk about complex or sensitive issues, understanding colloquial references and dealing confidently with hostile questions.	CAN understand documents, correspondence and reports, including the finer points of complex texts	CAN write letters on any subject and full notes of meetings or seminars with good expression and Accuracy.
B1(PET)	CAN express opinions on abstract/ cultural matters in a limited way or offer advice within a known area, and understand instructions or public announcements.	CAN understand routine information and articles, and the general meaning of non-routine information within a familiar area.	CAN write letters or make notes on familiar or predictable matters.

| A1 | CAN understand basic instructions or take part in a basic factual conversation on a predictable topic | CAN understand basic notices, instructions or information. | CAN complete basic forms, and write notes including times, dates and places |

Selections from ALTE Can Do Statements: overall general ability on www.cambridgeesol.org/exams

The information above provides a basic overview of the relationship between the Common European Framework of Reference and the Cambridge ESOL exams. It also locates the Preliminary English Test within the Framework and in relationship to the other exams in the series. The sub-section which follows will look more closely at the PET exam.

The Preliminary English Test (PET)

The description of the PET which follows is based upon information and commentary from the official *Preliminary English Test Handbook* (2005). The PET is the second exam the Cambridge five-level suite of ESOL exams.

The exam publishers suggest that the PET "tests competence in Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking." (3) Language learners who are at the PET level "should be able to cope linguistically in a range of everyday situations which require a largely predictable use of language" (3). The Common European Framework and the PET producers identify PET-level learners at the Threshold level, or intermediate level, and evaluate learner's language abilities in terms of Materials a Threshold User can negotiate and What a Threshold User can do. The PET Handbook locates these abilities in the following context:

> *A Threshold level user will be able to use English in their own or a foreign country in Contact with **native and non-native speakers** of English for general purposes as described below" (PET Handbook, 2005, p. 3).*

> Materials a Threshold User can deal with might include reading:
> - street signs
> - product packaging
> - informal letters
> - newspaper article

What a Threshold User can do:
- secure needed information from a tourist information center
- understand a tour guide explanation
- make arrangements with a travel agent
- exchange factual information in a meeting
- receive and pass along phone call messages

The following quotation is a summary of the type of Test the PET is according to the handbook.

"In real life, language is used in context, and the forms of language vary according to that context. The assessment aims of PET and its syllabus are designed to ensure that the test reflects the use of language in real life. The question types and formats have been devised with the purpose of fulfilling these aims. PET corresponds closely to an active and communicative approach to learning English, without neglecting the need for clarity and accuracy." (4)

The following table outlines the format of the PET.

PET CONTENT: AN OVERVIEW				
Paper	**Name**	**Timing**	**Content**	**Test Focus**
Paper 1	Reading/ Writing	1 hour 30 minutes	Reading: Five parts which test a range of reading skills with a variety of texts, ranging from very short notices to longer continuous texts. Writing: Three parts which test a range of writing skills.	Assessment of candidates' ability to understand the meaning of written English at word, phrase, sentence, paragraph and whole text level. Assessment of candidates' ability to produce straightforward written English, ranging from producing variations on simple sentences to pieces of continuous text.
Paper 2	Listening	30 minutes (approx.)	Four parts ranging from short exchanges to longer dialogues and monologues	Assessment of candidates' ability to understand dialogues and monologues in both informal and neutral settings on a range of everyday topics
Paper 3	Speaking	10-12 minutes per pair of candidates	Four Parts: In Part 1, candidates interact with an examiner; In Parts 2 and 4 they interact with another candidate; In Part 3, they have an extended individual long turn.	Assessment of candidates' ability to express themselves in order to carry out functions at *Threshold* level. To ask and to understand questions and make appropriate responses. To talk freely on matters of personal interest.

Table 2: PET CONTENT: AN OVERVIEW
From the *Preliminary English Test Handbook*, p. 5. University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations

Students have test booklets and papers for the various papers or sections of the exam, but mark or transfer all of their answers to Optical Mark Reader answers sheets, except for the speaking-interview portion of the PET exam.

The PET at Colegio Prestigioso

Even before *Colegio Prestigioso's* transformation into a bilingual institution, the school promoted students' taking the Preliminary English Test and First Certificate Exam. Then, students sat for the PET in the First Year of Secondary and for the First Certificate in their Fifth and final year. Today, for students at *Prestigioso*, their first encounter with international examinations and with PET comes annually in November, near the end of their seventh and final year of primary school. The school recognizes these exams because they "assess language proficiency" (Written Communication from *Colegio Prestigioso* English Administrative Secretary). A more elaborate rationale for the use of these exams from the school's English Administrative Secretary is as follows:

> Cambridge ESOL and CIE exams are widely respected for providing accurate and Trusted evidence of language ability according to international standards. In Argentina, many institutions use these qualifications as part of their entry procedures, helping to standardize entry requirements across different courses and clearly showing applicants what is required of them. Some institutions also recognize these exams as credits towards internal English courses.

These statements identify internal and external motivations which justify the school's use of these exams.

Seventh-Form teachers at *Prestigioso* also readily identify the PET as an educational priority. This following excerpt reveals Laura's perspectives about what 7th-Form students should know or learn about English.

Int: The first question is: What do you think that 7th form teachers in this school want students to know about English?

Laura: Mainly, to be able to ..I dunno..go abroad and be able to communicate. That is why we train them in in not only in speaking and conversation but also in vocabulary. And, towards the end of the year we are going to stress a little bit pronunciation because sometimes you can't understand a word not because you have the right or wrong word because just because you you don't pronounce it properly. That is why we also teach transformation. You can use it with sentences and with words if you don't know..I don't know, if I tell a tiny piece of wood is here in my finger, you immediately think of a spinter, no splinter.

[Side discussion of the concept of transformation omitted.]

I: If you had to describe more specifically, uh goals that you have or...

L: [Interrupting] more academic, okay, uhm

I: It can be academic or anything.

L: Yeah

I: just..

T: We train – our goal is we need our children to pass the PET Cambridge examination. And, for that they need a certain proficiency in English that would also allow them to – in two more years – be able to pass the first certificate in English. And therefore, by this time, they ought to handle perfectly well all the verb tenses and uh different communicative situations like going to the airport or at a hotel or buying things going shopping. Our children they belong to a rather high level in society. They have been able to or they have had the possibility of going abroad, and most of them have practiced English somewhere.

In this brief excerpt, Laura identifies the dual, and as we shall see in Chapters 6 and 7 of this dissertation, perhaps conflicting goals for English learning at *Prestigioso*.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have laid out how English elite bilingual education came to one school in Argentina and showed how English language instruction looks at various levels at the school. I have also identified key aspects of the PET exam origins, purpose and format. Through goals and standards espoused by the Common European Framework of Reference, with which the PET is aligned, and by the PET authors themselves, we see that the PET is intended to support and evaluate a broad based, communicative study of the English language designed to facilitate natural interaction and improved communication with native speakers. In addition to these stated goals and standards for English language learning, *Colegio Prestigioso* English administration and English faculty embrace the exam and believe it supports the school's communicative goals for students.

In the next two chapters, I go on to show how, despite communicative goals and intentions of the CEFR, of the PET, and of 7th-Form teachers, the PET format and the task of preparing students for the exam nonetheless in many ways work against these goals. Chapter 5 will consider how the PET yields a curriculum and overall approach to language instruction that bears little resemblance to the broad communicatively based instruction envisioned in the CEFR. Chapter 6 argues that PET preparation activities and the classroom discourse model to which it contributes run contrary to two of the most fundamental dimensions of communicative competence and communicative teaching implicit in the CEFR and championed by SLA scholars, namely *student output* and *interaction*.

CHAPTER 5

A CULTURE OF CORRECTION AND GRAMMAR

In *Colegio Prestigioso*, most 7th-grade primary students, heretofore referred to as 7th-Form students, take the Cambridge University Preliminary English Test (PET) at the end of their final year of primary education. The 7th-Form represents the first occasion in which students take an international, high-stakes standardized English exam to evaluate their English proficiencies to date. Therefore, for the teachers and students of this grade level, students' taking and passing the PET exam is a major educational goal.

When 7th-Form teachers at *Colegio Prestigioso* discuss their goals for their students and their concept of what students are supposed to know, they offer two distinct, perhaps disparate, sets of goals or outcomes. One has to do with communication, students' abilities to speak and use English for real-world purposes such as travel, employment, and higher education. The other set concerns preparing students for the PET Exam. The focus of this chapter is not to explore the potential conflicts of these goals. Rather it is to examine the direct impacts the PET exam has on the curriculum, or as these teachers identify it – the "syllabus," and on how teachers implement the syllabus. In other words, how does the PET exam shape classroom instruction? In this chapter, I argue that they are at least four major ways in which the PET seems to influence these 7th-Form classes: 1.) the PET dictates the curriculum and pervades teachers' global approach to their classes; 2.) the PET contributes to a culture of correction; 3.) the PET fosters a strong grammatical bent to instruction; and 4.) the PET promotes extensive use of mock PET exams in the curriculum and in class activities.

PET Impact on Curriculum and Global Goals

A preliminary indicator of the strong influence of the PET exam on these 7th-Form

classes is the selection of the principal texts for students' course and their activities in class.

One of the texts is Oxford University Press's *PET Masterclass* (Capel and Nixon, 2003).   This

text is designed to present to students the substance and format for the PET exam. (See also

Appendix A for a more detailed explanation of how the text works and for text sample pages).

The *Masterclass* text itself provides lists of all the topics, language skills and grammatical items

for which students are responsible on the exam. In addition, 7th-Form teachers compile and

assemble yearly a booklet of vocabulary and grammar exercises, *Getting Ready for PET 2006*.

This supplemental booklet includes mock exercises, even practice tests, which model exactly the

format and types of tasks students will have to execute on the actual PET. In short, *Prestigioso*

teachers regard the test as the curriculum they must cover during the 7th-Form year. Moreover,

they establish for themselves and for their students PET preparation as the fundamental, global

goal.

The following remarks, from interviews with 7th-Form teachers, reflect the connection

teachers made between the PET exam, the syllabus, and class direction.

> Darla: We train – our goal is we need our children to pass the PET Cambridge
> examination.   And, for that they need a certain proficiency in English that would also
> allow them to – in two more years – be able to pass the First Certificate in English.   And
> therefore, by this time, they ought to handle perfectly well all the verb tenses and uh
> different communicative situations like going to the airport or at a hotel or buying things
> going shopping.

This quotation illustrates that specific language learning objectives that are specifically assessed

on the PET, such as students' using particular verb forms correctly or completing particular

communicative tasks comprise the year's curriculum.

Darla also explicitly identifies preparing students for the PET exam and completing a

PET-centered syllabus as one of the most important goals for this semester.

> Int: So thinking back to the beginning of the term what were your goals for your students for this semester?

> Darla: Most of all it was practicing the full skills for the PET and completing the syllabus because the syllabus dealt with the possible topics on the test so it was we were in a rush.

Likewise, Laura explicitly connects the year's course syllabus with the PET exam.

> Int: So thinking about thinking back to the beginning of the term what were your goals with your students for this term?

> Laura: Basically finishing everything connected with the syllabus and I mean everything connected with the exam and to have a little training and prepare as much as possible.

> Int: What do you mean train them?

> Laura: To train them for the exam.

Some other similar remarks teachers made included "stick to the syllabus," "We are trying to

cover everything," and "Everything we do is for the test."   Evident in interview data and

throughout the class observations are the time constraints and pressures teachers feel to cover all

the elements that the PET exam demands of students.   The institution's emphasis on the exam

makes it a priority to which teachers must attend and thus the focus for instruction in their

classes.

<div align="center">A Culture of Correction</div>

The PET generated a culture of correction that was evident in a preoccupation with

correctness and corrections as well as in a focus on students' scores on tests and mock PET

exams.

Correctness, corrections and accuracy

The single most common class activity, by far, during three months of regular class visits

to all three 7th-Form English teachers' classes was the correction of exercises. "Let's go to the

exercises" could have been the program's mantra. On nearly a daily basis, except during the

Literature class period once a week, teachers and students engaged in the oral review and oral

and written correction of exercises. It is possible that some language teachers might regard

reviewing or drilling exercises and activities, similar to those provided in the *Masterclass* or

Getting Ready for PET texts as effective language teaching that they would implement regardless

of the presence of a standardized test. However, in the case of Colegio Prestigioso, the source

and content of the exercises, the intense pacing of review and correction, and the sheer frequency

of such classroom activity suggest that the PET exam contributed to, if not created, this

instructional dynamic.

The following comments from one of the teachers, Laura, summarize the perspectives

that these teachers have regarding the use and correction of exercises.

> I: Last time you talked about correcting exercises as part of class activities. And ya'll
> did a lot of that in the last few weeks. So in what ways do you think that writing and
> correcting exercise is exercises is helpful for students language abilities and then in what
> ways might it not be?
>
> P: It is helpful very helpful if you have trained them to pay attention to you. And to
> profit from it.
>
> I: How would they how will they profit if they do the exercises?
>
> P: If they do the exercises and we correct them all and they are paying attention and they
> are really concentrated on what they are doing it is they can make a lot from it. I mean
> they can make out rules they can make up their own map of the language in their brains
> and oh you can work out lots of things form seeing what your mistakes were.

Prestigioso teachers believe that completing, reviewing and correcting exercise after exercise

help students to learn English and helps them have the best chance to succeed on the PET.

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Therefore, they pressure themselves and their students to complete as many exercises as they physically and mentally can, especially during the spring semester.

To illustrate, in the class observation excerpt from a class in late October, Laura and her students execute several tasks, or activities, orally together in class.   These particular activities come from the supplemental booklet "Getting Ready for PET 2006." All of the activities in this unit have to do with "Services" in some way. In the first activity there are 15 sets of mixed up words that when re-sorted yield phrases about community services, such as "have your car repaired."   First, students have to re-write the phrase in a logical order, and then, from a word bank, match the service locale where that task can be handled.

Students are volunteering, eager to read their re-sorted and the corresponding locales. On a few of the phrases, the student and teacher debate the answers. At times, Laura will re-read, confirm or correct if phrases were not in the correct order. A female student asks about "laundry." Laura clarifies that it is a place in open or business where you go to have laundry washed. In this instance, Laura asked me, the researcher, what term I would use for this room in a house. I say, "laundry room"

Task 2 confuses the students. Students were to complete sentences by choosing the appropriate word, such as ambulance, cash, or for hire, in order to complete sentences. Laura figures out that the students do not fully understand meaning of the prompting phrases. So, she asks some guiding, or deductive questions or makes brief comments to guide students toward the meaning of the phrases.   Individual students take turns reading descriptions and then filling in the appropriate word.   Some of the prompts included: *You can't just push to the front, you know. You have to _____.* (queue) and *There you are, L15. could I have a _____ please?* (receipt)   When a student encounters a sentence about changing a "5lb. note," he does

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not understand. Laura rephrases the prompt and helps him connect it to a coin – the concept of making change.

Learning about actions and vocabulary associated with community services may not be an intrinsically test-related subject.   This topic could be taught in a variety of EFL or ESL settings for a host of authentic, practical purposes.   So, in what ways does this excerpt demonstrate a connection to the PET exam or exam preparation?   **First**, the topic has been chosen because it is one for which students are responsible on the exam.   **Second**, the material is presented in a relatively narrow context that resembles the format of the test. There is no attempt to relate the material to students' current or future lives, such as a reading or a discussion about student's personal experiences with services in their communities. **Third**, these activities have been selected specifically to supplement the *Masterclass* textbook activities. **Fourth**, each of prompts and exercises presented in the example above are completely devoid of any context or real relationship to one another.   They are simply drills that do as much to provide students experience with test-type question formats as to teach students meaningful vocabulary.

An excerpt from another class shows a similar test orientation to writing instruction. Among the tasks that students complete on the PET is a short writing such as an e-mail. The prompt for such a task might be writing to a friend to talk about one's vacation or to RSVP to an invitation. The test prompts will indicate several pieces of information that the test-taker must address. Letter-writing conventions and proper punctuation are also evaluated.   Since students must complete such a writing on the PET, most writing practice and assessments that students complete are modeled after such writing tasks.   The following is an excerpt of Janet reviewing a recently completed mock PET writing assessment with her students.

Janet begins, "Okay. So, 2 things. 2 things. Now, as regards the e-mail....It is not as long as it used to be." She explains that communication is quicker since letters do not have to travel. Also, though she does not explicitly state this to students, she is also reflecting that the writing task is shorter, since the PET test changed from informal letters to e-mails for the writing task.

Responding to a mistake some students made, Janet says that "a question mark is not something to put at the end." Janet adds, that the letter should begin, "Dear Pepita, Hello." A student proposes that the next element should be, "I write you." Janet responds, "I write you is wrong." Another students offers, "I write to you." Janet repeats and confirms the second students answer.   Janet continues, "So, I am writing to tell you the three things that are included." She asks the students, "How do I decide what tense…?"   A student replies, "depende de la situation" (it depends on the situation).   Janet confirms, in English, the student's comment.

Next the teacher and students focus on phrases using the word "shopping." Some students have used the word "shopping" to refer to a "shopping mall" because the term has been appropriated that way in Argentinean Spanish. In a scolding manner, Janet asks, "what is it?" Students figure out the mistake and respond in unison, "shopping mall." Janet follows with "shopping mall, shopping center."   Janet then proceeds to the chalkboard and writes the phrases, "to go shopping" and "To go to the shopping mall." Orally, Janet distinguishes them. "The shopping mall is a place."

Janet asks the class, "How do I say good bye in an e-mail?" The students together reply, "see you soon." Janet offers some other possibilities, and reminds them, "and you put your name." I notice that today, for this, the students are generally, and unusually quiet and attentive.

Janet explains that she has not finished marking all of them and thus cannot return them yet. She decides to read someone's letter.   She points out opening phrases like: *how are you*; it *has been a while*.   She comes across the student's use of "have ever drunk" in the e-mail. She stresses aloud that the correct phrase should be: "was the best ___ I ever ___"
She writes "had ever drunk."   Students are responsible for the proper, grammatical uses of the present perfect and past perfect tenses on the PET.

Janet continues perusing the letters looking for items to highlight.   She notes that a student's use of "Thank you for your letter" is okay.   Prompted by one letter, Janet asks the group about the spelling of "great." Together, various students spell out, "gre -- at." Janet confirms and reminds students that "Grate the other one is cooking"

The students are quiet and patient as Janet continues looking through the letters and pointing out trouble areas so students can be aware of them for the PET.   Janet writes on the board, "the work it is not" Several students suppose that the contraction "isn't" is more appropriate.   That is not Janet's issue. She crosses out "it," and informs the students "the work is the subject, not it."

Next, Janet highlights a piece from a student's letter, "Why do you need the money? Is an emergency?" Several students surmise that "is that" is needed.   Janet corrects them with the phrase " "is it an emergency?"

In one student's letter, the preposition "to" was omitted.   A student asks what affect the omission has on the scoring, "..if you don't put 'to.'" Janet replies, "I will give you a point less." However, she stresses that "in the PET nothing." Janet also reminds students, "there are no question marks to begin sentences" In Spanish, question marks are placed at the beginning of interrogatory sentences. Students will sometimes forget and use them in English as well.

We see in the above review of students' writing practice an emphasis on correcting "errors" in the students' letters, errors being technical, structural, grammatical and conventional elements that comprise the scoring components of the PET.   The broader communicative task for this letter was for the student to respond to a friend's request for financial assistance.   While the writing task itself features quite a range of substantive, communicative possibilities, Janet's review of the task and the students' work does not address these elements. She gives attention only to test-related aspects. Janet and the other 7th-Form teachers know that as long as the students are generally on topic, which most students manage reasonably well, they will earn higher scores by executing the technical and conventional elements of the task. Devoting so much class time and attention to these conventions is therefore a direct result of the demands of the PET task.

Even "regular tests," that is to say institutionally created assessments, are often modeled after *PET Masterclass*-style activities or upon sections of mock PET exams. Therefore, in addition to practice exercises, teachers and students regularly review in-class tests and assessments.   What follows is one brief excerpt of a review of one such assessment.

In this mid-September class, Darla announces that there are three topics or matters she will cover. These correspond to the items she had written on the board. The students will have a Module Test the following Monday, corresponding to the Module's in their *PET Masterclass* test prep texts. She reminds the group that many of them need a high mark. Darla also has a set of tests to return to students, and as she does, she makes comments to individual students about their results and progress. Darla suggests to one student that she was writing better each time. Darla wants to review some of the common issues and mistakes that students had on the assessment. Mostly, the teacher conducts this orally, but she writes a few answers and phrases

on the chalkboard.   For example, she states, mixing English and Spanish, "if estás emocionado (if you are excited) and you can't sleep." This phrase was one of the prompts from the test. The desired response was, "I was thrilled". She writes the answer phrase on the board.

Darla also discusses with students that when writing in the past in English that they should use actual conjugated forms of verbs rather than always using "I went to eat", "I went to see the concert," which is the more common pattern in Spanish.

Upon returning one student's exam, Darla comments that it earned a zero. She states, "This one, on the real PET would not be corrected because you were not on topic." Darla then poses the question to the class: "Do you go to the shopping?" The teacher and students respond collectively, " no - you go shopping." And Darla adds, or "you go to the shopping…" And, the students add, "center."   The word "shopping" used in Argentinean Spanish refers to a shopping mall. Clearly, the concern with this feedback was about correction, correcting technical and grammatical mistakes so that students get the "right answers" and avoid making errors on the PET.

Preoccupation with "Marks"

Another dimension of this culture of correction related to the PET exam is a preoccupation on the part of teachers and students with students' scores, or marks. Teenage students in many learning contexts might be concerned with their test grades and final marks for a given semester.   Certainly, the overwhelming majority of students in most grade-levels at *Prestigioso* feel pressure from the institution and their parents to earn good grades. Nevertheless, we will see below in three distinct data representations a more direct connection between student marks and the PET.

First, just shortly after the spring semester began, in early August, Prestigioso's English Department Director, Linda, and the three 7th-Form teachers, Darla, Laura, and Janet held an informational meeting for parents to learn more about the PET, the school's preparation of the students, and students' readiness for the exam. I attended this meeting, was formally presented to parents, and documented the proceedings. First, Linda gave a formal welcome and made brief opening remarks about the purpose of the meeting, namely to discuss the PET to be administered at the end of the term. Then, Darla, primarily, gave an overview of the format of the exam and the major topics and tasks it covered. She explained that the students were receiving more than ample preparation for the PET in their 7th-Form classes. Once these opening remarks were completed, parents were given the opportunity to ask questions and discuss with the administration and 7th-Form teachers issues of concern to them.

Among the topics discussed, and perhaps one of the utmost concern to parents was their children's readiness in relationship to their grades or performance on regular, institutional assessments. The teachers maintained that virtually all of the students were ready and able to take the exam. One parent in particular contended that her child's prior semester grades did not support that contention. The English Director, Linda, suggested that the report card grades reflect a different set of marks than those of the PET. Furthermore, she maintained that grammar instruction and the institutional tests used to evaluate them are generally more rigorous than the specific grammar sections on the PET. Therefore, even if a student did not earn a high mark in grammar in the previous term, with some work, he/she could still do quite fine on the PET itself. Even with this explanation, this matter seemed to worry some parents. Interestingly, the episode illustrates parents' assumption of a close correspondence between the school curriculum and the PET.

Laura's intriguing approach to revealing grades to her students represents a second

example of the relationship between "marks" and the PET.   One day near the end of the term,

and shortly before the actual PET administration day, Laura arrives in her classroom. Students

are gathered about her desk asking about activities for the day and eager to know their results

from the recent major test they took.   Laura informs the students,

> Linda (the English Program Director) wants to give you the marks after the PET so that
> you don't get nervous."   Laura announces that they are going to revise the grammar
> exams.   She moves about the room directing students to sit further forward. Laura
> remarks to the students, "I don't know if you realize...we are short of time.

From her desk at the front, left side of the classroom, Laura states, "Before we go on with

the mock, we are going to check a few things from your grammar exam." She adds, "Marks

[were] not so terrible," but that she was disappointed at some mistakes and misjudgments

students made – ones that they should have been familiar enough with not to commit.

She declares, "These are not things that can happen on your PET" and warns students not to be

'thinking about flowers', a missive about paying attention and concentrating during the test.

Apparently, one section of this grammar exam required students to implement changes to

sentence prompts using passive voice constructions, one of the emphasized grammar elements on

the PET.   Many students had not paid close attention to the demands of the exercise, and as a

result simply paraphrased the prompts using other phrases of their choosing.   Laura stresses to

the group, "you thought everything was paraphrasing and not passive voice. Everything is not

paraphrasing."   She continues, "you have to be very open minded on the test on what the people

are asking you." On her test section titles, or headings, give clues about the task students have to

perform, almost like an annotated version of the PET test format.

In this instance, Laura explicitly links the students' performance and the resulting scores on this grammar exam to their potential performance on the actual PET.   Yet at the same time, Laura apparently does not want to be very specific about the actual marks for fear it might undermine students' confidence on the PET.

A third example of the preoccupation with students' marks on PET-related assessments comes from Laura's interview.   Laura describes her satisfaction coming in to the final weeks of the term, heading towards the PET administration, due to the fact that students' marks on exams and mock PET tests seemed to indicate that students were well prepared for the PET.

I: and what was the last week of classes like before the test.

P: hum

I: what do you feel like you were trying to cover or accomplish.

P: everything. We were trying to cover everything. And accomplish everything. However what was in a way relaxing for me was the fact that I could [determine] from their results get that we were not doing that bad. And when I had these replacement[s] [when she had years before worked as a replacement 7th-Form teacher] that I told you about that was not my feeling. I thought that I was there, and I didn't know what for because they [the students] didn't know anything. That was my feeling at the time and that was not the feeling I had this last time. I mean as nothing not necessarily doing with me or with any other teacher but the thing is that counting for I mean as regard to mathematics and their results mathematics and speaking the numbers were good. But the numerical numbers the numerical results from the test

I: you are referring to the mocks they were

P: yes, yes.

These comments indicate that an important dimension of what these 7th-Form teachers were trying to accomplish was to have their students achieve good numbers, good scores on PET practice exercises and mock assessments in preparation for the PET administration at the end of the term.

This culture of correction is driven by the PET. Teachers indicate explicitly and implicitly that corrections are to help students avoid making mistakes on the PET. Certainly, teachers in another institution or setting could have a strong commitment to linguistic accuracy and use exercise correction as a means of pursuing such it. However, the explicit purpose, quantity, pace, intensity and frequency of correction activities at *Prestigioso* suggest a motive beyond the pursuit of grammatical accuracy.

Grammar Instruction

The topic of grammar instruction in foreign language instruction is one of the most hotly debated and most written about topics among language education researchers and practitioners (Ellis, 2002; Swan 2002; Lee and VanPatten, 2003). In many traditional approaches and methods, some thousands of years old, grammar instruction is at the heart of curricula and language learning (Lee and VanPatten, 2003; Shehadeh, 2005; Richards and Rogers, 1986). Even as second-language acquisition (SLA) and foreign language learning research over the last thirty years have led practitioners to understand and implement variations of communicative approaches to language instruction (Lee an VanPatten, 2003; Savignon, 1998; Canale and Swain, 1980) , language educators still argue about the role of grammar instruction in foreign language classrooms (Ellis, 2002/ Long). At least in pedagogical theory, most language educators currently agree that grammar instruction should not be the sole focus or the most important component of language instruction (Brown, 2002; Richards, 2002, Ellis, 2002). It is not surprising, then, that when *Prestigioso* teachers are asked what they think 7th-Form students should know or be able to do with the English language, without hesitation they all espouse communication, for real world purposes, as the desired goal for their students. So, why then is

60% or more of class instructional time dedicated to structural and grammatical language points, tasks, and exercises?

The PET purports to be a broad-based language exam, communicative in focus. Explicitly, only the *Writing* section within **Paper 1**: **Reading and Writing** would on the surface seem to require a mastery of grammatical structures.   Past versions of the PET and other Cambridge ESOL exams more explicitly tested structural and grammatical accuracy.   Though substantial revisions have been made to the exam in order for it be a "more communicative" exam (PET Handbook, 2005), the need for grammatical knowledge and accuracy nevertheless remains firmly embedded throughout the test.

The following excerpt from Darla offers a concise overview of the role and purposes of grammar instruction in the 7th-Form classes.

> Grammar exercises. Uh, we follow a text book, and the textbook dictates, more or less, the grammar topic and the vocabulary topic we tackle because uh the book presents the vocabulary with listening exercises with real eh-- not real because it's in a book -- but real material in a way because it looks like a eh clipping from a newspaper article – recordings from radios, TV programs. Uhm, so we do the book sometimes, the two at the same time, or before the book -- depending which presents things in a better way. And uh, then we we comment on the fact that this paragraph is full of adjectives.   And then we move on to adjectives, and what do we use adjectives for, and then comparative and superlative of adjectives, and then the famous transformations always going paraphrasing exercise that we have in the PET examination [a PET section in which test-takers re-phrase a given sentence using other structures and vocabulary], which is uh used all over – "me" and "I am shorter than he is", no, or "as tall as" and the use of "too" and "enough" also comes in to adjectives and "so" and "such." Then, we co - we might also comment on the tense when we talk about something – da da duh dah, no, that has already happened, "use the past tense." And, it's if it is an immediate past, we use this. [Unclear – 2-3 words] we give them mechanical exercises ehm to to practice.

Prestigioso teachers, acutely aware of the need for grammatical knowledge and skills on the PET, devote considerable energy and time to grammar instruction. In a large sense, structural and grammatical knowledge function as subject content in these language classes. This is to say that students do not merely hear and comprehend grammar explanations from their teachers or

practice exercises.   In Darla's classes, it is not uncommon to hear teacher and students in

exchanges in which students, in English, use sophisticated metalinguistic language to describe

grammatical labels and rules before undertaking a practice exercise related to reported speech or

using past participles.

One of the common type of structural exercise in which teachers and students engage is

paraphrasing, or *transformation*.   In such exercises, students re-write sentences using different

word order or phrases, most often for the purpose of manipulating or practicing grammatical

tasks such as reported speech, comparisons or the passive voice. These are used in classes, and

on the PET exam, because they represent a highly efficient way to test a student's control of a

wide range of vocabulary and grammatical skills at once.   At the end of the institutionally

produced booklet of exercises, *Getting Ready for PET 2006*, are nine full pages of such drills or

exercises, drawn from old PET exams or PET-prep workbook series.

One of Janet's classes devoted an entire 1.5 hour block to writing and correcting answers

to one of these page-long exercises.   The following are some of the actual prompts from one of

those pages and the expected student responses. One prompt is: "Everybody likes the drama

lessons." Students modify the prompt "Drama lessons…" to create a sentence like "Drama

lessons are liked by everyone." Another is: "Sally is taller than Millie." Students are to create:

"Sally isn't as short as Millie." And finally, "The flight to London is 12 hours long" becomes

"The flight to London takes 12 hours."   First, students work on the transformations

independently. Then, Janet asks some students to write their answers on the blackboard. Via

mostly teacher discourse, Janet confirms that students' answers are correct or not and directs

corrections. She encourages students to check and correct their own answers; she circulates,

monitors and assists students as they work.   Based on student reactions and behavior, these are

challenging and tedious for *Prestigioso* students.   So, why do teachers devote so much time to them?

Paraphrasing and circumlocution are widely considered appropriate communicative skills that all language learners need to be able to draw upon in writing and in conversation.   The nature of the paraphrasing activities used at *Prestigioso*, however, is technical and amounts to a grammatical manipulation exercise.   A couple of additional examples are: "What is the price of the mountain bike?" and "The black Labrador puppy belongs to Matthew." Correct answers for these prompts might be "How much does the mountain bike cost?" and "Matthew has a black Labrador puppy." They are given such emphasis because one part of the PET Writing section requires students to be able to transform sentences in this way.   And as such, the PET publishers and *Prestigioso* teachers are using communicative labels for grammar-based test preparation.

An excellent example of the level of grammatical understanding on the part of the students as well as teachers and students' dedication to grammar study comes from the day, described earlier, when Laura and students discussed a major grammar exam near the end of the term.   The following is an exchange between Laura and a male student.

L: "explain the mechanics of passive voice"

MS: "to change subject.."

L: "if you have direct object put it in place of subject and more or less" vice versa

L: "and what about verbs to be"

MS: "goes into tense of sentence"… "and the other verb in past perfect"

Laura writes an example on board: "People were praising and criticizing Jack at the same time" She asks a student for the subject of the sentence. The student guesses "People and Jack." Laura says one subject my dear. The student refines the answer – "people."   Laura explains that the

rest is the predicate.   Another male student understands and remarks that Jack is "objecto

directo." Several students reiterate in unison that it is the "direct object" in unison. Darla makes

some comments about the verb. The students indicate they understand the meaning of the past

continuous verb forms.   The test task was for students to convert sentences, like the example,

into a passive voice construction.   Darla says, "we have the direct object" and "we need the verb

to be past the past participle." She states and writes on the board, "Jack was being praised and

criticized at the same time," "So," she explains, "here we have the same tense plus the

participle."   Laura laments that "many people made the same mistake on the test."

For about forty-five minutes, Laura continued to review various grammatical problem

areas, such a verb tense difficulties on the paraphrasing exercise and errors made on the reported

speech exercise.   While the remainder of the review was less interactive, students remained

focused and attentive, occasionally offering examples, responding to teacher prompts, or asking

questions.   Laura and other teachers, due to the demands of the PET exam, have established

fairly technical and high-level grammatical skills and discourse as critical knowledge` for these

7th-Form students.

Granted, given the English-language learning experiences of these three 7th-Form

teachers, it is likely that some type of direct, or explicit, grammatical instruction would be an

important part of their language teaching even if they were not negotiating the PET.   English

language education in Buenos Aires maintains vestiges of British and European notions of

traditional language learning and grammatical accuracy as a staple of high quality language

learning. All of these teachers attended British-based bilingual or high-level primary and

secondary schools followed by rigorous teacher education programs. Also, each connects

grammar with effective communication to some degree. All of this said, these teachers do

question and in some ways lament the quantity of grammar instruction and test preparation in

which they engage.   Here is Laura's response to a general question about what *Prestigioso*

teachers expect their students to know about English.

> Int: what do you think seventh form teachers in this school want the students to know about English?
>
> L: about English?
>
> Int: yes
>
> L: what a difficult question. I don't know what to answer. About English? That is so big. I mean I would like them to acquire as much mastery of the language as they could without forgetting that they are human beings of course. And that they are …..almost lessons that they are children of 12 years of age almost and they have their own interests so I'll try to teach them things in the easiest possible way so that they can understand and they can acquire the necessary things in order to communicate but also all the necessary strategies for the exam because in fact all this exams have a lot of strategy rather than mastery of the language. And without the English language. That's too much.

Likewise, Darla has concerns about the grammar emphasis.

> I: I think that's most of the questions I have that are about reflecting about the semester there were a lot of things that came up in your previous interview we probably don't have time to get to them all but the first one is what connections do you see between learning and practicing grammar and learning to communicate in a language?
>
> P: connections?
>
> I: yes
>
> P: ok. Grammar is ….structured is facts. Sooner or later it pops up so in order to communicate in a more accurate way you should know that when you are telling a story or something that is going to happen you should use the past the future tense. The thing is I still feel that the children know a lot of names they know what that this is a symbol here to the other one is going to future the other one is a symbol present which [indicates] use [of the present]. yes. And they get too much grammar. But if they are not I don't know its [they do not study] languages as much as a native would or as much as somebody going to bilingual school would.

The fact that students are learning the level of technical metalinguistic knowledge they are and engaging in the amount and types of grammar exercises they are, in spite of teachers' misgivings, is directly attributable to the presence and influence of the PET.

<div align="center">Role of Mock PET Exams</div>

A final, simple, but nonetheless significant indicator of the influence of the PET upon the 7th-Form language instruction at *Prestigioso* is the prominent place of mock PET exams in student texts, as the bases for institutional exams, and as sources for intense practice in the weeks just before the actual PET administration.

As we have established, teachers and students use two primary texts, the *PET Masterclass* preparation text and the school produced booklet, *Getting Ready for PET 2006*. Darla, the lead 7th-Form teacher, indicated during interviews that throughout the semester in which the PET is administered, students complete a mock exam every two weeks. Frequency increased during the final two weeks of this semester. Typically, students would complete a mock reading and/or writing paper (section) of a mock PET during a class hour. Occasionally, students might be assigned a paper or part as homework. Usually, teachers collected the mocks and took them home to grade, giving students marks to indicate their progress. As we will see in this section, teachers and students reviewed mock papers during classes.

Colegio Prestigioso teachers have at their disposal a wealth of older PET workbooks, practice tests and even released, previously administered PET exams. The school itself maintains a resource library of these workbooks and model tests. Also, experienced teachers like Darla, have accumulated their own personal libraries of mock exams and resources. The English Program Director and the 7th-Form teachers collaborate seriously, but informally, about the mock exams and their use. The 7th-Form teachers integrate mock exams fully into the curriculum and

decide together when they will be given during classes. In her interview, Darla explains the schedule for mock test administration. In the first half of the year, students take mock exams rather infrequently – once a month or six weeks. During the spring term, from August through November, all 7th-Form students take mock exams every two weeks.

> Darla: And what we do is we time them as if they were sitting for a real exam. They have an hour and a half to complete the reading and writing and they hand in. They start working with pencil which we don't usually do for test. And but the PET requirements establish that you fill in the answer sheet in pencil. We start working with answer sheets before we hand and then we give them the listening and ……we even separate the desks a little bit more as space allows us. And we take them up and give a mark.

Class time is dedicated for students to complete the exams; teachers take them home to correct; and they return them and review them thoroughly with students during class time. Darla, herself, suggested that following the winter break, it is as though an additional subject or class has been added to the curriculum, a class called *mocks*.

As the spring semester progresses and the PET, given in late November, approaches, mock frequency and intensity increase. Laura describes the process as follows.

> Int: How many mocks did they do in the last week or so?

> L: In the last week they did more than throughout the whole year.

> Int: ok

> L: I think that I mean we had one book that was for mock exams I mean for mocks that had four or five tests right? and they did it throughout the year. And in this last month they did two more books.

> I: ok

> L: so months and months how many they did in this last week one, two, three, including the exams?

> I: oh yea

L: because the exams were also mocks.

I: ok.

L: so one, two, three, four, four more or less in the last week. Whereas they had a whole book with four tests to do to cover throughout the year so imagine.

During the final two weeks, when the pace and frequency of mock testing do not permit time for teachers to take mocks home for review, careful review and correction takes the form of oral discussions between teacher and students. For example, on November 23, just two days before the actual PET, Laura and her students spent a full hour of an 85 minute class block working on mock activities. For the first 30 minutes, as a whole group activity, Laura and the students discuss orally elements of a writing paper they had completed during an earlier class. Mostly, Laura talks about common problems students had such as using too many words in their letters, misusing vocabulary such as "to my house" instead of "home," and the need for writings to be more interesting and more organized. Occasionally, Laura and individual students would have exchanges about student questions or concerns, mostly about their marks. During the latter part of this class, the students quickly completed a PET mock listening section and rapidly reviewed the students' answers.

It is noteworthy that the "mocks" curriculum does not merely review and practice vocabulary and grammar, but also explicitly includes instruction and practice with the exam format and the implementation of the test-taking strategies teachers have incorporated into instruction throughout the year. In short, by the end of the term, either as practice or as pieces of institutional exams, mock PET exams eclipse all other language learning activities and become the primary language learning activity for teachers and students alike. The PET not only shapes the course of language teaching and learning at *Prestigioso*, but for parts of the year becomes the curriculum itself.

Summary and Conclusions

Formal class observations and general institutional observations and information provide

substantial evidence of washback effects due to the prominent role the PET plays at El Colegio

Prestigioso.   The teachers, Darla, Laura and Janet all make it clear that this test is the

motivation and driving force behind virtually all learning and activities throughout the year.   We

have identified PET influence on curriculum and global instructional goals, in the creation of a

culture of correction, on grammatical instruction, and through extensive use of mock PET exams.

All of these effects seem to support a noticeable washback effect on language learning at

Prestigioso.

Alderson and Wall (1995) proposed a test, or proof, within washback research for

determining the existence of washback—"does the test cause teachers to do things they would

not otherwise do."   It would be difficult to argue, given these teachers' own EFL educations and

training that they would abandon a commitment to serious grammar instruction, even if the PET

were not such a critical part of the school's curriculum. When I asked her how she would teach

if there were no PET test, she responded this way:

> L: oh. What would I teach? As regards subject probably trying to cover the same things
> because I already have it quite stuck in my mind that there are some things that they have
> to know once they have finished the primary school. It is not taught in the 7th year as
> many as not here but in many other schools. And probably a little bit more than this
> much more than this. In what way? Oh the ….videos, films, uh taking them out, taking
> them to watch, taking them to the theatre and uh many ways. However it is ok and I think
> that even this can be done in a better way.

Nevertheless, the PET has an undeniable affect on the curriculum and on the way teachers teach

their classes. In each of their interviews, the teachers emphasize the need to complete the PET

syllabus and the demands this places upon them. Darla states directly in her interview, the

school's 7th-Form "syllabus would be too structured/limited, if not for PET." When I asked

Darla about "teaching to the test," she affirms a strong PET test presence and a strong desire to

incorporate other facets of language learning into the curriculum.

Int: ok. Have you ever heard the phrase teaching for the test.

D: yes

Int: ok if so what does that phrase mean to you?

D: that well what I more or less …actually I do and that is a ….because we are test
oriented everything we do is for the test. We do the exercises in this book not for the
children to learn I want to go on with the same example medical vocabulary to in case
they are in England and the state and they need to go to the doctor but they are learning
many kind of vocabulary in case that in the pet they get a picture they have the doctor so
ok it might be useful eventually if they need it but everything is test oriented we do this
for the pet for the pet for the pet. So its yes its really…

Int: so do you have more of a negative or more of a positive feeling about the idea of
teaching to the test?

D: in seventh form it helps because whatever I would like to do more project work but
there is no time. more literature more reading of book and talking about it and more I
don't know reading of signs and probably making an experiment or going to the lab and
that would be more interesting than learning from a picture that this is a test tube the
other one is a microscope and there is no time.

Janet talks about the risks of not covering the required Cambridge syllabus if she branched out to

teach other things. She also contrasted the type of teaching she does at *Prestigioso* with more

"communicative teaching" she did when teaching English at companies. Therefore, these

teachers are aware that they are operating under very test specific constraints, and they have, at

least in general ways, a notion that the exam prevents them from teaching in a different way.

Class observations reveal a consistent intensity and rapid pace, a need to make sure

students have more than ample practice and correction with all of the potential tasks, topics,

grammar items on the PET.   During the spring semester, these teachers devote enormous

amounts of time and energy to the practice and revision of mock PET exams. This commitment

comes on top of a challenging and demanding year-long syllabus.   Undoubtedly, without the

PET, each of these teachers would give their time, energy and focus to other language learning tasks and options.

This chapter has examined the global impact of the PET on the 7th-Form EFL instruction at Prestigioso. The data presented suggest that: the PET dictates the curriculum and pervades teachers' global approach to their classes; that the PET contributes to a culture of correction; that the PET fosters a strong grammatical bent to instruction; and that the PET promotes extensive use of mock PET exams in the curriculum and in class activities. While having students pass the PET and later the Cambridge First Certificate Exam are stated and actual goals of the institution and its teachers, success on these exams is not generally viewed as an end in itself. Rather teachers see their larger role as preparing students to use English to study, to travel and to work in the future. Given the limitations of an exam like the PET to foster a well-rounded English language user and the classroom dynamics created by PET test preparation, it is probable that the use of the PET is working against the larger goal of producing competent language students well prepared to use English into their lives beyond their training at Prestigioso.

CHAPTER 6

CAMBRIDGE PET ESOL EXAM EFFECTS UPON INTERACTION AND
STUDENT ORAL PRODUCTION IN AN EFL CLASSROOM

Communicative Language Teaching, Output and Interaction

In 1972, Savignon investigated the role of communication activities in second language
classes, and established the value of and need for a strong emphasis on communicative language
abilities. Her contribution transformed SLA and second language pedagogy. Incorporating and
emphasizing communication in second and foreign language has become a widely accepted
fundamental principle in second language teaching (Garcia Mayo and Pica, 2000). According
to Garcia Mayo and Pica (2000), "By definition, CLT [communicative language teaching] puts
the focus on the learner, who must have the opportunity to take part in meaningful
communicative interaction in order to respond to genuine communicative needs" (p. 36).

Since their inception, communicative approaches to language instruction have faced the
challenge of balancing or accommodating the long standing tradition and practice of
predominantly grammatical emphases in language teaching. Savignon (1998) regards
grammatical competence (knowledge of the structure and form of language) as only one of
various competences, such as discourse competence and sociolinguistic competence, that
language users require to be effective communicators (Lee and VanPatten, 2005, p.53).

Even as language theorists and foreign language teachers have sought to transition to
CLT in language classes, they have encountered the problem of state, national or international
exam standards that tend to emphasize testing and teaching language structures and grammar.
This conflict is exemplified in this dissertation's research context. The CEFR, PET publishers,
the *Colegio Prestigioso* English administration, English teachers, and parents unanimously

espouse English learning for communicative purposes.   Yet, several "papers" (sections) of the PET test specifically and heavily focus on discrete grammar points, often with little context for their use.

This chapter will argue that preparation for the PET produces negative washback upon Prestigioso 7th-Form classes because exam study and preparation draw the focus towards grammatical, metalinguistic and mechanical uses of English and away from the communicative, meaninful input, output and interaction that all stakeholders hold to be their goal. I will first describe the concepts of *output* and *interaction* as they relate to second language acquisition. I then show how instruction in primary grades at Prestigioso exemplifies communicative, authentic task-based and content-based uses of language. I show that by 7th-Form, students evidence a high-level of oral/aural skills in English. I then move on to present classroom vignettes that show how while some 7th-Form classroom activities continue this focus, PET prepration introduces an increasing focus on structure and corrections and a resulting decrease in students' opportunities for authentic, extended input, output and interaction.

Oral Output in SLA

Communicative language teaching and attention to grammar do not have to be in conflict. In fact, many SLA scholars and educators continue to investigate, discuss and advocate ways in which both goals may be obtained (Pica, 2002; Mackey, 1999; Swain and Lapkin, 1998). However, one way in which they commonly in conflict is when class discourse or interaction is compromised because the teacher dominates talk and instruction.

When a language class syllabus has a strong grammatical focus, due to the technical nature or advanced level of grammatical items many teachers feel the need to explain much more. In this scenario, teachers talk and provide substantial comprehensible input, but students

are not afforded opportunities to respond or produce orally. As is explained in the discussion

below, language classrooms in which student output is limited compromises students'

communicative and SLA development (Mackey, 1999).

Merrill Swain (1985) contended that exposure to language and the receipt of meaningful

input is not sufficient for language learning. She argued that oral *output* is needed for learners to

acquire and develop language skills: "communicative production encourages learners to attend

to input better since they themselves need to use language they are hearing around them" (Swain,

1985). Swain's *Output Hypothesis* has become a lynchpin of second language acquisition theory

and practice. Output improves fluency in a second language because it serves a *practicing*

function (Swain, 1995). Furthermore, it contributes to improved linguistic accuracy in three

ways. First, output helps students *notice* or identify gaps between what they say and what they

intend to say. Second, it allows students to test hypotheses of communication; that is, to

determine if their communications are effective. Thirdly, output can serve a metalinguistic

function in which students reflect upon language use and structures, even when engaged in a

communicative task whose primary function is to understand and convey meaning (p. 132).

Swain's work has established learner output as fundamental principle of second language

acquisition and thus of foreign language teaching and learning.

Interaction in SLA and in FL Classes

In addition to the concepts of *input* and *output*, modern SLA scholars have identified

interaction as a third key component of second language acquisition. Interaction provides a

language learner feedback on his or her L2 production. According to Gass and Mackey (2006),

> During interaction, there are instances in which the conversational participants negotiate
>
> meaning due to lack of understanding. As a part of this negotiation, learners receive

feedback on their production [output], thereby potentially drawing attention to linguistic

problems and leading them to notice gaps between their production and the target

language (p. 4; See also Long, 1996).

While the emphasis that Gass and Mackey (2006) place upon the understanding and negotiation

that occurs within interaction has more to do with structural or perhaps grammatical issues,

negotiation during interaction can also center on the understanding the intended meaning. For

example, Lee and VanPatten explain negotiation and understanding within a particular

communicative context as follows:

> The act of communication in most settings involves the expression, interpretation, and
>
> negotiation of meaning (Savignon,1998). That is, a person wishes to express an idea
>
> (opinion, wish, request, demand) to someone else and does so. The other person must
>
> understand both the message and the intent of the message. Sometimes interpretation is
>
> partial, and some negotiation is needed (Lee and VanPatten, 2003, p 51; See also,
>
> Savignon, 1998).

In their seminal piece on interaction and second language learning, Swain and Lapkin

(1998) establish, by analyzing pair dialogs during a language task, that during interaction,

language learners "co-construct the language they need to express the meaning they want and to

co-construct knowledge about language" (333). SLA studies have consistently shown that

during oral interactions, such as between conversational pairs, learners modify output and

interactions by negotiating meaning or forms "when either one signals with questions or

comments that the other's preceding message has not been successfully conveyed" (Pica et. al.,

1996; Garcia Mayo and Pica, 2000; Mackey and Silver, 2005; Mackey et. al, 2003).

Hall and Verplaetse (2000) have also emphasized the importance of interaction in language learning classrooms but from a different perspective than that of Pica, Mackey and Lee and VanPatten. These SLA scholars focus quite directly on language as an individual entity or subject to be learned and with communicative competence or grammatical competence as an end. Hall and Verplaetse also support strongly the need for classroom interaction among teachers and students but from a socio-cultural perspective on language learning which values discourse and sociolinguistc competence (2000).

> From this perspective on language and learning, classrooms – and more particularly the activities comprising classrooms – are considered important sites of development. Because many classroom activities are created through classroom discourse—the oral interaction that occurs between teachers and students and among students—its role is especially consequential to the creation of learning environments and ultimately to the shaping of individual learners' development (Hall and Verplaetse, 9).

This study's theoretical framework presumes that learners' broad communicative competence is the most important goal of instruction and learning. It is further informed by work on Task-based Instruction (TBI), a global approach to language instruction advocated by SLA scholars including Lee and VanPatten, Shehadeh, Nunan and Mackey, and work on Content Based Instruction. In the next sub-section, I elaborate upon TBI and CBI and their relationship to the matter of classroom interactions the present research context.

TBI and CBI

Developed through years of advancement under the broad umbrella of communicative language approaches, two well recognized models for effective second language classrooms are Task-based Instruction (TBI) and Content Based Instruction (CBI). They are distinct

approaches, but each was developed with the purpose of creating language learning

environments in which students learned language in the context of using it for particular

purposes, rather by studying its linguistic and grammatical structures.

Tasked-based instruction attempts to teach language through the execution of "real world

tasks" such as planning a vacation, conducting a banking transaction, or researching information

about a topic on the internet.   A task may be defined as "an activity, that has a non-linguistic

purpose or goal, with a clear outcome, and that uses any or all of the four language skills in its

accomplishment, by conveying meaning in a way that reflects real-world language use"

(Shehadeh, 2005).

Content based instruction approaches language learning, not by students focusing on

language or language use, but by having them engage language through content courses such as

history, math or geography in the second language, with pedagogical consideration given to

students' language levels. Students learn language by using it, rather than studying it (Brinton et

al., 1989; Wesche, 1993).

While the classroom realities of these two approaches are quite different, both maintain

teacher-student discussions and interactions during completion of communication or academic

tasks. Students have substantial opportunities to develop their language skills through the oral

output described earlier in this section.   Communicative approaches to language learning pursue

grammatical understanding and accuracy, but TBI or CBI, or other communicative-based

approaches address structural and grammatical issues are addressed "naturally" in the course of

pursuing broader educational and communicative tasks in which the priorities are understanding

content, negotiating meaning and striving for effective communication.   I am persuaded that

even after 30 or more years of communicative-oriented approaches to language learning and

instruction, that teachers in countless contexts still give far to much attention to grammatical learning and development in their classes. Ellis (2002) has argued that grammatical instruction is largely useless until learners are advanced enough to apply grammatical knowledge into a base of language already acquired. Effective language learning classrooms are environments in which students have opportunities for real communication, for real purposes, rather than merely the study of the grammatical structures.

Moreover, as described in Chapter 4 of this dissertation, primary classes in Forms K-6 at *Colegio Prestigioso* employ principles and practices from both TBI and CBI which provide students ample opportunity for output and interaction. Again, this chapter argues that in the 7th-Form, due to the presence of and preparation for the PET, teachers move away from these approaches that provide a broader, more holistic and more effective approach to language, one in which students actively communicative, produce and interact. We can look to existing research on testing washback to ask how classroom interaction is affected by standardized language tests. The next section, therefore, reviews the most prominent washback study on the topic.

Classroom Interaction in Washback Research

In fact, studies of test washback have rarely examined classroom interaction and the impact of tests upon student oral production. One exception, however, is Cheng (2005), who completed a comprehensive study of classroom dynamics, interaction teacher and student talk in English language classrooms which were negotiating implementation of a new high stakes, national standardized exam.

A dimension of Cheng's study of implementation of the new Hong Kong Certificate of English Education (HKCEE) exam (2005; 1998) was classroom observation to determine washback effects upon classroom interaction. She observed two sets of classes, one set of

secondary 5 (U.S. senior) students who would take the old HKCEE exam and one set who would

be taking the new 1996 HKCEE exam. The researcher conducted four 70-minute observations

for each of the three teachers selected for the study.   Entering the classroom observation

segment of her research, Cheng's assumptions about the washback effect of the new 1996

HKCEE were:

- the teacher will assign more practice opportunities to students

- the teacher will assign more class time to student activities such as role play and
  group discussion

- the teacher will talk less

- the students will talk more

- the teacher will use more authentic materials from real-life sources

Again, Cheng's broad goals for the classroom observation aspect of her research was "to

explain in detail the classroom interactions and discourse" (p. 209).   Cheng's observation

scheme focused on these five components:

1. Time: How is time segmented within the lesson as a percentage of class time?

2. Participant organization: Who is holding the floor/talking durig the segments of the
   lesson as a percentage of class time?

3. Activity type: What teaching and learning is realized through various activities as a
   percentage of class time?

4. Content: What are the teacher and the students talking, reading or writing about, or
   what are they listening to?

5. Material used: What types and purposes of teaching materials were involved?

(Cheng, 2005)

Data related to each of these components were observed and documented using a grid sheet

modified from Part A of the Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching (COLT) system

(Frohlich, Spada, and Allen, 1985). The researcher both observed and documented classroom activities in real time and also re-analyzed transcripts of video-taped recordings. "This scheme led the researcher to observe and describe the interactions that took in the classrooms in order to understand how learning opportunities were created in the context of the new 1996 HKCEE. A fundamental principle behind Cheng's analysis was Allwright's (1984) emphasis on interaction: "everything that happens in the classroom happens through a process of living person-to-person interaction" (Cheng, 2005, p. 210).

Cheng documented a shift in the nature of student oral communication during oral language classes. Due to the shift from 'Dialogue Reading' and 'Picture Conversation' in the old HKCEE to 'Role Play' and 'Group Discussion' sections in the new exam, student responses focused on expression of meaning with less concern about grammatical accuracy. Under the old exam, students had produced "isolated sentences, which [were] assessed for grammatical accuracy" (226). Cheng's study therefore shows that exams can have limiting effects on student communication and output. It further demonstrates that test producers and teachers are aware of such effects, evidenced by the attempts to effect learning through exam and curricular modifications.

Cheng also found that teachers' patterns of interaction were quite similar in the old and new exam years. In other words, she suggests that while there are washback effects, teachers also exert influence and tend to rely on established practices no matter what the content and focus of the test. In both 1994 and 1995, observations revealed that classes were highly teacher-controlled and teacher-talk dominated classes (p. 226). In one of the three teacher's classes, though, student talk exceeded student talk and for another teacher talk was reduced.

Cheng does not elaborate upon why teacher-talk dominated classes; she does not propose that use of the national exam, whether the old or new version is responsible for teacher-controlled classes. Her research does indicate that the exam change was designed to promote more student talk and interaction. In the present study, the point of comparison and contrast is not instruction and class dynamic under two different exam formats. Instead, the contrast is between class dynamics and student interactions in previous grades and the year when the exam takes place.

Cheng determined that teachers' approaches were more varied. She explains this phenomenon as follows:

> Teachers tried to vary their teaching activities according to their understanding of
> The integrated and task-based approaches encouraged by the new HKCEE. One
> Of the reasons Betty gave was that they did not really know what the new HKCEE
> format would be, and they did not know how they should teach according to the new
> examination syllabus. Nor could they rely on any past exam papers. Thereafter, they just
> tried their own ideas (p. 226).

A fourth finding was increased on student role play and group work increased student interactive activities increased in 1995, reducing individual student work. This finding again illustrates that Hong Kong English language examiners, administrators and teachers were aware that the older exam was having the effect of limiting student interactions and oral output. For that reason, they amended the exam. In my discussion later in this chapter, I maintain that both the PET exam format and teachers' preparation of students for the exam limit student oral output and interaction.

Overall Cheng concludes that teachers' approaches were not really transformed by the presence of the new test:

It can be seen that although the change in the HKCEE could push them to change their

classroom activities given the importance of this public examination, it did not change

them in their fundamental beliefs and attitudes about teaching and learning, the roles of

teachers and students, and how teaching and learning should be carried out (p. 227).

Cheng notes that among the researched teachers there was significant variation in beliefs about

language teaching and in classroom practice; however, the exam reform effected little change in

any of their approaches to English teaching.   Cheng concludes,

A change to a public examination can, to a large extent, change the content of

teaching and even the way activities are carried out, but very little change in the

interaction pattern between teachers and students could be found in this study, and

might not be found within the initial couple of years of the change (p. 228).

In contrast to Cheng's overall finding, I will argue here that class observation and teacher

interview data in the present research project suggest that the PET standardized exam is causing

at least some level of modification in instructional procedures, even if teachers remain basically

wedded to a particular teaching philosophy or approach.

In the remainder of this chapter, I analyze teacher interview and class observation data of

7th-Form English instruction at *Colegio Prestigioso* and show that in contrast with other years

and other teaching contexts within the school, student interaction and oral output are reduced

during the 7th-Form year. This discussion explain how the PET itself and teachers' approach to

preparing students for it produces these reduced interactions, which as established in the

discussion above, works against SLA principles and in certain ways against the overall

institutional language learning goals.

Oral Communication in Primary Grades at the *Colegio Prestigioso*

In order to provide communication-driven, meaning-based instruction *Colegio Prestigioso* teachers utilize variations of both of TBI and CBI models at different points in the K-6 curriculum. Student oral output and interaction are strongly encouraged and are a staple of English classes in these levels. For example, throughout these primary grades, students study language arts much as elementary-aged students would in their native language. Students read age-appropriate literature and actively participate in oral class discussions of the content, meaning as well as the linguistic structures and vocabulary presented in the stories. Teachers guide these discussions to facilitate student responses and interest.   In the 3rd-Form each year, the students learn English through preparation for and the performance of a musical play, spoken and sung for the other primary-level students.   In their Projects class, 6th-Form students investigate topics such as the Renaissance or Ancient Egypt, construct representative models and present them to the class in an oral presentation.

These first six years of primary-level English education establish a pattern of instructional techniques and classroom environments that foster student oral output and interaction. Students become competent and comfortable English speakers both for logistical operations in class and for learning academic material.

However, in the 7th-Form, the final year of primary and a transitional year into the secondary program at the school, a major shift occurs in the curriculum and in instruction.   At the end of the 7th-Form year, students take the Cambridge Preliminary Test of English (PET). At *Colegio Prestigioso,* achieving successful results on this prominent international English as a Second Language (ESOL) Exam is a major educational goal, one that produces *negative washback effects* on English language instruction for the 7th-Form students.

Despite having well trained teachers with high-levels of English proficiency and bright, capable students with strong developing skills in English, in significant ways the 7th-Form English program abandons essential and well-established principles aural/oral interaction and output in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and sound second language pedagogy, particularly with regard to students' opportunities for and development of oral communication and interaction.   This chapter argues that the use of the Preliminary Test of English (PET) and preparation for this exam have the negative washback effect of limiting students' oral communication skills.

Speaking Abilities of 7th-Form students: Student-talk during Oral Interviews

Colegio Prestigioso holds as one of its educational goals for its students' effective English communication, including speaking. The Speaking "Paper" (section) of the PET consists of an oral interview. In response, during the 7th-Form year, students' oral skills are supported by pair-work practice with native speakers, outside of their regular class time, and by formal oral interviews with their teachers. Darla's administration of these oral-interview assessments demonstrates that students possess well developed oral language skills.

At the beginning of this day in mid-November, Darla's students complete the 2nd Administration of the survey for this research. During the remainder of the class period, Darla executes individual, end-of-term speaking assessment with several students. The form of these assessments is modeled on the interview section of the PET Exam most of the students will take at the end of the semester. Darla and a single student sit up at very front, right corner of the classroom, in essence in a doorway between this classroom and the next room. Darla allows me to sit up in the front of the class next to where they are doing the interview.

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Each of the interviewees has brought a picture they will describe to Darla in the first portion of the assessment. A male student comes to the front and sits in a chair in front of Darla. He has his picture in hand. He says, "Here are four boys I don't know – in a place where you can ski. One is wearing a jacket... They are wearing glasses." He tries to describe and gesture a protector – says "wrap" or something to keep snow from entering here (the pants leg). He goes on –"here is a boy with a comic." Darla guides and corrects him adding, –"a comic book you mean." The student goes on, – "The boy on right side and on left side are wearing helmets." Darla asks him – "why?" He answers, "If they fall down without the helmets they would hurt more than with the helmets."

Shifting the direction of the interview somewhat, Darla says, – "let's imagine you know this boy" [*teacher provides a fictitious name for the pictured boy*]. The student responds, "He is untidy. He likes very much playing football and...does not like rugby. He skis very well, and he likes going to Chapelco (an Argentinean ski resort in the Andes)." Darla follows up, asking the student if he had ever been there. He replies "Yes," and Darla asks him to tell her about it. Their exchange continues. The student remarks, "...and if you go in summer, you can swim. It seems that it is cold but it is not cold." Darla asks him, "Why seems?" He follows, "when you see – looks cold." Darla proposes that "water in Bariloche, even in summer is cold." The student next talks about "rafting and...mountains. The hotel prepared a trip by bus to Lanin." Darla inquires, "What is Lanin?" "Volcano," replies the student. Darla moves to the next phase of the interview and says to the student, "tell me about your brother." He asks, "Leonardo or Alberto," and Darla chooses. "He is studying for one of the Cambridge exams, I think... so he studies. He is very tired because he takes a bath everyday." Intrigued, Darla asks, "You

don't have a bath on Sat and Sun?"   The student answers, "only on Sunday." Darla and the student laugh together.

The tone of this interview was notably conversational. The teacher was concerned, interested, pleasant, and entertaining. During the interview, the student seemed almost oblivious to my presence, even though I was sitting to his right and typing. Darla and the student were face to face and quite engaged in the interview.

After the third (3rd) interview, Darla explained that she had asked students to bring and to prepare a picture to describe. The final unit of the *PET Masterclass* text addresses *personality*. For the PET, student-examinees must be able to describe [hypothetically] how someone is or feels. Therefore, there is a direct connection between this oral interview and what the interview assessment students execute for the actual PET. Darla's test preparation was based on her personal experiences as an examiner for the First Certificate oral assessment.

Though this interview-assessment was quite structured and guided by the teacher, it allowed the student some space to express what he wanted to and to create oral language. There was the opportunity to talk freely and in a more extended fashion that is typically permitted during regular classes. This student's interview, as well as those of the other students observed this day, demonstrated both the potential as well as the current ability of these 7th-Form students possess based on their six years of formal English study at the *Colegio* as well as through other studies, experiences, and travels.   The data suggest that students were ready and able to expand their oral and other language abilities if the curriculum included frequent and extensive oral production and interaction with their teachers and classmates. Even so, classrooms observations of daily activities show that students in the 7th-Form English classes did not always receive such opportunities and that their absence could be attributed at least in part to the upcoming PET

exam.   The next section presents the regular classroom activities that afforded students

maximum opportunities for oral output and interaction. As we will see in the subsequent

sections, however, these maximum opportunities did not represent the most common classroom

dynamic.

Maximum Opportunities for Interaction and Student Output in 7th-Form Classrooms

In the previous section, we looked at the level of oral production of which 7th-Form

Prestigioso students are capable.   In this section, we will consider three excerpts, one from each

of the 7th-Form teachers, that portray the class activities that gave students the most opportunity

to speak and to create language. These excerpts reveal that 7th-Form classes in some ways

continued to provide opportunities for "communicative" activities and avenues for students to

produce and create extended, authentic oral/aural langauge, without the restrictions that

accompany the more typical grammatical exercises.

Janet's Class in late August

Having just completed the last grammar exercise of the previous unit, Janet and the class

launch into a new unit, *Take a break*, with vacations as the topical focus. This first part of the

unit features a series of pictures intended to stimulate students' prior experience with the topic

and facilitate their speaking about it. Presented in the "Warm-up" section are photos of a

sailboat at sea, some hikers in the mountains, and tourists on a bus in London.   Janet initiates the

discussion asking, "What kind of holiday are they having?" The students yell out, "exciting",

"trekking." A student offers some comments, something about the beach.   In response to a

comment about the enjoyability of a holiday, Janet indicates that it depends on type of person

you are and the needs you have what you would think of holiday.

Janet prompts the students by asking them what they would take on an adventure holiday. The students collectively and randomly suggest items they would need.

The next activity is a speaking task featuring drawings of items such as hiking boots, a backpack and bug repellent. In the task, students are supposed to identify, or name, the items and talk about why they would be useful on a wildlife walking tour in Madagascar. Janet first encourages them to do the activity in pairs; it eventually becomes a whole group activity.

A student starts talking about "wearing a hat" something about sun, and Janet responds with an affirmative comment. A male student is trying to indicate the bug repellent. Janet has to supply the word. One female student contributes, "I think it would be useful a rucksack because you could carry all these things". One male student says, "waterproof jacket" The teacher builds on this by adding, because there might be occasional – the male student is trying to explain, the teacher adds, "occasional showers". The student continues with this line of thought - because you could get sick.   Janet confirms, "because you could get sick if you get wet."

Janet explains that the reason for the French dictionary is that people speak French in Madagascar. A male student singles out – "a rope." The teacher confirms and praises with "good". The male student describes the scenarios if you are walking in... a mountain, "if you fall down, you can … the rope and .." – and the teacher follows and fills in "you can climb back" A female student proposes – sun something. The teacher identifies this item as – "sun lotion" In this instance, Janet and her students are in some senses building meaning together, but as we will see in a later excerpt, this occurrence was fairly rare in Janet's classes.

A few minutes later, Janet and the students undertake activity 7 within the *Writing* section of the unit, a task that builds directly upon the items and discussion the teacher and students were having concerning important items to take on the wildlife tour in Madagascar. The

teacher or a student identifies the item or the basic description of the item, provided in sentences 1 through 5. Then, a student will match that description with the reason or use for taking that item on the trip. A male student proposes, the first thing you must buy is a pair of walking shoes." The teacher and the male student negotiate the appropriate function "because you will be walking every day."   Another student offers, "In addition, you will need a good sun hat." With some prompting and guidance from Janet, the student offers, "to avoid sun stroke". Another female student identifies "rain-proof jacket… Janet helps some: "for the occasional shower." Janet reminds students to correct their answers. The students will use the functional relationships in the next activity, one in which students apply appropriate transitional phrases in a short paragraph that incorporates the travel items and rationales just discussed.

In this excerpt from one of Janet's August classes, we observe some of the types of activities in which Janet and her students engaged and how and when students had opportunity for interaction and output.   For *Colegio Prestigioso*, the example above represents the high end of student oral production and interaction in a given class hour, especially in one of Janet's classes. In the scenario above, the teacher and students participated in a guided oral interaction centered on conceivably real-world task.   Students produced orally and had the chances to build upon their linguistic knowledge and modify their output based upon teacher feedback.   Thus this exchange may be view as somewhat beneficial language learning. On the other hand, though different students are commenting throughout these activities, nearly all of the comments are confined to or driven by scripted options available in the text. Students seemed to grasp and be able to apply the content but students were not afforded chances and ways to produce more original, thoughtful, or free-flowing remarks.   These limitations may be attributed in part to the PET exam because the teacher and students were compelled by test demands, via the *PET*

Masterclass preparation text and its objectives, to rely upon provided scripted answers rather than interacting with the teacher and/or fellow classmates to produce item descriptions and justifications on their own and therefore benefit from their interlocutor's feedback during the interaction.

Darla's Class in Mid-September

On this day in mid-September, following announcements and class business, Darla and the students proceed to their *PET Masterclass* textbooks.   The class is working in Module 4.   On the introductory page for Module 4 is a montage of photos for students to survey. These depict people packed into a crowded subway, a hand holding a cell-phone, a couple holding a recently won lottery check, and a woman receiving an overnight delivery. Darla asks some general, prompting questions about the first photo. One female student explains that it could be because there are many people going to work. Darla agrees, adding that they are going to the city center. Teacher explains that they go to work at 8:00 in the morning and _____ [teacher providing a gap for students to fill] at what time in the afternoon. Students collectively respond that the people return home in the afternoon. She affirms and adds, "5-6 in the afternoon." For the next picture, a female student says, "it's the …"   She does not remember word for postman.   A male student adds, "and she has to sign [for the package]." A male student contributes to female student's observation.   A male student says, a postman is handing in… The teacher helps out with "a box." The teacher begins to say "she is signing." Almost simultaneously, several students surmise that she is "signing." Darla continues her thought that she has received it. In reference to a label on the package, the teacher asks, "What is overnight?" A male student responds, "Less than a day."

The purpose of the communicative activity just described was to stimulate students' thinking about the topic they are about to undertake, to encourage them to draw upon vocabulary they already know and perhaps to expose them to some new contexts and phrases. Though the students' oral production (output) did not constitute free-flowing discourse, it is noteworthy that the teacher, in interaction with her, gave them multiple opportunities to speak and that several students produced appropriate, full-length sentences, even though the context might have been new for them. It is noteworthy, though, that even this "communicative activity" is prescribed by the book and is limited to short-phrase responses to teacher prompts or questions. Therefore, as students engage in PET text activities, their oral outputs is are neither as spontaneous nor as lengthy as they are capable of.

Laura's Class in Early November

Laura begins Unit 17.2. Laura asks students what the unit is called. The class replies "All work and no play." Laura asks, "Do you know where this comes from?" There is no response. She goes on to explain that it is a famous saying. She writes on the board, "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." This is an English expression that means what? She gives the students a chance to respond. One male student suggests, "When you work, there is no chance to play." Laura follows with "This means, when you spend all your time working, you become a dull person because you have no interests." Laura elaborates to move the conversation along; she explains, this unit uses part of this phrase – to show people working too much. This is a disease these days. There is a name for it. She writes on board "workaholic." She adds, I don't know how to say it in Spanish. Various students speculate aloud in Spanish. A female student says "hide in work". Approvingly, Laura restates the phrase. She adds, "our society is going towards that" [pause] "is that something safe for human beings?" In unison, the students

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answer, "no." "Without work," suggest Laura, "a human being does not feel ... dignity let's say" [pause] then adds, not so much here with us [Argentina].

Laura and the students transition into surveying three photos in the textbook depicting different working scenarios from harvesting grain to a businessman stressing over a pile of folders. Laura and the students discuss them. A female student contributes, "you always have to do something is bad because [feel like] wasting time when you are sleeping". Laura agrees, "something haunting us all the time." A female student talks about feeling bored. The teacher continues, "we should be doing something or we would get bored...we cannot listen to silence....we do not know how to rest." These exchanges about the content of the photos prepare students for the main text of the unit, "Work can damage your health".

Laura says to the class, "you were supposed to read these at home. Did you read it?" "If not, you cannot do the exercise," When she surveys, many hands go up that had not read. Laura reprimands and reminds the students that "they were not complying with your work" "children this is not the way" Now, the class is silent.

Laura calls on a female student to read the passage. Different students take turns reading aloud. The text talks about people in jobs and time off. All but two boys are looking at their books and appear to be reading along. Class is quiet and on task. It is 2:17pm. When one student finishes, several students are always ready with hands up to volunteer to read. Most discourse, other than students reading, is teacher commentary during the reading. There are a few sentence-length comments from students, such as one student referencing remarks from her parents like "finally I am home" because they are so busy and not available to be home and spend time with the children.

In this excerpt, during the discussion centering on the topic of work, students had some opportunities to demonstrate comprehension through negotiation of a topic or prompt and express themselves fully and some students do produce complete, relevant and well conceived oral output. Active participation, interaction and feedback from the teacher granted students the opportunity to reflect upon their output, potentially building upon their linguistic repertoire. There were glimpses of teacher-student discourse that seemed to reach beyond the limits of the PET prep text and its exercises. Students contributed more than those in the excerpts from Darla's classes and more than they do in other moments of Laura's class.   When completing the reading together, the teacher talked primarily, clarifying the reading to promote student comprehension. This goal, however, could have been achieved by permitting students to explain what they know or to ask about what they do not grasp. Either task would have required them to speak in relationship to the read text. So, why did the teacher not proceed in this way? While we cannot say with complete certainty, it is likely attributable at least in part to the PET and its influence on the curriculum and classes. Time is a major burden and source of pressure. Therefore a teacher may attempt to explain material or problems as efficiently as she can. She may be aware that many, but not all students will deduce or decipher meanings or answers quickly; therefore, she will explain items directly, rather than giving students opportunities to "work it out" on their own through interactions and discussions. The teacher also knows that a PET related and designed activity forthcoming, for which she wishes students to comprehend well the passage content to execute the exercise well, an outcome motivated by improving PET performance.

Section Summary

The excerpts presented above describe the classroom situations in the 7th-Form in which students have the greatest number of chances for oral output and for interaction with their teachers and classmates, especially in an open and free manner, for a communicative purpose. In other words, this is the "best case scenario" for instruction that is influenced by the PET. At times, students had opportunities for open-ended output in the form of conversation or responses. We could begin to see, though, the influence of PET related activities in limiting the length and type of student oral output.

Cheng's study described an old standardized English exam that limited student interaction and a new exam created for the purpose of increasing student interactions by having group work and role plays as dimensions of the oral parts of the exam. This situation highlights the fact that many dimensions, even sections, of exams do not naturally lead to facilitating communication, output and interaction among teachers and students when they have to prepare for them. So, though Cheng's (2005) study showed that interaction increased because test demands dictated practice of such interactions, it also suggests what this study affirms, namely that standardized English exams, such as the PET, provide challenges to conducting classes in which student output can be maximized. In the next two sections, we will observe much more restricted opportunities and types of student speech as a result of the PET and its activities.

Typical Opportunities for Interaction and Student Output in 7th-Form Classes

In this section, we contrast the opportunities for maximum interaction and output described above with the type and amount of teacher discourse, teacher mini-lectures, and

teachers' interactions with students in more typical 7th-Form English classes. We will also look at students' spoken responses and the limits on students' opportunities to contribute orally in class.

Janet's Class in Late August

On this day in late August, Janet and her students work in *PET Masterclass* Unit 11.1, entitled "Take the challenge." After completing a 450-word reading about an international service organization, Janet and the students undertake some of the activities within the Grammar section of the unit. For this unit, the grammatical focus is determining when the past simple or past perfect forms of verb are used. Given the opportunity to explain the function of the past perfect, one male student states, "it is the past that happened in the past." The teacher clarifies that it is the "previous past."

In a practice exercise, students must appropriately complete seven sentences containing blanks with the simple past or past perfect of provided verbs. A student reads one. Janet and students work together, interact, negotiate to get to "had learned." For another sentence, a student correctly applies "had travelled", and Janet praises the student. One male student struggles trying to figure out what do with an "until he ..." prompt. Janet simply gives the corrected version "until he worked, he hadn't met." A student asks why "hadn't." Janet replies that she will explain this in Spanish, whereby she means she will just translate the expression into Spanish: "había conocido". Various students seem confused. At first, the teacher thinks that the students are not trying or not paying attention. But then she asks them, "Are you really trying?"

In this grammar exercise, a very common activity in all 7th-Form classes, the purpose of the activity is manipulation of grammatical forms. The exercise calls for students simply to say

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the correct verb form, which amounts to only a word or two, in a situation devoid of much context.   Therefore, this PET oriented activity limits both the potential quantity and length of student oral output.   Interactions are very one-sided, as the teacher talks primarily.   Students are not participating in a meaningful, two-way interaction in which they can contribute and develop their language abilities through negotiation or reflection upon their output.

A Typical Day with Darla in Mid-September

Like every afternoon at 1:30pm, all primary level students and teachers meet in the courtyard for organization and greetings. Once dismissed, we all walk back to Darla's regular classroom. It is a small classroom, just behind the teachers' lounge in a building near the back of the school property called the "casita" (small house).

Today is *hat day*. The teacher and students enter class donning various types of hats. Darla is wearing a folding army hat; she demonstrates to students how it folds. The teacher, glances around the classroom and begins to describe the hats she sees students wearing. She mentions Bob Marley and a farmer harvesting. A male student donning a white cap declares that he is tennis player Andy Roddick. The teacher remarks that I am "David the conqueror," as I am wearing a conquistador helmet.   A female student, wearing a popular four point football-fanatic hat, declares "I am a joker" (of cards).   The teacher notices that another student is Mary Poppins.

In the segment of the class described above, the students enjoyed a lighter, comical moment, filled with comprehensible references and input (Krashen, 1982; Long, 1990). Nevertheless, the teacher did not offer students the opportunity to talk about their hats, the characters they represented or rationales for their hat selections. This would have been an excellent method and opportunity for students to speak in a more elaborate manner about

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something they enjoyed and were knowledgeable about. A reasonable question to pose is: why were students not given more opportunity for oral output, especially when they are capable of it? We will look at a couple of more activities from this same class and provide and answer to that question.

Following the communication activity about people and their work, described in the previous section, Darla proceeds to a couple of activities below the pictures. For the first, she simply says aloud vocabulary words, such as *box*, *miserable* and *technology*, from a list, and students indicate orally the number of picture with which a given word could be identified. When students work collectively this way, they are typically correct. In the second activity, some students and the teacher read aloud model remarks such as, "I'll pass on your message when he gets back." The students then have to match the remark with a structural description such as "using a conditional structure" or "talking about the past." When students work collectively on finite activities of this nature, they are typically correct in their responses.

The two exercises just described are quite common in the *PET Masterclass* text and in language classes at *Prestigioso*. Such exercises feature instructions or question prompts followed by a "mini-task" such as applying a phrase, relating a picture number, selecting answer choices from a list or word-box. Students have to comprehend situations and vocabulary and be able to manipulate information, but they do not have to produce or create language, especially orally. Though there is the potential for teachers to permit students to describe more or to explain why they have chosen an answer, often the goal is to make sure that students understand and choose the correct answer. If students only choose a letter or number, or merely read a sentence answer give, students' oral production and interactions are more limited. This limitation is caused by the PET because the *PET Masterclass* utilizes numerous activities

designed to replicate or to provide practice for PET exam questions.   The orientation and focus

of these activities frequently is limited, giving students restricted range of responses.   In

addition, Prestigioso teachers are obligated and pressured to complete the PET syllabus and

preparation. Therefore, the *modus operandi* that develops is teacher's leading students from one

exercise to the next. They must stay on pace.   Therefore allowing the space and time for

students to elaborate on pictures, phrases or ideas presented is challenging and fairly uncommon.

In these excerpts from one of Darla's classes fairly early in the term, we can observe a

range of language tasks and of opportunities for students to speak and to interact orally with their

teacher and with each other.   In a previous section of this chapter, we saw students describing

thought-provoking pictures to introduce a unit in the *Masterclass* text.   The teacher gave them

space and support to express themselves more completely.   However, when discussing their hats

and the matching exercises students were permitted to speak very little. Taken as a whole, this

class exhibits the common types of oral communication from students.

Summary

As we have seen in this section, the use of the PET seems to contribute to increasing

limitations to students' oral production in the types of activities and exercises that teachers and

students execute during 7th-Form language classes.   Many of the exercises, designed to help

students develop the knowledge and skills needed to succeed on the PET, require single-word,

short phrase or mere manipulation of provided texts.   The types of exercises dictated by the

PET exam, and more specifically by the PET test-prep materials lead to limited student oral

contributions and production.

I maintain that there are three reasons, related to the PET, for such limited oral

communication. First, most class activities are exercises from the *PET Masterclass* text or other

similar exercises from the "Getting Ready for PET" text. These exercises are designed first and foremost to align with PET items, and only secondarily to align with principles of effective classroom second language acquisition. Clearly, they are not designed to promote maximum student response. Second, these excerpts illustrate that teachers have a tremendous and daunting amount of topics and tasks to cover in preparing students for the PET. Teachers must proceed efficiently. Therefore, teachers get accustomed to moving through activities and exercises quickly. The third reason, tied closely to the first two, is that teachers and students become accustomed to this mode of exercise and activity and perhaps operate in it. So, even when activity might offer more opportunities to speak neither the teachers nor students are in the practice of doing so.

<div align="center">Quiet Students: Teacher-dominant Scenarios</div>

So far, we have observed examples of fairly open opportunities for students to talk during an oral interview, occasions for students to talk during "communicative activities," and quite limited opportunities for student oral production during vocabulary and grammar manipulation activities. The presence and effects of the PET, however, are most apparent on occasions when students have virtually no opportunity to interact with the teacher or with others in the target language. This section will present and analyze two scenarios, which while not the most common at Prestigioso, are not atypical either. Reviewing and correcting lengthy grammar drills associated with particular PET sections or mock exams are common class activities in which students speak relatively little. First, we will observe Janet and her students working on a paraphrasing exercise. Then, we will review an exam with Laura and her class.

Janet and Paraphrasing Dominate the Day

As I enter and take a seat, this class is already underway (intersession/dual visit) the students are somewhat noisy. A female student is commenting to Janet, "I am working, Miss. I asked you if I could go to the blackboard." Janet is visibly and audibly frustrated with some aspect of the student's manner and behavior and is scolding various students for talking and being off task. The situation represents the issue of rapport and discipline, common issue for Janet and this, her main group.

This November day, unlike the excerpt from Janet's class reviewed earlier, reflects another, all-to-common side of Janet's classes. Often the teacher and students simply correct grammar exercises in a way that affords very little teacher-student interactive discourse in the target language. Janet, as the teacher talks much, much more, while students work, write and correct. This exercise is a paraphrasing exercise from pages 119 and 120 of Unit 15 from "Getting ready for PET 2006."

While two female students are at the chalkboard writing sentences for correction, the other students are at their desks. Some are writing, and many are talking. The teacher is circulating and assisting individual students. Once the sentences are written, Janet has one of the female students to read aloud sentences written on the right-hand side of the board. All are correct but one where 'owe' should have been 'own'. Janet, who is standing next to me, praises the student, "very good" "excellent". These are some sentence examples:

4 These are such heavy books that I use them as doorstops

5 Do you own this umbrella? [T saw and sent a diff s to correct]

6 Sally isn't shorter than Millie. Millie is shorter than Sally

7 The sofa isn't too small for both of us.

8 Ed is fatter than Mike.

7 The sofa isn't too small for both of us.

8 Ed is fatter than Mike.

By the time the student has read out these sentences, Janet has already reviewed them and is ready to move on. Most of the students are copying and correcting, writing at their desks.

The teacher speaks to individual students about their work. Sighs in consternation and has an exasperated look on her face. Janet asks the class "Can everyone see Maria's handwriting" "Lucas, are you correcting?" At this point, quite a few students are off task, talking or wandering about. Annoyed, Janet attempts to address them. Such disruptions and student lack of focus are common problems for this teacher.

Janet, throughout this class, worked to monitor those writing on board, to look for errors in the exercise, to negotiate some rather difficult student behavior issues, to oversee individual student progress, and to manage her own frustration and anxiety about the challenges of the class. During this class session students spoke infrequently, if at all, in the target language. Few teacher-student interactions concerned the subject matter.

This example demonstrates how the process of executing grammar practice exercises can dominate a class and virtually eliminate student oral participation in a class.   Moreover, in this scenario Janet struggled to manage a technical grammar activity and student boredom by having to engage in it. It would seem that working with the communicative and curricular constrains posed by the PET are made particularly apparent when a less experienced teacher has to negotiate them.

Students take mock exams every two weeks throughout the spring term and even more frequently towards the end of the term, just before the actual PET administration.   In addition, regular, institutional tests are modeled after PET exam papers and exercises. As a result of this testing emphasis, teachers and students spend substantial class time reviewing and correcting PET practice exams.   This practice often produces its own class dynamics.

The next few excerpts are from one of Laura's classes the week of the PET administration. This day, Laura arrives on time and promptly begins the class. The students are already asking about their marks on the grammar exam. Laura announces that, "Linda [the English Program Director] wants to give you the marks after the PET so that you don't get nervous."   Students are a bit anxious. Laura declares, "Before we go on with the mock, we are going to check a few things from your grammar exam." She informs the students that "Marks not so terrible, but I was disappointed that…" She mentions a few trouble areas.

Laura states, "These are not things that can happen on your PET." She warns the students not to be "thinking about flowers." This is a way of saying they cannot afford to be distracted – that they need to focus and concentrate during these tests. So Laura and the students will review orally some trouble spots from this exam they recently took.

Laura begins by asking a student to "explain the mechanics of passive voice." A male student responds, "to change subject."   "If you have direct object," adds Laura, "put it in place of subject and more or less" vice versa. "And what about the verbs to be" she asks. The student replies, "goes into tense of sentence….and the other verb in past perfect." Laura writes an example on the board. She asks the students to be patient and quiet. She writes:

People were praising and criticizing Jack at the same time.

The teacher asks the students for the subject of this example sentence. A student guesses "People" and "Jack". Laura responds, "One subject my dear." The student answers "people." Laura explains that the rest of the sentence is the predicate. One male student figures out the example and adds that Jack is the "*objecto directo*". Several of his classmates state in unison the "direct object". Laura is teaching, using a mini-lecture, and asking students questions for which they have to deduce the answer.

Laura gives some explanation of the verb. Students know the concept of the past continuous verb form. She says, "We have the direct object" and then follows up, "we need the verb to be past the past participle." She writes on the board, "Jack was being praised and criticized at the same time." "So here we have the same tense plus the participle," remarks Laura. She comments that "many people made the same mistake on the test." Laura names aloud the three students who did the best on this exercise on the test.

In the part of this class described above, some students are giving some complete, sentence-length oral responses. They are not in a free-flowing conversational format. They are in response to particular questions or directives from the teacher, Laura. Often students' answers were just short, single-word responses to teacher set ups. The approach taken to reviewing these grammatical points, as well as the time pressures of the upcoming PET administration on Saturday, likely limit the class format, interactions and students' oral production.

The excerpt that follows is a continuation of this same class with Laura.   The notable difference is, as Laura goes further and further into her review of the test, the class discourse becomes more and more one-sided. The class devolves into Laura's simply explaining test items, test dimensions, procedures and issues of concern, with little or no student input.

Laura challenges the students: "You thought everything was paraphrasing and not passive voice. Everything is not paraphrasing." She explains, "You have to be very open minded on the test on what the people are asking you." She points out that on here test there were section titles. On the PET Exam, by contrast, titles or hints about grammar item required may not be indicated. Laura clearly relates these results on the term final grammar exam to student performance on the upcoming PET.

Laura directs a comment towards a student, "I don't know...I don't know what happened to you." The student asks about his/her grade. Laura replies and reiterates that she is not going to reveal the marks to students. She explains that if they are too happy about their results they will not be focused for the PET and likewise if saddened or unhappy about the last exam results.

The teacher reads, "I think that chess is a more interesting game than cards." Instead of paraphrasing, some students had written "In my opinion." Laura indicates that is not what she had expected. A student asks, "¿no es el mismo?" And, Laura responds, "well what is clear when I see a comparative in the sentence, I want you to paraphrase the comparative." She also reminds students to write the rest of the sentence when completing these paraphrasing activities, "though on the PET it is easier because you only need to change 3 words."

Now, about 30 minutes into the lesson, we are still on test and grammar review. Earlier, students were quiet, generally listening, and attentive to the teacher. Now, students' body language does not seem as engaged. They are still quiet and listening, though. Laura and the students continue with this same type of activity for about another half hour. During this time, there is lots of teacher test explanation and review with virtually no student talk or response. Laura's tone is one of understanding, of patience and of caring but also of frustration and at times almost pleading – particularly when students have missed items – some she is sure they

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should know.   After wrapping up the final section, some students ask again about their test results. The teacher gives them ballpark numbers.

The class now shifts to executing mock PET sections as preparation for Saturday's actual administration of the PET Exam.   The students, astutely, are concerned about inadequate remaining class time to finish the mock test. Laura calmly encourages them to do what they can. She says, "do parts 1 and 2 of the reading." There are approximately twenty minutes of class-time remaining. The students begin writing [2:32pm].

As the class hour winds down, Laura asks the students, "Have you all finished?" Collectively, they reply "no."   They ask, "Can we finish after the break or stop until break" Laura replies, "No, you can keep working until the break."   Now various conversations are gradually audible all over the classroom. Soon loud talking and laughing commence. The bell rings, and Laura says, "You may go down children."

This excerpt reveals some of the routines teachers tend to fall into when reviewing tests with students.   The mode established was the teacher pointing out problems areas and common errors of students. At times, the teacher allowed students to contribute orally and actively in the reflection and correction process. As is common for *Prestigioso* teachers, review and correction was driven and dominated by the teacher.   Evidenced by her own statements, the upcoming PET exam day was on her mind and motivating her agenda for the day. As we have seen in most of the excerpts presented, the agenda, the tasks and the time constraints presented by the PET affect how teachers teach and result in classes in which students have highly structured, somewhat infrequent, and limited types of oral communications.

Conclusion

Aside from Cheng's (2005) largely quantitative examination of exam washback effects upon teacher-student interaction, few washback studies have considered interaction and student output. This chapter represents a thorough qualitative review of the PET exam's influence on student interaction and output in an EFL setting.

Second language acquisition scholars generally maintain that second-language teaching and learning, particularly in second-language classrooms, should be communicative in nature, facilitate student oral output, and feature abundant opportunities for two-way interactions between teachers and students and among students. Arguably, therefore, language classes in which language learning does not provide a communicative focus and features oral interactions among teachers and students that are teacher dominated and limit the length and type of student oral responses and would not represent a productive, effective language learning environment. Further, such an approach begs the question "Why would a well established bilingual school, with a rich language learning tradition and well trained teachers operate with an instructional approach that teachers know, or should know, is at odds with effective second language pedagogy or at the very least, runs contrary to the communicative goals they have for with their students?

Class observations as well as teacher interviews reveal that teachers aspire for their students to communicate, and at times, all three teachers reach beyond the *Masterclass* text or the exercises to try to conduct more open and interesting discussions with their students. However, the volume of material teachers must cover with students to prepare them for the PET, the time constraints for doing so, and the exam and prep text format dictate considerably what teachers teach and how they go about it. For example, they move through all material, even

readings and other more open-ended activities with efficiency, even haste.   Often, teacher-

dominated discourse and restricted, sometimes non-existent, student oral participation in classes

become the norm.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION

This dissertation explored the effects of high-stakes English tests on students learning

EFL at a bilingual school in South America. Argentina is one context in which the University

Cambridge ESOL exams have a prominent role in the professional, academic and educational

sectors of the society. In the capital city of Buenos Aires, Spanish-English bilingual schools, or

*colegios bilingüe*s, are one of the major institutions delivering English education. The majority

of these schools feature a comprehensive afternoon English curriculum and incorporate and

encourage the Cambridge ESOL exams into their academic programs.

The global research question guiding this study was: **What are the *washback* effects of**

the Cambridge ESOL exams upon English language learning and teaching at an

Argentinean bilingual school?   I pursued this research question by investigating three specific

sub-questions:

1. How does the Preliminary Test of English (PET) affect the 7th-Form English curriculum at *Colegio Prestigioso*?

2. How does the PET affect what and how teachers at *Colegio Prestigioso* teach?

3. What impact does the PET have upon teacher-student oral interactions during English classes?

Summary of Findings

The Co-development of Elite Bilingual Schooling and an International EFL Test

This dissertation traced the development of a bilingual EFL curriculum at Colegio Prestigioso. I traced how the growing international political and economic power of English was reflected in this and many other schools' development of a full-time, year-long academic program that runs from March through December.

I showed that while English as a foreign language education has long been a major part of the school's program, the effort intensified with the school's formal transition to a full bilingual program in 2000. I then showed how *Prestigioso's* English program varies as students progress from the Initial grades where pre-school and Kindergarten-aged children learn English through games, songs and basic school routines. The Primary Level curriculum for Forms 1-6 is based on projects in content areas such as science, history, and social science.

I showed how the instructional focus shifts in the Seventh Form, the final year of Primary School, as students sit for the Cambridge Preliminary English Test at the end of the year. This Form marks the introduction of three year-long courses: *Language, Getting Ready for PET, and Literature*. I illustrate how the Language and PET classes in essence function as a singular endeavor, as both focus upon PET-type tasks, linguistic structures and grammar rules. In Literature classes, students read stories, summarize them, and then complete comprehension activities that review the factual elements in the story. These classes are not intended to provide direct preparation for the PET.

I showed that in Secondary School, students study English literature, history, biology, maths, and business, following guidelines for the British International General Certificate of

Secondary Education (IGCSE).   In their Language classes, they also prepare for more advanced Cambridge ESOL exams.

Because of increasing washback from the Cambridge ESOL exams on Colegio Prestigioso's curriculum, in Chapter 4 I also laid out some of PET exam's principal guidelines and objectives. The PET is part of the suite of internationally marketed University of Cambridge ESOL proficiency exams. I traced the linkage between the suite of Cambridge ESOL exams and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

I showed how the Common European Framework of Reference and the PET producers identify PET-level learners at the Threshold level, or intermediate level, and what that means for the English proficiency level and abilities that Prestigioso 7th-From students are expected to possess.

In Chapter 4 we determined that the PET is intended to support and evaluate a broad based, communicative study of the English language designed to facilitate natural interaction and improved communication with native speakers. In addition to these stated goals and standards for English language learning, *Colegio Prestigioso* English administration and English faculty have embraced the exam and believe it supports the school's communicative goals for students.

In Chapters 5 and 6 I contrast the communicative dimension of Colegio Prestigioso's English educational mission, the communicative goals of the Common European Framework, and the communicative curriculum espoused by Cambridge ESOL to the ways which the 7th-Form teachers and students negotiate preparation for the PET.

Increased Emphasis on Grammar and Metalinguistic Knowledge

Chapter 5 of this dissertation examined the curricular and global instructional impacts of the PET upon the 7th-Form. When 7th-Form teachers at *Colegio Prestigioso* discussed their goals

for their students and their concept of what they are supposed to know, they offered two distinct, perhaps disparate, sets of goals or outcomes. The first concerned to communication, students' abilities to speak and use English for real-world purposes such as travel, employment and higher education.   The second was to enable students to pass the PET.   For the larger societal and educational reasons already discussed, the Prestigioso English administration and teachers embrace the exam and believe it supports the school's communicative goals for students.   In sum, therefore, the CFR, the PET producers and Prestigioso teachers all aspire for communicative instruction and believe that the PET should help to create such instruction.

The findings from Chapter 5 suggest that: the PET dictates the curriculum and pervades teachers' global approach to their classes; that the PET contributes to a culture of correction; that the PET fosters a strong grammatical bent to instruction; and that the PET promotes extensive use of mock PET exams in the curriculum and in class activities.

The first two strong indicators that the PET dictates the curriculum are: 1.) that a commercial PET exam-prep textbook and an institutionally compiled booklet of PET exercises are the sole texts and the primary instructional materials for 7th-Form students' language studies and 2.) that teachers themselves identify exam preparation as the focus of this year.

The persistent assignment and correction of activities and exercises centered on the grammatical structures and vocabulary for the PET, typically devoid of a broader context attest to the influence of the PET upon the 7th-Form classes.   This culture of correction is driven by the PET. Teachers indicate explicitly and implicitly that corrections are to help students avoid making mistakes on the PET.   This classroom environment and practice was not representative of the other Primary-level classes and grades at Prestigioso. Certainly, some language teachers might regard reviewing or drilling exercises and activities, similar to those provided in the

Masterclass or *Getting Ready for PET* texts as effective language teaching that they would implement regardless of the presence of a standardized test. In the case of the 7th-Form classes, though, the source and content of the exercises, the intense pacing of review and correction, and the sheer frequency of such classroom activity suggest that the PET exam contributed to, if not created, this classroom dynamic. Furthermore, data reveled that teachers believe that correcting exercise after exercise help students to learn English and helps them have the best chance to succeed on the PET. Therefore, they pressure themselves and their students to complete as many exercises as they physically and mentally can, especially during the spring semester.

An additional aspect of the correction and accuracy emphasis was the constant association and comparison of testing marks by teachers and students with potential performance on and readiness for the PET.

Another major finding from Chapter 5 was that *Prestigioso* teachers, acutely aware of the need for grammatical knowledge and skills on the PET, devote considerable energy and time to grammar instruction. Though the PET purports to be a broad-based language exam, the need for grammatical knowledge and accuracy is embedded throughout the test.

Therefore, in 7th-Form Language classes at Prestigioso, structural and grammatical knowledge function as subject content. Students do not merely hear and comprehend grammar explanations from their teachers or practice exercises. Students learn to comprehend, discuss and apply sophisticated metalinguistic language to describe grammatical labels and rules related to items and exercises they will undertaking on the PET

The fourth major finding from Chapter 5, indicating PET washback effects upon 7th-Form classes is the prominent use of PET mock exams in 7th-Form classes, especially during the semester in which the PET is given. Class time is dedicated for students to complete the exams;

teachers take them home to correct; and they return them and review them thoroughly with students during class time. Mock-exam work and review constitutes a de facto course at Prestigioso during this term. The "mocks" curriculum does not merely review and practice vocabulary and grammar, but also explicitly includes instruction and practice with the exam format and the implementation of the test-taking strategies. In short, by the end of the term, either as practice or as pieces of institutional exams, mock PET exams eclipse all other language learning activities and become the primary language learning activity for teachers and students alike. The PET not only shapes the course of language teaching and learning at *Prestigioso*, but for parts of the year becomes the curriculum itself.

Based on the analysis and findings in Chapter 5, it is difficult to deny the strong presence of the PET upon the curriculum and global approach to 7th-Form English classes. Therefore, the PET is producing washback effects upon these teachers and classes. The subject matter for courses and the rationale behind teaching are based upon the PET. The more important issue is whether the washback or pedagogical outcome at *Prestigioso* is consistent with the articulated goals of the CEFR, of the PET designers, or even of the *Prestigioso* personnel themselves? Linguistic competences and grammatical accuracy are within the language goals of both the CEFR and of the PET; they are, supposedly, only dimensions of a larger, more holistic view of language development and language learning. In theory, pursuit of linguistic competences should not be the entire focus of language learning nor work against development of pragmatic or sociolinguistic competences. Given what we learned in Chapter, it would seem that the PET is, in fact, producing negative washback at Prestigioso because exam preparation is working against a more productive, comprehensive approach to English language learning.

Moreover, having students pass the PET and later the Cambridge First Certificate Exam are stated and actual goals of the institution and its teachers, success on these exams is not the larger, more important goal these educators are pursuing.   Prestigioso strives to prepare students who able to use English to study, to travel and to work in the future.   Since preparation for the PET has produced a test-centered curriculum, a culture of correction, and highly technical grammar intensive instruction it is safe to say that the PET is working against the larger goal of producing competent language students well prepared to use English into their lives beyond their training at Prestigioso.

Decreased Oral Production and Interaction

The findings of Chapter 6 question the PET's contribution to communicative competence by demonstrating that PET preparation activities and the classroom discourse model to which it contributes run contrary to two of the most fundamental dimensions of communicative competence and communicative teaching, namely *student output* and *interaction*.

In that chapter, we reviewed the contributions of prominent scholars in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) such as Pica (2002), Gass and Mackey (2006), Mackey (1999), Swain (1995) and Lee and Van Patten (2005) who have discussed and defined the fundamental roles that student oral output and interaction play in developing communicative competence and, therefore, in effective SLA classrooms.   Chapter 6 established that effective language learning classrooms are environments in which students have opportunities for real communication, for real purposes, rather than merely the study of the grammatical structures.

Chapter 6 briefly reviewed task-based instruction and content based instruction, two approaches both of which are recognized as highly effective models of communicative language

teaching and learning.   Data revealed that Primary-level teachers employ principles and techniques from these models throughout the first six forms at Prestigioso.

Evidence from Chapter 6 suggests that in the 7th-Form, due to the presence of and preparation for the PET in the 7th-Form, teachers abandon approaches such as TBI or CBI, which provide a broader, more holistic and more effective approach to language, and via which in students actively communicative, produce and interact.   The data demonstrate that in contrast with other years and other teaching contexts within the school, student interaction and oral output are reduced during the 7th-Form year.

The chapter reviewed four major sets of data: 1.) individual student interviews that documented students' substantial oral communication abilities; 2.) infrequent regular classroom scenarios in which students had some opportunities to demonstrate comprehension through negotiation of a topic or prompt and express themselves fully; 3.) typical student output and interaction in response to PET-test type activities and exercises which limited student oral contributions to single-word, short phrase or mere manipulation of provided texts; and finally 4.) teacher dominated reviews of grammar exercises and mock PET exams in which opportunities for student oral participation were negligible.

Second Language Acquisition foreign language education scholars maintain that second-language teaching and learning should: be communicative in nature, facilitate student oral output and feature abundant opportunities for two-way interactions between teachers and students and among students. Language classes in which language learning does not provide a communicative focus and features oral interactions among teachers and students that are teacher dominated and limit the length and type of student oral responses do not represent the optical

language learning environment. Moreover, such an environment would not be consistent with the CEFR, PET or *Prestigioso* goals of a broad communicative approach to language learning.

In the *Colegio Prestigioso* context, the volume of material teachers must cover with students to prepare them for the PET, the time constraints for doing so, and the exam and prep text format in large measure dictate what teachers teach and how they go about it. For example, they move through all material, even readings and other more open-ended activities with efficiency, even haste. Often, teacher-dominated discourse and restricted, sometimes non-existent, student oral participation in classes become the norm. As a result of these demands, teachers and classes abandon essential and well-established principles aural/oral interaction and output in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and sound second language pedagogy. Based on these findings in Chapter 6, it is reasonable to argue that the use of the Preliminary Test of English (PET) and preparation for this exam have the negative washback effect of limiting students' overall communicative and SLA development.

<center>Research Implications for Language Testing</center>

This research has significant implications for the field of language testing by adding to, affirming and challenging findings of earlier washback studies. The originators of washback research, Alderson and Wall (1993), established investigable *Washback Hypotheses* that focused upon language teaching, course content, methodology, sequence of learning, degree and depth of teaching, participant attitudes, role of test consequences, reach of impact upon learners and teachers (pp. 120-121). Just below, I identify findings in this study related to these basic hypotheses. These scholars also established classroom observations as a centerpiece of washback research. This dissertation conducted 60+ hours of class observation data to investigate classroom impacts of the PET upon 7th-Form teachers at Colegio Prestigioso.

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Supported by interview data and other observations, these classroom observations established that the PET "influenced teaching" because it determined in large measure the content and materials to be used to prepare students for the exams; it "influenced how teachers teach" to some degree because teachers spent considerable time explaining and reviewing grammatical topics and exercises, even though this approach to teaching broke with approaches employed at the same school in other grade levels; and the PET "influenced the sequence of learning" because students' appropriate oral development was sidelined to accommodate metalinguistic understanding and exam strategies. This dissertation study is noteworthy in that it featured longer-term and more extensive class observation than other washback studies to date.

Alderson and Wall (1993) also raised the issue of alignment between test purposes, materials and teaching practices. As indicated earlier in this discussion chapter, the Cambridge ESOL standards, defined by the Common European Framework, the PET exam producers and the test preparation text publishers aspire for alignment and positive washback. While 7th-Form teachers at Colegio Prestigioso embrace the PET and focus almost exclusively on the content, topics and grammatical structures the PET covers, they simultaneously embrace teaching that is in conflict with the communicative emphasis of the CEFR. This finding speaks to the challenges and complexities of achieving positive washback from the test to the classroom (Cheng, 2005).

This research also affirms and extends the Wall and Alderson findings (1993) on instructional modifications in years or terms in proximity to exams. In their research, during observations conducted during the third term of the year, when the test is administered, researchers noted "a 'narrowing of the curriculum' as teachers finish or abandon their textbooks and begin intensive work with past papers and commercial publications to prepare their students

for the exam" (pp. 61-62). The present dissertation research verifies this same phenomenon, on

perhaps to a more severe degree. First, at *Colegio Prestigioso* the entire year leading up to the

PET is dedicated to study and preparation for it.   And, as established in Chapter 5, towards the

end of the test term, mock exams essentially became the curriculum.

This dissertation also contradicts Watanabe (1996) and Alderson and Hamp-Lyons

(1993) assertions about teacher differences as accounting for classroom dynamics and methods

more than exam influence.   Watanabe's (1996) studied two teachers, both of whom taught one

test-preparation course and non-test course. Watanabe compared the teaching content and styles

of the two to determine whether the test was dictating the use of the traditional grammar-

translation approach in English classes. He determined that one of the teachers employed

grammar-translation, needed for exam prep, whether or not he was teaching the exam course.

However, the other teacher did not. Watanabe asserted that the teachers' educational

backgrounds, their beliefs about effective teaching methods, and the differing proximity of the

courses to the respective exams could account for these differences.   The exam did not cause

use of this method.

Likewise, Alderson and Hamp-Lyons (1995) conducted a study similar to Watanabe's,

observing teachers preparing students for TOEFL exams. Their study determined that teacher

differences, such as background, personality and philosophy had more to do with the way they

approached classes than whether an exam was the focus of the course.

The findings in this dissertation, though, point to contradictory findings.   At Colegio

Prestigioso, there were three teachers with different personal backgrounds, different periods of

experience, different teacher-training backgrounds and different philosophies about the PET

exam. However, as a result of the PET and the school's approach to this exam, these three very

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different teachers taught their classes in ironically similar ways. It is worth noting that in a test-rich context such as Buenos Aires, that teacher preparation itself, and the type of instruction that follows from it, could itself be influenced by the test or test series. Test washback effect could include these elements.

This dissertation research affirms and extends Hamp-Lyons (1998) findings related to the negative impact of test-prep materials on English language instruction. Hamp-Lyons studied TOEFL preparation texts. Upon analyzing five prominent TOEFL preparation texts and guides on the market, she concluded that these texts would promote negative washback. One of the principle reasons was that these texts centered on the test format and questions, rather than on any type of more orderly or logical syllabus that one could systematically study. Chapter 5 of this dissertation seems to affirm Hamp-Lyons finding. Though there is more content and substance in the PET Masterclass text than Hamp-Lyons found in TOEFL prep materials, it was due in large measure to the types of activities and exercises in the PET text that teachers and students struggled to have sufficient interaction and opportunities for student output during classes. Based on the standards we have established, this outcome suggests a negative washback effect.

As described in the Chapter 2 Literature Review and in greater detail in Chapter 6, Cheng's (2005, 1998) two-year, multi-phased washback study of a new national English exam in Hong Kong is perhaps the most comprehensive and most data-driven of the washback studies to date. Cheng's study described an old standardized English exam that limited student interaction and a new exam created for the purpose of increasing student interactions by having group work and role-plays as dimensions of the oral parts of the exam.

One phase of her study was regular, thorough class observations that considered teacher-student interaction as an item for analysis. The observations and analysis centered upon quantitative representations of classroom elements and activities. She found, as a result of the new test implementation, that teachers shifted their oral activities work from oral reading and communication cards to role plays and small group discussions, foci on the new exam. Student talk also overtook teacher talk for most teachers. However, the patterns of teacher-student interaction did not change. She ultimately concludes that effecting washback, such as improving oral communication, is difficult using a national language exam. This situation highlights the fact that many dimensions, even sections, of exams do not naturally lead to facilitating communication, output and interaction among teachers and students when they have to prepare for them.

The current dissertation project, which featured many more hours of class observation at various levels in the studied institution than Cheng's study, collected and analyzed classroom activities and interactions qualitatively, reviewing in detail the content and significance of these interactions. This dissertation's findings affirm Cheng's findings in that goals and standards set forth by the CEFR and the PET publishers will not yield positive washback, such as communicative classrooms, when teachers feel that they must abandon such a dynamic to accommodate the test. So, though Cheng's (2005) study showed that interaction increased because test demands dictated practice of such interactions, it also suggests what this study affirms, namely that standardized English exams, such as the PET, provide challenges to conducting classes in which student output can be maximized.

In addition, this research adds to Cheng's study and to washback studies in general by documenting qualitatively, on an extended basis what washback effects, such as classroom dynamics and student interaction look like.

<div align="center">Implications for South American Bilingual Education Literature</div>

Argentina's bilingual schools have a long and successful history of producing competent bilinguals. De Mejía (2002) and Banfi and Day (2004) documented the rich tradition of these institutions in Argentina, describing their roles in the society and general characteristics of such schools.   Previous literature has provided broad descriptions of elite bilingual immersion programs in South America and of the *colegios bilingües* in Argentina. To date, there have been no in-depth qualitative studies of an individual school, its program, its curriculum and daily learning. This dissertation has provided a glimpse of one such school, its program, its curriculum and daily learning.   This study also addressed in detail how the school, its teachers and students negotiate the Cambridge ESOL exams, a staple of EFL instruction in the Argentinean context.

<div align="center">Implications for EFL and Testing in Schools</div>

The impact of globalization has led business, governments and universities in many countries to promote greater numbers of highly competent English language users.   Such institutions evaluate learners' abilities by their performance on international standardized English exams, such as the University of Cambridge ESOL Exams. Because of class, professional, and societal purposes and beliefs about the value of English ability, and particularly competence as defined and evaluated through the Cambridge English as Second Language Exam series, *Colegio Prestigioso* has embraced internationally marketed standardized English proficiency exams, namely the Cambridge exams like the PET and First Certificate. It is certainly understandable

that this bilingual institution would seek out external, credible ways to demonstrate its students' English proficiency. The majority of the students are passing the PET each year. The school faculty and parents are pleased with this difficult accomplishment. In addition, this very study has shown that most of Primary school education is providing high quality, well rounded, if not cutting edge English language study. If so much is going well, then what is the relevance of this study? Why so much concern if, for one year, teachers and students prepare for an international exam to the detriment of other language areas?

The response to this question is that this institution, others like it in Buenos Aires, and in fact other second language programs in many other contexts may not be aware of the overwhelming power of such standardized exams and may not desire tests' negative influences, or negative washback, on language teaching and learning. A strong bilingual program should offer broad, effective, meaningful, purposeful language instruction and interactions for its students. This institution has the resources, the teachers, and the able students to maintain such a program. The school's embrace of the PET and other Cambridge ESOL exams, as well as the societal norms pushing their use, have in many ways forced the school, its teachers, and its students towards less, rather than more, communicative authentic English teaching and learning.

Prestigioso 7th-Form teachers have mixed attitudes about the PET and its implications. They believe that the experience of a rigorous international exam is challenging and motivates students to study and work hard towards a goal. The teachers do not believe the PET represents all that students know and can do in English, but that it represents some worthwhile measure of students' English competence. They also realize that the test has limitations and creates particular demands for themselves and for students. They know that there are other, better ways to teach and learn English.

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Though administration and teachers are somewhat aware of negative aspects of the test, this study suggests that they are not fully aware of the depth and breadth of the impact on English learning, on students and on the school's larger English education mission. This negative impact reaches beyond the 7th-Form. The 7th-Form year marks a shift from a stronger, more broad based approach to language learning in primary school to five years of secondary language learning largely centered on and compromised by Cambridge Exams. The value of this study for this institution, and for many other English as Foreign Language programs which integrate similar high stakes standardized language exams as goals or centerpieces, is to demonstrate the real, damaging, and pervasive effects on basic classroom instruction, dynamics, interactions, and student oral production.

Resolving these problems and reducing the conflict between communicative goals and the narrow, intensive grammatical instruction demanded by the PET can be complex and challenging. Fortunately, at Colegio Prestigioso and other institutions with a well organized immersion program, highly competent teachers and eager, capable students, these negative effects can be overcome. The following solutions might function independently or in concert. First, language scholars and teachers must demand that Cambridge revamp the language and writing sections of the PET, in particular re-evaluating or re-scoring them in a way that emphasizes effective completion of communicative tasks, rather than weighing so heavily technical, discrete grammar items. Second, the administration and faculty at a school like Prestigioso could elect not to emphasize these exams to such a degree, choosing instead to broaden the curriculum from 7th-Form on to feature more reading, discussion, and analytical and creative writing – activities that SLA supports as effective means of helping language learners enjoy the process and develop advanced language abilities. Third, if Colegio Prestigioso did not

wish to abandon the exams, given their societal importance, the approach to them could be different. Teachers could a) approach the material and tasks in a more interactive and less technical way or b) prepare students for the exam in an extra-curricular sessions that would focus on the exam, but not disrupt the larger, holistic communicative language mission of the institution.

Directions for Future Research

One of the greatest needs in washback studies specifically, and in language learning research in general, is more input and understanding of student perspectives regarding standardized language exams and other language assessments.   While not presented in this dissertation, the researcher has collected data in the form of questionnaires, individual interviews and exam-day impressions of the 7th-Form students who completed the process of preparing for and taking the PET exam in Spring 2006.   Careful analysis, reflection and writing about their perspectives and experiences is urgently needed and should be completed to add to literature in language testing and in other language learning fields.

In the Literature Review of this dissertation, I reviewed Bailey's (1996) conceptual piece on "working for washback." Bailey has posited the goal of working for positive washback, and specifically from a communicative language teaching and task-based stance. She has also proposed some principles and processes that language educators can use to evaluate whether an exam, such as the PET, is yielding positive feedback in the classroom.   She has proposed using communicative tests that feature "discourse functions, registers and sociocultural rules" (See also, Shohamy, 1992) and evaluating if the test measures what the programme intends to teach. She proposed the following questions that local language education reformers, teachers, or researchers could use to guide their efforts:

1. Do the participants understand the purpose(s) of the test and the intended use(s) of the results?

2. Are the results provided in a clear, informative and timely fashion?

3. Are the results perceived as believable and fair by the participants?

4. Does the test measure what the programme intends to teach?

5. Is the test based on clearly articulated goals and objectives?

6. Is the test based on sound theoretical principles that have current credibility in the field?

7. Does the test utilize authentic texts and authentic tasks?

8. Are the participants invested in the assessment processes?

(Bailey, 1996, pp. 276-77)

Worth undertaking at *Colegio Prestigioso*, or other similar language program utilizing international standardized testing, would be some type of action research or collaborative program review and documentation that analyzes whether standardized exams in use are accomplishing what they purport to deliver and whether the participant-stakeholders understand and value the products and results of using such exams. Most relevant to the context researched here, for example, are questions 4, 6 and 7. Careful review and evaluation of these questions in relationship to the PET and First Certificate Exam at *Colegio Prestigioso* would likely yield surprising results and perhaps raise concerns for the institution and its language education mission.

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Appendix A: An Overview of the *PET Masterclass* Text

This appendix provides a description of and sample pages from the primary 7th-Form English-language text, *PET Masterclass*.   On the pages that follow are two of the pages from the table of contents of this text and then two pages from an actual unit.

First, let us consider the table of contents in order to view the overall design of this text and of the activities that comprise a typical unit.   Here, we will use Module 5 of this textbook to get a sense of the text as a whole functions.   Looking at the rectangular block designated as Module 5, it contains 4 Units. For example, 17.1 and 17.2 comprise one unit and 18.1 and 18.2 comprise one unit.   Module 5, as a whole, does not have a unifying theme, but the titles and topics *within each unit* are related.   Before looking more closely at a particular unit, atop this table of contents page are the headings: READING, WRITING, LISTENING and so on.   If you start with Reading, for example, and track downward to Module 5, you will see the activities in the Module that correspond to PET exam skills or even to specific exam tasks.   Within a single unit, not every facet of the PET test will be practiced directly, but by the end of each Module, students will have practiced all of the papers, or sections, of the PET exam.

Still looking at the table of contents within Module 5, let us consider Unit 17.   All activities in this unit center on the theme of *work*.   As we go across, we will see that section 17.1 has no reading or writing activities, but does feature a listening activity modeled after the exam, a speaking activity, a grammar activity focused on infinitives, and a vocabulary building activity. By contrast, if you look at 17.2, the section does contain reading and writing activities – tasks or activities not addressed in 17.1.

Following the Table of Contents display, also here in this appendix, are illustrations of the actual 2 pages of section 17.2.   Section 17.2 is entitled "All work and no play" which takes the topic of work beyond the basics of types of jobs and how to secure them, presented in 17.1. 17.2 is comprised of 3 task areas: *the Warm-up, Reading* and *Writing*.   The warm up is intended to stimulate students' thoughts and speech about how and how much people work. The reading section features a text entitled "Work can damage your health" which students read and then complete Activity 3 – a comprehension activity. The 3rd task-area, *Writing*, includes activities 4, 5, and 6 which is essentially writing through steps.   The 35-45 minutes note-writing students have to complete in activity 6 is similar to the type of writing they would complete on the PET exam.

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17.2 All work and no play

Warm up

1 What negative aspects of work do the photos show?

2 Discuss the questions.
- How many hours a week do people work on average?/How many hours a week should people work on average?
- How many weeks' holiday do people have each year?/How many weeks' holiday should people have each year?
- At what age do people retire?/At what age should people retire?

Reading Part 3

3 Look at the sentences below about holidays and work.

Read the text to decide if each sentence is correct or incorrect.
If it is correct, mark A.
If it is not correct, mark B.

1 Nowadays, more than half of all Americans would prefer to decrease their time at work.
2 American companies give three weeks' holiday a year.
3 Joe Robinson first suggested his idea for a new law in a TV interview.
4 He thinks children should have longer holidays as well.
5 American couples work longer hours than they used to.
6 Mark Liechty thinks Europeans make clear differences between being at home and being at work.
7 It is thought that in the 19th century factory workers suffered from stress.
8 Only a small number of Americans are ill due to long working hours.
9 Robinson advises people to ask for longer holidays before they join a company.
10 If you work for an American company in Europe, you get longer holidays.

Work can damage your health

Americans work the most hours and get the shortest holidays in the developed world. They work, on average, two weeks longer a year than the second most overworked group in the world, the Japanese. A survey by the Families and Work Institute found out that 63 per cent of Americans want to work less, up from 46 per cent in 1992.

Joe Robinson, editor of *Escape* magazine, wrote a special report on the lack of holidays in the USA. He reminded readers that Western Europeans and Australians get five weeks' holiday a year compared to 9.6 days in the USA. He encouraged Americans to demand a new law which would give every worker who has been in a job for a year three weeks off, increasing to four weeks off after three years. The idea was immediately popular and since then, Robinson has appeared on TV and radio talk shows.

'Once people think about it more carefully, they find out it's not just about holidays,' explains Robinson. 'It's

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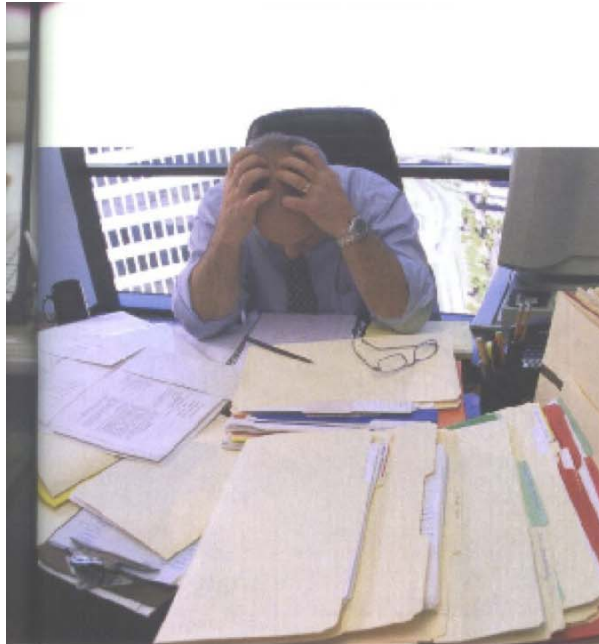
about family values, having time for your kids. It's about your health and your relationships. It's about the quality of life.' He says the average husband and wife together spend 500 hours a year more at work than they did in 1980.

It isn't easy for Americans to take time off. Mark Liechty, a professor at University of Illinois, Chicago, says that Americans work hard in order to buy anything they want and to make themselves into the people they want to be. He feels Europeans are better at separating life and work. They understand the importance of having a life outside work.

The strongest argument for longer holidays is health. Research has found that in the late 19th century, people who worked with their brains (rather than, for example, factory workers), became 'nervous and anxious' because they needed time away from work. A recent study has shown that men who don't take holidays are both more likely to die young and to suffer from heart disease. It is thought that half of all Americans are damaging their health through overwork.

Until three-week holidays become law, Robinson encourages those looking for jobs to ask for more holiday time when they are discussing salary and benefits after accepting a job offer. 'It's the best opportunity to get the time you need.' He adds that American companies in Europe all give their employees European-length holidays. 'If they can do it there, why can't they do it here?' he asks. ' Tell your employer that you are going to work very hard, but at the same time, you need a holiday.'

Writing

4 Read the note and ideas about changes at work. In which two areas do the staff suggest changes?

Kris
Could you get some ideas from people in the office for any changes which would make our staff happier in their jobs? Can you write me a short note with a few recommendations?
Many thanks
Richard

Changes at work

I'd like to be able to work around the children's school times. At the moment, I have to leave my son and daughter at school 20 minutes before it opens.   could start work half an hour later and only take half an hour's lunch break.

Changes at work

Why can't we use the internet at lunchtimes? We work long hours here and I could order my shopping from the supermarket.

Is there any chance of finishing earlier on a Friday? We could work longer hours on Monday to Thursday, or have shorter lunch breaks. It would be great to finish at, say, 3 o'clock on Fridays.

I'd like to use email for personal messages, not all day, but during breaks. It won't cost the company very much.

5 Richard has asked Kris to write a short note. Look at how he makes his first point. Add one or two sentences about the second point. The whole note should not be longer than 45 words.

Richard
These are my recommendations from the staff's suggestions. Firstly, they would like to be able to choose their working hours.

6 Imagine you have to hand in a piece of work at the end of the week. Write a note to your teacher or lecturer asking for more time to complete it. Explain why you cannot hand it in on ti   end tell him/her exactly when you will hand   in. Write 35–45 words.

EXAM TIP In Writing Part 2 you only write between 35–45 words so the information you include needs to be short and clear.

Appendix B: Teacher Initial Interview Protocols

1. Could you tell me about your position here at Prestigioso?

    ¿Podéis describirme tu posición, es decir, tu trabajo en el Colegio Prestigioso?

2. You work with the secondary level students.   What do you think the secondary level
    teachers at this school want students to know and to learn about English?

    ¿Qué piensas que los profesores de la secundaria quieren que los estudiantes sepan y
    aprendan de Ingles?

    ¿Cuáles son las capacidades que ustedes están tratando de desarrollar en los estudiantes?

3. How is the secondary level curriculum determined?

    ¿Cómo se determina el plan de estudios para los cursos de secundaria?

    a. Who makes the decision?

        ¿Quien hace las decisiones sobre los cursos, los temas y el contenido de los
        cursos?

4. Do you think that there is general approach that secondary level teachers use in teaching
    their courses? If so, could you describe it?

    ¿Piensas que hay una filosofía o enfoque general que los profesores de secundaria usan
    cuando ensenan sus cursos.   ¿Cómo describes este enfoque o manera de ensenar?

5. What are purposes and goals of the _____ course in the First Year?

    ¿Cuáles son los propósitos y metas del curso de Historia del Primer Ano?

    What techniques and activities do you use in the Project course?

    ¿Cuales son las técnicas y las actividades que usas vos en el curso
      de history?

6. What types of texts do students read in the _____ course?

¿Cuales son los tipos de textos que leen los estudiantes en el curso de historia?

7. What type of preparation do you ask students to do prior to each class?

    ¿Qué tipo de preparación o tarea les pides que los estudiantes hagan antes de cada clase?

    ¿Qué es el impacto de la preparación en lo que ocurre durante de una clase?

8. What do you try to accomplish when you engage students in question/answer

    ¿Qué quieres conseguir cuando entablas los estudiantes en los diálogos de preguntar-contestar que usas con ellos durante las clases?

    I noticed that in the classes sometimes students seem to have basic idea about what they want or need to say. They use key words and phrases to communicate – but may not be able to communicate with complete phrases or sentences. How do you try to help them?

    Fije que durante las clases, a veces los estudiantes tienen la idea básica acerca de lo que quieren o necesitan decir. Usan palabras o frases claves para comunicar – pero no comunican con frases completas. ¿Cómo tratas de ayudarles?

9. In what ways do you think the _____ course helps the students?

    ¿Como piensas que el curso de historia ayuda a los estudiantes?

    (For teacher – more about knowledge of history or language development which is your first priority – and why?)

    ¿Para vos, del contenido de los temas de historia o el desarrollo de las capacidades con el idioma, es uno más importante que el otro – es decir das énfasis a uno más que otro?

10. What is the students' role in the Project course?

    ¿Cuáles es el papel de los estudiantes en el curso de Project?

    How would you describe their participation during class?

    ¿Cómo describes la participación de los estudiantes durante las clases de historia?

    What kind of interaction would you like to have with students in the history class?

¿Qué tipo de interacción te gustaría tener con los estudiantes en las clases de historia?

Students here at Prestigioso – in various levels

11. Can you tell me about the Cambridge Exams, especially in Secondary?

Por favor, decime a acerca de los exámenes de Cambridge – especialmente como funcionan en el nivel secundario.

Do you consider the test an advantage or disadvantage for students?

¿Consideras vos que los exámenes de Cambridge son una ventaja o desventaja para los estudiantes?

What are the strengths and weaknesses of the test?

¿Cuales son los buenos y malos de la forma o del contenido del examen?

Do you think the school's use of the Cambridge Test affects the secondary level curriculum?

¿Piensas que el uso de los exámenes de Cambridge afecta el plan de Estudio del nivel secundario acá en Prestigioso? ¿Cómo?

12. Do you see a connection between the _____ course and the Cambridge exams?

¿Ves vos una conexión entre el curso de historia y los exámenes de Cambridge?

Experiences Learning English/ Professional path

13. Could you tell me about your own experiences learning English?

¿Podes decirme algo de tus experiencias aprendiendo el inglés?

14. Why did you decide to become an English teacher?

¿Por qué decidiste llegar a ser una profesora de inglés?

¿Donde hiciste el curso de profesora de inglés? Y como era ese
programa?

15. How did you come to work at Prestigioso?/ How long have you been here?

¿Cómo empezaste a trabajar en Prestigioso?

¿Por cuánto tiempo has trabajado acá?

Appendix C: Sample of Follow-up Interview Protocol

7th Form Follow-up Interview Protocol with Darla
December 5, 2006

Reflecting on the term

1. Thinking back to the beginning of this term, what were your goals with your students for this term?

    In what ways do you think you accomplished them?
    In what ways do you think maybe you did not – or what could have been different, better?

2. How would you relate your work this semester to the overall educational goals of Colegio Prestigioso?   How would you relate it to the language learning goals of Prestigioso?

3. Please compare and contrast this semester with the previous semester – the winter term.

    (Is the content or format of classes different after the winter break?)

4. Describe what the last month of your work with your students has been like?

5. Describe what the last week has been like?   (What have the tasks been?)

6. Tell me about your interactions with your students in recent weeks – especially the weeks leading up to the PET test. What have been their work habits, attitudes? What have they talked about? How have they felt?

    What messages/advice did you give students about the PET test leading up to the exam?

7. What do the students say to you about the exam? During the term. After the test.

8. In the weeks before the PET Test, students did several mock exams.   Could you describe this process? What did you/they hope to accomplish? How did students respond? What was the schedule – how many taken?

9. Describe for me your impressions of the PET test administration on Saturday?

General

1. What connections do you see between learning and practicing grammar and learning to communicate in a language?

> Are there times and ways in which the PET exam – the exam itself or preparation for it are in conflict with the goal of teaching students to communicate?

> (Correcting exercises – as a part of regular class activities. In what ways do you think writing and correcting exercises helps students' language abilities?

> In what ways might it not be?)

2. Have you ever heard the phrase "teaching to the test"? If so, what does the phrase "teaching to the test" mean to you?

Student Qs

3. Do the students equate their ability to do PET-type exercises and activities with being proficient/having high-level ability in English? Do you think they should feel this way?

4. What reasons do you think the students have – or that they mention to you are their reasons/motivations for taking the PET exam?

5. You mentioned that "children are not easily motivated"? How does this fact shape how you go about teaching and the activities that you use in class? What connection do you see between motivation or lack of motivation and the PET test?

6. I have heard a few students talk about the PET or English in relationship to a job. How do they think about or process the notion of having a job or using English in it?

7. Maturity issue – how did you see this come out in recent weeks or on the test day?

8. What are some pressures you think the students feel with regard to the study of English? Where does pressure come from? How do you think pressure affects language learning?

Skill areas

9. The texts that you use center on content topics or themes. They also center on grammatical topics or points. How well do you see this organization meshing together?

10. Please describe your students reading activities for this year. What comments/impressions do you have? How much do your students read in English?

11. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the students with respect to describing – rather than translating – and then applying new vocabulary?

12. How well do your students handle transformation or paraphrasing?

13. Who do you feel manages better or performs better on the PET students who tend to process language as a whole or those who process the language in smaller pieces or units?

14. What thoughts or comments do you have about your students writing abilities? What are the issues or challenges they have in writing? How much do they write?

15. For some parts of the year, students went out for oral pair practice with other teachers or native-speaker assistants. Could you describe this process? How many teachers/ assistants worked with the students? Where were they from? How often did each student have this contact? Other comments?

16. Describe the relationship and any disconnects between students listening experiences in class or at home and the listening section of the PET test

17. Describe your approach to the literature class? What connections do you see between the literature class and the PET?

Texts/ themes

18. What were the interview themes and topics this year?

19. How are the test book and the "Getting Ready for PET" booklet that the school prepares connected? How/where does the content come from for the booklet?

20. Drawings – colorings – you like for your students to incorporate drawing and coloring into their language learning? Why? What do you feel it contributes?

21. How realistic or "day to day" is the oral language that is used in class? How realistic do you consider the language used or solicited in the PET interview paper?

The PET Test

22. What changes have you seen in the PET test in the last decade? What impressions do you have about the Test as it is now?

23. If you were in charge of the PET test, what changes, if any, would you make to the test? Do you see any flaws in the test/test format?

    If there were no PET test, and you could teach English any way you wished, what would you teach? How would you go about it?

The School

24. In what ways could you say Prestigioso is a bilingual school?   In what ways is it not?

25. What are some ways in which the level of English has improved at Prestigioso?

Appendix D: El Colegio Pilot Study 2005 Data Inventory

Teacher and Level	Type of Data	Length of time
6th frm T-A	Cls Obs	1 hr 25 min
7th frm T-A	Cls Obs	1 hr 25 min
6th frm T-B	Cls Obs	1 hr 25 min
7th frm T-B	Cls Obs	40 min
7th frm T- B	Cls Obs	40 min
1st yr T-B	Cls Obs	1 hr 25 min
7th frm T-A	Cls Obs	1 hr 25 min
6th frm T-A	Cls Obs	1 hr 5 min
6th frm T-C	Cls Obs	1 hr 25 min
6th form T-B	Cls Obs	1 hr 10 min
7th frm T-A	Cls Obs	55 min
1st yr T-A	Cls Obs	1 hr 25 min
1st yr T-A	Cls Obs	1 hr 25 min
1st yr T-C (Admin 2)	Cls Obs	1 hr
1st yr T-A	Cls Obs	1 hr 25 min
1st yr T-A	Cls Obs	1 hr 20 min
Admin 1/me	Cls Obs	Short
1st yr T-C (Admin 2)	Cls Obs	1 hr 10 min
1st yr T-A	Cls Obs	1 hr 8 min
6th frm T-C	Cls Obs	1 hr 20 min
6th frm T-C	Cls Obs	1 hr 20 min
6th frm T-A	Cls Obs	1 hr 20 min
7th frm T-B	Cls Obs	40 min
1st yr T-B	Cls Obs	1 hr 25 min
1st yr T-B	Cls Obs	1 hr 25 min
1st yr T-B	Cls Obs	1 hr 25 min
1st yr T-C (Admin 2)	Cls Obs	1 hr 25 min
1st yr T-A	Cls Obs	1 hr 25 min

Teacher and Level	Type of Data	Length of time
7th frm T-A	Intv	1 hr
1st yr T-B	Intv	1 hr plus
1st yr T-C (Admin 2)	Intv	1 hr plus
6th frm T-C	Intv	45 + mins
Admin 1	Intv	45 mins
Admin 1	Intv	45 min

Appendix E: Dissertation Data Inventory

Data Collection Summary

Researcher visited the research site 4 to 5 days per week from Aug 8 until Nov 30, 2006. In early December, researcher was present multiple days during the week for observation/execution of institutional exams, Cambridge exam preparation, and on weekend days when Cambridge exams were administered at the research site.

All data collection elements indicated in research proposal/prospectus successfully completed, excepting follow-up interviews with 3rd-year teachers. Researcher completed preliminary analysis and utilized comparative analysis with previous years' research and previous class observations to develop and inform later class observations, student interviews, follow-up teacher interviews etc.

The following details the data collection activities completed:

- Completed weekly (or more frequent) class observations with each 7th form class & teacher.

- Completed weekly class observations with 3rd-form classes/students, rotating teachers.

- Completed review, analysis and coding of all Summer 2005 data – class obs and intvs.

- Began comparison and analysis of this Fall's class data with Summer 2005 data.

- Completed initial and follow-up interviews with each of the three 7th-form teachers.

- Completed initial interviews and arranged for follow-up questionnaires with three 3rd-Year subject area teachers.

- Interviewed 6 7th-form students and 5 corresponding sets of parents.

- Interviewed 6 3rd-year students and 6 corresponding sets of parents.

- Executed early and late semester questionnaires to all 3 7th-form classes and both 3rd-year classes.