

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

The Variations in the Levels of Performance of Learners among the Various English Language Speaking Skills Tested in both Written and Oral Approaches: Evidence from Secondary Schools in Eldoret Municipality

Oriwo Sophia Atieno

Ph.D. Student, Department of Curriculum Instruction and Educational Media, School of Education,
Moi University, Eldoret, Kenya

Abstract:

It has been observed in Kenya that the mode and the scope of testing influence to a great extent the exposure of the students to a particular field of study. The use of written tests by KNEC in the KCSE English language examination of the speaking skill has influenced the teachers of English attitude towards the training and valid testing of the speaking skill in the classroom. Since the KIE English language syllabus recommends an oral evaluation at the end of secondary school English language course, the study sought to investigate the relationship between oral and written test scores in secondary schools in Eldoret Municipality, Kenya. Based on the study, this paper discusses the variations in the students' performance in the various speaking sub-skills tested in either mode of testing. The study was formulated and interpreted with reference to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach. The study used correlation research design, which enabled the researcher to assess the degree of relationship between the scores attained from a written and an oral test of five sub-skills of the speaking skill. This assisted in establishing the adequacy of the written tests currently used in the assessment of oral as well as aural skills. Purposive, stratified and simple random sampling procedures were used to select the twelve schools and 360 Form Four students who participated in the study. The research instruments used were two achievement tests – one written and the other oral. Descriptive statistics such as mean and mode were used to compare the variables under study. Inferential statistics were also used. Pearson's product moment correlation was used to analyze the degree of relationship between the variables, t-test to establish significance of the difference between the mean scores and analysis of variance to determine between as well as within group variance. The independent variable was speaking competence while the dependent variables were the speaking sub skills tested. These were rendition of an oral narrative, word stress, intonation, contrastive stress and conversation. The results of the study showed that variability in the students' performance in writing sub-skills as well as in the oral sub skills. This is an important finding for it implies that as many sub-skills as possible should be included in the tests and more particularly in the oral mode. It was, therefore, recommended that oral English test should be allocated a full paper on its own. Such a move would definitely put oral English in its rightful place and also provide for the necessary wash back effects.

Keywords: *Variation, levels, performance, learners, speaking skills, English language, written, oral approaches, secondary schools, Eldoret municipality*

1. Introduction

The objectives of teaching speaking at the secondary school level are clearly stated by the Kenya Institute of Education (2002). It is stated that by the end of the course, the learner should be able to:

- a) Demonstrate awareness that spelling in English may or may not be related to pronunciation
- b) Pronounce correctly sounds they find problematic
- c) Communicate, correctly, confidently and appropriately in different contexts
- d) Respond correctly to oral information on a variety of subjects
- e) Demonstrate acceptable communication skills
- f) Use non-verbal devices effectively in speech
- g) Use correct stress and intonation to bring out rhythm and meaning
- h) Demonstrate the ability to use correct register in different contexts
- i) Use tone to interpret attitude
- j) Use stress to distinguish grammatical meaning in words
- k) Present oral reports on literary and non-literary topics

In the syllabus, the content for listening and speaking is organized under the following areas:

- a) Pronunciation
- b) Listening comprehension
- c) Mastery of content
- d) Etiquette
- e) Non-verbal cues that enhance communication

The testing of speaking has for a long time been ignored by the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC). Though the two skills have been in the syllabus since the inception of 8-4-4 system of education in 1985, the speaking skill was first tested in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) English Paper 2 (102/2) in 2002. Only one aspect of speaking, namely pronunciation (homophones), was tested. The current Secondary School English Syllabus underscores the importance of speaking and recommends a comprehensive evaluation. It is suggested that this be done through dictation, listening comprehension, role play, note taking, making oral presentations, speeches, telling stories, reading aloud, reciting poems, oral interviews, conversation or even interpretive reading of extracts from books (KIE, 2002, p. 19).

Currently, the Kenya National Examinations Council examines English language in three papers, namely Paper 101/1, 101/2 and 101/3. Paper 101/1, which tests functional skills, has three questions:

- Question 1 - Functional writing
- Question 2 - Cloze test
- Question 3 - Oral skills

The speaking skill is tested as part of the oral skills in Paper 101/1 Question 3. The oral skills cover the bulk of the paper, with an allocation of thirty marks out of the possible sixty marks for the total score. The syllabus recommends that the students sit for an oral examination at the end of form four; however, this is not the mode of testing currently. Oral skills are tested in writing. The essence of the study was to establish whether the written examination currently used in the evaluation of oral skills yields results adequate enough to ascertain oral competence of students.

1.1. Communicative Competence

Communicative competence is a linguistic term, which refers to the learner's ability in the second language. It is good knowledge of the target language by a speaker or listener and the application of that knowledge to specific situations for specific results. It includes the speaker's knowledge of the alternatives and the rules for appropriate choice between the many codes, registers and styles of a language (Carson, 1990). The term underlines the view of language learning implicit in the communicative approach to language teaching.

Carson (1990) breaks communicative competence into six sub-competencies:

- a) Linguistic competence: the competence to use and interpret structural elements of a language. It is the domain of grammatical and lexical capacity, i.e. words and rules.
- b) Discourse competence: the interpretation of individual message elements in terms of their interconnectedness and of how meaning is represented in relationship to the entire discourse or text, i.e. cohesion and coherence.
- c) Sociolinguistic competence: the understanding of the social context in which communication takes place, including role relationships, the shared information of the participants, and the communicative purpose for their interaction. Only in a full context of this kind can judgments be made on the appropriateness of a particular utterance that is, appropriateness.
- d) Strategic competence: the coping strategies that communicators employ to initiate, terminate, maintain, repair and redirect communication. These are both verbal and non-verbal. It is the way language is manipulated in order to meet communicative goals that is, appropriate use of communicative strategies.
- e) Socio-cultural competence: familiarity with socio-cultural context.
- f) Social competence: empathy and ability to handle situations.

Bachman (1990) divides communicative competence into broad headings of organizational competence, which includes both grammatical and discourse (or textual) competence and pragmatic competence, which includes sociolinguistic and illocutionary competence. These sub-competencies were taken into consideration in the study. The marking schemes of either mode of testing were formulated with these in mind. The sub-competencies mentioned above are the tenets of CLT referred to in the literature review.

Through the influence of CLT, it has now become widely accepted that communicative competence should be the goal of language education central to good classroom practice (Savignon, 2001). This is in contrast to previous views in which grammatical competence was commonly given top priority. The understanding of communicative competence has been influenced by the field of pragmatics as the philosophy of language concerning speech acts. The goal of language acquisition is communicative competence: ability to accomplish communicative goals. The desired outcome of the language process therefore is the ability to communicate competently and not the ability to use language exactly as a native speaker does.

It is worth noting at this point that CLT in the field of language teaching and learning has come to be disregarded. However, its ideas and concepts remain valuable.

1.2. Language Testing

Testing and teaching are so closely interrelated that it is virtually impossible to engage in either without being constantly concerned with the other. Tests are constructed for two main reasons. They are used as devices to reinforce learning and as means of assessing the students' performance in the language. A test in plain ordinary words is a method of measuring a person's ability or knowledge in

a given area (Heaton, 1985). Language testing involves the four major skills in communication. These are often broadly defined as: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In many situations where English is taught for general purposes (as is the case at the secondary school level in Kenya) the skills should be carefully integrated and used to perform as many genuinely communicative tasks as possible. This being the case, majority of the test items in this study were as much as possible relevant to the ability of the participants to use language for real life communication, especially in oral interaction. Two test items – rendition and conversation – realized this demand.

Heaton (1985) says that the testing of speaking ability should be in the form of an interview, a picture description, role-play and problem solving tasks involving pair or group work. The conversation is a form of an interview and could also double up as role-play. The test specifications were based on the types of language tasks included in the learning programme. The specific type of tests used were those of achievement limited to the particular material covered in the English curriculum for the four years secondary school time frame. Language can be tested using various approaches as presented in the next subsection.

1.3. The Speaking Skill

Speaking is the act of making recognizable verbal utterances in a given language. Webster (as cited in Matere, n.d.) describes it as the act or instance of uttering words for communication or expression of thoughts in spoken words. As for skill, the Collin English Dictionary describes it as a special ability in a task, sport etcetera – especially ability acquired by training. It is important to note that speaking is not the oral production of written language but involves the integration of sub-skills which added together constitute an overall competence in oral language (Vikuru, as cited in Groenewegen, 2008).

Speaking is often the skill upon which a person is judged at face value. It is important as part of a person's personality. Considering the status of English as an international language, it is important for the users of the language to be able to speak and interact competently in a multiplicity of situations. Speaking ability is often regarded as the primary measure of knowing a language. Fluency in a language rather refers to the ability to converse with others than the ability to read, write or comprehend oral language. As such, speaking would be regarded as the most important skill to be acquired and learners' progress would be measured in terms of their accomplishment in spoken communication.

Three areas of knowledge are involved in speaking:

- a) Mechanics (pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary): using the right words in the right order with the right pronunciation.
- b) Functions (transaction and interaction): knowing when clarity of message is essential (transaction/information exchange) and when precise understanding is not required (interaction/relationship building).
- c) Social and cultural rules and norms (turn-taking, rate of speech, length of pauses between speakers and relative roles of participants): understanding how to take into account who is speaking to whom, in what circumstances, about what, and for what reason.

Gathumbi and Masembe (2005) argue that skills must be informed by knowledge. While skill as already noted is a special ability acquired by training, the definition of knowledge as awareness, consciousness or familiarity gained by experience was adapted for purposes of the study. It is apparent from these two definitions that there is a marked difference between knowledge and skill. One appears to be a rather passively latent thing and the other seemingly practical. Further, it is argued that at the level of the major learning domains, knowledge is purely cognitive while a skill is psychomotor (Gathumbi & Masembe, 2005). As such, the two require different treatment at different levels. However, there is implied correlation between knowledge and skill. Skill being a special ability in a task attained by training is obviously preceded by knowledge (Gathumbi & Masembe, 2005). Training entails imparting of knowledge, which is then translated into a skill demonstrated by the ability to perform a task. The participants' ability to accomplish the various tasks assigned to them was a measure used to gauge how well they would translate knowledge into skill.

The above distinction and correlation related to the understanding of the speaking skill implies that learners' knowledge of language structures may or may not be translated into practical speech situations. A learner is said to be skilled in language use only when they attain the capacity to use the known phonological, supra-segmental and grammatical structures coherently. Speaking as a skill does not operate in isolation. It goes hand in hand with certain related concepts and skills.

1.4. Testing of the Speaking Skill

Even though many students have mastered basic listening and speaking skills, some students are much more effective in their oral communication than others. Those who are more effective communicators experience more success in school and in other areas of their lives. The skills that can make the difference between minimal and effective communication can be taught, practiced, improved and tested. Lawtie (2006) discusses three trends that have been taken in the definition of oral communication. The first one has been to focus on communication activities that reflect a variety of settings: one-to-many, small group, one-to-many, and mass media. Another approach has been to focus on using communication to achieve specific purposes: to inform, to persuade, and to solve problems. A third trend has been to focus on basic competencies needed in everyday life- for example, giving directions, asking for information, or providing basic information in an emergency situation. The latter approach has been adapted in part by this study as it includes some of the areas that the syllabus stipulates. Many of these broader views stress that oral communication is an interactive process in which an individual alternately takes the roles of speaker and listener, and which includes verbal and non-verbal components.

Lawtie (2006) further suggests two methods for use in the assessment of the speaking skill. In the observational approach, the student's behaviour is observed and assessed unobtrusively. In the structured approach, the student is asked to perform one or more specific oral communication tasks. His or her performance on the task is then evaluated. The task can be administered on a one-on-one setting with the test administrator and one student. Students should feel that they are communicating meaningful content. Tasks should

focus on topics that all students can easily talk about, or, if they do not include such a focus, students should be given an opportunity to collect information on the topic.

It is not easy to design tests that explore the whole range of the speaking skill. Further separation of speaking and listening is quite artificial since the two operate together in most circumstances in real life. However, for the purposes of the study, speaking has been isolated. Test items designed to assess speaking attempt to assess the following sub-skills:

1. Ability to recognize and pronounce the significant sound contrasts of the English language.
2. Ability to recognize and use stress patterns
3. Ability to produce the melody or patterns of the tunes of English (i.e. the rise and fall of voice).
4. Application of etiquette in conversation
5. Appropriate and effective use of non verbal cues to enhance communication

1.5. Statement of the Problem

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

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

English being a second language to most Kenyans, majority have problems in the listening and speaking skills (KIE, 2002, p. 7). The unique problems that learners have arise from the wrong forms of spoken English which have become institutionalized in society. The wrong forms result from the influence of mother tongue and/or the first language. It has been observed that most school leavers, university graduates, practicing teachers of English and those of other subjects do not speak English fluently, accurately and appropriately. This fact has been expressed by a number of scholars, educators, government officials, employers, politicians and journalists (Ong'ondo & Barasa, 2006, p. 181).

Professor Eshiwani, the then vice chancellor of Kenyatta University (*Daily Nation*, 1993, May 7), addressing freshmen also observed that university graduates are unable to express themselves in good English. The British Council Report (1992) and others, on the teaching of language skills, also conclude that the skill of speaking is second to that of listening in terms of neglect in the teaching of the four language skills. The reasons the reports give for this trend are that oral skills are not tested by KNEC and secondly language teachers do not get enough guidelines from the course books on how to teach the skills. This scenario has undergone a slight change since the revision of the curriculum in 2002. However, from the researcher's experience in many classroom practices, the speaking skill has not been accorded the attention it deserves.

The current syllabus (KIE, 2002, p. 19) now emphasizes speaking and recommends an oral examination at the end of the four-year secondary English course. However, KNEC is still assessing oral skills using a written mode of testing. Response to the oral skills section of English Paper 101/1 has been in writing. The areas dealt with are pronunciation, prosodic elements, accurate and effective listening, speech presentation, rendition of oral narratives, reciting poems, etiquette, use of correct register, negotiation skills, turn taking and the use of non-verbal cues that enhance communication. Indeed, the use of spoken English can only be promoted in schools by incorporating an oral test into the overall testing requirements. This can be a valuable additional means of improving oral abilities.

Lee (1991, p. 342) identifies tests as the driving force behind learning. This fact applies to the Kenyan situation as well. Many teaching and learning activities are geared towards excellence in national examinations. Given that the teaching approach used is Communicative Language Teaching, Lee is right to suggest that the tests in a communicative syllabus should be adjusted to be more communicative and to incorporate evaluation of oral abilities. A number of pitfalls have been identified in the testing practices even with the revised curriculum. The tests used to evaluate speaking are new and purport to address the objectives for the teaching of speaking but are in fact almost similar in design and therefore effect to those, which they replace. The course content is truly communicative and oral oriented but the tests particularly for speaking and even listening are as they have been. This is unfair to students who study according to one set of parameters during class time while preparing for a test based on differing principles.

The problem addressed in the study was the use of written tests in the assessment of the speaking skill. The researcher proposes that oral tests of communicative competence be designed (Lee, 1991). If the aim of teaching speaking is to promote oral skills in the target language, then it seems reasonable that this ability should be at the heart of the testing. Such tests will definitely conform to the learning goals set for the students and taught in the learning programme. The tests would also have a positive wash back effect on the whole English course for oral skills in general and speaking in particular. Failing to test oral production practically has resulted into inaccurate assessment of students and negative wash back effects on the teaching of oral skills. As such, it was necessary to ascertain through research whether or not indeed written tests are valid in assessing the speaking skill. A comparison of scores attained by individual candidates in written and oral examinations of the speaking sub-skills tested would further be used to establish the relationship between the two sets of scores and, therefore, the extent to which the current written mode of testing used is a valid measurement and an accurate way of establishing speaking proficiency of users of English language at the secondary school level.

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

2. Materials and Methods

The study was carried out in secondary schools within Eldoret Municipality using correlation research design. The study involved collection of two sets of measurements and computation of the coefficient of correlation between these two sets of measurements to determine the magnitude of relationship. On the average each school has two streams. Students' population was found to be approximately forty-five per class. This gave a total of 1080 students from the twelve schools. Records available at the Uasin Gishu District Education office (2009) indicated that the Municipality had thirty-three (33) secondary schools at the time of the study. Out of these, sixteen (16) were public while seventeen (17) were privately owned. In order to get a representative sample for the study, the thirty-three schools were stratified into national, provincial, district and private schools. There is only one national school, which was purposively sampled. The remaining thirty-two (32) had the following distribution: six provincial, nine district and seventeen private schools. Stratified random sampling was used to select two provincial schools, three district schools and six private schools.

This formula yielded a sample of 400 participants who were equally distributed among the 12 schools resulting into an average of 30 students per school. This figure further apportioned to the streams in each school resulted into 15 students per stream. In summary, 12 schools and 360 students were involved in the study. Simple random sampling, specifically the lottery method, was used to select students to take part in the study. These were Form 4 students. They were chosen because they had undergone adequate instruction in the revised English language curriculum.

The two achievement tests used in the study, namely a written production test and an oral one, were criteria-based. The tests assessed whether or not the students possessed the sub-skills of rendition of oral narratives, syllabic stress, intonation, contrastive stress and all the skills involved in conversation. The test takers were expected to clearly display their competence levels. The examiner or scorer would then identify the level and score accordingly. The tests were thus designated as tests for mastery. In such forms of tests, the teaching of content is based on the concept that students are different primarily in the speed at which they learn rather than in the amount they can learn. Thus the amount is fixed for all learners but the rate is allowed to vary (Weir, 1990). The syllabus takes care of the amount of content to be taught.

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

The study used two types of tests:

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

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

3. Results

The study sought to find out whether or not there were variations in the levels of learners' performance among the various speaking skill items tested in either mode of testing. To achieve this objective, the various means of the test items were computed and then analyzed. Since the items did not have uniform maximum number of marks, the various means attained were converted to read out of 100%. The table below displays the means of the various skills in either mode of testing.

Sub-skill	Mode of Testing	Mean score	Mean in %	Grade	Level of Competence
Rendition x/6	Written	1.7185	29	E	Weak
	Oral	1.6183	27	E	Weak
Syllabic stress x/4	Written	2.1979	55	C+	Average
	Oral	1.4003	35	D	Weak
Intonation x/4	Written	2.7126	68	B	Good
	Oral	2.6598	66	B	Good
Contrastive stress x/4	Written	0.3921	08	E	Weak
	Oral	1.1730	29	E	Weak
Conversation x/12	Written	9.7713	81	A	Excellent
	Oral	7.8182	65	B	Good

Table 1: Variability in Performance in the Speaking Sub-skills

The information in the table reveals the levels of performance based on the means as follows:

3.1. The Written Mode of Testing

Conversation has a mean of 81% (grade A; EXCELLENT). This is followed by intonation at 68% (grade B; GOOD), syllabic stress at 55% (grade C+; AVERAGE), rendition at 29% (grade E; Weak) and contrastive stress at 08% (grade E; WEAK).

3.2. The Oral Mode of Testing

In this mode, intonation ranks high with 66% (grade B; GOOD). This is followed closely by conversation at 65% (grade B; GOOD). The remaining items, that is, syllabic stress, contrastive stress and rendition have means of 35% D, 29% E and 27% E, respectively. All the three items were poorly performed.

Of the five items tested both in the written and the oral modes, conversation and intonation registered good scores. The poorest performed were rendition and contrastive stress. The pie charts presented below give a vivid pictorial illustration for easier comparison of the levels of performance. These levels could also be interpreted as competence levels in the areas tested.

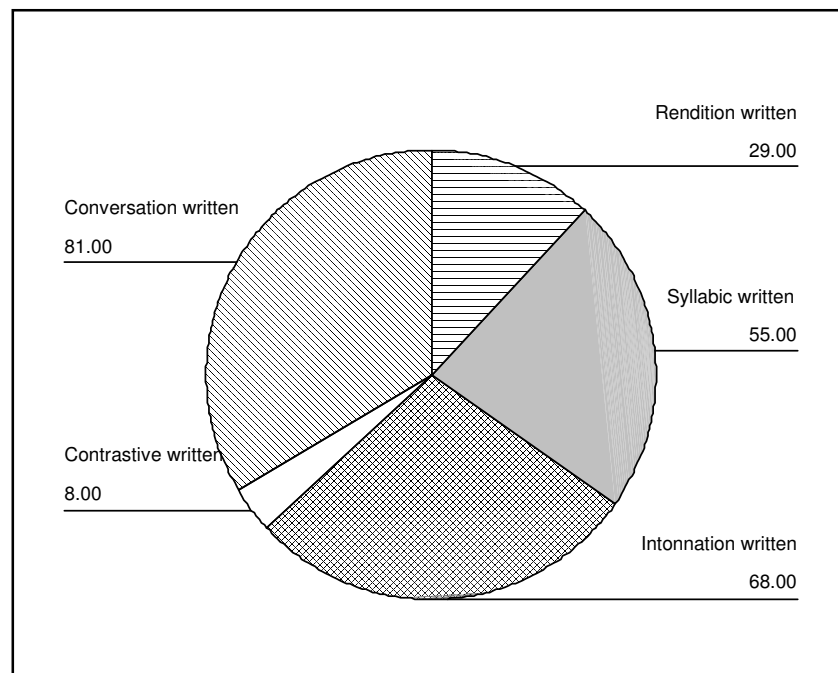


Figure 1: Variability in performance in the written test

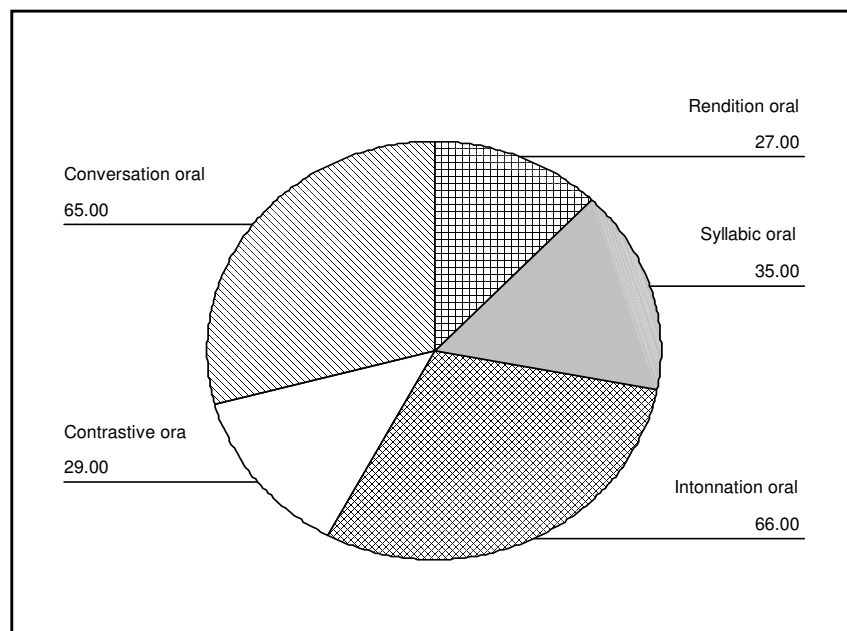


Figure 2: Variability in performance in the oral test

3.3. Hypothesis Test

The hypothesis tested stated that there is no variation in the levels of performance in the various speaking skills items tested. This hypothesis was tested using analysis of variance (ANOVA). This was used to determine if the means of the two tests differed significantly from each other as well as those of the individual test items. The f-test was used to determine whether or not the sample means differed from one another (between group variance) to a greater extent than the test scores differed from their own sample means (within group variance) using the ratio. Using the SPSS computer program, the f-value for the two means, 16.9581 and 14.7214, was 97.395. The P was 0.000, which was less than 0.05 significance level. The null hypothesis was rejected and it was concluded that there was a significant variation between the means of the two test scores. This was also so for the individual test items.

4. Discussion

The results of the study showed that there was variability between the total scores of the two modes of testing as well as among the various speaking sub-skills tested. The significant differences in the scores that appeared particularly among the sub-skills can be interpreted in terms of the skills that required simple fluency and those that focused on accuracy. Two test items, namely rendition and conversation, focused on fluency. Fluency as the criterion was used in the sense Brumfit (1984) defined it: "the maximally effective operation of the language system so far acquired by the student." To this end, the testees were simply to explain as well as demonstrate how they would attract audience attention and how they would practically perform certain identified portions of the narrative.

From the scores attained, it was revealed that both written and oral production responses of the rendition item were weak, that is, grade E. This might gain explanation from the fact that either the skill may not have been taught well or the practicality of it was not done. This means the learners might not have been given ample time for practice or no opportunity at all to participate in actual speaking activities. Some of the related studies reviewed revealed that teacher talk dominated many classrooms thus denying the learners the much-needed practice. The chorus answers also do not provide a clear diagnosis of the less able speakers. The studies also concluded that there was prevalence of imitations of what the teacher said. Given that the selection criterion is based on written test scores, there are high chances that the teachers themselves are not good models. To compound this point is the fact that when they trained, speaking did not have the attention it has been accorded now. There are possibilities that they are not competent in speaking.

The conversation sub-skill on the contrary scored very highly particularly in the written production mode. It had an average score of 81% that is grade A. The oral production score of the same sub-skill had 65% grade B. On the whole, the questions in the conversation both oral and written evoked longer responses from the more able students but seemed to confound the less able ones. Thus this particular sub-test elicited the best display of linguistic ability from the testees both in terms of amount of language produced and the range of grammatical structures used. The conversation was therefore the most successful of all the sub-skills tested. It was able to stimulate optimum language output and therefore a clear distinction between language productions in writing in comparison to speaking. Even with the strategic competence facilities for use in speaking, on the average, the oral production skill still scored lower.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The results of the study showed that variability in the students' performance in writing sub-skills as well as in the oral sub skills. This is an important finding for it implies that as many sub-skills as possible should be included in the tests and more particularly in the

oral mode. The conclusion here is that oral English test should be allocated a full paper on its own. Such a move would definitely put oral English in its rightful place and also provide for the necessary wash back effects.

Based on the study findings, it is recommended that in-service courses should be organized for practicing teachers. During such courses, teachers who are proficient in the speaking skill can be identified and used as specialists to instruct others. The same group of teachers could also be used as examiners of the oral production examination. Skill specialization could also be allowed so that only those who are proficient handle listening and speaking in schools. Such teachers can be identified using proficiency and diagnostic speaking tests. Most learners develop the skill through both acquisition and learning. They acquire a lot of the sub skills from the teachers and others around them. The significant others include the media. As such both the teacher and planned media, for example, the radio programmes by the Kenya Institute of Education (currently Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development) and the audio-visual learning materials should be used to display the correct standards along which the learners can model their speech.

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