

Backwash: The Impact of a Core Proficiency Test on the Learning/Teaching Situation: A Case Study

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Abstract. Language tests should reflect the priorities of the syllabus. Where they do not, it is invariably the test which has overriding importance in the eyes of the learner. This is especially true when the test result has important implications for the student's career choices. The repercussions of a testing-teaching mismatch are often described as 'wash back' and may be positive or negative. This paper shows how the introduction of a new test has brought about desirable changes in teaching methods and learning strategies in a Saudi military academy. Students were asked for their opinions of the new test and teachers with the experience of both old and new dispensations were questioned about the nature of the changes and the extent to which they are attributable to the new test.

Organization of the paper. This paper is divided into a number of sections as follows: First, a background of the context of the study is giving a highlighting history and the existing teaching learning situation. Objectives and limitations of the study are presented in brief. The next section presents the theoretical principles underlying the construction of the Core Proficiency Test (CPT). Then the related literature is reviewed. The design of the study and research tools are illustrated, and finally the results and conclusions are presented.

Terminologies. Backwash and wash back are used interchangeably in this paper to mean the effect of the test on the learning teaching situation.

Hypothesis. This paper hypothesizes that the new test will bring about fundamental changes in cadets learning strategies involving a shift of emphasis from rote learning of vocabulary and grammar structures to learning English for communicative purposes.

Background

The King Faisal Air Academy (KFAA) provides a three-year training program for officer-cadets. About 90% of the training courses are delivered in English, requiring a general English proficiency beyond the threshold level. All new entrants spend between 10 and 42 weeks in the School of English before starting the course of academic and specialist study which supplies the air force with its cadre of pilots and other officers. In 2001, the air academy introduced a new language test to replace the American Language Course Placement Test (ALCPT). The ALCPT was designed by the US Defence Language Institute in the 1950s and was employed by the US forces as the benchmark EFL test. Over the years, negative feedback from the end-user (the Royal Saudi Air Force) led to misgivings about the ALCPT and its effectiveness in the Air Force training program. A comprehensive analysis of student training needs highlighted the centrality of speaking and listening skills, skills not examined in the form of the ALCPT then in use. The ALCPT, a multi-choice grammar, vocabulary and listening test, placed a heavy premium on recognition vocabulary, and this was seen to have a negative effect on the teaching-learning situation. The most effective test-taking strategies involved the memorization of vocabulary items at the expense of all other language skills.

Within the academy, instructors were enthusiastic evangelists for change. As experienced teachers, they recognized the shortcomings of the test in which 75% of the items focused on vocabulary thereby encouraging the memorization of vocabulary at the expense of other skills. Cadet performance in the academic training phases subsequent to language training and in professional training at the air bases after graduation was widely reported as unsatisfactory. Dissatisfaction centered on inadequate speaking skills, especially among aircrew for whom adequate English is mission-critical. The academy authorities were under pressure to act. Once institutional inertia had been overcome and the case for a new test had been accepted, the search for a replacement began.

A host of commercially produced examinations were available but, for a variety of reasons (cultural bias, skills emphasis, test format) none of these proved acceptable. Even so, staffs were under considerable pressure to adopt one of the internationally recognized tests of English proficiency. Tests such as the Test OF English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or the International English Language Testing Service (IELTS) are well-established and enjoy the kudos of wide international recognition. Since our requirements at the academy are more limited, we argued for a test that would accurately predict our students' ability to perform in the immediate post-English Language Training (ELT) academic and professional environment. In the end, the arguments for internal validation won the day and we proceeded to design our own test.

The CPT

Between 1999 and 2001, the academy staff designed and introduced a new in-house test, known as the Core Proficiency Test (CPT). The test has now replaced the ALCPT as the qualifying test for the next phase of training. The test has three modules: grammar/vocabulary, listening (both computer-delivered) and speaking. The year 2003 will see the introduction of a computer-based reading module.

The test reflects the general framework of Relevance Theory as developed by Sperber and Wilson [1]. The required steps were followed at the design stage and during the validation process. Items were reviewed before the initial pilot study, then the items were trial and poor items were excluded or modified. The test was then piloted on a larger sample and reliability data obtained. Concurrent and construct validity was also computed. The test was designed to reflect the language skills and linguistic elements that cadets need to be proficient in, hence, content validity is claimed. The overall aims of the test are:

1. To test the cadets' knowledge of a basic 'core' of English grammar and vocabulary. The 'Core' in Core Proficiency Test refers to the set of high-frequency vocabulary and grammar items on which the academy's in-house language course is based. Using the Collins Cobuild wordlist as a starting point, a core vocabulary of nearly 1500 items was selected based on their frequency and importance in general English and their importance in RSAF officer training in Saudi Arabia. The 'core grammar' consists of 100 grammatical areas selected from a databank of 399 items taken from the COBUILD on CD-ROM (a corpus-based dictionary/grammar developed by the University of Birmingham). The core grammar areas are routinely covered in general EFL textbooks and represent the consensus among a group of six experienced academy instructors. Individual test items are drawn from a bank which reflects this core. The vocabulary-grammar test consists of 50 items in a multiple-choice format.
2. The listening comprehension test consists of 25 items which make use of on-screen, aviation-related graphics to enhance face validity.
3. To test the cadets' ability to communicate with and respond to a fluent speaker in relatively natural conversation. The consensual path was also used to construct a needs-based speaking skills syllabus and the final product owes much to the work of North and Schneider [2]. The speaking test is a structured interview with an interviewer and assessor and employs a fail/pass/credit measure on each of the three sets of descriptors: grammatical and lexical control, overall interaction and fluency. Reliability Coefficients for the different components range between .80 and .85. A specialized group of interviewers was trained in interview technique with particular attention being paid to the consistent interpretation of the descriptors. Inter-rater reliability in the speaking test reached .85.

The academy course is titled 'English for Air Cadets'. It consists of six books produced in-house over a period of 5 years and is based on rigorous needs analysis. Each book consists of four units and may be covered within an average of 180 teaching hours. The course embodies a multi-syllabus approach and a multi-presentation methodology. It provides cadets with an integrated practice of productive and receptive skills. Each book ensures coverage of a relevant core vocabulary and grammar, integrated in topics of interest to cadets and emphasizes communicative language use. A unit from book 5 for example is organized as follows:

Lead in section and brainstorming: This section draws on the cadets' previous knowledge of the presented topic. Vocabulary and grammar items are elicited orally at this stage through picture-related discourse.

Reading: Cadets are presented with a text which is about 350 words long, followed by a picture-related reading exercise and a text-related exercise. These exercises allow cadets to practice and develop relevant reading sub-skills.

Vocabulary: This section provides practice and extension exercises using the vocabulary presented in the reading texts and exercises.

Group work: Cadets are asked to produce orally and in a written form utterances that are relevant to the topic presented in the unit.

Grammar: The relevant grammatical point is presented in genuine language tasks and reinforced in oral and written exercises.

Listening: Although listening enters in every section, in the presentation of the lesson pair work and team work is provided in a form of exercises to improve their listening skill.

Communication sections: Each section of a unit requires the use of language in tasks that resemble real life communication.

On entry, cadets are first given a placement test and allocated to one of the six course books. At the end of each book cadets are required to sit for an achievement test which covers the following linguistic elements and language skills: vocabulary, grammar, speaking and listening. Cadets are required to obtain an aggregate of 70% before being allowed to proceed to the next book. The maximum period of training is 42 weeks. When a cadet passes book six, he is eligible to sit for the CPT which is scheduled every five weeks. Cadet must achieve a minimum 75% in all three modules at one sitting before qualifying for the next phase of training.

Review of the literature

Do we test what we teach or do we teach what we test? Alderson and Wall [3] use the term 'wash back' to refer to changes in student and teacher behavior which can be traced to the influence of tests. Tests produce changes in teaching styles and learning strategies. These changes may be evaluated as positive or negative. Where testing takes the form of a traditional summative pen-and-paper examination, assessing a long and variegated course of study by analyzing performance on a sample of the syllabus, the scope for negative wash back is obvious. The more important the test, the more pervasive the wash back. The term 'wash back' is used in language testing as one of the parameters that are introduced to study the effect or impact of tests, especially new tests. Examining wash back entails examining the relationship between teaching and testing.

Alderson and Wall [4-6] investigated the effects of changing the O-level English examination in Sri Lanka. They concluded that the impact of the new test was less pervasive than had been expected. Their study revealed no changes in teaching methodology in classrooms. This was attributed to the lack of understanding on the part of teachers of what would have been adequate styles to prepare students for examinations. Alderson and Hamp-Lyons [7] studied what happens in TOEFL preparation sessions as compared with non-TOEFL sessions conducted by the same instructor and found the variation could not be explained simply in terms of wash back. Shohamy [8] offers empirical data and observations regarding the uses of an Arabic and an English test. She concluded that the power of the Arabic test, at first, was capable of changing the behavior of students and teachers alike as long as the test was in sight, just before the scheduled administration. However, after it was in use for eight years, it was demonstrated that the test had the power to change the specific teaching methods. The English test, on the other hand, had what she described as a tremendous impact on classroom activities, content and language teaching methodologies and learning strategies. Cheng [9] studied the impact of a newly introduced public English test which is taken by the majority of secondary school leavers in Hong Kong. Her experimental design involved a questionnaire addressed to students to assess their perceptions and attitudes toward their English language learning. Though the new exam had indeed brought about changes in classroom teaching and learning activities, with a greater emphasis on group work and integrated language tasks which characterized the new test, Cheng concluded that these changes were largely superficial. Students' reported motivation and learning strategies remained largely unchanged: they were still working towards the test. It may be that Cheng's expectations were unreasonable for it is unlikely that any test could, of itself, produce the changes in attitude and motivation she was hoping for.

Design of the present study

The impact of the CPT was assessed using classroom observation and a questionnaire addressed to teachers and another addressed to cadets. The questionnaire addressed to teachers (see Table 1) tried to elicit answers on cadets' awareness of test content and aims as well as their attitudes and motivation. In addition, teachers were asked whether or not it had changed teaching styles and learning strategies. Classroom observation involved attending sessions at random. The technique was not by any means an attempt to evaluate teachers, but rather to assess the types of classroom presentations in accordance with the proceedings of lesson plans, for one purpose in mind, which is to examine the effects that the CPT had on the teaching learning situation. Classes were observed at the beginning of each 5-week cycle and again in the critical period immediately prior to the examination. The observations made use of the teachers' lesson preparation notes, a standard format loosely based on the RSA Dip. TEFL pro forma.

Table 1.

Items	Strongly agree	Agree to a large extent	Agree to some extent	Do not agree
Our cadets understand the purpose of the CPT.	59%	18%	18%	5%
The test is based on clear goals.	72%	27%	1%	-----
The test measures what the English teaching program purports to teach.	54%	40%	6%	-----
The test utilizes authentic texts and tasks.	40%	18%	36%	6%
Results are perceived as fair.	55%	36%	9%	-----
The CPT has influenced teaching methodology.	50%	31%	13%	6%
The CPT exerts a positive influence on the learning environment.	77%	22%	1%	-----
The CPT has influenced cadet learning strategies.	72%	22%	-----	6%
The CPT dictates what I teach.	22%	50%	13%	13%
The CPT has influenced the rate of learning.	45%	40%	9%	6%
The CPT has changed cadets' attitude to learning.	66%	18%	13%	-----
The CPT has boosted cadet motivation.	66%	22%	9%	-----

Description of the teachers' questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of 14 points, Table 1 presents 12 points (the ones that can be considered to be quantifiable data), and the other two points namely 13 and 14 were done separately because they required teachers to write extendedly about them, (qualitative data) outlining the pre and post CPT teaching methodologies, of which the results of these two points are discussed in the results and discussion section. Questions 1-5 relate to the test itself: the clarity of its goals and perceptions of the test, whether the test is fair and whether or not it utilizes authentic text materials. Questions 6-10 attempts to study the impact of the test: whether the test influenced teaching methodology, whether or not it exerted a positive wash back on the learning environment, students' learning strategies and the rate of learning. Questions 11-12 are related to the students'

attitudes and motivation. A four-point scale was used to assess questions 1-12. For questions 13 and 14, teachers were asked to outline pre- and post-CPT teaching methodology and indicate any observed differences in learning strategies.

All 24 teachers in the school took part in this study. All of them except one have witnessed the pre- and post-CPT days, so they are well placed to assess whatever impact the new test has exerted on the teaching learning environment. The majority have been at the school for more than 10 years. All but two are native speakers of English and all of them hold MA degrees in English Language Teaching.

Before it was given to instructors, the questionnaire addressed to them was reviewed by two colleagues who are native speakers of English, both hold post graduate degrees in Applied Linguistics. As a result, some improvements were suggested and necessary changes were made. No remarks were made about the questionnaire after it was piloted.

Two items of the questionnaire rely on the instructors self-report. These were outlining old and new teaching methodology and cadets learning strategies. However, to ensure the reliability of self-reports, the questionnaire was also substantiated by feedback from cadets.

Classroom Observation

Pre-CPT cadets' focus was exclusively on learning (often by rote) grammar rules and memorizing vocabulary. Given no notion of (core) grammar or vocabulary, the learning was considerable: five-7000 words and an all encompassing pedagogical grammar. In the circumstances, the highest-yield strategy was the use of synonym lists and Arabic translation, in the case of vocabulary, and a rule based approach grammar. To see how the situation has changed, several lessons were observed by senior members of staff.

Classroom observation involved attending sessions at random. Classes were observed at the beginning of each 5-week cycle and again in the critical period immediately prior to the examination. The observations made use of the teachers' lesson preparation notes, a standard format loosely based on the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) Dip. TEFL pro forma.

The observations were carried out by the researcher and by the principal instructor, and three senior instructors who are all native speakers of English. Table 2 provides a summary of five observed lessons.

Table 2.

Teacher	Aims for cadets	Procedure	Focus
PH	By the end of the lesson cadets will have learned how to form the present continuous, practiced its pronunciation and started to appreciate the illocutionary force of the structure (eg. for protesting or warning about certain situations).	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teacher plays sound effects tape. Teacher then asks about what the person or thing is doing. 2. Teacher writes whole paradigm on board: Sts. practice in pairs. Teacher monitors output, making note of gross errors. 3. Following teacher examples, Sts. mime everyday activities and ask partner. 4. Teacher introduces Present Continuous worksheet, after that Sts. practice similar situations orally. 	<p>Listening, Speaking</p> <p>Listening, Speaking</p> <p>Listening, Speaking</p> <p>Reading, Writing and Speaking</p>
TO	By the end of the lesson the cadets will have been exposed to listening material based on personal descriptions. Be able to describe the physical appearance of a friend and personality.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use pictures to elicit familiar vocabulary relating to personal description. 2. Play cassette - Sts. complete the task. Chunk the recording and get feed back. 3. Allow a number of cadets to describe someone while others guess identity. 4. Refer cadets to worksheet and give them time to write and make notes on describing their best friend. Teacher monitors feedback. 	<p>Pre-Listening</p> <p>Listening</p> <p>Post Listening</p> <p>Oral practice</p> <p>Writing and Oral practice.</p>
DF	By the end of the lesson cadets will have been able to identify a flight plan being described. Be able to identify details of a flight plan as presented on a map.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Revision of compass direction. 2. Abstract flight plans. Identify and talk about. 3. Identify problems and conventions of a map. 4. Practice flight plans using CPT methodology. 	<p>Oral practice</p> <p>Task based</p> <p>Listening, Speaking</p> <p>Task based</p> <p>Listening, Speaking</p> <p>Problem areas.</p>
MY	By the end of the lesson cadets will have practiced/consolidated Q/A formulae and fluency for information exchange with reference to biographical data.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Masked Over Head Transparency (OHT) with headings to elicit biographical Question Answer Q/A. 2. Pair work to review vocabulary of bio. information. 3. Group work to elicit relevant info. 4. Completed information grid on Over Head Transparency: review Q/A. Teacher monitors all stages. 	<p>Eliciting Q/A formulae</p> <p>Vocabulary Q/A formation, Fluency/Accuracy of questions sharing and sequencing notes.</p>
JN	By the end of the lesson cadets will have been able to speak about their daily routine work with accuracy and fluency.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Elicit positive/negative sentences for routine. 2. Oral work: matching pictures with activities. 3. Pair work elicit Y/N answers. Teacher monitors. 4. Work sheet involving written exercise. 	<p>Oral work</p> <p>Involving verb form.</p> <p>Controlled oral practice.</p> <p>Oral practice</p> <p>Writing</p>

Cadets' Questionnaires

While it is impossible to seek information on the old English language training system from cadets who have already graduated, it is possible to obtain information from cadets who are being trained on the new system. For this purpose, another questionnaire was designed. The questionnaire was originally written in English in consultation with colleagues who are native speakers of English. It was then translated into Arabic and was reviewed by a colleague from the Arabic Language Department at King Saud University. The reason for giving it to cadets in Arabic was to ensure the absence of misinterpretation had it been written in English. The questionnaire used a 5-point scale and covered 21 points. Some of the questions relate to the course. Others relate to the test. Other questions relate to attitude towards learning English. The remaining questions relate to attitude towards the instructors and their teaching styles. See Table 3 for full content and the breakdown of cadets' responses.

Table 3.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Do not know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The English course places too much emphasis on vocabulary.	14%	50%	16%	9%	9%
The CPT is not a precise measure of cadets' language ability.	33%	14%	16%	21%	14%
If cadets' had to resit the CPT after two months in Aeroscience, most would fail.	30%	28%	16%	19%	4%
In a good English course we would spend most of our time learning how to speak English.	28%	40%	21%	4%	4%
English language training is the most difficult part of our training at KFAA.	35%	19%	4%	26%	14%
The instructors do not do enough to make the classes interesting.	26%	33%	19%	14%	7%
I only want to learn enough English to ensure I pass the exams.	21%	21%	4%	23%	28%
Cadets should not be permitted to speak Arabic in the English class.	40%	14%	8%	23%	11%
If you enjoy what you are learning, you learn it more quickly.	59%	19%	11%	7%	2%
If the instructors knew how to speak Arabic, they would be more effective at explaining things to cadets.	30%	33%	9%	16%	11%
We don't do enough writing in class.	23%	28%	16%	19%	11%
We derive most benefit from time spent in the language labs.	19%	26%	30%	11%	11%
If English weren't compulsory, I wouldn't	28%	28%	28%	9%	4%

	Strongly agree	Agree	Do not know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
bother to study it.					
I would like to be able to understand English Language movies and TV, and read magazines and newspapers in English.	45%	38%	-----	4%	11%
Where possible, English teachers should be native speakers.	28%	21%	23%	16%	9%
English words and concepts are easier to learn and to remember when they are explained in Arabic.	40%	38%	9%	11%	5%
When I don't understand something, I usually ask a fellow cadet to explain it in Arabic.	35%	42%	11%	7%	2%
There is always at least one cadet who understands the subject and is able to explain it to us in Arabic.	11%	33%	28%	16%	9%
When I study usually make notes in a mixture of Arabic and English.	23%	42%	11%	16%	4%
I have forgotten most of the words I had to learn for the CPT.	21%	23%	9%	35%	11%
Since leaving the English Department, I have tried to maintain my level of English.	35%	35%	7%	14%	7%

Results and Discussion

A mismatch between test requirements and teaching program will result in teachers and students operating with different priorities and goals. In a setting where motivation is largely instrumental and where a course of study is seen as a barrier to the achievement of more desirable goals, students will adopt survival strategies which mark as irrelevant anything not explicitly tested. Pressure from students often forces teachers to be complicit in this reductionism approach. In the context of the CPT, it was crucial to produce an exam which mirrored our teaching priorities. In this we have been largely successful. Most of the teachers surveyed agreed that the test has clear goals and measures what the course purports to teach. In this way, the test reinforces the teaching program and makes the teachers' job a lot easier. Since the test reflects our teaching priorities, teachers need no longer consciously teach for the test. Support also comes from the task types employed in the CPT. As far as possible, the listening component attempts to make use of tasks that are approximate to those used in class. This required considerable imagination on the part of our computer programmers but underscores the tests' commitment to simulating real-world tasks wherever possible. Since the cadets can now see the relevance of skills work, the test has directly boosted cadet motivation and encouraged active participation in class.

All respondents agreed that prior to the introduction of the CPT teaching was very much test-driven and the cadets focused on memorizing and cramming vocabulary. Since there was no test of oral skills, cadets were unwilling to invest time and effort in improving their speaking skills. Emphasis in the classroom was on the teaching of lists of items and their synonyms or on the mining of reading texts for vocabulary. The large vocabulary load meant that there could be little exploration of these items in context. The net effect of all this was that the school was producing students who were adept at vocabulary multiple-choice tests but poor speakers, readers, listeners and writers. Consequently, the teaching methodologies employed in pre-CPT did not encourage active student participation in pair or group activities. Instead, students worked individually, with teacher leading the class.

All teachers completely agreed that the CPT required a sea change in methodology. Students are now willing to take a more active role. Activities that encourage pair work and group work are used. There is a much greater emphasis on the development of oral skills. This is reflected not only in the material used, but also in the expectations of what students should be able to do at the various stages of their language learning. Their oral skills are developed through an explicit speaking skills syllabus and their progress is monitored through regular oral tests and, finally, in the CPT interview.

Under the old dispensation, listening was largely a test of memory with the focus on particular vocabulary or grammar items. With the advent of the CPT, pre- and post-listening tasks emphasize listening as an active process. Global listening, listening for gist and listening for specific details are all addressed in the listening materials. The teaching of reading is now based on more interesting and relevant topics. Reading tasks are specifically designed to develop reading skills and not just present vocabulary items. These observations were reinforced during lesson observations. Table 2 provides a summary of five such lessons.

All respondents agreed that learning strategies prior to the introduction of the CPT were merely focused on learning grammar rules and memorizing of vocabulary, employing rote learning. The ALCPT required a passive vocabulary of between seven and eight thousand words. In the circumstances, rote learning using Arabic translation was the most cost-effective strategy. Students monitored their progress exclusively through the use of multiple-choice format tests, since this was the only format used on the exit test. The prevailing view among pre-CPT cadets can be summed-up in the comment of one teacher: "The students tended to equate testing (doing Multiple Choice Questions, MCQs) with learning and were dismissive of attempts to introduce skill-based learning. Speaking was unimportant and equated with the short-term goal of passing the oral qualifying exam. If it was not tested, it was not worth doing."

All respondents agreed that CPT requirements and demands reduce the effectiveness of rote learning as a learning strategy. Students are now required to use language in a communicative environment. They are also aware of the need to develop all skill areas. This results in students adopting learning strategies that facilitate a broad-based learning approach. Respondents stressed that students are now keen to practice and use the language, a situation that did not exist in pre-CPT days.

The positive backwash reported by the teachers was not always reflected in cadet responses. Although the vocabulary load in the new course has been sharply reduced (from 6000 to about 2500 words) to reflect the notion of an essential 'core', most cadets felt that the course still placed too much emphasis on vocabulary. Nearly half of the respondents thought that the CPT is not a precise measure of cadets' language ability while 35% disagreed and 16% could not decide. No test can be claimed to be a precise measure. Tests do have standard errors of measurement and the larger the error the more imprecise the test. However, it should be noted that some students, perhaps the majority, will not always be satisfied with tests. Again, a majority of the sample agreed that if cadets had to resit the CPT after two months, most would fail. As with Cheng's [9] Hong Kong students, in Saudi Arabia education at school level is largely test driven and the motivation is usually instrumental. Where there is a tradition of 'cramming' for tests, little of enduring value is retained once the test requirements have been satisfied. It was partly with the aim of addressing this problem that the CPT was introduced. Though we have no direct evidence of this backwash effect, feedback from colleagues engaged in post-CPT training has been encouraging, especially regarding improved listening and speaking abilities. The majority of cadets (68%) agreed that a good language course should give priority to the teaching of speaking. 54% thought that the English language training phase is the most difficult in the academy. English language training poses their first barrier and cadets lacking language aptitude may find it threatening, since failure to qualify within the allotted time will result in expulsion. Most cadets (51%) said that they are not learning English to pass the exams only, but they want to be proficient in the language. On the other hand, 42% said that they are learning English purely for examination purposes. Most agreed that cadets should not be permitted to speak Arabic in class, but there was a sizeable group dissenting on this issue. Unsurprisingly, nearly all agreed that if someone enjoys what he is learning, he learns it more quickly. 63% agreed that if native instructors of English knew Arabic, they would be in a position to explain things effectively to cadets. 27% did not think so. However, a good instructor is always good regardless. 51% of cadets thought that they do not do enough writing in class. This is true in the sense that the prime concern of the course is given to speaking, listening and reading. However, writing is not totally neglected, and this is supported by 30% of the sample. 45% thought that they would benefit from language labs. 22% disagreed and 30% could not decide. However, labs are a means of learning, listening is also taught naturally in every class in a reciprocal way. 56% said that they would not

bother to learn English had it not been compulsory. This percentage is in conflict with the 51% who said that they disagree with the statement which says that they only want to learn English because they want to pass the test. And, it is also in conflict with the 83% of the sample who say that they would like to be able to read newspapers and follow the events of a film in English. 49% preferred the instructors to be native speakers. 23% could not decide and 25% disagreed. 78% said that if words and concepts are explained in Arabic, they would be easy to remember. 77% said that when they do not understand something, they ask a colleague to explain it for them. 44% said that there is always someone in class who is able to explain things in Arabic. However, 28% did not have an opinion and 25% disagreed. 65% said that when they study they make notes in both Arabic and English. 44% of the sample said that they have forgotten most of the words they had to learn for the CPT, but 46% disagreed. However, it is expected of some cadets to forget some of the words but definitely not all. The good thing, however, is that the majority of cadets 70% said that they have tried to maintain their level of English since leaving the English Department.

Conclusions and Implications

From the point of view of the respondents, the old testing system, by focusing on usage rather than use, hindered their ability to provide the skills they believed the cadets required. They found that the CPT brought about positive changes in the learning environment: they observed a positive wash back. There had been a fundamental change in cadet learning strategies involving a shift of emphasis from rote learning strategies centered on vocabulary and grammar to a new emphasis on speaking and listening skills. Cadets are now keen to practice and use the language. Classroom observation provides ample evidence (Table 2) that the CPT has transformed teaching methodology from a structural to a more communicative approach. The onus is now on the cadet to demonstrate an effective use of language in context. Other implications of this study are to do with tests themselves. Many teaching institutions introduce new tests which have been thoroughly researched according to the traditional measures of validity and reliability. The long-term implications of new assessment procedures are often ignored. However, Messick [9] claimed that the consequences of tests should be studied as part of the concept of validity. These consequences (what we might call 'implicational validity') deserve closer monitoring and should play a key role in test maintenance.

However, much of the evidence given by cadets suggest that, in fact, there is some kind of evidence of positive wash back effect. This evidence is not as ample as those of the instructors who thought that in KFAA they have changed what cadets study not how or why.

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. ينبغي أن تعكس الاختبارات أولويات المناهج ، وعندما لا يكون الأمر كذلك فإن أهمية الاختبار ستبقى دائما على أهمية المنهج وفقا لرؤية المتعلمين. وهذا الأمر عادة ما يكون صحيحا على وجه الخصوص إذا ما كان لنتيجة الاختبار أهمية في تحديد مسار الطالب. ونتيجة لاختلاف المنهج والاختبار فإن المحصلة ستكون ذات أثر راجع سلبي على العملية التعليمية. يخلص هذا البحث إلى كيف أن تصميم واستخدام اختبار جديد نتج عنه تغييرات إيجابية للعملية التعليمية فيما يخص طرائق التدريس واستراتيجيات التعلم. تم استقصاء اتجاهات الطلاب حول الاختبار الجديد وكذلك تم أيضا استقصاء آراء المعلمين ذوي الدراية بالاختبارين القديم والجديد عن طبيعة ومدى إرجاع التغييرات الإيجابية لاستخدام الاختبار الجديد.

