



CAMBRIDGE ENGLISH
Language Assessment
Part of the University of Cambridge

Research Notes

Issue 58

November 2014



ISSN 1756-509X



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Language Assessment
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Issue 58 / November 2014

A quarterly publication reporting on learning, teaching and assessment

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Printed in the United Kingdom by Canon Business Services

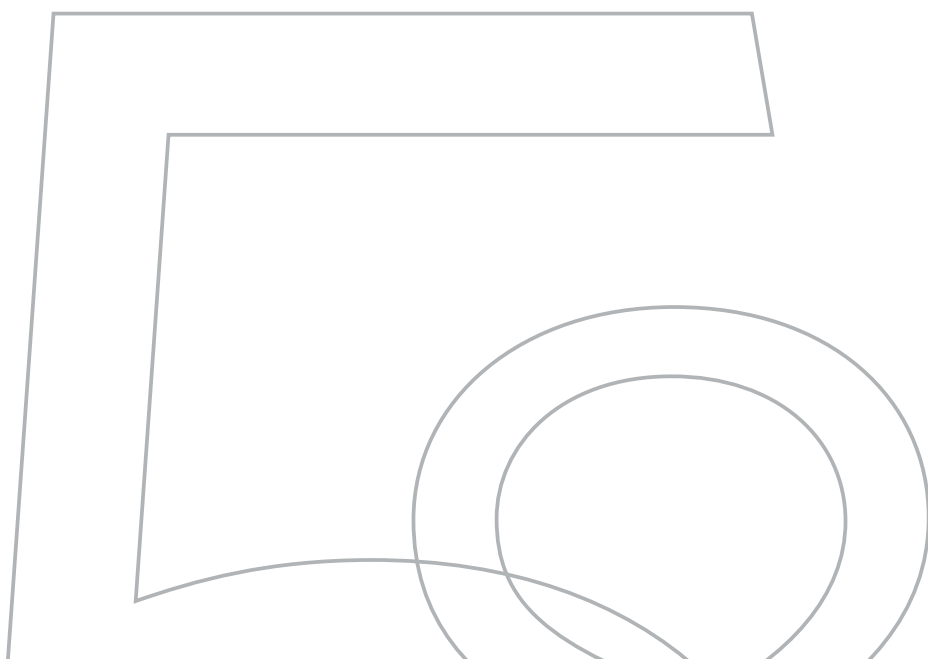
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Editorial

Welcome to issue 58 of *Research Notes*, our quarterly publication reporting on matters relating to learning, teaching and assessment within Cambridge English Language Assessment. The theme of the issue is the impact of Cambridge English exams and English language learning programmes in a variety of contexts.

Several papers report on the impact of English language programmes and Cambridge English language assessments used therein, at micro levels (teaching and learning) and at macro levels (employability, schools, parents and decision makers). Recommendations arising from the findings are intended to facilitate the up-scaling of the programmes or to ensure that the programmes better meet their goals. Most studies are collaborative in nature, which indicates the importance of working with local experts who are familiar with the relevant contexts. All the studies employ mixed methods designs. This results in a richer and more informative picture of impact(s) and a more in-depth understanding of the current state of English language teaching, learning and assessment within a particular context.

In the first paper, Docherty, Gratacós Casacuberta, Rodríguez Pazos and Canosa introduce us to Fomento, an educational group offering single-sex primary and secondary education, in Spain. The authors discuss the impact of Cambridge English assessments on stakeholders, stakeholders' perceptions of the English language initiative introduced by Fomento, and how findings compare between different groups of research participants. The authors also discuss motivation and how it is affected by learners' and teachers' attitudes to English language learning, teaching and assessment. Taking advantage of the single-sex education context, the authors explore gender-related differences in learners' attitudes towards English and English lessons, raising questions about the role of gender in the learning and teaching of English.

We remain in Europe with Ellis, Hawkey and Docherty who introduce us to *Progetto Lingue 2000 (PL2000)*, a major educational reform project in Italy. The paper provides an example of a long-term investigation of impact through an overview of 2001/02 and 2012/13 studies. The studies were based on similar samples of primary and secondary schools, with the data collection instruments from the first study informing those of the revisit study. The study reveals that teaching practices have become more communicative in nature; there is a significant increase in the number of school-aged candidates taking external examinations; and there is a rise in the standards of English attained.

We leave Europe for Northern Africa, with Khalifa, Khabbazbashi, Abdelsalam and Said, who discuss the impact of the Cambridge English Upskilling Programme on teachers and students in Egypt and provide recommendations for

upscaling the programme. The study revealed a positive effect of the programme on teachers, as it increased their awareness of the latest language teaching methodologies and resulted in an improvement of their teaching practices. The blended nature of the programme increased the teachers' capacity for self-reflection and allowed students to become more autonomous and responsible for their learning.

The following three studies focus on Asia.

Salamoura, French and Emery investigate the impact of the Society for Creation of Opportunities through Proficiency in English (SCOPE) programme and Cambridge English assessments in Gujarat, India. They found a range of positive impacts on learners, trainers and employers, and a few unintended ones. In terms of learner employability opportunities, one of the main findings showed that employers value the programme and that there is an encouraging degree of buying-in from employers such as police institutions, as well as global and local corporations. An identified area of improvement is the need for enhancing links with employers to ensure that their English language requirements are met.

Robinson, Galaczi, Docherty, King and Khalifa provide an insight into a large-scale 2013 baseline study carried out for the Malaysian Ministry of Education in the context of an English language education reform. The study investigated the Malaysian English language education system and how it is currently performing against internationally recognised standards. The achieved goals were to benchmark students in terms of their English language proficiency, and teachers in terms of their English language proficiency, teaching knowledge and practice. In addition, the current national curricula, assessments and learning materials were reviewed, and recommendations were provided for the next steps in the reform and impact-related research.

Yan, Gu and Khalifa reveal the positive and negative impacts of *Cambridge English: Key for Schools* on learners in Beijing, China. Using a mixed methods approach, they investigate learners' and parents' perspectives.

The final paper takes us to North America. Khalifa, Papp, Valero and Vidal discuss the effects and consequences of the use of the *Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT)* in Mexico, from the perspectives of policy makers, planners, implementers and teachers. The findings show that the impact of *TKT* is positive and that *TKT* plays a considerable role in raising teaching standards.

We finish this issue with details of the Studies in Language Testing volumes published this year, and a new diagram produced by Cambridge English to outline the practical role that research can play in delivering long-term enhancements to the education system.

Investigating the impact of assessment in a single-sex educational setting in Spain

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Introduction

This article describes preliminary outcomes of an impact study aimed at investigating the effects of introducing external standardised assessment, as part of an English language initiative, into a primary and secondary school in Madrid. This study is a joint research project between Cambridge English Language Assessment, Fomento de Centros de Enseñanza (hereafter referred to as Fomento) and Villanueva University.

Context

Fomento is an educational group founded on Christian principles which offers single-sex primary and secondary education in Spain. Fomento consists of 35 schools located in 11 of the 17 autonomous regions in Spain and there is an associated private university, Villanueva, which is affiliated with the Complutense University of Madrid. The Fomento schools are classified as either private (35% of schools) or *concertados* – state funded but privately run – (65% of schools), and are known for academic excellence with their students consistently achieving top grades on the university entrance exams¹ in most regions. In 2013, for example, 90% of Fomento pupils in the last year of secondary school (2^º *de Bachillerato*) passed the University entrance exam (i.e. *Selectividad*) compared to 55% of all Spanish students in the same grade (Fomento 2013).

When the first Fomento school was established in 1963 in Córdoba by a group of parents, education in Spain was conceived among many as the sole responsibility of schools, and, therefore, the only role of families in that respect was to choose a school for their children. From this point of view, Fomento introduced a new perspective in the educational field, in the sense that the focus was placed on families as the main educators of children, schools becoming a necessary partner in the educational process. This philosophy underpins all Fomento schools with each one being established by parent groups. In fact, the first parents' association in Spain was started by Fomento parents in 1965 (Fomento 1967). As a result of the success of this perspective, Fomento continues to emphasise the role of parents as 'first educators'. That is, Fomento sees its main responsibility as supporting parents in the education of their children rather than educating children *for* parents. In order to do this, Fomento tries to facilitate communication between the school (at both primary and secondary) and parents and encourages parental involvement

in several ways. Firstly, each class is assigned a family (i.e. parents of one of the children in the class), who has the responsibility of liaising with other parents from the class, the teacher and the school head about the class and any issues that arise. Secondly, each child is assigned a *preceptor*, typically one of the child's teachers, who meets the student twice a month to discuss their academic studies or any personal/social issues and provide guidance. The preceptor then meets parents quarterly to review the child's progress and discuss any issues that need to be addressed. Finally, each school year, Fomento offers parents a short course of 5–6 sessions on matters related to education (e.g. literacy development, understanding adolescence) with the aim being to help parents better support their children's learning. These courses are popular with parents as approximately 70% of them attend.

The Fomento English language initiative

Due to the growing importance of English both in the labour market and Spanish society in general, as well as to the implementation of bilingual programmes in Spanish state schools (see Blackhurst and Moss 2011), the criteria used by parents to choose a school for their children have changed recently. In the last five or six years, the quality of English language provision a school offers has become a factor of enormous significance in determining the choice of schools parents make. Fomento, following its policy of trying to offer parents high-quality education, initiated a 5-year strategic plan aimed at improving the English language levels of their students. Using the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, Council of Europe 2001), Fomento set the following targets for 2015: 90% of learners at the end of primary will have achieved A2 and by the end of secondary 80% of learners will have achieved B2.

Although Fomento has established these 2015 strategic goals for all schools in their network, the decentralised nature of education in Spain limits their ability to prescribe specific nation-wide curricular changes because the autonomous regions have responsibility for setting language policy (see Ashton, Salamoura and Diaz 2012). For example, there may be different policies in each region that govern the number of contact hours in English or there may be restrictions on teaching other subjects through English. Therefore, each school must develop its own action plan, in line with regional laws, to achieve the 2015 targets. Fomento provides guidance in this process and works closely with the schools to help them achieve their aims and the overarching general

¹ Please note that these exams will be abolished in 2017 according to a new law: 'La LOMCE'.

objectives set by Fomento. In light of this situation, Cambridge English exams were introduced in 2012 to monitor progress towards targets, encourage an increased focus on speaking instruction and provide accountability measures to parents.

At the beginning of this initiative, it is compulsory for learners in Primary Year 6 (11–12 years old) to sit either *Cambridge English: Flyers* or *Cambridge English: Key for Schools*, which both target CEFR Level A2, while *Cambridge English: Preliminary for Schools*, targeted at B1, is compulsory for Secondary Year 4 students (14–15 years old). Fomento covers the exam costs for students in these grades. Learners in other grades can also choose to take these or other Cambridge English exams but parents are responsible for the exam fees this year.

Study purpose

It is recognised that tests have the potential to influence behaviour within the classroom and beyond it (Alderson and Wall 1993, Cheng and Curtis 2004, Milanovic and Saville 1996); therefore, at the beginning of this new initiative, it is important to investigate the effects of introducing Cambridge English exams on stakeholders to ensure that the intended effects can be/are being achieved and well-motivated improvements can be made if necessary (Saville 2012).

This study is designed to provide Fomento with information about stakeholder perceptions of this initiative and the current state of English language learning, teaching and assessment at Las Tablas and Valverde schools, which are *concertado* schools in the north of Madrid and have been members of the official bilingual programme of the Comunidad Autónoma de Madrid since 2007 (see Blackhurst and Moss (2011) for more information about bilingual education in Madrid). The findings of this study can then be used to monitor the programme's effectiveness, acknowledge the school's strengths and identify any improvements that can be made to ensure continued success. They can also be used to inform other schools in the Fomento network about how these particular schools have responded to the initiative and, potentially, provide an example of how to address common concerns that are associated with implementing bilingual education and integrating external exams into the curriculum.

The introduction of the exams also has implications for the Department of Education at Villanueva University, which provides pre-service training to nearly 15% of Fomento teachers, while approximately 30% of graduates are trained to become English language teachers. Villanueva has a particular interest in the effect of this initiative on teaching practices which could inform both pre-service and in-service teacher development programmes.

Finally, as these schools follow a single-sex educational model, this study provides an opportunity to investigate any possible gender differences related to English language learning and teaching.

Research questions

The aim of the study was to address two inter-related research questions:

1. What is the impact (intended and unintended) of Fomento's decision to use Cambridge English assessments on the micro context (learning and teaching) and the macro level (schools, parents and other stakeholders) at Las Tablas and Valverde schools?
2. How do the impacts of introducing Cambridge English exams on the micro context (learning and teaching) and the macro level (schools, parents and other stakeholders) at Las Tablas and Valverde schools compare across stakeholder groups (students, teachers, parents, Fomento decision makers)?

Methodology

Educational systems are complex phenomena, which makes investigating impact challenging as one needs to contend with 'a great many independent, intervening and dependent variables' (Hawkey 2006:13). In order to come to a better understanding of test impact, Saville (2012) recommends a mixed methods approach which combines the use of both qualitative and quantitative data strands allowing researchers to capitalise on the strengths of each method while offsetting any weaknesses inherent in them (Creswell and Plano Clark 2011). For this study, a convergent parallel research design, which included an initial exploratory stage, was used (see Figure 1). The convergent parallel design is characterised by equal prioritisation of the qualitative and quantitative data strands which are collected concurrently and analysed independently (Creswell and Plano Clark 2011). The data is then combined at the interpretation stage. The benefit of this design for the present study is that researchers are able to build up a rich description of learning, teaching and assessment near the end of the academic year when stakeholder awareness of assessment is at its greatest, making it easier to identify the extent to which tests are influencing attitudes or behaviour.

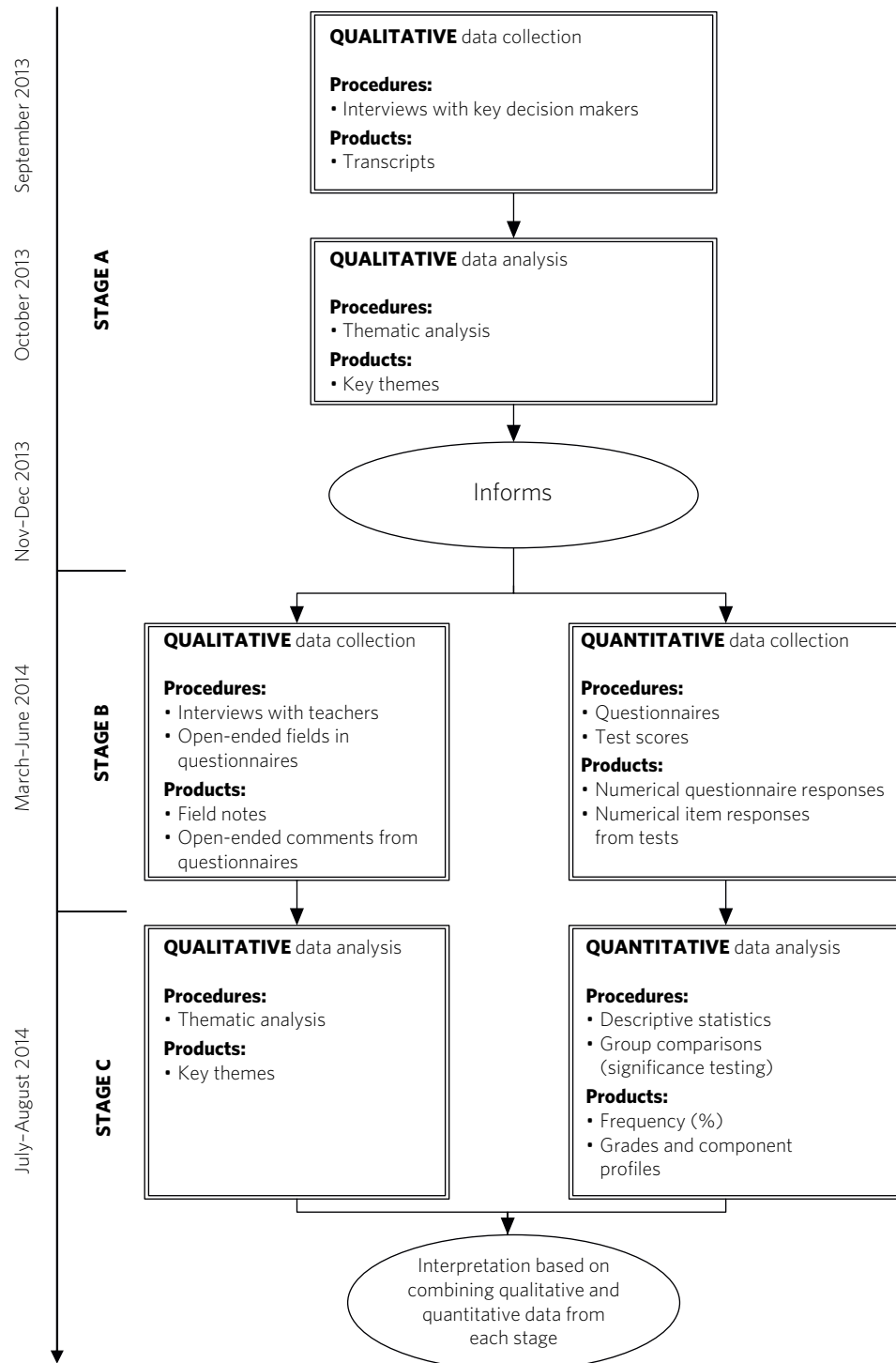
Instruments

This section describes the development of the data collection instruments for the qualitative research strand, consisting of semi-structured interview protocols and open-ended comment fields in the questionnaires, as well as for the quantitative research strand, consisting of attitudinal and perception questionnaires and learner test data.

A semi-structured interview protocol was developed for key decision makers, which focused on eliciting detailed information about the context of learning, teaching and assessment in Fomento schools and information about the English language initiative. The information elicited during these interviews informed the development of the questionnaires and the interview protocols for the teachers.

The questionnaires were designed to investigate attitudes about learning, teaching and assessment from the perspective of the different stakeholder groups: teachers, learners and parents. Statements were selected from the Cambridge English Questionnaire Item Bank, which contains Likert items used and validated in previous impact studies (see *Research Notes* 50 for more information). Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each statement,

Figure 1: Multiphase research design (Creswell and Plano Clark 2011)



using a 5-point scale. Questionnaires were reviewed by educationalists familiar with the context and translated into Spanish. The translations were verified by native Spanish speakers. A semi-structured interview protocol was developed for teachers based on constructs similar to those used in the questionnaires. Table 1 provides an overview of constructs covered in each instrument.

This article does not report on the test data, which will be analysed as part of the next phase of the project to monitor the proficiency level of learners and identify any variables that may be influencing attainment. The test data analysed in this future phase will include scores on *Cambridge English:*

Flyers, Cambridge English: Key for Schools and Cambridge English: Preliminary. Although only these exams were compulsory, learners in other grades took *Cambridge English: Starters and Movers, Cambridge English: First and Cambridge English: Advanced*, and learner performance on these exams will also be investigated.

Sample

This sample was made up of key decision makers from Fomento and students, teachers and parents from Las Tablas and Valverde schools. Las Tablas is the boys' school and Valverde is the girls' school. Although the schools are next

Table 1: Overview of key investigation points by instrument

Themes	Instrument
Attitudes towards learning English and the learning environment Learner motivation Attitude towards English lessons Use of English at school and home Parental involvement and engagement with language learning	Questionnaires: Teacher, parent, learner Semi-structured interviews: Key decision makers, teachers
Attitude towards assessment	Questionnaires: Teacher, parent, learner Semi-structured interviews: Key decision makers, teachers
Learner progression	Questionnaires: Teacher, parent, learner Semi-structured interviews: Key decision makers, teachers Test scores
Teacher motivation	Questionnaires: Teacher, parent Semi-structured interviews: Key decision makers, teachers
Teaching practices	Questionnaires: Teacher, parent, learner Semi-structured interviews: Key decision makers, teachers
Attitude towards the initiative	Questionnaires: Teacher, parent Semi-structured interviews: Key decision makers, teachers

Table 2: Overview of participating sample

	Valverde (girls' school)	Las Tablas (boys' school)	Total
Total number of students enrolled (between Primary Year 4 to Secondary Year 6)	424	434	858
Questionnaires			
Primary student participation	80	52	132
Secondary student participation	186	48	234
Total student participation	266	100	366
Parents	119	110	229
Teachers	11	11	22
Interviews			
Teachers	5	5	10
Fomento decision/policy makers			2

door to each other, the students are separated and do not interact with each other on school premises. Both schools offer primary and secondary provision; the sample included all learners except those in Primary Year 1–3 because research suggests that children younger than 8 years old are unable to reliably respond to questionnaires (Borgers, Leeuw and Hox 2000). Table 2 provides a breakdown of the sample by instrument and stakeholder group. Forty-three percent of all Fomento students from Primary Year 4 upwards responded to the questionnaire. The response rate of those in the selected grades who completed the questionnaire by school was 63%

for Valverde and 23% for Las Tablas. Twenty-three percent of all parents who have children at one of these schools responded (20% of Valverde parents responded and 25% of Las Tablas parents).

Data collection and analysis

Interviews were conducted in English with key decision makers in November 2013 and then with teachers during a scheduled school visit in June 2014. A pair of researchers interviewed each teacher, which allowed one to ask questions while the other took field notes. Questionnaires were delivered using an online survey tool and the learner questionnaire was administered by classroom teachers during computer lab sessions. Parents were sent the online questionnaire link by the school administration along with information about the study and asked to complete the questionnaire. Teachers were also provided with a link to their questionnaire by administrators of the schools.

The analysis of the questionnaires involved two steps. First, frequencies for each questionnaire statement were calculated using SPSS. Then a chi-square test was computed for each statement to determine whether response patterns were similar across groups. For learners, comparisons were made by educational level (i.e. primary or secondary), gender and by educational level and gender. For parents, responses were analysed by the educational level of their child and by the gender of their child. Common statements in the parent questionnaire and the student questionnaire were also compared. For the chi-square analysis, we used a critical value of ($p < .05$) to determine whether there were any statistically significant differences in group responses and a standardised residual of +2.0 or –2.0 to determine whether any particular response was showing a meaningful difference.

The qualitative data (i.e. field notes from interviews and open-ended comments from questionnaires) was analysed using theme analysis, which involved the identification of patterns in the data sets and then determining themes based on these patterns (Braun and Clarke 2006). Ethical guidelines from the University of Cambridge, the British Association of Applied Linguistics and the British Research Association were followed during data collection and analysis.

Results and discussion

Preliminary findings concerning attitudes towards English language learning, teaching and assessment and the impact of introducing external assessment on these factors are presented below in order to address the research questions.

Attitudes towards English: Learning and teaching

Learner motivation

Learner motivation is considered an important factor in language learning. That is, learners' attitudes towards learning a language and the extent to which they perceive it to be useful can influence their behaviour, both in terms of the amount of effort exerted on learning, and their willingness to persist with it even if it becomes challenging

(Csizér and Dörnyei 2005, Gardner 1985). Language learning motivation can be conceptualised in a number of different ways but it is generally agreed that, unlike the learning of other subjects in school, learning a foreign/second language has both a social and cognitive dimension (Dörnyei 1994, Trembley and Gardner 1995, Williams and Burden 1997). The social dimension stems from the fact that language has a communicative functional purpose and is key in establishing relationships with others. As such, learning another language can facilitate cross-cultural communication; therefore, learners' perceptions of, and attitudes towards, the target language and community/culture and their interest in establishing relationships with people associated with the language can affect their motivation (Gardner 1985). The cognitive dimension, on the other hand, emphasises factors that influence learner behaviour such as linguistic self-confidence, expectancy of success in learning and the value placed on an activity (e.g. expectancy-value theories; Eccles, Adler, Futterman, Goff, Kaczala, Meece and Midgley 1983). The cognitive dimension also recognises the importance of the learning environment in determining whether there is an emphasis on effort and learning or achievement and competition, which can influence the types of activities learners are willing to try and expend effort on during the learning process (e.g. goal orientation; Ames 1992). Learner motivation is a complex, multi-faceted, dynamic phenomenon. The Fomento data, therefore, was analysed from the perspective of how learners' attitudes and beliefs about English, their lessons and Cambridge English exams influence their learning motivation.

Learners' and parents' attitudes towards English and Cambridge English examinations

The value learners place on an activity such as language learning (the cognitive dimension of motivation) is most strongly associated with a willingness to continue engaging in the activity even when it becomes difficult (Csizér and Dörnyei 2005, Wigfield and Eccles 2000). Research also suggests that parental attitudes towards a particular language can influence learner perceptions of it (the social dimension of motivation; Bartram 2006a, Gardner 1985). Therefore, investigating both learner and parent attitudes towards English and language learning was important. Statements designed to elicit their attitudes were included on the learner and parent questionnaires.

Both learners (74%) and parents (89%) strongly agreed that learning English is important and as Table 3 shows, they recognise its role in improving employability and access to higher education. This is also something that the learners themselves elaborated on in their open-ended comments:

'To have a good job and also to get into university, you need to know English.'
(Female student)

'It is easier to find work if you know English.' (Male student)

Graddol (2006) points out that English language ability is becoming increasingly important in a globalised economy and has been identified as a contributing factor to economic success. When one considers recent economic indicators

that put Spain's youth unemployment at 54% (Eurostat 2014), it is not surprising that parents and learners want to improve future access to the labour market by any means and English language ability is viewed as a skill that not only offers its users a competitive advantage within Spain but also allows young people to seek employment elsewhere if necessary.

Table 3: Reasons for learning English: Parents and learners

How important is it for you/your child to learn English to . . .	% who indicated 'very important'	
	Parents	Learners
. . . improve job opportunities?	93%	84%
. . . improve access to higher education?	80%	69%
. . . communicate with others who do not speak Spanish?	79%	52%
. . . travel?	63%	45%
. . . use the internet?	58%	10%
. . . please my parents?	N/A	25%

Although there were no statistically significant differences in learner responses to the statements in Table 3 by gender, parents placed significantly more value on learning English for each of these activities than learners ($p < .05$). In addition, learners in primary school were significantly more likely to indicate that it is very important to learn English to please their parents (37%) than learners in secondary school (18%) ($p < .001$). This last finding highlights the important role parents play in influencing attitudes towards school subjects in the early years of schooling but also how that influence changes as learners get older.

It is clear that both learners and parents recognise the extrinsic utility of learning English for its potential role in future employment and in accessing higher education, which is likely to positively affect learner motivation. Not surprisingly, both groups also recognise the role Cambridge English exams play in achieving these future aims. For example, learners commented on how the exams help motivate them and build their confidence, which is likely to help them persist with their studies, and achieve their long-term goals:

'[The exam] helps you to learn more English and it motivates you to study.'
(Female student)

'[Doing well on the exam is important] because you feel good for all the work you've done during the year and for all that you have learned.' (Male student)

Learners overwhelmingly indicated that it is important for them to do well on the Cambridge English exams (96%) and that they are motivated by the chance of receiving a certificate (97%). When given the opportunity in the questionnaire to explain why the exam is important to them, several learners made specific mention of the value universities and employers place on exam results and certification, as these comments highlight:

'If you do the exam you can get a qualification that can help you get into the university you want and it will help you get the job that you want. And although this might seem stupid now, in the future it will be very useful.' (Female student)

'Because to find work they always take as a reference the Cambridge exams.'
(Female student)

'Because if I manage to pass ... it will appear on my CV in order to get a better job than others. Also so that I am paid a good wage.' (Male student)

Despite the clear link learners have made between the exam results and certification with their future career aspirations, they also see the value of the exams in supporting the social dimension of motivation. Nearly 94% of learners reported that it was important (i.e. very important and important) to them to learn English to communicate with non-Spanish speakers. Learners' comments indicate that they associate studying for the exams with their language development, which in turn will allow them to establish relationships with people who speak English:

'[Doing well on the exam is important] because in this way I can understand better the people who speak English, I can speak with them and get to know many different people.' (Female student)

'[I want to do well on the exam in order] to be able to speak to other people in English.' (Male student)

'I like the level of English that there is in my school. I also love that they prepare us for those exams. I know that I want to get to the top level and do all the exams, because I'm doing them better and better, and at the same time my English level is improving. When I grow up I want to see what it is like to live in New York, or London, in places with native English speakers. I thank my school for preparing me to take these exams too.' (Female student)

The learners appear to be interested in socialising with people from English-speaking countries and also possibly living in these countries. The Cambridge English exams are associated with helping them achieve these goals as they motivate them to reach the language levels needed to be able to integrate into these communities or feel confident communicating with English speakers.

Parents also recognise the exams' role in motivating their children:

'It is essential to promote English, which is possibly the language in which our children will have to get by in the future ... Cambridge exams help give a little push to our children's English.'

In addition, parents value the exams as an external accountability measure which can be used to monitor language learning. Typical comments left by parents highlight this purpose:

'I think the official English exams are essential to have an impartial evaluation and from an institution with international prestige. I thank greatly the school for this opportunity that they are giving us, even if my son does not always appreciate it.'

English is important in Spain today and parents and learners are very aware of its value in education, employment and facilitating communication with a wider range of people.

Cambridge English exams are positively associated with language learning and improving learner motivation, which in turn is linked to supporting learners' future goals and parental aspirations for their children.

Learners' attitudes towards lessons

The learning environment can also shape attitudes towards learning a language and influence learner motivation. The curriculum, classroom activities, teaching method and group norms can all affect learner motivation and behaviour by establishing what is important to learn and the best ways of learning it (e.g. goal orientation). The focus of this section, therefore, will be on the extent to which learners enjoy their lessons, their willingness to speak in English and finally on the role of assessment within the learning environment.

Although nearly three-quarters of learners agreed that they enjoy their English lessons at school, we found significant differences ($p < .001$) when their responses were analysed by school level and gender (see Table 4). Primary learners are more likely to indicate that they enjoy their lessons than secondary students. Several teachers pointed out in the interviews that lessons tended to be fun in primary school because students have more to learn and it is easy to teach through games whereas in secondary school, students are dealing with more cognitively demanding tasks and there is the added dimension that learners at this age are developing their sense of self, which can affect their attitude and motivation. As one teacher from the boys' school pointed out, it is sometimes necessary for the teacher 'to convince secondary students to learn English' because they easily become bored.

Table 4: Enjoyment of lessons by stakeholder group

I/My child enjoy(s) English lessons at school.	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Parents*	4%	8%	39%	39%
All students	13%	15%	50%	22%
Primary students	14%	7%	38%	41%
Secondary students	11%	19%	58%	12%
Female students	7%	15%	57%	21%
Male students	27%	16%	31%	26%

*These figures do not add up to 100% because 11% of parents selected 'not sure'

Gender differences were also identified in response to statements about lesson enjoyment. As Table 4 shows, male students were more likely to strongly disagree with the statement that they enjoy their English lessons than female students ($p < .001$). This finding is in line with research that has found similar gender differences in attitudes towards language learning (Dörnyei and Clement 2001, Mihaljević-Djigunović 1993). However, in order to try to better understand why male students are less positive about their lessons than female students, we looked more closely at all the responses of these male students who strongly disagreed. We found that they were from different grades so it could not simply be a case of one class whose members were collectively unhappy with their lessons. We found no explanation when we looked at their questionnaire comments. Surprisingly, those comments were actually quite positive about both the teachers and the English programme at the school: 'I think the school has good English teachers' and 'I like

my school and the English programme'. Only one comment was explicitly negative about the teacher.

A possible explanation for why male students were more likely to strongly disagree may be related to the difficulty of their lessons. Sixty-one percent of these learners indicated that their lessons were too easy compared to 18% of the whole student sample who said the same. As with many schools in this sector, students are grouped by grade and not by language level, which inevitably results in mixed-ability classes. Developing differentiated learning activities for a wide range of language levels within one class can be a complex and challenging task for teachers. In fact, during the interviews when asked about future professional development needs, one teacher specifically mentioned a desire to be given more training on differentiated instruction. When teachers did talk about the need to scaffold or adjust learning activities to better suit their students' abilities, it was usually focused on helping weaker students and there was little talk about how they address the needs of stronger students within their classes. The issue of mixed-ability classes and the effect this has on motivation and learning was also mentioned by students and parents in their open-ended comments:

'I think we are falling behind on some issues because there are girls who do not understand, and I get bored when I have already understood.' (Female student)

'If the English level is very different among the students, it is more difficult for the students with a good level to improve than for those with a lower level. It is important to think how all students can be stimulated to learn according to their capacity.' (Parent)

It may be that more focus is placed on ensuring struggling students are given additional support to bring them up to the level of the class and less time is spent pushing stronger students to go beyond the lesson aims.

It would appear that these gender differences may be attributable to a mismatch between the language ability of the male students and the level of their lessons, which is affecting their enjoyment of lessons. However, in the next section, which focuses on language use, we will see that there may be differences in the approach or goal orientation of boys and girls which can shed more light on these gender differences.

English language use

The opportunities that learners have to speak in a foreign language and their willingness to do so play a positive role in language learning. For example, the European Survey on Language Competences (ESLC) found that the greater use of English in the classroom, by both students and teachers, was positively associated with language attainment (Jones 2013). The willingness of a learner to communicate in a foreign language, though, can be affected by a number of factors such as the value they place on the language, their linguistic self-confidence/concept or relatedly any anxiety associated with using it, and group norms. In light of this and because one of the goals of Fomento is to improve speaking skills, we investigated in the questionnaires and during the interviews with teachers the extent to which learners have opportunities to communicate in English and how willing they are to do this.

As the use of English outside school can impact learners' use of it within the learning environment, we included statements to elicit this information in the questionnaires. Slightly less than a quarter of learners indicated that they very often have opportunities to use English outside school while 14% of parents said the same about their children. The activity most frequently engaged in was watching films or TV in English with 22% of learners reporting that they do this very often. Although it is a positive sign that almost a quarter of the learners report being exposed to English in some way outside school, the majority of learners report not having these opportunities, which makes the use of it within the learning environment even more important as this may be their only opportunity to engage with the language.

Eighty-seven percent of learners indicated that their teacher speaks English very often during lessons and although 64% reported that they speak to the teacher in English very often, only 7% said the same when it came to speaking to other students in English. In fact, 33% of learners said that they never speak to other students in English during lessons. These findings were consistent with ones from similar research conducted in Spain. In that study, a learner explained that she does not speak in English with classmates because 'If I speak English with a friend I think [it] is strange' (Salamoura, Docherty and Hamilton 2012). In addition, within Spain there also appears to be a perception that Spaniards are historically not good at learning English, which could affect their willingness to speak the language. A parent highlighted this issue in the questionnaire when they pointed out that students 'suffer from the famous "Spanish embarrassment" when they have to speak another language'. ESLC findings provide further support for this viewpoint as Spanish students tend to perceive English as a difficult language to learn compared to the other participating countries (European Commission 2012). Despite this and the fact that learners report that they rarely speak English with their classmates, both groups consistently indicated that speaking is their strongest skill (32%) followed by listening (26%). Teachers also agreed that speaking is the learners' strongest skill.

Further analysis of the data, however, highlighted gender differences in relation to learner use of English in the English classroom. Almost 60% of boys reported never speaking to other students in English compared to 25% of girls, which is significant ($p < .001$). Again, the questionnaire data revealed gender differences. The reasons why boys are less likely to speak in English with their classmates is quite complex and related to a number of factors. However, one explanation, which was mentioned several times by teachers in the boys' school, may be related to peer influence. As one teacher put it, some of the better secondary students don't want to show their true abilities in front of their friends because 'they are afraid of being different', suggesting that their classroom behaviour is being affected by their desire to fit in with their peer group. There appears to be a social 'cost' (Wigfield and Eccles 2000) to speaking English in class for the boys in terms of how they perceive themselves and how they want others to perceive them. In contrast, teachers in the girls' school noted that the absence of boys contributed to the female students'

willingness to speak in class. Although research focusing on foreign language learning in single-sex classes indicates that boys tend to benefit from all boys' classes in terms of learning outcomes (Barton 2002, Sukhnandan, Lee and Kelleher 2000) and willingness to use the language in class (Chambers 2005), the influence of peer groups on learner attitudes should not be underestimated (Bartram 2006b) as they can affect classroom behaviour, which in this case, may be creating very different classroom norms.

Another explanation for this difference may relate to the goal orientation of the learning environment in the two schools (see the section 'Learner motivation' in this article). Research suggests that learners' perceptions of the achievement goal promoted in the classroom will influence their attitudes towards learning and the amount of effort they are willing to exert in learning (Ames 1992, Butler 2012). Ames (1992) describes two contrasting goal orientations: 1) mastery, which tends to focus on learning effort and places emphasis on the learning process and 2) performance, which emphasises achievement and competition. Learners who are motivated by mastery goals are more likely to be satisfied with their school, tend to engage in self-regulatory learning strategies and recognise the role of failure in learning, whereas those who are motivated by performance goals tend to avoid challenging tasks for fear of failure and lean towards learning strategies such as memorisation that offer short-term gains (Ames 1992). Research by Chavez (2000) into the effects of gender on learner interaction in foreign language classes suggests that there is a tendency for male students to focus on competition (i.e. mastery goals) whereas the female students emphasise co-operation (i.e. performance goals). An analysis of the comments given by the girls and boys seems to support these gender-based differences in goal orientation in that the boys focused primarily on learning English to achieve future goals related to work and study, and although girls left similar comments, they frequently went beyond this narrow focus by mentioning the importance of learning in order to communicate with others, their love of the language and their general desire to improve. The implication of these different goal orientations is that the boys may shy away from activities that they perceive as risky, such as speaking with classmates, which may lead to embarrassment or a sense that they are doing less well than their classmates. Although this is an area in need of further investigation, what is clear is that the tendency for language learning research to ignore gender (Pillar and Pavlenko 2001) could be contributing to these differences going undetected and limiting our knowledge of how to better support all learners in their language development.

Role of assessment in the learning environment

Assessment has multiple functions in education, including the measurement of achievement, public accountability, the provision of feedback to learners and teachers, and it also tells learners what is valued by the school or society and should be paid attention to (Boud 2000). A key component of this new English language initiative is the use of the Cambridge English exams at Primary Year 6 and Secondary Year 4, but for the rest of the students, the decision to take an exam and which exam to take is a choice made in collaboration with their teacher and their parents. This section focuses on learner and

teacher perceptions of Cambridge English exams and their role in the learning environment.

The majority of exam preparation is integrated into regular English classes throughout the year, which teachers indicated was not problematic because the content and focus of the exams is in line with the school's English curriculum, as pointed out by teachers in their interviews. Additionally, Fomento provides students, nearer the exam set date, with extra exam-specific practice, which includes task familiarity activities, as mentioned by the interviewed teachers.

In the questionnaire, the teachers agreed that they are pleased their school is using the Cambridge English exams (95%) and feel confident preparing their students for them. Sixty-five percent of learners said that they like the Cambridge English exams they are preparing for and 90% reported that they believe their students can do well on them. Both teachers and learners agreed that preparing for the exams has had a positive effect on learner language development; in fact, 80% of learners reported that as a result of preparing for their exam, their English has improved. Learners also admitted that they work harder in class when they know they are preparing for their Cambridge English exam (70%).

The exams appear to be positively contributing to learner motivation in that they are providing a clear goal for learners to work towards. However, another aspect of the exams which teachers placed a great deal of value on was their usefulness in supporting the development of learner autonomy. In the interviews, teachers pointed out that the exams raise student awareness and help them identify their strengths and weaknesses, thus helping them become 'more independent learners'. As one teacher put it: 'students start understanding their level and being able to identify where their weaknesses are in order to work on improving in these areas'. Learners tended to agree with their teachers as 84% of them believe that these exams help them identify the areas they need to work on to improve their English. Comments left by some learners in the questionnaire reinforce this perspective:

'I can understand [from the exam] if I'm performing well or I need to improve something which is relevant.' (Female student)

However, there also appear to be gender differences related to this last point. Although both boys and girls had similar responses to the statement in the questionnaire concerning the formative aspect of the exams, the comments left by male students tended to focus more on the exams' usefulness for their future and less on them as a tool to provide feedback, which lends further support to the finding, discussed in the previous section, that they may be more interested in performance goals than mastery ones:

'[Doing well on the exam is important] because I can find a better job.' (Male student)

'[Doing well on the exam is important] because I want to get into a good college.' (Male student)

Discussion

The findings from all data strands suggest that, overall, learners, parents and teachers see value in learning English for purposes such as access to work and higher education and that learners enjoy their English lessons. All stakeholders recognise the role of assessment in supporting

the achievement of their future career and inter-cultural communication goals. Despite the emphasis that parents and learners place on learning English, only 10% of students take additional lessons outside of school, which suggests that both are pleased with the English provision at the schools.

There are, however, gender-related differences in learner attitudes towards lessons and the use of English in the classroom. The data suggests that male students are less positive about their lessons than female students and more likely to report that they do not speak English with classmates, which may be linked to their goal orientation and the difficulty of the lessons. These results should be interpreted cautiously because of the limited number of male students in the sample but is worth further investigation nonetheless in light of recent research on goal orientation and gender.

As teachers play an important role in creating the goal orientation in the class, the next section will focus on their motivation and how this may influence the learning environment.

Teacher motivation and confidence

Within educational psychology, there is an extensive body of research that focuses on student motivation; however, much less research has been done with a focus on teacher motivation (Richardson, Watt and Karabenick 2014) even though it is becoming increasingly recognised that teacher motivation matters (Barber and Mourshed 2007). That is, teachers' particular motivational systems can influence their teaching strategies and job satisfaction, which in turn can influence their students' motivation and performance in distinct ways (Butler 2014, Malmberg 2006). Given the important influence of teacher motivation on learning, this was an area of focus during the teacher interviews and in the questionnaires.

During the interviews with teachers, we investigated their reasons for choosing this profession as this can provide insight into their motivation as teachers. It is important to point out that, in Spain, the type of teacher training received will depend on the educational level the teacher plans to teach. A primary-school teacher must go through a 4-year university programme in education, whereas a secondary-school teacher can choose any subject for their Bachelor's degree and then take a 1-year long Master's degree focusing on teaching in secondary school. In addition, to become a secondary-school English teacher, one must have a degree in English philology or similar. For these reasons, the choice to become a primary-school teacher tends to be more intentional than the choice to become a secondary-school teacher. In fact, secondary-school teachers often take up teaching after having had different work experiences or having considered different professions.

In the case of the Fomento teachers who were interviewed in our study, 40% of them stated that teaching was their first choice. The other 60% had different work experiences before deciding to sign up to this profession. Nevertheless, when asked about their motivation, they tended to indicate intrinsic (i.e. motivated by enjoyment of teaching) and altruistic reasons (i.e. motivated by the desire to help others) for choosing to become teachers.

Despite indications that the teachers were intrinsically and altruistically motivated, further analysis of the data revealed differences in teachers' motivational drivers by school level.

The secondary-school teachers tended more towards intrinsic motivation when asked about their role as a teacher as can be seen from the following comments:

'Transmit/communicate content and show students that "English is life" and learning English is good for them'. (Male teacher)

'Transmit my love for the language'. (Female teacher)

The primary-school teachers, on the other hand, showed more altruistic motivational patterns:

'It is important to bring out what is inside the child. Educate students as persons'. (Female teacher)

'She loves children because everything you say to them matters'. (Female teacher)

'He considers education essential for the well-being of society'. (Male teacher)

'It is important to be an example, give them confidence, be an assessor for the children'. (Male teacher)

The relationship between motivation and job satisfaction, quality of education and engagement has been extensively researched, with agreement that there is a strong link between good teaching and an intrinsic and altruistic motivational orientation (Day 2006, Malmberg 2006, Watt and Richardson 2008). When teachers are intrinsically motivated, student learning improves because students benefit from observing their teachers' engagement in the subject as well as their willingness to keep updated in the field through continuous teacher professional development. Students are learning 'by example' and are inspired to learn by their teachers' example rather than being motivated by rewards and punishments. This notion was revealed quite clearly during the interviews as 70% of teachers described themselves as a 'role model'. When teachers have an altruistic motivation, they tend to establish positive interpersonal relationships with their students based on respect and a true interest in their development. Again, the Fomento teachers emphasised in the interviews the positive relationships they try to foster with their students and all of them mentioned how much they like their students. Teachers with this motivational orientation tend to also relate learning within the classroom to real life, which requires not only a good knowledge of their subject, but also a real interest in matching instruction to students' motivations (Fried 1995). The classroom climate created improves student confidence and makes true collaboration possible, which leads to learners' willingness to take the language learning risks associated with improved outcomes. It is not surprising that the majority of Fomento teachers talked about the importance of supporting and developing students' linguistic self-confidence during the interviews, which was also confirmed in the questionnaire results with 82% of teachers agreeing that they believe the majority of their students are capable of learning English. This finding mirrors the response by learners to a similar question as 78% of them strongly agreed that they also feel confident in their ability to learn English, which may be attributable to some extent to their teachers' beliefs in their abilities.

The Fomento teachers were also given statements designed to tap into their confidence, which is linked to teacher motivation in that confident teachers are more likely to persist in the profession and try to find solutions to the problems

they face in the classroom rather than ignore or avoid them. We found that 95% of them agreed that they like teaching, feel confident teaching English and feel confident in their ability to plan appropriate English lessons for their students that are also in line with the curriculum. The teachers are slightly less confident in planning differentiated activities for their learners (84%) which was an area mentioned by one teacher as a possible target for further training. It would appear from these responses that the teachers are motivated professionals who feel capable of and are interested in helping their students learn.

Another important aspect to take into account as evidence of teachers' intrinsic and altruistic teaching motivation is their willingness to improve their teaching. They reported in the questionnaire that they collaborate and talk to each other regularly in order to support improved learning. For example, 53% reported talking to other teachers almost daily about how to improve teaching, 58% reported they discuss their class's progress with colleagues almost daily while 47% said they discuss their lesson plans almost daily with other teachers. One can conclude that these regular discussions are reflective of a positive school climate where teachers feel comfortable asking for 'one another's support and aid' and it also indicates that the teachers have a certain level of autonomy within their department to manage the teaching and learning process.

The teachers also expressed an interest in further professional development, which is an indication that they are intrinsically motivated as they both recognise the need and have a desire for improvement. They would like to receive more training in teaching methodology and more opportunities to visit other schools in order to observe classes and discuss teaching practices with a wider range of teachers. Although classroom observations are not common in Spain (OECD 2013) because they are sometimes viewed as a punitive measure for underperforming teachers, several Fomento teachers acknowledged their value in supporting professional development and expressed an interest in having an opportunity to observe classes not only in other schools but also in their own school. However, as a male teacher points out, even though 'the administrators would be open to implementing observations [he is] not sure how other teachers would feel about it'. Having opportunities to receive feedback on one's teaching performance is an important aspect in improving the quality of education and also supports teacher motivation (OECD 2013) and thus should be a focus of any future professional development programme.

Teacher motivation and the role of assessment

As mentioned previously, teachers are pleased with the introduction of the Cambridge English exams and feel that they not only motivate students but also help support learner autonomy. Although the teachers all agreed that the tests are well designed and test an appropriate range of knowledge and skills for their students, there were two teachers from Las Tablas who expressed concerns about the use of these exams. One primary-school teacher wondered whether too much time is spent on exam preparation and one secondary-school teacher wondered about the extent to which school management was using the exam results to evaluate his

teaching. As the teacher explained, 'I don't know the effect of the exam results on administrators, which directly or indirectly influences my teaching'. In contrast, another Las Tablas teacher felt that the exams actually provide professional feedback 'for how you are doing as a teacher'.

Discussion

The questionnaire and interview data suggest that the Fomento teachers are motivated teachers and enjoy teaching English. They have a clear thirst for more training opportunities and appear willing to try new approaches to teaching and learning. The Cambridge English exams are viewed positively and perceived as supporting the learning process. However, there is some concern over the use of student test scores and the extent to which they are being used to evaluate instructional quality. Although learner test score data may be used as part of a varied and comprehensive teacher evaluation process, it should not be the only component. Teachers need to be aware of how they are evaluated and the role learners' test scores have in that process. This will reduce any underlying concern that teachers may have and reduce any negative impact the tests may have on teacher motivation.

Parental involvement and engagement

As mentioned previously, Fomento emphasises the role of parents in education. Research indicates that parental engagement is strongly associated with learner attainment (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler 1995). In addition, parents' attitudes and perceptions of education and language learning can have a significant impact on their children's views (Bartram 2006a). Consequently, parents' involvement and attitudes towards the English language initiative and the Cambridge English exams was an important focus of the questionnaires and is explained in this section. As parents tend to have children in both schools, they not only have insight into the characteristics of both schools, but also help ensure that student background variables are to some extent controlled for in the current research. That is, the socio-economic factors are stable across the two schools, making differences in the data attributable to other variables.

The parents in this study appear to be highly engaged as 92% reported that they regularly attend the school to participate in activities or to talk to their child's teacher. Nearly 50% of parents said that they help their children very often with their English homework, which is possible because many of them can speak English either very well or moderately well (76%). These findings were echoed by the teachers, who felt that parents were active participants in their children's education.

Parents' attitudes towards the initiative

When parents' attitudes towards the English language initiative were elicited, the majority of comments were very positive about the school, the teachers and the English programme. The following two comments are reflective of their views:

'I am very satisfied with the English programme and teaching at the school. My son has a high level without resorting to any kind of additional support.'

'I value a lot the importance of learning English. And what I value most of all has been my son's motivation this year from his teacher so he likes the language, this will help him a lot in a short-term to want to keep learning.'

Several parents did, however, make comments that suggest that they do not fully understand the schools' approach to English instruction:

'In general I don't quite understand the method used and so far I had the impression that it didn't work but I have to admit that this year (5th year of primary education my daughter and 4th year my son) I have noticed that my two children are able to understand and speak in English.'

'I have no clue of what my son does in English.'

'I would like to be better informed about the method that the school uses, and what exactly they do in class...'

It would appear that despite a very comprehensive process to engage with parents, some aspects of the English programme, such as the teaching methodology, are proving more challenging to disseminate.

Many other comments left by parents were particularly focused on the need to improve their children's speaking skills and increase the number of classes taught through English. Some of these comments seemed to contradict the questionnaire findings. Even though 84% of parents think that their child is making good progress in English and 74% agree that their child's teacher has a good level of English, many of them indicated that they would like more native English-speaking teachers in the school. Typical examples of these comments are:

'English lessons should be taught by native speakers not by Spanish people.'

'It is not acceptable that out of the three subjects that they are taught in English, none of them is taught by a native teacher.'

'The English level teaching at school I think is acceptable, but I think that it could be greatly improved by incorporating more native teachers to every year.'

Parents appear to be influenced by the 'native-speaker fallacy'. That is, there is a common, yet unsupported, perception that native English-speaker teachers are somehow better English teachers than their non-native counterparts. More and more research seems to indicate that there are important advantages to having a non-native English-speaking teacher in these contexts (Ma 2012). Some of these advantages include the ability of a teacher to anticipate linguistic problems when they share the learners' first language (L1), and non-native teachers tend to have more language awareness than native speakers because they have gone through the language learning process themselves, which can improve instructional effectiveness (Ma 2012). Increasingly it is also being recognised that the use of the L1 in language classrooms can be facilitative if used purposefully (Cummins 2007).

Parents' attitudes towards the exam

Nearly 95% of parents reported that they understand why the school introduced Cambridge English tests and 92% said that they are pleased with this decision. However, several parents seemed to feel that the school policy concerning exam registration did not take full advantage of the exams' motivational properties as the following comment illustrates:

'For me the great usefulness of the Cambridge exam is that it makes official the student's language level. Apart from that, for me the most important thing is that my son learns English and that's why I value the fact that the school is bilingual. I would like that students with a higher level could sit the right exam according to their level and not just the level established for their age and year. In the case of my daughter, she passed the PET exam when she could have most probably sat the next level, First (motivation for the student).'

Some parents seem to believe that the school is putting students forward for an exam based on the grade or age of the student rather than their English language ability. In fact, teachers make recommendations on which exam a child should take based on their language ability and although some recommendations may be made cautiously to ensure that learners are able to succeed and have a positive exam experience, teachers encourage students to challenge themselves and take the appropriate exam for their level. More information may need to be provided to parents concerning this issue as it may be that they do not fully understand the exam policy and also may have unrealistic expectations for their children when it comes to which exam is most appropriate for them.

Another issue raised by parents and teachers related to the timing of results. Because many students take the exams in May and June, the results may not be available until after school has finished for the year. Teachers point out that this makes it difficult to provide feedback to learners about their performance because they probably will not be teaching these same students in the following academic year. As one teacher explained, even if you try to talk to students about their exam results from the previous academic year, 'a 13-year-old boy doesn't remember what he did back in June and doesn't care'. A few parents complained that when they receive their child's test score, they do not necessarily know what it means or how to interpret the Statement of Results, which includes a profile of performance by skill (e.g. an indication of how well the candidate did on each skill). Parents may need additional support and information regarding test scores and their interpretation.

Discussion

Fomento parents demonstrate high levels of engagement in their children's education. Their children's success at learning English is clearly of great importance to them. Although they help their children with their homework and attend school events, the data seems to suggest that they still lack a full understanding of the methodological approach used to teach English in the schools, the exam policy and how to interpret exam scores. This may be resulting in some misconceptions. A more varied approach to disseminating information about these issues may be needed. Parents may be able to more effectively help their children succeed if they have a better understanding of each of these issues. In addition, parents may need to be provided with research concerning the issue of native English teachers and non-native teachers so that they are less pre-occupied with the number of native English-speaking teachers in the school and place more value on what the Spanish teachers can offer in terms of English language instruction.

Conclusion

This preliminary analysis of the Fomento data suggests that learners are motivated to learn English and value learning it because of its role in employment, education and establishing relationships with others. These attitudes appear to be reinforced and aided by parents who also value English and have a good knowledge of the language themselves. Teachers appear to be highly motivated, confident and interested in improving their teaching practice. All stakeholders are pleased with the introduction of Cambridge English exams. Parents appreciate the external reference that the Cambridge English exams provide, which appears to reassure them that their children are moving towards a high level of English language proficiency. Teachers and learners value the role the exams play in motivating learning and in supporting learner autonomy; however, it may be that learners in the boys' school are too focused on the extrinsic value of the exams rather than their formative dimension.

Despite these positive findings, there are some areas that are in need of further investigation or attention. The male students appear to be somewhat less willing to speak in class and have a slightly less positive attitude towards their English lessons. It may be necessary to better understand this situation and determine whether this is affecting their English attainment. Similarly, although the teachers have worked hard to help support weaker students in their classes, this may be coming to the detriment of the stronger learners, who may not be challenged enough during classes. It is important to ensure that all learners have opportunities to be pushed beyond their current ability level.

Finally, parents appear to need more information about the English language programme and teaching methodology while teachers need to be reassured about the use of the exam results. Better dissemination of information may help resolve misunderstandings that both stakeholder groups may have and help in improving parents' perceptions of the learning that is taking place.

The next phase of the project will focus on investigating questionnaire responses and test data to determine if there are particular affective variables that are associated with attainment. This study has also raised questions about the role of gender in learning and teaching, which may be an important area for future investigation.

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Iterative impact studies of Progetto Lingue 2000

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Introduction

In 1999, the Italian government initiated *Progetto Lingue 2000* (Languages Project 2000 (*PL2000*)), a major educational reform project to raise the level of foreign language learning and teaching across primary and secondary schools in Italy. In 2001, two years into the initiative, Cambridge English Language Assessment (hereafter referred to as Cambridge English and formerly known as Cambridge ESOL), with the support of the Italian Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca (Ministry of Education; hereafter referred to as MIUR), initiated an impact study to determine the extent to which *PL2000* objectives were being met. A decade later, Cambridge English retraced the steps of the original study to investigate the longer-term impacts of *PL2000*. This article provides an overview of these studies to track the development of *PL2000* and its impact over time on foreign language learning, teaching and assessment in Italy.

The Progetto Lingue 2000 initiative

With the growing awareness of the importance of multilingualism and modern language learning in Europe at the turn of the 21st century, MIUR sought to introduce innovation in key aspects of English, French, German and Spanish learning in schools. *PL2000*'s key aim was to improve foreign language learning outcomes, especially communicative language competences, in all grades of the school system. Planned *PL2000* interventions included: the establishment of small learning groups of students at a similar proficiency level; course provision in short learning modules (20–30 hours); an emphasis on using new technologies to support individualised language learning; improved access to in-service teacher training, and the use of internationally recognised external assessment in order to help monitor the progress and quality of the programme as well as provide learners with a language certificate which has currency within

and beyond Italy. The external certification in the four foreign languages offered through a funding agreement between MIUR and the officially recognised foreign exam boards including Cambridge English meant that, for the first time, learner achievement was formally aligned to specific levels of language competence as defined by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, Council of Europe 2001).

The PL2000 Impact Study (PLIS) Phase 1

Given the iterative approach eventually adopted to the impact study of *PL2000*, a major project with long-term educational reform objectives, the first phase of the study was carried out by Cambridge English in 2001–02. This PLIS Phase 1 studied the actions, attitudes and views of teachers, students, school heads, parents and others affected by *PL2000*. The research questions were:

1. What are the impacts of *PL2000* on language teaching and assessment?
2. What is the impact of changes in teaching and assessment on student and teacher performance and attitudes?
3. What is the impact of *PL2000* on heads of schools and on professional support for teachers?

PLIS data were collected on visits between March 2001 and April 2002 to seven case-study schools, in Novara (northern Italy), Rome (central) and Taranto (in the south) through questionnaires (students: N=224; teachers: N=11), classroom observations (N=13) and video-recorded interviews, involving 33 teachers, 11 heads of schools and 18 parents.

Phase 1 data indicated that *PL2000* was having positive impacts. Teachers were attempting more communicative approaches to language teaching with more information technology integrated into lessons. The introduction of external certification covering all CEFR levels, such as Cambridge English exams, was viewed positively by stakeholder groups (i.e. learners, teachers, school heads, parents). The findings suggested that the introduction of Cambridge English exams motivated students and also influenced the pedagogy and materials used by teachers. The impact study also suggested, however, that improvement was needed in the planning and preparation of lessons, in strategies to create the right balance between teaching for fluency, appropriacy and accuracy, and in increasing opportunities for language learning and practice in and beyond the classroom. A full account of the first PLIS study can be found in Hawkey (2006).

The PLIS Phase 2 Revisit

Cambridge English recognised the importance of researching the developments associated with the *PL2000* initiative over time through a follow-up study given that the *Progetto* was introduced to encourage *long-term* systemic changes in language education in Italy. Therefore in 2012–13, the PLIS researchers went back to Italy to conduct the *PL2000* Impact Study Revisit (PLISR) in order to see how language education

had evolved over a decade in response to the *PL2000* policy. The remainder of this article describes the PLISR methodology, methods and findings, which are inextricably linked to the PLIS research, but which highlight the longer-term impacts of *PL2000* in Italy. A full account of the PLISR study can be found in Hawkey and Ellis (2014).

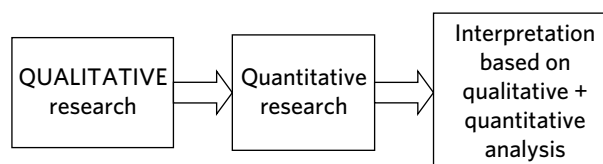
Methodology

As Saville (2012:6) points out, 'there is nearly always a fundamental need to collect comparative data, and therefore to develop research designs which can be carried out in several phases over an extended period of time or replicated in several different contexts.' Following up on the original impact study, PLISR sought to understand the longer-term impacts of *PL2000* through these research questions:

1. What are the longer-term impacts of *PL2000* on language teaching pedagogy, materials, media/technology and assessment?
2. What is the longer-term impact of changes identified in research question 1 on student and teacher performance and attitudes?
3. What is the longer-term impact of *PL2000* on heads of schools and on professional support for teachers?

As seen in Figure 1 below, PLISR used the two-stage sequential, exploratory mixed methods design (Creswell and Plano Clark 2011:69) of the current Cambridge English 'impact toolkit' (Saville 2012). In this approach, interview data, for example, are collected and analysed qualitatively as part of a first stage, to be followed, in a second stage, by the design and analysis of questionnaires informed by the interview data.

Figure 1: Sequential exploratory mixed methods design (Creswell and Plano Clark 2011)



An added element in the full report of the revisit study was to document practical arrangements and procedures of the study in order to inform future studies (Hawkey 2014).

Data collection and analysis

A key feature of PLISR was the fact that the sample population consisted of the same or similar schools as in PLIS (i.e. schools at primary and secondary levels in Novara, Rome and Taranto) and involved parallel groups of stakeholders: learners, teachers, parents, school heads and relevant officials. The data collection instrumentation from the first study informed that of the revisit study, with modifications to take into account the findings of the first study and changes in the field of language education. The instruments included a semi-structured interview guide, described by Hoepfl (1997:52) as 'a list of questions or general topics that the interviewer wants to explore during each interview', a classroom observation form

developed for PLIS, and follow-up questionnaires used on a larger sample of participants at a broader selection of schools to validate key areas of data collected through the original PLISR interviews and classroom observations (see below). The data collection features shared between PLIS and PLISR increased the researchers' ability to trace and explain change over time.

The qualitative interview and classroom observation data was collected during pre-arranged school visits. The researchers observed classes and interviewed key stakeholders who had formally agreed to participate. The data was documented in a variety of ways using multi-camera video-recording equipment for the classroom observations or audio-recording or lesson notes where video was not possible (see Table 1); single or double camera video for interviews. Signed participant permissions were obtained and ethical guidelines followed at each stage of the research.

The 65 PLISR recorded episodes for data analysis included:

- 18 English classroom lessons, lasting a total of 7 hours 40 minutes (460 minutes); four at primary, seven at middle school and seven at secondary schools; involving 382 students and 23 teachers
- 47 interviews involving 65 interviewees, nine school heads, 34 teachers, eight ex-students, 10 parents, with a total interview time of 822 minutes (13 hours 42 minutes).

Table 1: Recording modes and language medium of the PLISR episodes

Impact episodes	Recording modes			
	Total	Video	Audio	Notes
Total impact data, collections	65	56	5	4
In English	55	49	3	3
In Italian	10	6	3	1

The PLISR qualitative data was analysed according to *themes* or *categories* following procedures outlined by Folkestad (2008:5), namely:

1. Read the first unit of data.
2. Read the second unit.
3. Proceed in this fashion until all units have been assigned to categories.
4. Develop category titles or descriptive sentences or both that distinguish each category.

The topics discussed were now labelled and colour-coded in the written versions of the interviews and classroom observation summaries. The numbers of references to each in parentheses in the list below indicate the prominence of the topics in the PLISR interview data collection episodes.

1. Communicative (304) and less communicative (95) approaches to English language teaching.
2. Cambridge English exam approaches, services and influences (245).
3. Computer-based and other technological approaches to ELT (119).
4. Teacher training and support (81).
5. Language textbooks (74).

6. Changing sociolinguistic context in Italy (60).
7. Student-teacher relations (55).
8. Attitudes and influences of parents (53).
9. Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) (31), i.e. teaching subjects, such as history, geography and science, through a foreign language.

The themes listed above are relevant to the areas of potential language education development targeted by the *PL2000*.

Unlike the original PLIS (Hawkey 2002) in which the collection, analysis and reporting of qualitative and quantitative data was simultaneous, the 2012-13 PLISR was designed explicitly according to the two-stage sequential, exploratory mixed methods design (see Figure 1). The qualitative interview and classroom observation data were collected and analysed as *a first stage* of the study, followed, in the second stage, by the design and analysis of questionnaires informed by, and to validate, key evidence emerging from the interview and classroom data. The questionnaires, which focused on: English language background/experiences and future plans; English language learning classroom activities; English language learning progress, attitudes, uses; and future study and work plans, were administered online at a larger number of Italian schools than covered by the PLISR school visits (i.e. across 14 regions). This process of data triangulation is aimed at 'enhancement of validity and trustworthiness' (Glesne and Peshkin 1992).

Key issues emerging from the qualitative and quantitative evidence gathered and analysed by the PLISR are discussed in the next section, organised by the area expected to be impacted by the *PL2000* initiative.

Teaching and learning practices

One of the objectives of *PL2000* was 'to develop communicative competence in listening, spoken production and spoken interaction appropriate to the learners' age . . . and develop standards for language teaching linked to the CEFR' (Langé 2013). In the original PLIS study, communicative approaches to teaching English had been quite strongly in evidence. In the 2012-13 PLISR, communicative and less communicative approaches to language teaching were the most recurrent theme in the PLISR data.

In the teacher questionnaire responses (N=355), a selection of potentially communicative teaching-learning activities were claimed as being quite prominent in the classes of the teachers who completed the questionnaire (see Table 2).

These quantitative findings were in line with the PLISR interview data as primary and secondary-school teachers often spoke about communicative language teaching approaches. At primary level the emphasis was on pupils' activity in and for the target language in class; at secondary level, communicative language teaching tended to involve task-based approaches and activities to develop particular language micro-skills. Both these tendencies were also seen in some of the PLISR observed lessons.

Not all the classroom teaching observed could be generalised under a 'communicative' label, however. The PLISR

Table 2: Questionnaire responses (% of teachers) showing potentially communicative classroom activities

Activity in class	Frequently	Quite often	Sometimes	Never	Sum of Frequently + Quite often
Discussions or conversations in small groups	29%	33%	34%	5%	62%
Discussions or conversations with a partner	32%	38%	29%	2%	70%
Discussions for the whole class	49%	32%	17%	3%	81%
Students doing role plays (<i>giochi di ruolo</i>)	15%	36%	41%	9%	51%
Students writing notes	29%	45%	24%	3%	74%
Students writing letters or compositions	26%	44%	30%	1%	70%

*Note: Percentage figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Table 3: Prominence of teachers' English lesson activities which would not normally be seen as 'communicative'

Activity in class	Frequently	Quite often	Sometimes	Never	Sum of Frequently + Quite often
Students doing grammar exercises	46%	39%	14%	1%	86%
Students explaining the meaning of words in Italian	16%	33%	41%	11%	49%
Students reading aloud in English	42%	39%	17%	1%	81%
Teacher talking to the whole class	67%	27%	6%	1%	94%

*Note: Percentage figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

teacher questionnaire responses (see Table 3) also show a number of lesson activities which would not normally in themselves be seen as 'communicative'.

Despite this, frequent examples of interesting and effective communicative learning activities were evident throughout the study, in the classrooms observed and in the participant interview discussions. These activities were often enhanced by good teacher–student relations. The many PLISR conversations with English teachers at the Italian schools sampled reinforced the view that learner–teacher relations were tending to become closer, which was helped, as one teacher suggested, by greater ability and willingness on the part of students to use more English in their interactions outside school.

There seems little doubt that the language-as-communication message of *PL2000* has been received and absorbed into teaching practice more strongly over time although teachers' efforts in this area have not always been fully achieved.

Resources and materials

The *PL2000* impact areas of textbooks and computer and other technology-based approaches in English language teaching (ELT) were also shown as significant. The 'strengthened use of new technologies' in order to facilitate individualisation of

learning and increase motivation was an explicit aim of *PL2000* and thus a target area for the impact study.

Table 4 shows teachers' estimates of the frequency with which a range of technology-related activities takes place in their classroom. When the percentages of 'frequently' and 'quite often' responses are combined, it is evident that technology-related activities are often carried out, according to the surveyed teachers' reports. Note the combination of internet and other digital resources involved. The tendencies indicated in the questionnaire responses here broadly echoed the PLISR interview and classroom observation findings (where the topic was rated as third most frequent).

It was clear from the classroom observations, however, that it is not in itself the textbook or the communication technology focus of a lesson that determines its motivational strength, but rather the way these inputs are handled by the teacher. What does seem to be the case from PLISR evidence is that influences from *PL2000* continue to motivate language teachers, and through them their students, to make better use of the improving paper-based, online and other digital language learning materials available.

The changing sociolinguistic context in Italy

A common view expressed by stakeholders during the PLISR interviews was that it is because of the increasing importance

Table 4: Technology-related activities reported in the PLISR teacher questionnaire

Activity	Frequently	Quite often	Sometimes	Never	Sum of Frequently + Quite often
Watching English videos in class	15%	36%	45%	5%	50%
Using the internet in class for homework	13%	30%	49%	8%	44%
Using emails in English	9%	20%	46%	25%	29%
Using an interactive whiteboard	18%	26%	34%	22%	44%
Using the computer lab in your English studies	12%	26%	38%	23%	39%
Using exercises from digital version of English textbook(s)	15%	28%	39%	19%	42%

*Note: Percentage figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

of English in the world that changes in English language learning, teaching and assessment are taking place in Italy. In the words of a mother with a son wishing to enter university: 'Today without English language, you can't find a job. It's the first language in the world for all people to study for work'. It is thus not surprising that parents valued *PL2000* ideas highly enough to be willing to pay for initiatives such as external language assessments, which were originally government sponsored, but are no longer.

The growth of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is one of the themes in the PLISR data. The importance of this methodology for English language development (and of English teachers) was a key topic which generated a lot of discussion at some of the PLISR interviews.

Attitudes towards international exams

The use of external exam certification aligned to the CEFR for learners on *PL2000* programmes also emerged as a major impact of the Project. The high number of mentions in the PLISR data of Cambridge English exam approaches, services and influences indicates the continued importance of this aspect of *PL2000*. The 'added value' of international certificates such as those awarded for successfully passing Cambridge English exams was seen by PLISR participants as important. Over the past decade, in fact, there has been a significant increase in the number of school-aged candidates taking external examinations, including those provided by Cambridge English despite the financial crisis. In addition, the number of learners who have achieved CEFR Levels B2-C2 on Cambridge English exams has trebled during this same period. The increase in candidature, together with the rise in standards of English attained, are demonstrable outcomes of the positive impact of the introduction of external certification and a legacy of *PL2000* (Hawkey 2014).

Teacher training and support

Teacher in-service training was prominent in the discussions at PLISR schools even though recent financial difficulties in Italy have led to significantly reduced spending on it. The PLISR interviews revealed examples of English language teachers setting up their own ELT meetings, team teaching, sharing materials/lesson plans, attending available in-service meetings and taking advantage of support material/workshops offered by English language teaching or assessment organisations.

Gisella Langé, Foreign Languages Inspector and Special Advisor at MIUR, reminds us that *PL2000* 'is still playing a leading role in the learning and teaching of modern languages in Italy thanks to its great impact on policy makers, administrators, head teachers, trainers, teachers, researchers, textbook writers, publishers, test developers, including learners' and that it provides 'professional development support for teachers' through its initiatives (Langé 2013).

Conclusion

The findings of the PLIS and PLISR impact studies demonstrate a range of positive impacts of *PL2000* on language education in Italy. The two studies also demonstrate the advantage of taking an iterative approach to impact research which allows researchers to identify and analyse such impacts, taking into account changes in circumstances over time. The relatively small scale of the impact study may be considered a limitation of the PLISR, although the qualitative data obtained, 68 episodes of video- and audio-recorded data producing a 40,000-word/113-page analysis, are supported by more *quantitative* questionnaire data collected to help validate the qualitative interview and observation data.

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An investigation into the impact of a workplace English language programme in Egypt

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Introduction

Within the long-term objectives of English language reform in higher education (HE) institutes across Egypt and increasing employability in the global job market, the Center for Advancement of Post-Graduate Studies and Research, Cairo University (CAPSCU), Cambridge English Language Assessment and the British Council (Egypt) implemented a multi-phase upskilling programme targeting 1,000 students and 100 teachers. The programme aimed at the following: enhancing the workplace language skills of socially disadvantaged undergraduates, developing teachers' pedagogical knowledge and application, providing both students and teachers with a competitive edge in the job markets through internationally recognised certification and the introduction of 21st century skills such as digital-age literacy and effective communication in HE, and, lastly, the integration of international standards for teaching, learning and assessment within the local context. This paper reports on a mixed methods research study aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of this initiative and its impact at the micro and macro levels. The research focused on language progression, learner autonomy, motivation towards digital learning and assessment, improvements in pedagogical knowledge and teaching practices. Standardized assessment, attitudinal and perceptions surveys and observational data were used to investigate the above. The findings suggested a positive impact of the upskilling programme, illustrated how international collaborations can provide the necessary skills for today's global job market and highlighted areas for consideration for upscaling the initiative.

Context

Higher education in Egypt witnessed a profound transformation in 1959 with the constitutional amendment mandating education as a basic right for all Egyptians. The 'Free for All' education resulted in an expansion of the number of state universities from four in the 1950s to 19 in 2014, currently enrolling over 2 million students. However, this expansion was not accompanied with a corresponding development that would equip the students with the skills needed in increasingly competitive local and global job markets. Several projects, initiatives and plans thus emerged in an attempt to address the different factors leading to unemployment. One of these initiatives is Pathways to Higher Education, Egypt (PHE-EG) – a scholarship programme aimed at enhancing the soft skills of socially disadvantaged

undergraduates and widening their employment opportunities (for detailed information on PHE-EG, see pathways-egypt.com, Said and Kaseb 2013). PHE-EG is funded by Ford Foundation and managed by the Center for Advancement of Post Graduate Studies, Cairo University (CAPSCU).

One of the soft skills believed to greatly sharpen an individual's competitive edge in the tough employment market is that of English language ability. Euromonitor International's consumer perception analysis reveals that '67% of Egyptian employees believe English is the most important language for doing international business. Moreover, the average salary gap between non-English speakers and English speakers is around 70–80% in Egypt' (see Ramaswami, Sarraf and Haydon 2012:124). Similarly, an argument has been made that 'professionals cannot take their place in a knowledge economy if they lack sophisticated spoken and written English skills. Within professions such as medicine, nursing, teaching, accountancy and engineering, high level English ability is viewed as mandatory' (Hawthorne 2007:9). It was in response to this growing need for English language skills that in 2009, CAPSCU, through its PHE-EG administrative arm, issued a call for proposals to deliver an English Language component as part of its soft skills programme focusing on the improvement of English language teaching and learning. The upskilling programme was funded by Ford Foundation through CAPSCU and delivered by Cambridge English Language Assessment as the main contractor and British Council–Egypt as the subcontractor. The latter was tasked with the delivery of the Training of Trainers (TOT) course and the mentoring programme. The programme was divided into three iterations and took place between December 2010 and May 2014.

The Cambridge English Upskilling Programme

The goals of the Cambridge English Upskilling Programme (CEP) were to enhance the workplace language skills of approximately 1,000 undergraduates and recent graduates so that they could have better career opportunities and to enhance the teaching methodology of 100 teachers, with focus on pre-service and inexperienced ones. Key to the successful implementation of the programme was not just the realisation of the goals but also the:

- (a) Utilisation of international standards for teaching, learning and assessment, hence the use of the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR, Council of Europe 2001) as a learning ladder and target setter.
- (b) Introduction of 21st century skills such as digital-age literacy, effective communication, inventive thinking, and high productivity. This was realised through the use of

- a blended learning course (BLC) for students, the TOT course and teacher observation/mentoring schedules.
- (c) Attainment of an internationally recognised certification which acts as capability evidence in the local, regional and international job market. This was realized through the attainment of a Cambridge English workplace certificate known as BULATS (Business Language Testing Service) and the Cambridge English *Teaching Knowledge Test* (TKT) certificate. For information on these qualifications, see: www.cambridgeenglish.org/exams-and-qualifications/TKT and www.bulats.org.
- (d) Potential for mainstreaming the initiative to reform English language provision in higher education institutions nationwide and supporting a standards-based model that can be embraced on a national level by adopting the CEFR as the underlying framework of the initiative.

The impact of the upskilling programme and areas for improvement were researched through a mixed methods design study.

Investigation points

In order to examine the effectiveness of the CEP on PHE-EG English language provision and to investigate factors which may lead to mainstreaming of the initiative, the following three broad research questions were formulated:

1. What is the impact of the CEP on participating teachers?
2. What is the impact of the CEP on participating students?
3. What are the factors which need to be considered for mainstreaming the initiative?

The next sections provide details of the research sample and the methods used for addressing the above research questions.

Methodology

Research sample and selection procedures

The participant sample represented 12 out of the 23 state universities involved in PHE-EG programmes. The 12 universities covered different regions across Egypt.

A total of 1,006 students completed the CEP. In order to ensure accurate and fair selection of student participants as well as guarantee their commitment, a set of standard procedures for all PHE-EG programmes were first employed (e.g. attending an interview, submission of essays). This was followed by the administration of the Cambridge English Placement Test (CEPT), which was used for selecting students at the target language ability for this specific English language programme. PHE-EG selected students who achieved CEFR A2 level.

The majority of students (79%) were aged between 20 and 22. Gender distribution was approximately equal (males=49% and females= 51%). Most students were from Tanta, Minia, Beni-Suef and Fayoum universities. The largest percentage of students was enrolled at faculties of Commerce

(28%), Arts (20%) and Education (19%). Most students were in their fourth year of studies (39%) or had already graduated (27%). This implies that students were likely to be seeking employment or further education and as such, were in a better position to evaluate the extent to which the BLC and the BULATS certificate can have an impact on their future employment and education prospects.

A total of 102 teachers participated in the CEP. Teacher selection followed a two-stage process. Firstly, potential applicants were interviewed and scored against four criteria (linguistic competency, motivation, ability to deal with difficult situations and mixed-ability classes, and willingness to train for PHE-EG after finishing the course) using a 5-point Likert scale. Secondly, those who were shortlisted and attended the TOT were then given *TKT* as the end-of-course assessment. Based on their *TKT* results, they were selected to teach on the programme.

The majority of teachers fell in the 31–50 age range, were PhD holders and had more than 15 years of English teaching experience. There were 70 female and 32 male teachers. Most trainers also reported having a range of teaching qualifications and certificates.

Research design and methodology

A mixed methods research design (Creswell and Plano Clark 2011) was adopted for this study, where both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. The former consisted of score data from external assessments and attitudinal/perception surveys whereas the latter comprised of document review of teacher observation reports as well as open-ended commentary on surveys. Table 1 overleaf summarises the types and sources of data collected for investigating the impact of the CEPT on teachers and students.

Surveys were designed to elicit student and teacher views on the upskilling programme and were administered at the end of each iteration of the CEP. For students, the surveys focused on the impact of the placement test, blended learning course and workplace certification on English language learning, motivation, confidence in using English, attitudes towards independent learning, and future professional opportunities (28 questions). The teacher surveys focused on the impact of the TOT and *TKT* on changes in teaching practices, attitudes towards blended learning and professional development opportunities (21 questions). Teachers were also asked to evaluate the language learning progress of students as a further source of evidence for triangulation against score data and students' self-assessments of their own progress.

Survey items were adapted from the Cambridge English Language Assessment 'impact toolkit' and were further modified for the specific local context with input from teams in Egypt and the UK. Expert judgement was used in making further amendments to the surveys prior to implementation. Close-ended questions/statements were positively worded on a 5-point Likert scale. Open-ended questions and comment boxes were also included. The surveys were created with SurveyMonkey (online) and were in English.

Using a 'convergent parallel design' (see Figure 1) each strand of data analysis was completed independently. However, in answering the study's overarching research

Table 1: Overview of key investigative points and data type/sources

Areas of focus	Data type	Data source
Impact on teachers (e.g. in terms of changes in teaching practices, teacher evaluation, perspectives on blended learning approaches)	Quantitative Qualitative	1. Reports and observations by master trainers 2. <i>TKT</i> test score data 3. Teacher surveys 4. Student evaluations of teachers (in student surveys)
Impact on students (e.g. in terms of language progression, attitude towards English language learning and assessment, motivation, confidence and independent learning)	Quantitative Qualitative	1. Test score data (CEPT and BULATS) 2. Teacher evaluations of student progress (in teacher surveys) 3. Student surveys

questions, the findings from the two strands of analyses were merged. This approach enabled us to build a rich picture and the triangulation of information derived from multiple data sources enhanced our confidence in the findings (see Greene, Caracelli and Graham (1989) for a discussion on reasons for mixing methods).

Focus on teachers: Key findings and recommendations

Findings from four sources of data are brought together to evaluate the extent to which the programme had an impact on the enhancement of teachers' pedagogic knowledge and skills, their ability to apply acquired knowledge in practice, attitudes towards teaching and learning, and professional development. These sources include score data, classroom observation

data, teacher self-evaluation data and student evaluation of their teachers.

Score data from international assessment showed that teachers performed well on the assessment test with 90% achieving performance Bands 3 and 4 on *TKT*. The strongest performance was observed for Module 2 (lesson planning) on the basis of the percentage of teachers achieving Band 4, while the weakest performance was observed for Module 3 (classroom management) with performance on Module 1 (background to language teaching) falling in between (see Figure 2).

Classroom observation data revealed varying strengths in practical application. Possible areas for improvement were listed as decreasing teacher talking time, increasing paired interactions, varying the pace of the class and including more engaging materials. The following is an example of a typical comment from the observers:

Figure 1: Convergent parallel design procedural diagram (Adapted from Creswell and Plano Clark 2011:118)

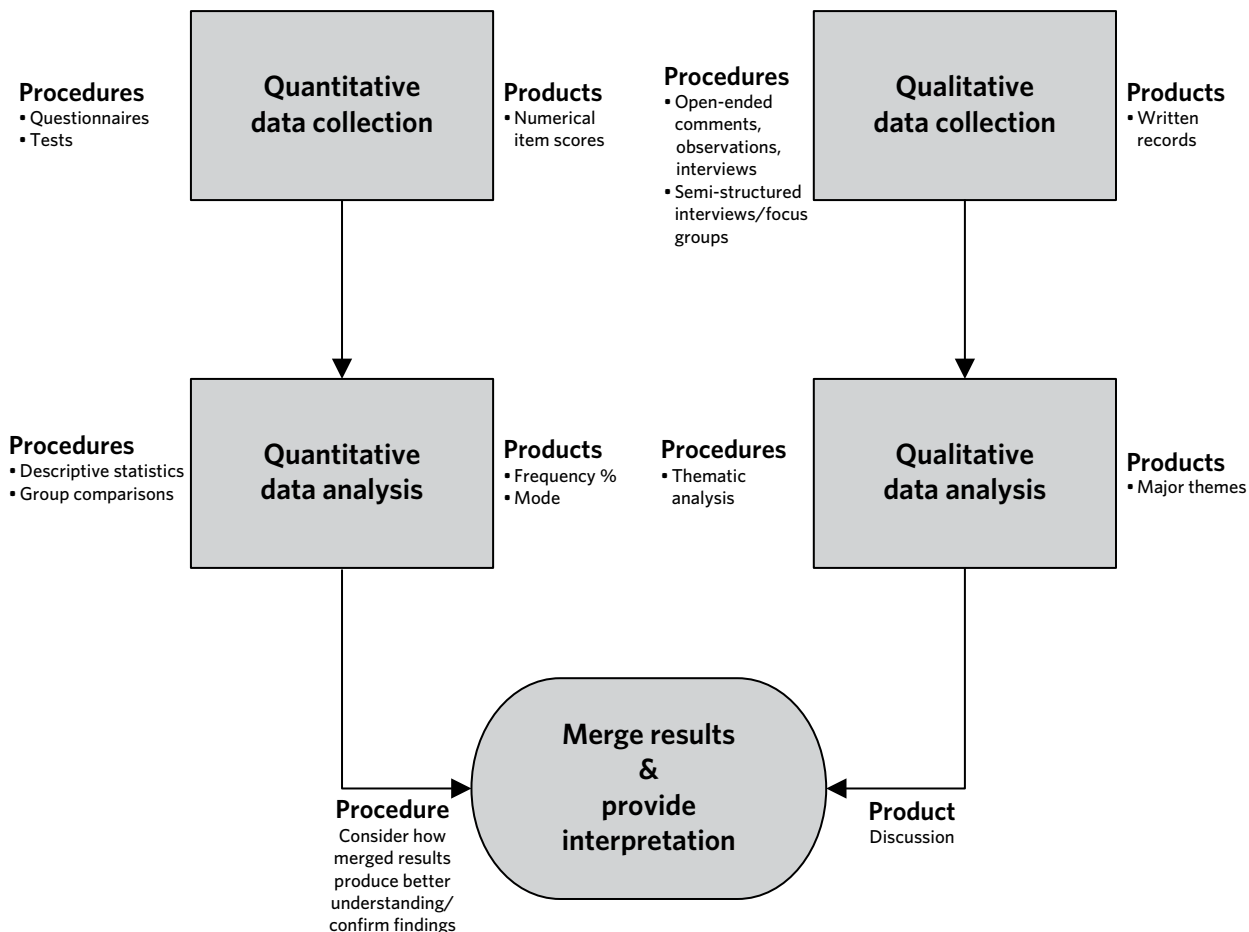
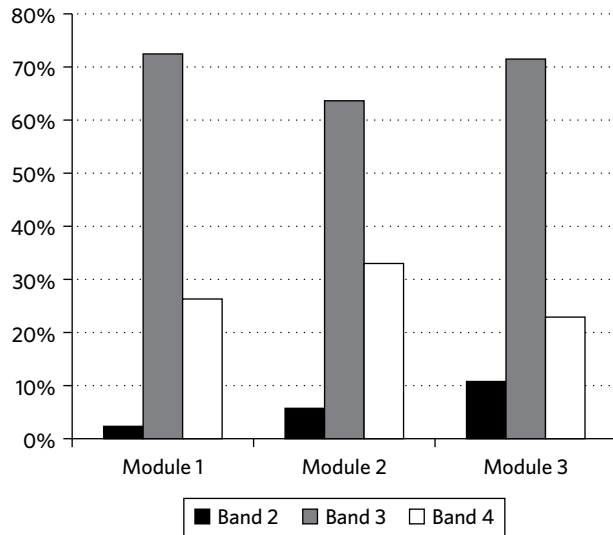


Figure 2: Distribution of band scores by TKT module (N=102)

'Teacher 12 showed a marked improvement. He moved around the class interacting with the students and monitoring very effectively. He put the students into small groups, kept to the time allotted to the task, and the students were obviously engrossed in the task. He used peer correction, which was appropriate and maximised student talking time. He still needs to work on cutting down his teacher talking time and backing up information visually.'

Self-evaluation data reflected a positive impact of the teacher upskilling programme on a) an increased awareness of new teaching techniques and strategies, b) a better understanding of a 21st century skills approach to language teaching, c) increased interaction in the classroom, d) promotion of active learning, e) awareness of student learning styles and ways of catering for them, f) placing greater emphasis on the development of learner autonomy, and g) development of greater self-awareness of positive and negative aspects of teaching. An illustrative comment by one of the teachers is reproduced below:

'[The course] made me appreciate the use of active learning techniques & helped me revise the roles I can play in the class; I used to overlook some of these roles; made me rethink of ways to empower learners.'

Students' evaluations of their teachers according to the survey responses suggested a highly positive attitude towards their teachers with the majority of respondents (95%) believing teachers to be well qualified, providing them with opportunities to interact with other students and also providing helpful feedback. Open comments by students further illustrated their appreciation for the teachers on the course. To sum up, findings demonstrate a very positive impact of the programme on teachers in introducing new teaching techniques and strategies, increased familiarisation with blended courses and ways of promoting learner autonomy and increased awareness of different student learning styles. In light of these findings, this article recommends more emphasis on the following aspects of learning and teaching:

- increasing shared responsibility for learning between teachers and students
- fostering learner autonomy and encouraging students to take responsibility for their learning
- reducing the 'lecture style' kind of teaching
- decreasing teacher talking time

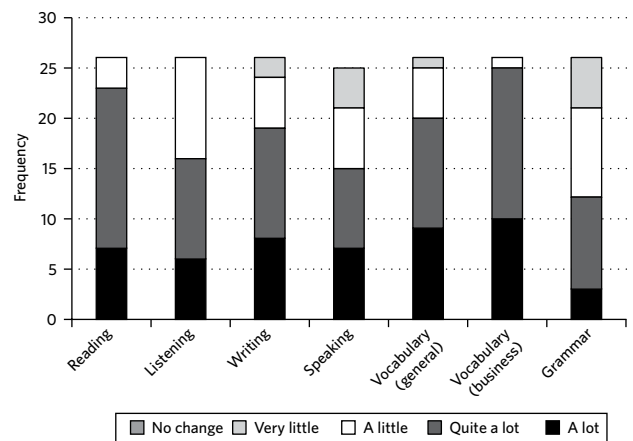
- increasing paired and group interactions
- varying the pace of the class
- selecting more engaging supplementary materials.

Focus on students: Key findings and recommendations

Findings from different sources of data are brought together to evaluate the extent to which the programme had an impact on students' English language progress, attitudes towards digital learning and assessment, future professional and academic opportunities, and the development of learner autonomy. These sources include students' score data, self and teacher assessments of progress, student and teacher close- and open-ended responses from surveys.

Survey findings point to a highly positive impact of the Blended Learning Course (BLC) on students. Both students and teachers have attributed improvements in students' English language skills and knowledge to a positive impact of the BLC.

Students believed the BLC to have had the strongest influence on their listening, reading and writing skills, with average ratings above 3.0 (maximum 4). Amongst the four skills, speaking was observed to have the lowest average of 2.97. From the perspective of teachers, students displayed most improvement in business-related vocabulary, followed by reading and general vocabulary. The least perceived improvement was reported for the skills of grammar, speaking and listening (see Figure 3).

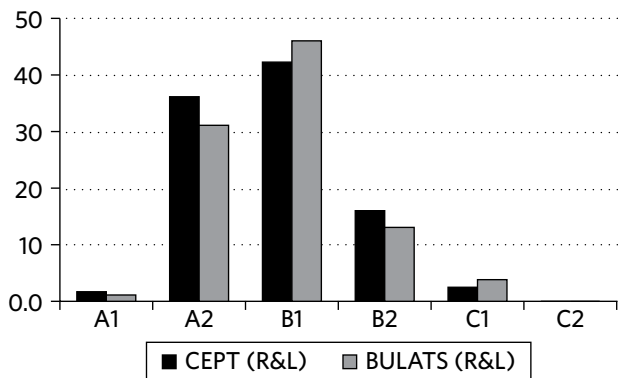
Figure 3: Teachers' perceptions of improvements to students' language skills

These perspectives were substantiated, to some extent, in the results of the score data. Figure 4 shows the percentage of candidates across the different CEFR levels on the CEPT and BULATS tests of Reading & Listening (measured in both tests). It can be seen that while the proportion of candidates across the different CEFR levels is fairly similar on the two tests, the percentage of candidates achieving a B1 band on BULATS is higher than CEPT. These are positive results, indicating an improvement (albeit small) in candidate abilities on the skills of reading and listening following the BLC.

Another approach was to examine improvement at the

individual candidate level by extracting those candidates who had achieved a minimum of one band level higher on BULATS Online compared to CEPT. Results showed that 21% of candidates had moved to an upper CEFR band level following the BLC and 1.5% had moved up two levels. A breakdown of the CEFR levels of these candidates (based on CEPT results) suggested that, as expected, the BLC has the strongest impact on candidates at Levels A2 and B1.

Figure 4: CEPT vs. BULATS results (Reading & Listening)

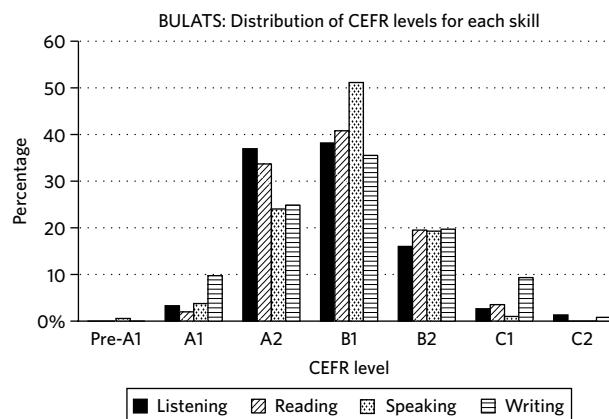


R&L=Reading & Listening

A snapshot of candidate performance on the BULATS test and broken down by skill is displayed in Figure 5, where results suggest a mode (the most frequently occurring level) of B1 on all four skills, which is in line with the PHE-EG target exit level.¹ When focusing on subject specialisations, the findings similarly show that the majority of candidates across groups display a mode of B1 (see Table 2). Writing appears to be the students' strongest skill in most subject groups with 30–37% of candidates displaying abilities at Levels B2 and above. This is not the case for the Commerce and Accounting group, where the strongest skills are reading and listening with approximately 49% of candidates at Level B2 and above (see Table 2). Speaking, on the other hand, is this group's weakest skill with less than 10% of candidates achieving Level B2 and above. Arts and Humanities, in contrast, was the strongest group in terms of speaking skills with around 25% of the candidates at Level B2 and above. Stronger performances

in speaking in this group may be a reflection of the more language-oriented nature of the subjects.

Figure 5: Band score distributions of BULATS candidates across language skills



Survey results suggested a positive impact of the BLC on students in increasing their confidence and motivation to use English, increased familiarity with the notion of self-study and increased preparedness for the BULATS test with agreement rates hovering around 90% (see Figure 6). Correspondingly, the disagreement rates are generally low, falling below 10%. The lowest agreement rate (81.7%) was observed for the statement (f) 'I felt well-prepared for taking the BULATS test' but which is nevertheless still quite high (see Figure 6).

Students also reported having a positive attitude towards blended learning approaches following their experience with the BLC. Both teachers and students believed that the online component of the BLC had a positive influence on promoting learner autonomy. However, relatively high average ratings of 2.8 and 3.1 for the statements 'I found it difficult to manage my learning on my own' and 'It's easier for me to learn when the teacher tells me what I have to do' in the student surveys as well as in the open comments by teachers, suggested that there was also a need to provide students with support in the online part of the course.

Results also suggested that in spite of all the efforts to facilitate digital learning, technical issues with the online

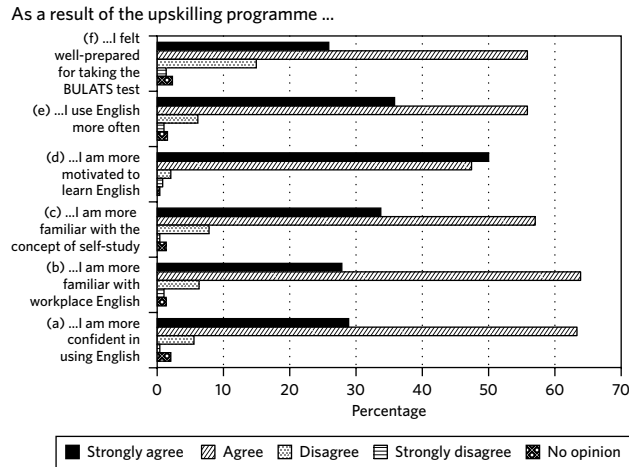
Table 2: Distribution of candidate (%) by CEFR level and subject group for different modules (N=983)

CEFR level	Arts & Humanities (N=498)			Commerce & Accounting (N=236)			Engineering (N=132)			Medicine & Science (N=117)		
	R&L	S	W	R&L	S	W	R&L	S	W	R&L	S	W
Pre-A1	-	0.4	0.2	-	0.8	0.4	-	0.8	-	-	0.9	-
A1	1	3.4	9	3	6	14	0.8	1	4	-	3	10
A2	34	19	2	3	3	2	22	20	18	34	26	23
B1	44	52	33	45	49	39	42	58	39	44	46	36
B2	16	24	21	39	8	13	27	20	30	14	23	18
C1	3	1.6	10	9	0.8	7	6	-	7	4	0.9	13
C2	-	0.2	0.8	0.4	-	-	0.8	-	2	2	-	-

Note: R&L = Reading and Listening; S = Speaking; W = Writing.

¹ It should be noted that this mode is A2 when considering the candidates' final CEFR levels, as the BULATS certificate is awarded at the *minimum* level achieved across all skills.

Figure 6: Student perspectives on the impact of the Cambridge English Upskilling Programme



delivery were one of the most problematic aspects of the programme.

Lastly, the impact of the use of external assessment on students' future professional prospects and learning was elicited using a series of statements. Results indicate that participants expect BULATS certification to have a strong positive impact on their future employment prospects. The highest agreement rates were observed for statements: I think that BULATS certification has a) *helped me move closer to my future professional goals* b) *increased my employability in the job market* and c) *opened new employment opportunities for me in Egypt* with 96%, 91% and 89.1%, respectively. In light of the nature of the course and the assessment, which are oriented towards equipping students with English language skills for the workplace domain, the findings are highly encouraging as they show that the external assessment is functioning as intended from the perspective of the students. A positive impact of the test on learning was also observed. For example, 94% of the students agreed with the statement that *taking the BULATS assessment motivated me to study harder during the blended learning course*. Overall, these results lend strong support to the usefulness of external assessment in the context of this project.

The following student comment captures the positive impact of the CEP:

'I would like only to thank the University of Cambridge in Britain that gave us the opportunity to test our capacities, strengths and weaknesses. The BULATS course is really useful to undergraduate students who are unsure of their English level. It is also a great means for learning business English. I would like to express my full gratitude to all who have contributed in this course from the teachers who taught us many useful things that one can never have from any other areas. It is an honour to be a part of this world where we all share mutual collaboration in all fields. I am really happy that I finally found people who really appreciate one's ability to work and learn ahead.'

In sum, findings point to a highly positive impact of the BLC on students in terms of improvements in English language knowledge and skill as well as increased student confidence and motivation to use English, increased preparedness for the BULATS test, a more positive attitude towards blended learning approaches, and a positive influence on promoting learner autonomy. Students also expected the BLC and BULATS certification to have a strong positive impact on their employability in the job market.

Several recommendations are made in light of the findings. It is recommended that PHE-EG should:

- Aim to have students exit the course with a minimum B1 level across all four skills and to also have a higher proportion of students graduate from this course at B2 level so that they are able to function independently in the workplace as far as language proficiency is concerned. These aims can be achieved by:
 - increasing the number of face-to-face hours (which is also the most common emerging theme from the surveys with reference to improving the BLC)
 - allowing for more practice time
 - increasing all types of opportunities for student-student and student-teacher interactions in the English language.
- Continue efforts to promote learner autonomy and provide support in time management for the online component of the course.
- Cater for differences in student learning style; for example by including a wider range of task types both in the classroom and the online environment.
- Ensure access for all by providing necessary infrastructure and technical support for the online component of the course.
- Play on the strengths of face-to-face and online approaches and minimising any weaknesses.

Focus on mainstreaming the initiative: Factors for consideration

As mentioned earlier, the initiative was implemented in 12 out of the 23 state universities participating in PHE-EG programmes. The 12 universities are geographically distributed across Egypt. One of the requests from the bid issuer was for the winning bidder to provide recommendations for mainstreaming of the initiative and upscaling it to nationwide implementation. The suggestions made below are based on the qualitative and quantitative data gathered during the course of the initiative and on new knowledge and experience gained during implementation. They cover the areas of online/digital learning, careful selection of participants, usefulness of external assessment on professional prospects and learning, test administration, and enhancing value for students. These are followed by more overarching strategies which can help guide the mainstreaming of the project on a national scale.

Online/digital learning

While the digital element of the upskilling programme can help learners become autonomous and responsible for their own learning, it is important to provide institutional support to ensure successful implementation. Examples of the steps taken by PHE-EG to support students in their learning are summarised below:

- Motivating students to show up for online sessions: Teachers on the course were highly supportive and persuasive and tried to motivate students to attend by all possible means, including making themselves available at

many different times for students who could not make it on the designated dates.

- Asking students and teachers to come up with an action plan for the implementation of the 50-hour online training: This was carried out by teachers and students with teachers posting on Facebook groups and other online fora, making various suggestions on how to divide the work over the online period.
- Focusing on online exercises: Teachers laid stress on the exercises and helped students with completing them.
- Providing technical support to students in accessing and navigating online materials: Both the administrative team and the trainers provided technical support upon request. Moreover, university labs were made available to those students in faraway residences who could not have access to the internet once the face-to-face part of the course was completed.

The survey findings also highlighted:

- Technical issues: In spite of all the efforts devoted to facilitating digital learning, technical issues with the online delivery were commented on as one of the most problematic aspects of the programme.
- Access to the online course: Given that PHE-EG deals with under-privileged students, many did not have access to the internet once the face-to-face tutoring had finished and as a result, many of the students did not finish much of the course and depended only on the face-to-face part of the course, leading to a number of drop-outs.
- Need for more practice time: Students expressed a need for more practice time for different features of the course, with a stronger preference for more face-to-face classroom teaching.

Two insightful comments (reproduced below) touched on the ways in which technology may differentially affect students who are either familiar/confident with using technology, who may have problems accessing the internet or who may not be used to online courses. Some of these problems raise very important issues from a socio-economic standpoint and need to be carefully considered and addressed for future mainstreaming of the programme.

'The idea is great; however, it is met by socio-economical difficulties. Some of my students did not own computers; others could not join the online sessions. Some females in villages within Upper Egypt could not go to an internet café or to the university after the course to practise the online part so, they missed an important aspect of the course.'

'Generally speaking the course allows trainees to absorb training on their own time, as it is self-paced learning, and it also emphasizes the importance of practice, leaving valuable classroom time for more skill-building activities. As for me, I felt very comfortable and confident with the technology so that it becomes an aid in communicating with my students. But that was not the case with all students; the motivated students made the best out of this opportunity and they worked well and completed all the assignments independently. They have become more active in their learning and gain technological empowerment that expands beyond the required course. Some students, however, especially living in remote villages, had no access to internet at their homes and it was not easy, for girls in particular, to go to internet cafes. Others had some technical problems with the internet connections. Some students had no internet problems but were not used to this independent type of learning, and consequently didn't take it seriously and didn't attend all the online sessions. I'd like to conclude by

saying that for me and for many of the students, this experience increases the interaction not only between me and the students but also among them.'

Strategy 1 In order to ensure access for all in upscaling the initiative across HE institutions in Egypt it is imperative that the necessary infrastructure and technical support for the online component of the course are secured; a training element on digital literacy for teachers should be included; efforts in supporting students with time management and autonomous learning strategies should be strengthened.

Careful selection of participants

In order to further support capacity building and the professional development of pre-service teachers, it is recommended that PHE-EG continue their efforts in selecting teachers who display the expertise necessary for delivering the students' upskilling programme but who can also benefit the most from the career opportunities that international certification can offer, e.g. early career teachers, language instructors. If course participants are predominantly PhD holders with strong theoretical backgrounds in teaching, it might be preferable to put more emphasis on practical communicative approaches to teaching, micro-teaching and on how to deliver the blended learning course successfully.

The student selection process was shown to be effective as illustrated in the high agreement rates by both teachers and students for the statement *the CEPT accurately placed students on the course*. These findings suggest that CEPT is fit for purpose and substantiates the decision made by PHE-EG to include a screening test for student selection.

Strategy 2 Existing selection procedures for students should continue without any change. Thought may be given to grouping of students according to specialisation post-selection. Decide on which layer of the teaching cadre would benefit the most from teacher training and the subsequent international certification.

Usefulness of external assessment for professional prospects and learning

The notion of using external assessment has resource implications when upscaling the initiative. Findings from the surveys indicated that participants attribute a strong positive impact to BULATS certification in enhancing their future employment prospects. Moreover, students believed that taking the BULATS test motivated them to study harder during the course. Both findings show that external assessment is functioning as intended and lend strong support to retaining the use of external assessment for the future mainstreaming of the initiative.

Strategy 3 Continue the use of international assessment for selection purposes, benchmarking purposes or certification purposes. Such use ensures accurate placement, deeper learning growth impact and accountability of the training provider; provides motivation for learning, and is a desirable factor in job applications. Thought may be given to

using a recent version of the CEPT which covers the four skills.

Test administration

The online tests required broadband width and internet connection which PHE-EG in Cairo University ensured were available. From a technical perspective, quality of recordings was generally satisfactory, with examiners reporting most speaking samples to be clear and audible with occasional strain on the examiner but with little impact on marking reliability. For one of the sessions, however, serious technical issues were reported for sound quality, with the microphone cutting off for six candidates and affecting reliability of marking accordingly. Background noise did not appear to be a problem except for one test session, where slamming of doors, phones ringing, sound of other candidates, etc. were observed. As explained by CAPSCU, these were due to the evacuation of the building as a result of some revolution-related turbulence at the time. These factors can potentially affect candidates' test performance and attempts should be made to minimise background noise. The other frequently recurring problems were a distortion of sounds due to candidates speaking too loudly or having the microphone too close and also candidates starting to talk too soon, leading to the cutting off of the beginning of the recordings. These findings have practical implications for future administrations of online Speaking tests.

Strategy 4 Share lessons learned with regard to technical issues related to the smooth running of online testing. Set up standard operating procedures for examiner co-ordination, monitoring and evaluation.

Enhancing value for students

Students were provided with a list of options as reasons for enrolling on the upskilling programme. The most common reason given was the focus of the BLC on developing and enhancing students' English language abilities within a workplace context.

Strategy 5 Enhance the value of the initiative by linking up participants with potential employers at least for

internship purposes. Contact students post-programme and once they have entered the job market to evaluate the extent to which the BLC and BULATS certification have helped them secure employment and to gather testimonials.

In sum, the findings from the study demonstrated the positive impact of the upskilling programme on the stakeholders on the one hand and also identified possible areas for improvement. It also illustrated ways in which international assessment can be successfully used in local contexts to match the workplace language needs of today's global citizens. These results and the lessons learned can therefore be drawn upon in planning a road map for the national level implementation of the programme through international collaborations, building on the strengths of the initiative and taking corrective action to minimise limitations.

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Enhancing employment opportunities through English: An investigation into the impact of the SCOPE programme in India

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Introduction

In 2007 the state government in Gujarat, India established the Society for Creation of Opportunities through Proficiency

in English (SCOPE) to develop and improve English language ability in young people throughout the state of Gujarat, for the purposes of increased employment opportunities.

Six years after the launch of the SCOPE programme and the introduction of the Cambridge English assessments, Cambridge English Language Assessment and SCOPE were keen to see the effect of both the programme and the assessments within the educational context in which they are used. The rationale behind this impact study is in line with the Cambridge English concept of 'impact by design' (Milanovic and Saville 1996, Saville 2012), which calls for a systematic investigation of test impact as an integral part of the test development and validation process and within the tests' wider context of use.

The study, therefore, aimed at providing the SCOPE management with an insight into stakeholders' perceptions of the SCOPE programme, of the Cambridge English assessments used therein, and their effect on learners' employability prospects. It also intended to inform SCOPE of notable changes in SCOPE test taker characteristics and performance over the last few years. Such information would allow SCOPE to record positive effects, unintended effects and lessons learned, and make informed decisions about follow-up actions for either sustaining conditions for success or working on areas that warrant improvement.

The study was conducted over a period of three months (August–October 2013) in collaboration with SCOPE. Since a main investigation focus was learner employability opportunities, the study targeted college and university students within the SCOPE programme as this cohort was deemed more likely to actively seek employment after their college or university studies.

It addressed one overarching question: What is the impact (intended and unintended) of the SCOPE programme and Cambridge English assessments on the micro context (students' English language skills/proficiency) and on the macro level (students' employability, employers and other stakeholders)?

Context

Education is ... an important enabler for economic development and growth. Gujarat, the entrepreneurship capital of India, is well recognized globally for its achievements in economic development and industrial growth. However, progress that Gujarat has made in the education sector remained in the background but has fully supported and facilitated the economic development in the State. The entrepreneurial spirit of Gujarat is also visible across the education sector in various quality and access reforms constantly being innovated. These include but are not limited to creation of unique institutions ...'

(Team Higher Education 2012:3).

As part of the BRICS group of countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), India has experienced and continues to experience economic growth, with its skilled workforce making it popular with foreign investors. It has become therefore vital for Indian companies to have the right language skills to compete for international business. However, while students and professionals in India have good technical skills, many lack the relevant level of English language and struggle in the job market (Team Higher Education 2012).

The state government in Gujarat responded to this challenge by setting up SCOPE, one of the 'unique institutions' mentioned by the Principal Secretary for Education in the quotation above, with the aim of raising the level of English among students and the workforce. The drive and rationale for the creation of SCOPE is best described in the following quotation from the *Team Higher Education Report* (2012) of the state of Gujarat:

English is a global language. English language helps trade, travel, communication and success beyond national boundaries. It has become a yardstick to measure the success of employees in many industries and is a key factor for employability in others. Gujarat cannot be denied the advantage of riding on the benefits of language proficiency when it is emerging as fastest growing state in the country and is signing Memoranda of Understanding with world's industry leaders for employment opportunities for its youth (2012:23).

The SCOPE programme

SCOPE aims to improve young people's employability in an increasingly English-based workplace, by providing them with access to appropriate English language courses and assessment.¹ SCOPE's approach to English language advancement is 'neither domination of, nor disinclination for, English' (Ravi and Chand 2012:1).

The SCOPE programme offers two models of engagement (Ravi and Chand 2012:2). The first is a Public Private Partnership (PPP) model, in which affiliated training centres run the 90-hour (spreading over two to three months depending on the time availability with the learner) course-led English programmes aimed at helping candidates achieve Levels A1 (beginner) to C2 (advanced) on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR; Council of Europe 2001). At the end of this programme, candidates take CEPT (Cambridge English Placement Test) and/or BULATS (Business Language Testing Service). (Note that the terms 'training' and 'trainer' in this paper are used to denote 'teaching' and 'teacher', in accordance with the use of these terms in the Indian context, where a teacher is someone teaching at a state school whereas a trainer is someone teaching in other contexts.) The second model of engagement is the Open Assessment Scheme (OAS). This model provides the opportunity for learners to take one of the offered Cambridge English assessments without undertaking a taught course first, and is only available to students studying in Higher Education Institutions. It is possible that this model appeals to candidates who already have knowledge of English and want to establish and accredit their ability. Although learners are welcome to register under either of the two schemes, in the original design SCOPE expected that the majority of its learners would follow the PPP scheme where they have the opportunity to attend a course and enhance their language ability before taking an assessment to certify that ability.

B2 is the minimum requirement for anyone wishing to teach on the SCOPE programme, or two levels higher than the course they teach. To register as a SCOPE trainer, one thus needs to have a B2 or higher level qualification.

Soon after SCOPE's launch in 2007, Cambridge English was

¹ This programme also includes learners with varying disabilities, such as: blindness/visual impairment; deafness and dumbness; orthopaedic/loco-motor disability; multiple disability; mental retardation.

selected as the partner who would provide the programme's assessment. The main criteria for selection were the Cambridge English capacity to offer internationally recognised assessments and flexibility in test mode delivery (paper-based at the beginning replaced by computer-based and online tests later on).

Cambridge English currently offers two assessments as part of the SCOPE programme: CEPT or the computer-based BULATS, both of which assess candidate ability up to C2 level of the CEFR, are used to assess reading and listening. Cambridge English recommends that more able SCOPE learners who are aiming at achieving a B1 or higher level take BULATS Reading and Listening, which puts more weight on workplace English than CEPT. As the SCOPE programme places emphasis on speaking, all candidates who sit CEPT or BULATS also take the BULATS Online Speaking test. Referring to BULATS Online Speaking, the *Team Higher Education Report (2012:25)* mentions that it is the first time in India that an online test is conducted on such a wide scale, reaching out to candidates in every corner of the state. When combined, the three assessments provide candidates with a comprehensive assessment of reading, listening and speaking skills.

Both CEPT and BULATS Reading and Listening tests are adaptive tests that assess listening and reading skills plus knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, through a variety of item types. The adaptive nature of the tests means that as the candidate progresses through the test, each item is chosen on the basis of the candidate's response to the previous item. As a result, the test becomes progressively easier or more difficult until a consistent level of ability is achieved, and the candidate's level of English can be accurately identified. The adaptive test also means that the test is suitable for the candidates, whatever their level of English. They will not have to answer a large number of questions which are above or below their level. There is no 'pass mark'; candidates are placed in one of six levels or bands from A1 for beginners up to C2 for those who have mastered the language. The front of the test report form that each candidate receives displays the test scores and CEFR levels. Each candidate is provided with an overall score out of 100, alongside the relevant CEFR level, as well as separate scores out of 100 for Reading and Listening.

The BULATS Online Speaking test is a computer-based speaking test that assesses spoken English in a workplace context. The questions are presented via a computer screen and the candidate responds to audio prompts via a microphone. The test comprises five parts and lasts approximately 15 minutes. The Speaking test is marked by an examiner and the candidate is awarded a CEFR level.

The rationale behind the introduction of Cambridge English assessments is that they allow learners to approach employers with a statement of competence that is linked to an internationally recognised standard for describing language ability.

SCOPE and the community

The SCOPE programme community of stakeholders is displayed in Table 1.

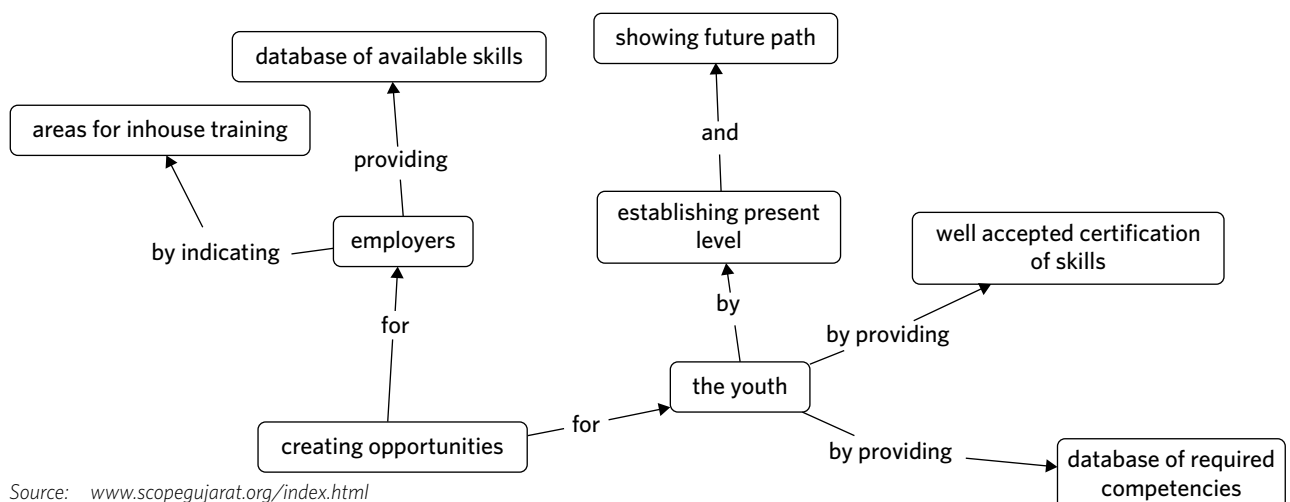
Table 1: SCOPE programme stakeholder community

Policy making	Government of Gujarat
Decision making	Government of Gujarat and SCOPE Management
Implementation	Zonal training partners (the prime partners who run the programme) Training centres and trainers Learners
Beneficiaries	Employers

SCOPE believes that by providing English language teaching and accreditation for young people in Gujarat, employers can increase the pool of skills available to them. This will encourage and attract further business and investment from other companies, which in turn will motivate more young people to improve their English skills as this is shown to improve their career opportunities. Figure 1 below shows how SCOPE envisages learning English can benefit the students and the community in Gujarat. An example of how the SCOPE programme can benefit the local community is the case of training traffic police officers in Vadodara, which is discussed later on in this paper.

Since its inception and up to October 2012, SCOPE had achieved an enrolment of over 300,000 learners (*Team Higher Education 2012:23*). This number had risen to 411,000 by the beginning of 2014 (as cited on the SCOPE website).

Figure 1: How improving English language skills can benefit employability in Gujarat, India



Source: www.scopegujarat.org/index.html

Employment opportunities for SCOPE graduates

As well as supporting students throughout their English language study, SCOPE also makes provision to open up external employment opportunities for programme graduates. An example of this is SCOPE's partnership with a global Knowledge/Business Process Outsourcing (KPO/BPO) company, which has a significant portion of their business based in India. In a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed in 2011, the corporation agreed to automatically fast-track SCOPE graduates to the second interview stage, employ a certain number of SCOPE graduates a month (subject to qualifications and interview success) and support unsuccessful candidates with a view to a reapplication to the company in the future (Team Higher Education 2012:26).

Methodology

Sample

SCOPE has training centres in 26 (out of a total of 33) districts in the state of Gujarat, most of which are in urban areas. As of April 2014, there were 630 registered centres across all districts.

The test score data collection comprised the entire SCOPE population (i.e. all SCOPE learners who took an assessment) between January 2011 and December 2013.

Sample selection for the survey used stratified random sampling (in 16 districts including the districts with the four largest cities in Gujarat) with proportional representation. Within each centre a random sample of classes and learners was targeted. The selected sample consisted of 66 centres, where survey data were collected from 90 trainers and 1,851 learners. The profiles of the centres, trainers and learners are as follows.

Centre profile

- **Location:** 73% of the centres were in urban areas, whereas 27% were in rural areas.
- **SCOPE training model and courses:** 21% of all the centres participated in both training models; 76% in PPP only whereas 3% in OAS only. SCOPE Level I/II (A1/A2) courses were offered by the majority of centres (94% and 91% respectively); Level III/IV (B1/B2) courses were offered by 55% and 47% of centres; and only a small percentage of centres (8%) ran SCOPE Level V (C1) courses.
- **Years in the SCOPE programme:** Over half of the centres (51%) had been in the programme for more than three years; 24% between two and three years; and the remaining 25% up to two years.
- **Language facilities:** In terms of language facilities for supporting English language learning, the centres reported that they provided PCs in classrooms (70% of centres); a computer lab (62%); library or resource centres (59%); language lab/centre (49%); and smart boards (20%).

Trainer profile

- **Location of trainer SCOPE centre:** Reflecting the distribution of the selected sample of SCOPE centres, 73% of trainers

worked in centres located in an urban area whereas 27% of trainers worked in centres located in a rural area.

- **English Language Teaching (ELT) and SCOPE programme experience:** The highest percentage of trainers (54%) were at the beginning of their ELT career (1–4 years of experience; with about 17% reporting having just one year of teaching experience) followed by 32% who had between five and 10 years of experience, while the remaining 14% had 11 or more years of experience. 80% were trainers while 20% were heads of SCOPE centres. The trainers had a varying degree of training experience within the SCOPE programme. The highest percentage of respondents (38%) had between two and three years of experience, another 36% had four years or more, whereas the remaining 26% had just one year working with the programme.
- **Academic qualifications:** 50% had a postgraduate degree followed by 29% who were university graduates and 21% who had a College diploma/degree. All degrees offer pedagogical training if students are trained to become English teachers.
- **Teaching qualifications:** 27% had a local qualification while 48% had an internationally recognised qualification, namely *Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT)*, *Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (CELTA)* or *Diploma in Teaching English to Speakers in Other Languages (Delta)*. The latter is a fairly high percentage and reflects the importance trainers and SCOPE centres place on international certification for professional accreditation and development. 11% of respondents reported having no teaching qualification.
- **SCOPE teaching:** The highest percentage of trainers (62%) were teaching at Levels A2/A1 of the programme; 21% at B1/B2; and the remaining 17% at all or a combination of the previous levels.

Learner profile

- **Overall profile:** The survey targeted university/college students as this was deemed to be the cohort of prime interest for investigating perceptions about the effect of the programme and assessments on employability prospects. The highest percentage of respondents were, as expected, between 19 and 21 years of age (64%), followed by a younger cohort of 16 to 18 year olds (21%) while the remaining learners (15%) were 22 years old or older. 54% were female and 46% male.
- **Attendance of SCOPE course:** Over half of respondents (56%) were in the OAS model, which means they had not followed a SCOPE course before taking an assessment, whereas 44% were in the PPP model (taught course followed by assessment). Of those who had completed a SCOPE course, the vast majority (94%) had followed an A1 course. 2% had followed an A2 course and the remaining 4% a B1 or higher course.
- **Socio-economic status:** This was a self-assessed category. The vast majority of respondents (89%) stated that their annual household income was up to 1 99,999 Indian Rupees (INR) (low socio-economic status); 9% between 200,000–499,999 INR (medium socio-economic status); 2% more than 500,000 INR (high socio-economic status).

- **Parental educational level:** Most respondents stated that their parents were educated at primary school level (39% for fathers; 52% for mothers) or at secondary/higher secondary school level (39% for fathers; 30% for mothers), whereas a smaller percentage had parents with a university or postgraduate degree (16% for fathers; 7% for mothers).
- **Employment:** 29% of those who completed the survey reported that they were at that time or had been previously in employment. The majority stated they planned to look for a job within the next year (58%) or in one year or later from the time of the survey (23%).

During data analysis, comparisons were run, where appropriate, between the following learner and trainer groups: PPP vs. OAS; A1/A2 vs. B1/B2. Comparisons were performed between A1/A2 and B1/B2 course level learners but any reported differences in the findings need to be treated with caution due to the small numbers of survey learners who had attended a B1/B2 course.

Research design

A convergent parallel mixed methods research design (Creswell and Plano Clark 2011) was used to investigate the overarching research question. In this research design, qualitative and quantitative data were collected simultaneously but the analysis of the two strands of data was conducted independently of each other (see Figure 2). The interpretation of the results drew on both strands to build a richer picture and understanding of the findings.

This triangulation of information derived from multiple data sources enhances confidence in the findings (see Greene, Caracelli and Graham (1989) for a discussion on reasons for mixing methods).

The data collection instruments in this study were selected from the Cambridge English 'impact toolkit' (Saville 2012) and, where necessary, adapted for the Gujarati context using expert judgement reviews prior to field implementation. Table 2 presents an overview of the key investigative points and demonstrates how triangulation of data sources was achieved through a variety of data types.

Instruments used

Quantitative data collection

The quantitative data collection was wider in scale than the qualitative collection and took place through the administration of perception and attitudinal questionnaires/surveys to learners and trainers and the collection of learner test score data.

Learner and trainer survey

The statements in the learner and trainer survey were positively worded using a 4- or 5-point Likert scale and a number of them provided an open-ended comment section. The learners' survey was translated into Gujarati to ensure reliable data collection.

Both surveys sought learners' and trainers' perceptions on the investigative points outlined in Table 2. In particular, respondents were asked to express their views on the SCOPE

Figure 2: Convergent parallel research design (adapted from Creswell and Plano Clark 2011:118)

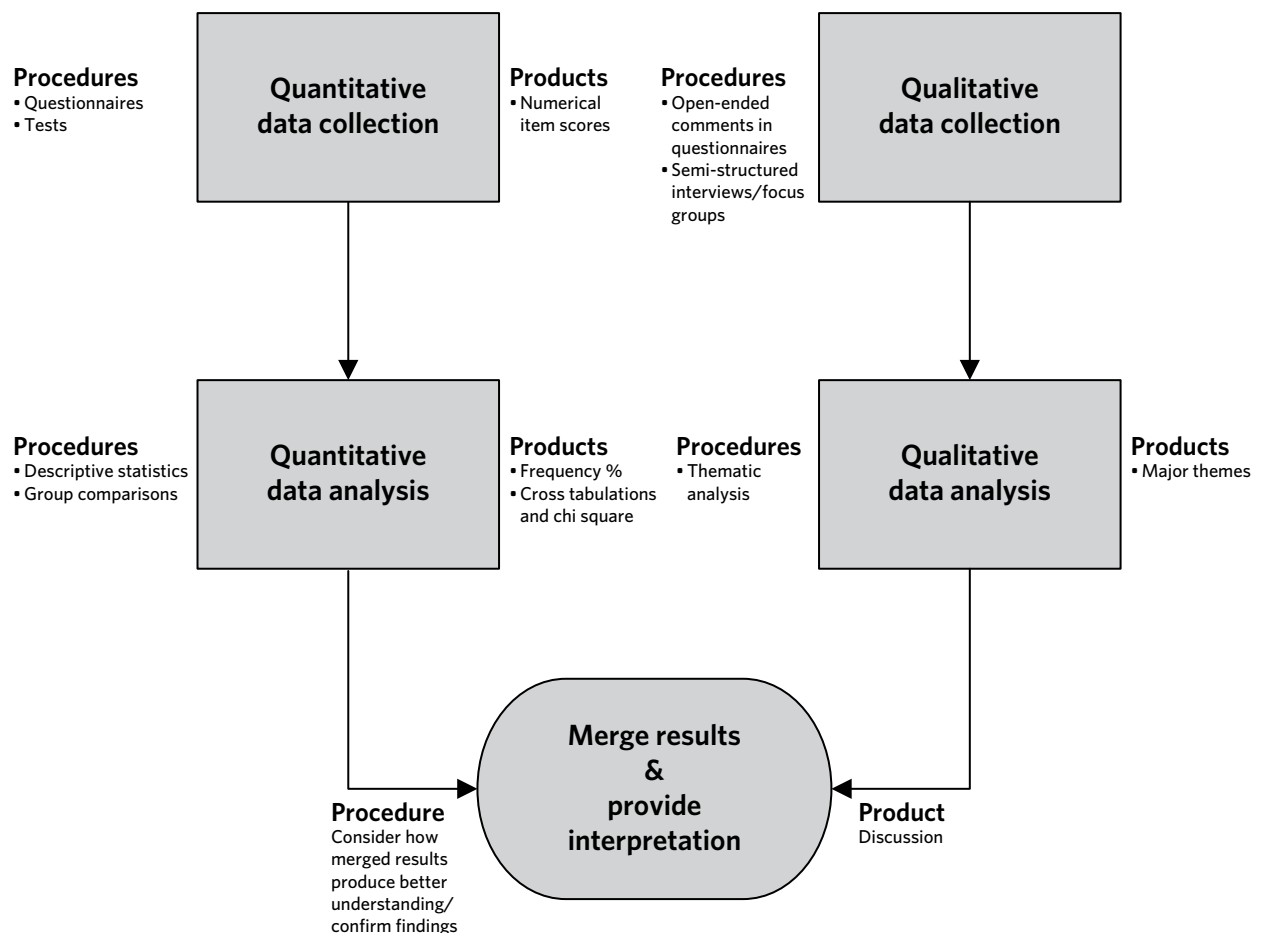


Table 2: Overview of key investigative points and data types/sources

Key investigative points	Data type	Data source
Attitude towards the SCOPE programme	Quantitative Qualitative	Questionnaire to learners and trainers Semi-structured interviews with policy makers, employers and trainers
Attitude towards Cambridge English assessments	Quantitative Qualitative	Questionnaire to learners and trainers Semi-structured interviews with policy makers, employers and trainers
Learner employability prospects	Quantitative Qualitative	Questionnaire to learners and trainers Semi-structured interviews with policy makers, employers and trainers
Learner performance	Quantitative Quantitative	Questionnaire to learners and trainers Test score data

programme in general and on the SCOPE courses and Cambridge English assessments in particular; on the use of the target language in class; on the influence of the course on learner progression; and on the effect of the Cambridge English assessment results on learner employability prospects.

Test score data

Reading, Listening and the Online Speaking test results, as well as candidate information from all SCOPE test takers in three consecutive years 2011–13, were examined for any notable changes in terms of performance and demographic profile of the whole SCOPE population. The test scores of the survey respondents were also investigated for any differences in performance between those learners following the PPP training model (taught course followed by assessment) or the OAS model (assessment only).

Qualitative data collection

Qualitative data were collected from semi-structured interviews with three groups of stakeholders to investigate their attitudes and perceptions of the SCOPE programme and Cambridge English assessments. These included: SCOPE policy makers from the government of Gujarat to establish programme objectives and expectations; trainers and employers, including a corporation, which has signed an MoU with SCOPE. The interviews were conducted in English and some of them were audio-recorded (with participants' consent) as an aide memoire in addition to live note-taking.

Interviews with policy makers, trainers and employers

The policy maker group interviewed included the current and former Chairpersons of SCOPE. This post is held by the Commissioner of Higher Education in the government of Gujarat. The two Chairpersons are the secretary in the Executive Committee and Governing Body of SCOPE and the guiding force behind the entire programme, with decision-making authority on most of the issues, policies and concerns (see also Table 1 for an overview of the SCOPE stakeholder community).

Interviews were also conducted with a number of stakeholders who are involved in training (i.e. teaching) and running the SCOPE centres: four zonal training partners (see Table 1), and trainers (i.e. teachers) from Ahmedabad and Vadodara.

The employer group comprised representatives from three companies/institutions. These included a global KPO/BPO (call centre) company where a better than average understanding of English (A2 or higher) is a fundamental requirement for employment. For recruitment purposes this company administers a Reading test, whereas speaking is assessed through job interviews. Learners who possess evidence of the minimum requirement of A2 are exempt from the interview. At the time this interview was conducted, 186 learners had been taken on by this company since the MoU with SCOPE was signed in 2011.

The second company was one operating in the field of infrastructure and finance services in Gujarat and a potential employer for SCOPE graduates. Finally, the IPS (Indian Police Service) Commissioner from Vadodara police participated in the interview session as a number of traffic police officers are attending SCOPE courses to enhance their English language skills in order to improve their communication with the (English-speaking) public from outside the state (e.g. businesspersons, tourists, students, etc.).

The interviews served as a basis for gathering contextual information, carrying out situational analysis and investigating perceived potential effects.

Results and discussion

The presentation and discussion of results is organised around the four main investigative points: a) attitudes towards the SCOPE programme; b) attitudes towards Cambridge English assessments; c) perceptions about the effect of the SCOPE programme and Cambridge English assessments on SCOPE learner employability prospects; d) learner performance. Overall there is agreement for nearly all statements. Where the percentage of disagreement was 20% or higher, further in-depth analysis was performed to check the influence of the following variables: PPP vs. OAS model (taught course followed by assessment vs. assessment only); attending or teaching at A1/A2 vs. B1/B2 levels.

Attitudes towards the SCOPE programme

This section discusses attitudes and perceptions towards the SCOPE programme and course.

Learners' views

In general, learners' perceptions about the programme and the course are positive.

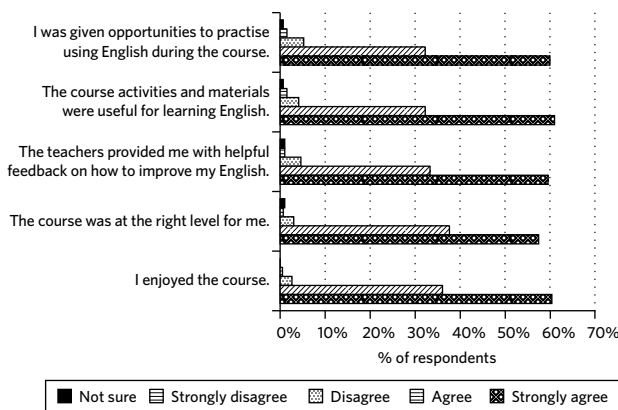
The survey shows that the learners' motivation to join the SCOPE course and subsequently take the tests stem from a desire to get a good job (66% 'strongly agree'), improve their general English (64%), obtain a Cambridge English statement of results (64%), get accepted at university (58%) or improve their workplace English (55%). Typical comments included: 'to get good job and improve English and communication skills'; 'to get job, SCOPE certificate will support my

qualification. So, I will get good job easily'; 'A good job in India or in abroad. To take my career to the next level'; 'To improve my general English'; 'study and job'.

A positive response was obtained for all the questions relating to learners' experience of the SCOPE course (Figure 3), with at least 92% agreeing that they enjoyed the course, the course was at the right level, the activities and feedback were useful and there were opportunities for practising English in class. As a result of the course, 92% of the learners reported they were more confident in using English and more motivated to learn English. The majority of learners also reported that they would recommend the course and be interested in taking a course at the next or a higher level.

Figure 3: Learners' perceptions about the SCOPE courses

Please tell us about your experience with the SCOPE course.



Trainers' view

Overall, trainers appear to be well versed in SCOPE's main aim of increasing employability among young people in Gujarat. This is evidenced by their comments which show that language is viewed 'as a practical tool helping learners to get a job' and that the programme 'was to put in place a mechanism for English language proficiency in the state sector, offering more opportunities with career prospects'.

Ninety-five percent or more of the trainers said they felt confident and liked teaching their SCOPE English course. The majority of trainers (at least 86%; Figure 4) also thought that the course was at the right level for their students and that it prepared the students adequately for the assessments, as well as for language use outside the classroom. Like learners, the vast majority of trainers (96%) agreed that the course increased learners' confidence in using English and motivation to learn English.

Trainers were also asked about the use of the target language (English) vs. L1 (Gujarati or other) during the SCOPE classes. Tables 3a and 3b show that the majority of trainers report that they practise and encourage the use of the target language in class. Comparing responses between A1/A2 and B1/B2 course trainers (in Tables 3a and 3b) a significant difference was observed in statements 2 and 3: a higher proportion of the A1/A2 course trainers reported that students talked a little or very little to other students or the trainer in English in class, compared to B1/B2 course trainers (34%-36% vs. 5%). Comments provided by trainers do not shed any light as to

Figure 4: Trainers' perceptions about the SCOPE Level I or II (A1/A2) course

To what extent do you agree with the following statements about the SCOPE Level I or II (A1/A2) course?

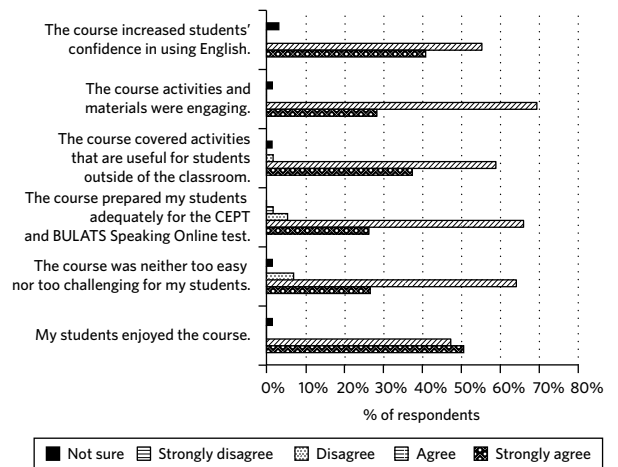


Table 3a: Use of English vs. L1 during the SCOPE A1/A2 level courses - trainer survey*

	Question/Statement	A lot	Quite a lot	A little	Very little	No change
1	I taught in English more than in Gujarati or any other language.	43%	34%	14%	9%	0%
2	Students talked to other students in English more than in Gujarati or any other language.	25%	39%	32%	4%	0%
3	Students talked to me in English more than in Gujarati or any other language.	29%	36%	30%	4%	2%
4	I encouraged students to speak to each other in English.	63%	36%	2%	0%	0%

Table 3b: Use of English vs. L1 during the SCOPE B1/B2 level courses - trainer survey*

	Question/Statement	A lot	Quite a lot	A little	Very little	No change
1	I taught in English more than in Gujarati or any other language.	42%	47%	11%	0%	0%
2	Students talked to other students in English more than in Gujarati or any other language.	26%	68%	5%	0%	0%
3	Students talked to me in English more than in Gujarati or any other language.	47%	42%	5%	0%	5%
4	I encouraged students to speak to each other in English.	60%	30%	0%	5%	5%

*Note: Some percentages do not sum due to rounding

why this might be the case and investigation of teaching practices through classroom observations, for instance, may be necessary.

The positive views expressed about the programme in the survey were also reflected in the interviews, where trainers indicated that the course and the assessments fit the learners' needs: 'The course as well as the exams are appropriate. It all depends on the regular practice that the students have to put in after they have completed the course'; 'The course enhances the students' English grammar, speaking skills and also works on pronunciation. They also get to know about people and places they are not aware of.'

At the same time, trainers also thought that awareness-raising about the programme to all stakeholders was necessary and that Cambridge English had a role to play in this: 'Awareness has to be raised again and if Cambridge plays a part in this, people will listen'; 'It would help if Cambridge were to write to schools'; 'This would give endorsement to the programme'; 'Cambridge needs to provide more support, for example a Cambridge Centre dedicated to providing on-demand tests.'

A point of concern raised by trainers was whether learners understand the purpose and role of the course and the assessment within the programme. As one trainer commented: 'About 70% take the tests without having followed a course. People don't see the purpose of taking a course. They need to know what the purpose is behind taking the assessment. They are simply taking it for placement purposes, not to enhance their competence.' This warrants further investigation and it is a point we will return to later in the paper.

In addition, a number of trainers felt that SCOPE should seek employers' involvement in the programme to ensure the standard they require is met. Typical comments included: 'The project needs to get employers to demand a level that is required for specific roles in industry'; 'Employers need to set the standards for language proficiency.'

Employers' views

Employers are also of the opinion that the SCOPE programme is beneficial to learners with respect to confidence in using English ('SCOPE has increased the confidence levels of the police, especially in dealing with the public.'). The Vadodara police, in particular, intend to raise the number of their participants in the SCOPE programme from currently 100 to 3,000 (pending the securing of further funding). The latter point raised about funding revealed one of the positive effects of the programme. Having identified the need for English language training among the traffic police in the area but also a lack of budget by the police department, the head of the Vadodara SCOPE Training Centre subsequently succeeded in persuading the Oil and Natural Gas Commission to sponsor the training of 100 police personnel.

Other examples of successful buying-in from employers include the training of 4,000 employees associated with the Tourism Corporation of Gujarat Limited (TCGL), i.e. cab owners, taxi and auto drivers, tour operators, front desk executives, tourist guides, hotel associations and waiters, as well as a smaller sample (62) of bus drivers and conductors

employed by the Gujarat State Road Transport Corporation (GSRTC). Although employers are generally positive about the programme, like the trainers, they felt that the links with industry need to be strengthened: 'The programme is good but it needs to connect directly with industry if it wants to meet their requirements.'

Unlike the trainers, employers' opinion is mixed with regard to the amount of information they have received about the SCOPE programme. Whereas one employer said that they had sufficient information and had heard about the programme in a meeting with SCOPE representatives and investors who were working with the government on other projects, another employer felt that they had not received enough detail. This suggests that information dissemination about the programme may not have been consistent across employers and/or districts.

Policy makers' views

The policy makers view the SCOPE programme as unique in India in that it is not entirely located within the government (see, for example, the two SCOPE training models which involve public-private partnership). It brings together the efficiency of the private sector with the wide reach and infrastructure of the government. They believe that the SCOPE team, including the training providers, are open to innovation, and are not risk averse. One of the success stories thus far is that 'lakhs [hundreds of thousands] of people have learned a few words.'

Echoing the opinion of the previous two stakeholder groups, policy makers are aware of the need to enhance the link between the programme and employers. In the words of one policy maker: 'SCOPE needs to see what can be done to remedy the inadequacies of the relationship with industry.'

Discussion

Overall, the responses provided by all stakeholder groups demonstrate a positive attitude towards the SCOPE programme and the courses offered, particularly with regard to learner motivation and confidence in using English. A number of issues were raised, however, which collectively point to a need for the provision of more information about the programme to all stakeholders. These issues include the following:

- Despite the benefits reported from attending a course, trainers felt that a high number of learners do not see the purpose of taking a course before taking an assessment. This impression appears to contradict SCOPE's expectation that most learners will follow a course to enhance their language ability before they take an assessment to certify it. We will return to this issue when we discuss the results.
- Trainers also thought that further awareness-raising about the programme among learners and employers was needed.
- Stakeholders expressed the opinion that SCOPE should strengthen its links with employers and industry to ensure employers' requirements are taken into account.
- One of the employers felt they had insufficient information about the programme.

It is therefore recommended that Cambridge English and SCOPE work together on a renewed dissemination plan. The plan should contain comprehensive information about the purpose and content of the programme, the target learner groups, the different proficiency levels it covers and what they mean in practice in terms of learners' English language skills (e.g. in the form of Can Do statements). It should also promote attendance of the training courses and the benefits for the learners. Also it is important to ensure that dissemination of information is consistent across stakeholders and that the plan includes ways of gathering employers' requirements and views regarding English language standards in their work area.

Another issue that emerged was that about a third of trainers feel that A1/A2 level learners do not use enough of the target language in class. This may necessitate a renewed focus on the teaching of speaking at A1/A2 levels and ensuring that there are opportunities for learners to speak English in class.

A final point to note that emerged as an unintended effect of the programme was the successful co-operation between SCOPE and local employers and institutions to secure donor funding for learner participation in the programme.

Attitudes towards Cambridge English assessments

This section focuses on the stakeholders' perceptions about the Cambridge English assessments used in the SCOPE programme.

Learners' view

Learner attitudes about the tests were generally positive, with around 90% of learners viewing the assessments as an accurate measure of their English language level, as the following comment demonstrates: 'With the Cambridge evaluations, [learners] can see how they're progressing.' In addition, 92% felt that the topics and tasks were relevant for the workplace, while 87–89% would recommend the assessments to other learners.

However, a high proportion of learners (83–84%) also said that they worried about taking the tests. This could be attributed to their level of preparation before the assessment as there is a statistically significant difference between those learners that followed a course (PPP scheme) and those that took the assessment only (OAS scheme). Applying a chi-square test (which compares observed frequencies in each response category with expected frequencies based on the assumption that there should be no difference) we found that a higher than expected proportion of OAS students (59%)

'strongly agreed' that they were worried about taking the Reading and Listening test whereas a lower than expected proportion of the PPP candidates (44%) gave this rating. The reverse pattern was the case for the 'disagree' response to this statement (see Table 4a).

The same pattern emerged for the Speaking tests: a higher than expected proportion of OAS students (63%) 'strongly agreed' that they were worried about taking the Cambridge English Speaking Online test whereas a lower than expected proportion of the PPP candidates (46%) gave this rating. The reverse was the case for the 'disagree' response to this statement (see Table 4b).

Trainers' views

- Overall, trainers view the role of the Cambridge English assessments in the SCOPE programme favourably. The trainer responses on this topic centred around the following core themes: Cambridge English assessments are sound measurement instruments, for example: '[The assessments] are well designed assessments that measure what they say they're measuring. They are linked to the levels of the course and they are recognised because they are linked to Cambridge.'
- Cambridge English assessments add value to the programme: 'Cambridge English as a top rated assessment body adds more value to the programme for parents and employers.'
- BULATS/the course help improve speaking: 'BULATS will help them to improve communication skills of speaking normal English'; 'The trend which is being adopted by Cambridge to approach the students of different levels with BULATS has motivated and encouraged them to face the actual Speaking test online.'

Although trainers thought that the assessments are accurate measures of learners' ability, 68% agreed that their learners were worried about taking them. This ties in with their suggestion for the provision of more practice materials for both the course and the tests – particularly listening and speaking materials and preferably digital: 'More programme software should be assigned to the students for improvement and practice in listening and speaking English.' One comment also highlighted the need for the course to cater for students with special needs: 'I have more blind students so my courseware requires a lot of audio material, maybe stories and conversation, news reading, etc.'

Table 4a: Reading and Listening

Question/Statement	Group	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure	Total
I am worried about taking the test.	PPP	44%	35%	14%	5%	1%	100%
	OAS	59%	28%	7%	3%	2%	100%
	Total	53%	31%	10%	4%	1%	100%

Table 4b: Speaking

Question/Statement	Group	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure	Total
I am worried about taking the test.	PPP	46%	31%	15%	4%	2%	100%
	OAS	63%	24%	8%	2%	1%	100%
	Total	55%	27%	11%	3%	1%	100%

Employers' views

Employers view the introduction of internationally recognised external assessment to the SCOPE programme as a quality assurance badge for the learners' language ability. As one employer commented: 'A2 is the minimum requirement [for the company's recruitment purposes]. Learners who possess evidence of this are exempt from the interview'; 'A Cambridge English qualification is important.'

Discussion

The survey and interview data show that the attitude of key stakeholders towards the Cambridge English assessments used in the SCOPE programme are generally positive. Cambridge English assessments are viewed as a valid and accurate measure of English language proficiency, as value added to the SCOPE programme, as motivation for improving communication/speaking skills and as a quality assurance badge for learner language ability.

An issue worth noting here, though, is that of test anxiety, which was voiced by both learners and trainers. The trainers' concern could be attributed to and partially explained by another point they raised, that of the provision of more practice materials for both the assessments and the course. The learners' concern appears to be linked to whether they had attended a course before taking the assessments (PPP model) or not (OAS model) and potentially their degree of preparedness and familiarity with the assessments. Analyses showed that there was a significantly higher percentage of OAS learners who strongly agreed they were worried about both assessments.

Learner employability prospects

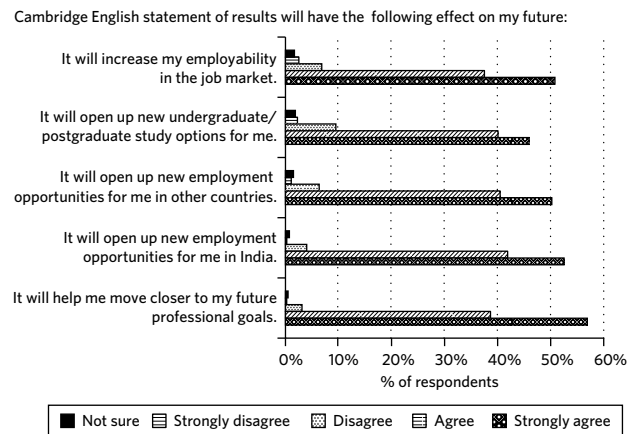
This section addresses perceptions about the effect of the SCOPE programme and Cambridge English assessments on SCOPE learner employability prospects.

Learners' views

In general, learners were very positive about the influence of Cambridge English assessments on their future employability (Figure 5; see 'Agree' and 'Strongly agree' responses combined). 89% or more claimed that the Cambridge English statement of results will help them move closer to their future professional goals and increase their employability in the job market. In particular, 86% said that the results will open up new undergraduate or postgraduate study options for them, and at least 91% felt that the results will create new employment opportunities for them in India or abroad. Agreement was somewhat higher for study options and employment opportunities in the B1/B2 level course learners as their higher level of ability naturally opens up further opportunities for them.

Learner comments support the quantitative (survey) findings above and show that learners recognise the link between a Cambridge English statement of results and employability prospects: 'Very good effect in my future professional plan [to] take a good job'; 'it [will] really help get a good opportunity'; 'English knowledge will increase my employability in the job market.'

Figure 5: Learner perceptions about employability prospects



Trainers' view

Reflecting learners' views, the majority of trainers also thought that the Cambridge English assessment results will help learners move closer to their professional, academic and employment goals in India or abroad. Typical comments in the interviews show that trainers are of the view that the SCOPE course and Cambridge English assessments enhance learner confidence in the job market: 'The valued certificate with knowledge of practical English will certainly increase pupils' confidence of representing themselves everywhere'; 'they will be able to plan their field of studies better, their general knowledge and vocabulary will be on par with others, they will be more confident in their interviews.'

Trainers also perceive the SCOPE programme as credible to employers, as the following comment reveals: 'The programme has only been running for a short space of time but already it is credible and accepted by employment agencies.'

At the same time, however, they also expressed the opinion that SCOPE needs to make the programme's links with employment requirements clearer. For example, one of the comments indicated: 'The impact on job prospects at A1 is marginal. . . . It would be good if it could be linked to employment. A2 is fine for a security guard, for example.' This view also ties in with previous comments by policy makers, employers and trainers about the need to strengthen the programme's connection with industry in general.

Discussion

The results above indicate that both learners and trainers perceive a positive link between Cambridge English assessments and learner employability opportunities. One point to note, however, is that although trainers commented positively on the SCOPE programme's credibility to employers, they were of the view that the programme's levels should be more explicitly aligned with employment requirements. Such information could form part of the information dissemination plan about the programme and its aims.

Learner performance

Learners' views

Learners were invited to comment on improvements they had noticed in their English language ability as a result of attending a SCOPE course. Their responses indicated that improvements were seen in the following areas (in order of highest rating): reading, speaking, writing, grammar, vocabulary and listening.

When asked whether the course had met their expectations, a number of responses indicated that learners felt the course had helped them improve their speaking skills in particular. Typical comments included: 'It provides basic knowledge, and helps in speaking'; 'I speak English better than past'; 'because it helps me speak English'; 'because after learning I can communicate easily.'

Trainers' views

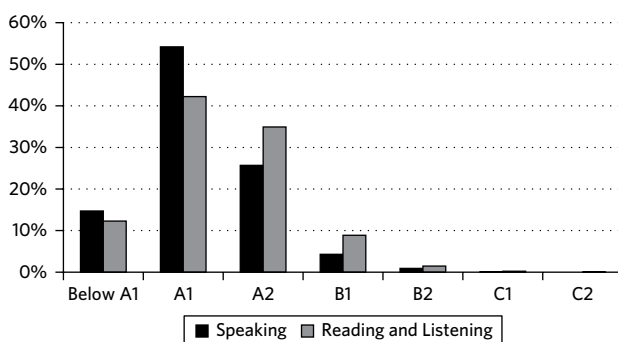
Trainers were asked about improvements they have seen in learners' language ability as a result of attending the SCOPE course. A positive pattern of response was received for all skills and areas. The highest proportion of the most positive responses ('improved a lot') was received by reading (49%), followed by listening (43%), speaking (42%), writing (40%), grammar (39%) and vocabulary (36%). This response was lowest for pronunciation (29%) and fluency (23%). This is a point to note, which we will return to when discussing the learner test results.

Learners' score data

Entire population score data (2011 to 2013)

Turning to the results, Figure 6 shows the CEFR levels achieved by all SCOPE cohorts taking Reading and Listening and Speaking Online from 2011 to 2013 in percentages (N = 123,656 in CEPT Reading and Listening; N = 16,918 in BULATS Reading and Listening; N = 145,919 in BULATS Speaking). Over this period, the majority of SCOPE learners (77% in Reading and Listening and 80% in Speaking) achieved an A1 or A2 level. (This finding is consistent with the profile of the sample of SCOPE learners who participated in the survey, 96% of whom reported that they were attending an A1 or A2 level course.) Over all candidates from 2011 to 2013, Reading and Listening performance was slightly higher than Speaking performance, with a higher proportion of candidates achieving Levels A2 and above.

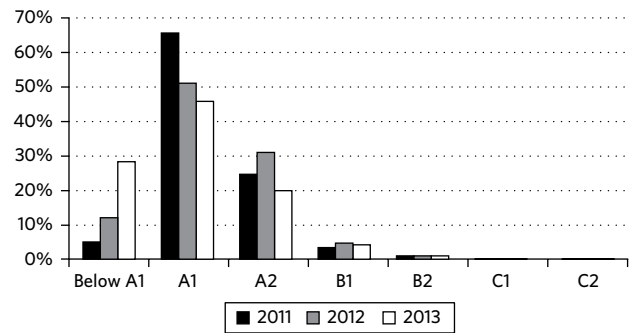
Figure 6: Reading and Listening and Speaking performance (all candidates 2011 to 2013)



Comparing performance over the three years, Reading and Listening CEFR distributions appear very similar, whereas Speaking CEFR distributions differ somewhat, with a significantly greater than expected percentage of candidates achieving below Level A1 in the most recent year, 2013 (28%), compared to 2011 (5%) and 2012 (12%) – see Figure 7.

To explore this difference further (why Speaking performance appears to decline somewhat in 2013), we examined the demographic information candidates supply when taking the assessments (e.g. age, academic

Figure 7: Speaking CEFR level by test year (all candidates 2011 to 2013)



qualification, reason for taking the assessment, etc.). Our investigation showed that there may be changes in the demographics and motivation of the SCOPE cohort:

- Looking at the variable of university/college qualification, we see that for both Reading and Listening and Speaking the proportion of candidates with a university or college qualification decreases notably over the three test years. For Reading and Listening the proportion decreases from 84% of candidates in 2011 to 45% of candidates in 2013. For Speaking it decreases from 74% in 2011 to 43% in 2013.
- What is also notable is that although Speaking performance differs only slightly between the two groups, a higher percentage of those without a university or college qualification are achieving below A1 level (20%), compared to those with a qualification (11%). The corresponding difference in Reading and Listening is less pronounced (15% vs. 13%).
- In terms of candidate test-taking reasons, it was noted that between 2011 and 2012 there is a sharp decrease in the percentage of candidates quoting the reason for taking the assessments as 'to improve job prospects' (from 47% to 17% for Reading and Listening; and from 50% to 15% for Speaking). Conversely, there is a sharp increase in the percentage of candidates quoting the reason 'to find out language level' (39% to 77% for Reading and Listening; and 35% to 79% for Speaking).

These findings, in combination with the fact that 56% of the 2013 survey respondents reported they were taking assessment only (under the OAS scheme) and trainers' views from the interview data that the majority of learners take the assessments without having followed a course, may indicate a change in the demographic and motivation of the whole SCOPE population. This is information which SCOPE is advised to take into account when planning subsequent actions about the programme.

Survey respondents' score data

The test scores of the group of learners who answered the survey were also analysed. Note, however, that whereas most of the respondents could be matched to their Reading and Listening (CEPT) data, the numbers of respondents who matched to the Speaking (BULATS) data were very low (less than 10% of the survey respondents). Any findings from the Speaking data should therefore be interpreted with caution.

Tables 5a and 5b show the CEFR levels achieved by the survey respondents taking CEPT Reading and Listening and BULATS Speaking Online (N = 1,527 in CEPT; N = 172 in BULATS). Like the entire population from 2011 to 2013, the

Table 5a: CEPT Reading and Listening performance (survey respondents)*

Test	CEFR level	Frequency	Percent
CEPT Reading and Listening	Below A1	245	16
	A1	705	46
	A2	490	32
	B1 or above	87	6
	Total	1,527	100

Table 5b: BULATS Speaking performance (survey respondents)*

Test	CEFR level	Frequency	Percent
BULATS Speaking	Below A1	42	24
	A1	80	46
	A2 or above	50	29
	Total	172	100

*Note: Some percentages do not sum due to rounding.

majority of the survey group (78% in Reading and Listening and 75% in Speaking) achieved an A1 or A2 level.

Of interest here is the comparison of performance between learners who followed a SCOPE course (PPP) and those who did not (OAS). For all skills, performance appears higher for the SCOPE course group. The results of a chi-square analysis show that in CEPT Reading and Listening a higher than expected proportion of the SCOPE course group achieved A2 level and above and a lower than expected proportion of the OAS group achieved B1 level or above (see Table 6). The reverse is the case for performance below A1 level. Similarly, in BULATS Speaking a higher proportion of the PPP group (30%) versus the OAS group (10%) achieved A2 level or above (see Table 7). (Note that although there is a significantly different pattern of results between the groups in Speaking, no specific values are significantly different from those expected.)

Discussion

There are a few points that merit further discussion from the results presented above. The first one is skill improvement because of course attendance. The trainers thought that the skills that had improved most were reading and listening,

Table 6: CEPT Reading and Listening by SCOPE course (PPP) versus assessment only (OAS) (survey respondents)*

Test	CEFR level	PPP	OAS
CEPT Reading and Listening	Below A1	13%	20%
	A1	44%	52%
	A2	34%	24%
	B1 or above	9%	3%
	Total	100%	100%

Table 7: BULATS Speaking by SCOPE course (PPP) versus assessment only (OAS) (survey respondents)*

Test	CEFR level	PPP	OAS
BULATS Speaking	Below A1	21%	45%
	A1	49%	45%
	A2 or above	30%	10%
	Total	100%	100%

*Note: Some percentages do not sum due to rounding.

whereas the areas that received the lowest proportion of agreement for improvement were fluency and pronunciation. The perceptions of trainers are supported by the results for 2013 which show that learners, on average, are performing somewhat better in reading and listening compared to speaking.

Learners reported that reading and speaking were the skills that had improved a lot as a result of attending the course. Learner comments also indicated that speaking was the skill that had particularly benefited from course attendance. This view is substantiated when looking at the performance between those learners who attended a course (PPP model) vs. those who did not (OAS model) in the 2013 survey. On average, the PPP group performed better in all skills but the difference is more pronounced in speaking. (Note, however, that the Speaking data come from a small number of learners and any interpretation of results ought to be treated with caution.)

Some of the comments provided by learners which show a realisation of the link between course attendance and improvement in speaking could be used when raising stakeholders' awareness of the value of the SCOPE programme and the training courses in particular.

The second point that is worth discussing here relates to the changing demographic and motivation when looking at the entire SCOPE population over the last three years. In terms of demographics, there is a notable decrease in the percentage of SCOPE learners who hold a university or college qualification. In terms of motivation, the percentage of SCOPE learners who take the assessments 'to improve job prospects' has substantially decreased and conversely the percentage of SCOPE learners who take the assessments 'to find out their language level' has significantly increased. The latter ties in with the 2013 survey, where 56% of respondents stated that they were following the assessment-only option (OAS training model), the main purpose of which is to ascertain English language levels. SCOPE may wish to collaborate with Cambridge English to investigate these changes further to inform future decisions within the programme.

Summary of key findings and recommendations

Positive effects/impacts

- The majority of learners who attended a SCOPE course and most trainers had generally very positive impressions. The overall perception was that the courses are at the right level for learners, the activities and feedback are helpful and, most importantly, both learners and trainers think that the courses increase motivation in learning English and confidence in using English.
- Cambridge English assessments are viewed as accurate measures of English language ability, as having a positive effect on learner employability prospects and as a quality assurance badge by employers.
- There is also an encouraging degree of buying-in from employers. The interview data show that employers value the programme while other stakeholders, such as trainers, believe that the programme is credible to employers. This

is also attested by the MoU signed between SCOPE and one of the corporations interviewed (a global KPO/BPO company) for recruitment purposes. In addition, Vadodara police intends to increase the number of police officers attending the SCOPE programme. Just before this paper went to press, the SCOPE management also brought another example of employer buying-in to our attention: the training carried out under the SCOPE scheme with bus drivers and conductors employed by the Gujarat State Road Transport Corporation (GSRTC) and people associated with the Tourism Corporation of Gujarat Limited (TCGL), i.e. cab owners, taxi and auto drivers, tour operators, front desk executives, tourist guides, hotel associations, waiters etc.

- According to policy makers, the SCOPE programme has already reached 'lakhs [hundreds of thousands] of learners'. The number of learners registered in the SCOPE programme reached 411,000 at the beginning of 2014, according to the SCOPE website.

Unintended effects/impacts

- The study revealed some changes in the demographic of the SCOPE population over the past three years. The number of learners with a university or college qualification, who take an assessment as part of the SCOPE programme, has decreased notably.
- The study also showed a potential change in the motivation of learners participating in the SCOPE programme. Over the past three years, the percentage of learners who state that they take the assessments to find out their language level has significantly increased over learners who take the assessments to improve their job prospects. Comments also indicate that trainers think there are higher percentages of learners who register on the programme to find out and certify their language level than those who follow a course first to improve their level. This may be why in the 2013 impact survey there was a relatively high proportion of learners following the OAS model (i.e. taking an assessment only).
- A further unintended effect revealed by the study was the successful co-operation between SCOPE and local employers and institutions which led to securing of donor funding for learner participation in the SCOPE programme. The case referred to is the sponsoring of the Vadodara police personnel not by the local police department but by a third party – Oil and Natural Gas Commission in this case.

Recommendations

- Dissemination of information about the programme, particularly to employers and learners.
- Further promotion of the SCOPE training courses.
- SCOPE and Cambridge to jointly promote the benefits of the programme.
- Encourage learners to take the training programme and continue with the programme at higher levels.

- Strengthen the teaching of speaking at A1/A2 levels and ensure that there are opportunities for learners to speak English in class.
- More course and test practice materials.
- Enhance links with employers to ensure that the English language standards required by the employers are met.

Conclusion

The study findings illustrated an overall positive impact of the programme on all stakeholders involved, revealed unintended impacts that may be worth sustaining, and identified areas that warrant improvement. It also highlighted stakeholders' very positive perceptions of the role of the programme's international examinations in providing a quality assurance badge and enhancing the learners' employability prospects. We hope that these findings will inform SCOPE's decision-making for maintaining conditions for success and implementing improvements but also feed into a wider plan for the extension of the programme within Gujarat and its replication in other states across India.

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Supporting national education reform: The Cambridge Malaysia Baseline Project

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Project background and aims

Education is widely recognised as a fundamental contributor to social and economic growth as it plays a key role in fostering social justice and equal opportunity. Many countries worldwide, therefore, are focusing on nationwide educational reform in order to improve standards of achievement and make their education system more effective, which will lead to the development of social and economic capital (Tiongson 2005). Malaysia has embarked on an ambitious nationwide education reform and in October 2011 the Ministry of Education in Malaysia launched a review of the education system in order to develop a new National Education Blueprint – the *Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013–2025* (Ministry of Education Malaysia 2013; referred to as the Education Blueprint in the rest of this article). The Education Blueprint presents the aspirations and goals of the reform, which aim to improve the access, quality, equity, unity and efficiency of the educational system and at the individual level, improve students' basic knowledge, thinking skills, leadership skills, bilingual proficiency, ethics, and spirituality and national identity. The Education Blueprint provides a realistic analysis of the strengths and areas for development of the national education system in relation to these aims and outlines a reform trajectory.

Proficiency in English (i.e. bilingual proficiency) plays an important role in the Malaysia educational reform, largely due to the increased importance of English as a global language and its role as a *lingua franca*. One key goal of the Malaysian national educational reform is to ensure that 'every child will be, at minimum, operationally proficient in Bahasa Malaysia as the national language and language of unity, and in English as the international language of communication' (Education Blueprint 2013:E-10). An essential starting point for such a goal is to establish a reliable baseline against which future growth and targets can be set. In 2013, the Ministry commissioned Cambridge English Language Assessment to provide such a baseline by undertaking a comprehensive evaluation of the learning, teaching and assessment of the English language in Malaysian schools from pre-school to pre-university. Cambridge English Language Assessment was well placed to undertake such an ambitious project due to its expertise in investigating the impact of examinations and its belief in the principle of 'impact by design', which starts from the premise that assessment and education systems should be designed from the outset with the potential to achieve positive impact (Saville 2012). Additionally, Cambridge English had established experience in education

reform through investigating educational standards in a range of international contexts in a comprehensive and evidence-based manner before attempts were made to improve those standards.

The aim of the 2013 Baseline Project was to provide the Ministry with a clear, evidence-based profile of how the Malaysian English language education system is currently performing against internationally recognised standards linked to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, Council of Europe 2001), which could be used to facilitate data-driven decisions on future targets and the means of achieving the aspirations identified in the Education Blueprint.

The key aims of the project were to:

- benchmark students at different school grades against international standards in terms of English language proficiency, overall and by individual language skills (reading, listening, writing, speaking)
- benchmark teachers against international standards in terms of:
 - English language proficiency, overall and by language skills (reading, listening, writing, speaking)
 - teaching knowledge
 - teaching practice
- explore the role of a range of factors such as the contexts of and attitudes towards learning, school location, school type, class specialisation and gender in language proficiency
- review current national curricula, assessments and learning materials.

The following article describes the comprehensive analysis of the national English language education system in Malaysia in order to create a baseline from which comparisons to international standards can be made, achievement gaps identified, ways to improve performance identified and future targets set.

Conducting the project

A mixed methods approach

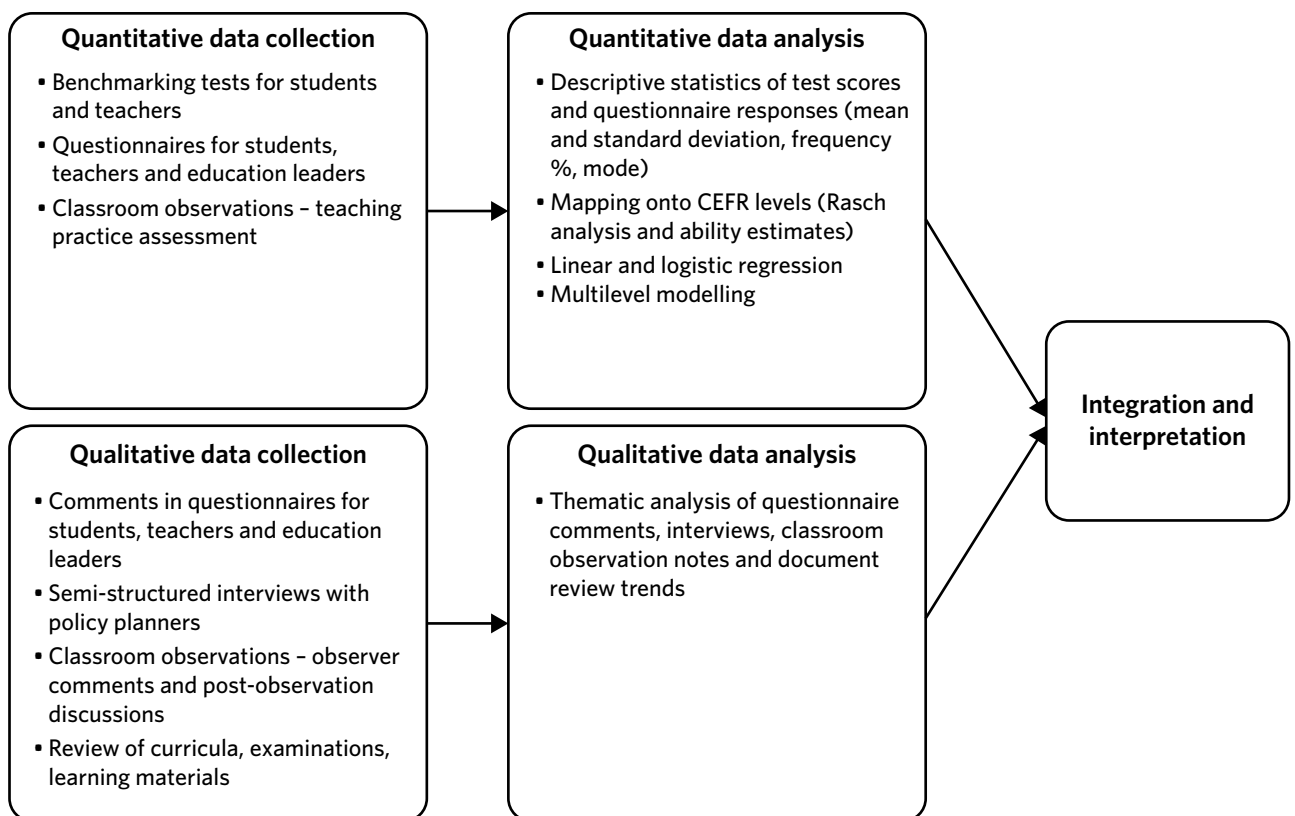
A premise recognised in educational reform is that 'a key characteristic of the educational process is that student learning is influenced by many small factors rather than a few large ones' (Chapman, Weidman, Cohen and Mercer 2005:526). Therefore, any recommendations made in the project needed to be based on an in-depth understanding of

several inter-connected aspects of the educational system in order to ensure they are achievable and to reduce the chances of any negative unintended consequences. As a result, the project involved the gathering and investigating of different types of information which provide insights into various aspects of this complex project, and focused not only on measuring English language levels of students and teachers, but also on investigating the context of learning, the availability and quality of resources, and stakeholder perceptions.

A mixed methods approach formed the basis of the study and a convergent parallel design (Creswell 2009) was chosen due to its value in collecting qualitative and quantitative data strands in a parallel fashion and in relatively short timeframes. Within the convergent parallel mixed methods design, quantitative and qualitative data strands are collected concurrently and independently, are analysed separately and are then integrated to inform the final overall interpretation and discussion of results. This approach allowed Cambridge English to build a rich picture of the current situation with regard to learning, teaching and assessment in Malaysia, as well as enhancing the validity of the findings and recommendations.

Figure 1 presents an overview of the data collection and data analysis procedures which formed the backbone of the project.

Figure 1: Research design



Project participants

A total of 943 primary and secondary schools were selected (approximately 10% of schools in Malaysia) using a stratified sampling methodology. The students and teachers in those schools were intended to be representative of the overall target population. All 16 states and federal territories in the country were represented, and schools were selected from

urban, rural and remote locations, ensuring a geographically representative sample. In primary schools, there was an added dimension in that alongside Bahasa Malaysian schools, there were also schools that taught in Tamil and Chinese. These schools were proportionally represented in the sample as well.

In total, 20,402 students took a Reading and Listening test, and from that group 9,921 were assessed for Writing, 1,372 for Speaking and 17,104 students completed a questionnaire.

A total of 424 teachers took a Reading and Listening test, with 266 taking a Writing test and 42 a Speaking test; 600 took the *Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT)*, 78 were observed while teaching and 1,290 completed a teacher questionnaire.

Forty-one Heads of Panel/Head Teachers were interviewed, 31 of them completed questionnaires and four Ministry officials were interviewed.

In addition, 14 Speaking Examiners, four Classroom Observers and a local Ministry of Education task force were involved in the successful implementation and completion of the project. Photo 1 shows Ministry officials and speaking examiners en route to one of the participating schools in Kelantan.

Data collection instruments

A range of instruments was used to allow the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data. They comprised:

- **Benchmarking English language tests for students and teachers:** Tests covering CEFR Levels pre-A1 to C2 and aimed at different age groups (i.e. pre-school, primary Year 6, secondary Form 3, 5 and 6 and teachers), which aimed

Photo 1: Speaking Examiners and Ministry officials en route to one of the participating schools (Kelantan)



at providing information on language proficiency in terms of Reading, Listening, Writing and Speaking as measured against the CEFR.

- **Benchmarking Teaching Knowledge Test for teachers:** Intended to provide a measure of knowledge of and familiarity with teaching knowledge concepts in an objectively scored test.
- **Student, teacher and Head of Panel/Head Teacher questionnaires:** Aimed at gathering stakeholder perceptions of and attitudes towards English language learning, teaching and assessment in Malaysia.
- **Classroom observations and post-observation discussions:** Intended to gather in-depth information on teaching competence and performance for a smaller sub-set of the selected sample.
- **Semi-structured interviews with policy planners and senior school administrators:** Focused on exploring perceptions of the review project and expected outcomes, as well as views on curriculum, textbooks, examinations and teaching practice.
- **Curricula, textbooks and examinations review:** Intended to investigate issues such as the relationship between standards, curricula, textbooks and examinations and the CEFR; information on the extent to which the different documents complement each other and reflect latest trends in learning, teaching and assessment, e.g. student-centred learning and teaching, learning-oriented assessment, communicative-ability assessment.

Photos 2 and 3 capture elements of the data collection and show student work during a classroom observation as well as a Cambridge English observer and a participating teacher in discussion following a classroom observation.

Data analysis

The mixed methods research design underlying this project involved both qualitative and quantitative analyses, which comprised:

- **CEFR level mapping:** Rasch analysis and ability estimates.
- **Descriptive statistics:** To provide an overall picture of CEFR language level, teaching knowledge and stakeholder perceptions, as well as the amount of variability within each group. The analysis focused on the cohort as a whole (e.g.

Photo 2: Student work captured during a classroom observation

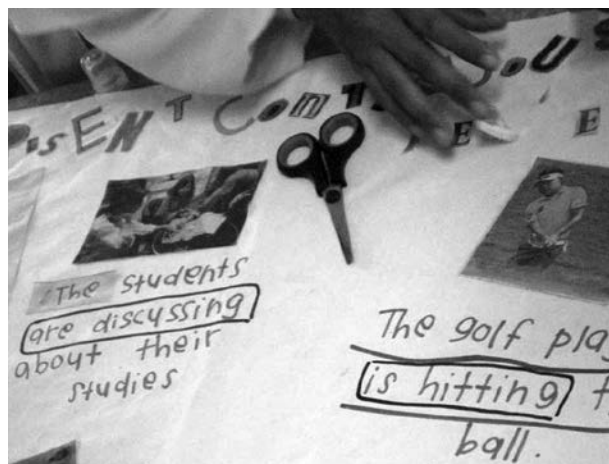


Photo 3: A Cambridge English observer and a participating teacher



all Form 5 students) and on specific variables within the cohort (e.g. Form 5 boys and girls; Form 5 urban, rural and remote students).

- **Linear and logistic regression:** To investigate which background and attitudinal factors play a role in high and low achievement.
- **Multilevel modelling:** To explore and confirm whether any attitudinal and background variables (e.g. student motivation, use of the internet) played a significant role in predicting the language level of students.
- **Chi-square test of independence:** To investigate whether the different variables of interest (e.g. state, location, gender, etc.) were related to questionnaire responses. Standardised residuals were also computed to identify which responses were contributing to the test of significance.
- **ANOVA and t-tests:** To explore whether there was any variance in the teacher group means for questionnaire composite measures. Questionnaire statements on similar topics (e.g. assessment practices, use of English in the classroom, etc.) were grouped together to determine whether teacher variables (e.g. experience, education, school type, etc.) influenced responses.
- **Thematic analysis:** Focused on grouping the wealth of collected in-depth observational, questionnaire, interview

and descriptive data into general thematic categories which indicated major issues brought up by the different stakeholders participating in the project.

The final analysis stage involved an integration of the findings from the language and *TKT*, the practices noted in the classroom observations and in the discussions with teachers, the themes from the questionnaires and from the interviews with senior administrators in schools and senior officials in the Ministry of Education, and the review of curricula, assessment and teaching materials.

Project outcomes

The completion of the project was marked by the delivery of three reports: an Executive Summary, a Results Report and a Technical Report.

The Executive Summary and Results reports provided information on student English language proficiency, with a focus on the overall and by-skill performance of the five school grades of interest and the attitudinal and background factors which play a role in English language achievement. The results from the baseline study indicated a range of student language proficiency. As expected in Malaysia, some students in Forms 5 and 6 were found to achieve high levels of proficiency. However, the proportion of students achieving the CEFR C1 and C2 levels was lower than expected. Furthermore, the results indicated that a significant proportion of students in the system are left behind and never progress beyond a basic user level of English. Interestingly, Speaking emerged as the weakest skill for students at all school grades. This is most likely due to a range of reasons including insufficient opportunities to practise in and out of the classroom and the strong emphasis on reading and writing over listening and speaking found in the reviewed national curricula, assessments and learning materials. The account of the student performance of the cohorts overall was supplemented by an investigation of performance based on key variables and comparisons between them, such as: states/federal territories; urban, rural and remote location; school types; gender; class specialisation. One of the most striking findings to emerge was the achievement gap across students at the same school grade. This achievement gap was pronounced in terms of location of the school, with students in remote and rural areas consistently performing worse than their urban counterparts. A further gap in achievement, which was especially pronounced in Forms 3 and 5, was based on gender, with female students performing significantly better than their male classmates. An achievement gap related to students' subject specialism was also found. In Forms 5 and 6 students in Science specialisation classes were found to perform significantly better than their classmates in Arts, Vocational and Religious class specialisations. The identification of such achievement gaps is vital in providing the evidence required to implement educational reform that is effective in promoting social justice and equal opportunity.

Findings were also presented on teacher English language proficiency, teaching knowledge and teaching practice. In each case, performance overall was given, followed by comparisons based on key variables such as urban, rural and remote location, and primary/secondary school. The vast majority of teachers achieved CEFR Levels B1 and above.

Although many teachers achieved high levels of proficiency, a significant number were found to be below minimum required levels. Speaking was again the weakest skill for most teachers. Importantly, the test performance findings were integrated with the findings on attitudinal and background variables which play a role in teacher attainment and enabled the identification of achievement gaps related to school location and school stage. Achievement gaps emerged indicating that teachers from urban schools performed consistently better in all four skills, as compared to their colleagues in rural and remote locations. Teachers in secondary schools have higher levels of English than their primary school colleagues. In terms of teaching practice, some examples of excellence were observed throughout the participating schools. At the same time, classroom observers noted that although teachers were uniformly strong in establishing a good rapport with students, they were generally much weaker in planning, managing and monitoring learning. In some cases, their limited language ability and/or limited skill in using graded language suitable for their students was negatively impacting their effectiveness. The following comments from an observer and a Head of Panel illustrate this:

'The teacher is held back by her language skills. Her poor grammar and vocabulary and control of prosodic features lead to inaccurate examples and modelling.' (Observer)

'A lot of teachers have not mastered the language, so they are not able to deliver lessons confidently and accurately.' (Urban secondary school, Head of Panel)

The integration of test data, attitudinal and contextual data, including open-ended comments from the teacher questionnaire, interviews with Heads of Panel/Head Teachers and Ministry of Education officials, and extended feedback from the classroom observers provided an in-depth picture of the current educational attainment in English proficiency and factors which impact on it. Specifically, the findings illustrated how a range of factors such as school culture, teaching resources and teacher training and professional development can shape the learning environment, which in turn can influence instructional quality and learning outcomes. The findings indicated that although teachers like teaching English they are overwhelmed by administration. Teachers stated that they want more professional development; for example, they need differentiation strategies in order to better support learners in mixed-ability classes. The questionnaire responses also suggested that parents need support to participate more fully in their child's education. Furthermore, improved internet access and more ICT resources were found to be required.

A review of key policy-setting documents which shape the learning, teaching and assessment in classrooms was also provided in the report, with a discussion of current curricula, learning materials and examinations. Finally, recommendations based on the mixed methods findings were provided, with suggestions for ways forward.

The Technical Report provided detailed information on the project, including sampling, project participants, instrument development, data analysis procedures and significance testing output.

The successful completion of the project was supported by the collaborative efforts of the Ministry and school

teams working alongside a Cambridge English project team consisting of members with a broad range of expertise and experience in the fields of English language assessment, curricula development, teacher training and development, primary and secondary education, sampling, research methodology, data analysis, operational delivery and processing, and educational reform.

Recommendations

The comprehensive set of findings of the Cambridge Malaysia Baseline Project formed the basis of recommendations for further action (Cambridge English 2014). The three main strands of the project – students, teachers and curricula, assessments and learning materials – are inevitably linked in a common ‘ecological system’, where changes to one affect the others. It was important, therefore, for Cambridge English to provide recommendations which address the complex system of learning, teaching, assessment, materials and policy. Those recommendations related to all three strands of the project and included suggestions for benchmarking language learning to international standards, revising primary and secondary curricula, examinations and assessments.

The recommendations formed the basis for an integrated solution which targeted a wide range of aspects of language policy going beyond the Baseline findings, such as:

- language policy and strategy
- curriculum reform
- materials and resources
- assessment and certification
- teacher development

- programme implementation
- evaluation and impact analysis.

The proposed integrated solution was designed to create the best possible conditions for learning to occur and to assist the Ministry of Education in making the aspirations set out in the Education Blueprint a reality. This would, in turn, provide the young people of Malaysia with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs to enable them to become global citizens of the 21st century.

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Impact of Cambridge English: Key for Schools on young learners' English learning: Voices from students and parents in Beijing, China

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Introduction

Cambridge English: Key for Schools, also known as *Key English Test (KET) for Schools* (*KET for Schools* hereafter), is specifically designed for school pupils aged between 11 and 14 (Papp and Nicholson 2011). As a basic level qualification set at A2 level on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR; Council of Europe 2001), *KET for Schools* demonstrates that pupils can use everyday English at a basic level (retrieved from www.CambridgeEnglish.org). The examination was administered in China for the first time in 2009 and, since

then, *KET for Schools* candidature has grown significantly (retrieved from www.fltrp.com). Against the backdrop of increasingly more teenagers studying abroad (retrieved from www.fltrp.com) and the English test policy reforms in Beijing in 2013 (which are intended to alleviate students' workload), *KET for Schools* has become one of the most authoritative tests of young learners' English proficiency in Beijing. Owing to its international recognition and the comprehensiveness of assessment, *KET for Schools* is being acknowledged by increasingly more school-aged students, their parents and English training institutions (retrieved from www.fltrp.com).

Given that the test is designed to motivate young learners and leave a positive impact on their learning, two collaborative teams, one from the Research Centre of Language, Cognition and Language Application in Chongqing University, China, and the other from the Research and Validation Group of Cambridge English Language Assessment, UK, set out to explore the impact of *KET for Schools* and the factors contributing to the test's impact. As a follow up to Gu and Saville's (2012) paper on parents' views of *KET for Schools* and *Cambridge English: Preliminary for Schools (PET for Schools)*, this paper reports on a different aspect of the same 2011 pilot case study. The main focus is on learners' views, which are triangulated with those of their parents in order to arrive at a more rounded insight into the impact of *KET for Schools* on young learners.

In spite of the great progress made in the domain of impact research, there is arguably a lack of balance in the analysis of different groups of stakeholders (Liu and Gu 2013). Although students are the ultimate stakeholders of any assessment (including *KET for Schools*), they have been less researched compared with other stakeholders in the previous impact studies (Liu and Gu 2013). In light of this, the main purpose of the present study is to understand pupils' views on the impact that *KET for Schools* may have on their own English language learning. Considering that *KET for Schools* candidates are young learners whose views may be difficult to ascertain (Alderson and Clapham 1992) and that parents have been found to play a significant role in their children's English language learning (De Fraja, Oliveria and Zanchi 2010, Gu and Saville 2012), parents' perspectives on *KET for Schools'* impact are also investigated to better understand test impact on young learners.

The context of EFL teaching in China

With the process of globalisation, English has become a world language and the starting age to learn English has been decreasing worldwide (Graddol 2013). In China, the government established a national policy in 2001 whereby children in state-funded schools were required to learn a foreign language from Grade 3 (9 years old) in primary school. Nowadays, English is a compulsory subject from Grade 3 in most state-funded schools.

However, for a long time, the focus of traditional English teaching in China has been on vocabulary and grammar, due to which the major teaching materials are confined to textbooks, which are compiled in China and recommended for use by educational authorities. Moreover, test-orientated teaching has played a dominant role. Learning English for tests has been regarded as the main purpose of English teaching and learning by many teachers, students, parents and even school administrators. This is because passing an English proficiency test is deemed to be closely related to one's life-long development, which is why students are often under great test pressure. Students are provided with a massive number of test-oriented exercises, particularly listening and reading tasks. Correspondingly, they are more likely to learn English for the purpose of reciting vocabulary and doing sample tests in order to acquire higher test scores, rather than gaining exposure to authentic materials and using the

language for communication purposes. This is likely to result in 'test score inflation' (Chyn 2002) rather than progress in communicative skills.

Test impact: Students and parents

Since Alderson and Wall (1993) drew attention to the complexities of washback, an increasing number of impact studies in the field of language assessment have been carried out (e.g. Cheng 2005, Green 2007, Gu 2007, Hawkey 2006, Liu and Gu 2013, Qi 2004, Saville 2010, Wall 2005, Wall and Horák 2011, Xie and Andrews 2013, Yang, Liu and Gu 2013, Zhan and Andrews 2014). The available studies have demonstrated the dynamic nature of test impact on learners. Both positive and negative impacts have been attested. For example, in mainland China, Fan and Yu (2009) studied the impact of the Intermediate Interpretation Test (Phase II) on students using questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. They found both positive and negative effects of the test on students and their learning: the positive impact manifests in students' enhanced motivation and enthusiasm towards English learning, their broadened learning content (e.g. more reading of newspapers) and methods (e.g. more practice on oral presentation and interpretation), as well as their positive perceptions of the 'scientificity' of test design and the test's promotion of their language abilities; the negative impact lies in students' narrowed and test-oriented learning content (e.g. concentrating on coaching materials) and strategies (e.g. rote learning and test-specific practice), as well as test anxiety (Liu and Gu 2013).

Furthermore, tests may have different amounts and types of washback on some learners compared with others, as hypothesised by Alderson and Wall (1993). For example, in Hong Kong, Andrews, Fullilove and Wong (2002) investigated the washback of the 'Use of English' oral examination on students' spoken English performance. Their analysis of students' spoken output reveals that the nature of washback effects varied from student to student, with improved performance in some cases, and with only a superficial level of learning (e.g. familiarisation with the exam format and memorisation of exam-specific strategies and formulaic phrases) in others. Andrews et al concluded that non-test factors such as individual differences among students may have interfered with the process of washback.

Test impact on learners may be unpredictable, as pointed out by Stoneman (2006), and this unpredictability might arise from the lack of knowledge about learners' beliefs and expectations in a testing situation. This is why, as Green (2006:114) suggests in an early study of learner expectations, learners' views should not be ignored in impact studies.

The available impact studies on learners have mostly been conducted from the perspectives of the learners, either through student questionnaires (e.g. Ashton, Salamoura and Diaz 2012, Chambers, Elliott and Hou 2012, Gu, Khalifa, Yan and Tian 2012, Salamoura, Hamilton and Octor 2012, Shohamy, Donitsa-Schmidt and Ferman 1996) or interviews (e.g. Gu 2014, Khalifa, Nguyen and Walker 2012). Regardless of the diversity of research methodologies employed in these studies, it is worth noting that drawing conclusions about learners' views is not an easy job since learners often

contradict one another or may have no views at all (see Alderson and Clapham 1992). Views of younger candidates, as Rea-Dickins (1997:306) points out, are among the most difficult to make sense of and to use, and thus should be taken seriously (Pollard, Thiessen and Filer 1997:1). Rea-Dickins (1997:306) further suggests that, as in other areas of life, it may be necessary to call on surrogate stakeholders, for example, parents, to speak on behalf of their children. Indeed, the significance of investigating parents' views on test impacts not only lies in this, but in their indispensable role in young learners' English learning (De Fraja et al 2010, Mulvenon, Stegman and Ritter 2005). Taking this into consideration, together with the fact that the candidates in the present study were young learners, a test taker survey was conducted as part of this study and parent interviews were carried out to get richer information about *KET for Schools'* impact on young learners. The key constructs under investigation included the impact of *KET for Schools* on learners' motivation, awareness of own strengths and weaknesses, English proficiency, as well as negative impacts including test anxiety and students' workload. Two research questions were addressed in this study:

1. What impact does *KET for Schools* have on test takers, from the perspectives of test takers and their parents?
2. Which factors contribute to the impact of *KET for Schools* on the test takers' learning of English?

Research method

Participants

The participants in the student survey were 340 candidates from Beijing, who had just taken *KET for Schools* at a Cambridge English administration centre. The interviews with the students' parents were conducted during the examination time while the parents were waiting for their children to take the exam. The time was quite limited and the interviews were voluntary. Only 20 parents were interviewed; among them, 15 were mothers, four were fathers, and one was a grandmother.

Instruments

A questionnaire for test takers and a protocol for interviewing parents were designed and administered in Chinese. They were also translated into English to enable their validation through expert judgement. They were validated through expert judgement and informal pilot interviews with young English learners and their parents at four different English training institutions in China.

Almost all survey questions contained a 4-point Likert-scale of agreement or frequency. The questionnaire consisted of two sections:

- Section 1: Demographic information such as gender, age, school and grade, types of school, and the age at which the student began to learn English.
- Section 2: Views on *KET for Schools* impact including learner motivation; awareness of own strengths and weaknesses; English proficiency; test anxiety; and workload.

The interviews with parents were employed for two main purposes: to triangulate the students' questionnaire data

on views of *KET for Schools'* impact and to explore in-depth information about the contributing factors to the impact. Therefore, the interviews followed the same structure as Section 2 of the student questionnaire and were semi-structured.

Data collection

The student questionnaire was completed in classrooms with the support of the test administration centre after candidates handed in their test papers. A total of 340 valid questionnaires were returned with a return rate of approximately 99%. The interview was conducted during the exam period when parents were waiting for their children outside. Altogether, 20 parents were interviewed, each interview lasting between 5 and 8 minutes. Three interviews were audio-recorded (with parents' permission) for detailed analysis, and the remaining ones were documented through note-taking alone.

The data was collected in December 2011 when *KET for Schools* was administered in Beijing, China.

Results and discussion

Student profile

Table 1 shows that, out of the total number of 340 students who completed the questionnaire, 44% were male and 56% were female. A majority of candidates (62%) were between 11 and 14 years old, and the remaining 38% were younger than 10. All the candidates were school-aged students, most of whom (70%) were in primary school, and 30% were in junior middle school. A large number of primary school students were between Grade 4 and Grade 6, while only 3% of them were in early grades (from Grade 2 to Grade 3). Most of the junior middle school candidates (73%) were in their first year, while the remaining 27% were in the second year. Most investigated candidates fell within the age range targeted by *KET for Schools*, but about one third were younger than the targeted age group.

Among the participating candidates, 63% were from key schools with high-level educational infrastructure such as having multi-media classrooms and libraries, and highly qualified teachers who have received professional training, and 2% studied in foreign language schools where students could learn English in a richer foreign language environment, which means that our sample was mainly drawn from schools where students receive high-quality education. The results of the questionnaire showed that 77% of the candidates began to learn English under the age of 6 and 23% of the students began to learn English between the ages of 7 and 10. According to a national education policy issued by the Ministry of Education in 2001, children in state-funded schools are required to learn a foreign language (mainly English) from Grade 3 (age 9) in primary school, instead of Grade 7 in junior middle school. Most of our sample began to learn English before being enrolled in primary school. This can probably be explained by the fact that Beijing is the capital, generally regarded as the political, economic and cultural centre of China, where parents who have received better education tend to be more aware of the role that

Table 1: Candidate information

Demographic information		Number (%)*
Gender	Male	151 (44%)
	Female	189 (56%)
Age	7 to 10	129 (38%)
	11 to 14	208 (62%)
School	Primary school	237 (70%)
	Junior middle school	103 (30%)
Types of school	Non-key school	108 (35%)
	Key school at the district or county level	82 (27%)
	Key school at the provincial or municipal level	83 (27%)
	Key school at the national level	27 (9%)
	School of foreign languages	7 (2%)
Age beginning to learn English	6 or less	251 (77%)
	7 to 10	76 (23%)

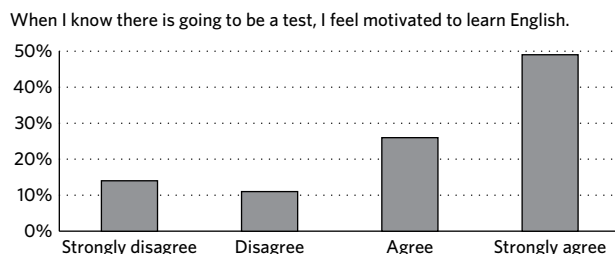
*Note: Numbers may not add up to 340 due to missing selections of some items in the questionnaire and percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

English plays in their children's future education and life-long development. Therefore, parents would not miss any opportunity to help children gain an advantage over others at a young age, including preparing them to learn English earlier than the nationally required age. This explanation is supported by Gu and Saville's impact study (2012) which investigated parents' views of *KET for Schools* and *PET for Schools* in China.

Perceived *KET for Schools* impact: Students and parents

Improve learner motivation

Figure 1 shows students' perceptions of the impact of *KET for Schools* on the improvement in their motivation to learn English. When Strongly agree (49%) and Agree (26%) responses are combined, it is evident that most students (75%) felt motivated to learn English when they knew they were going to be tested. About 25% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. These findings provide some evidence that *KET for Schools* mainly exerted a positive impact on students' learning motivation.

Figure 1: Impact on learner motivation

The positive impact was supported by parent interviews as more than half of the parents strongly believed that the exam had motivated their children to study English. As a grandmother of a Grade 4 pupil indicated, the test motivated her granddaughter to work harder since she would feel

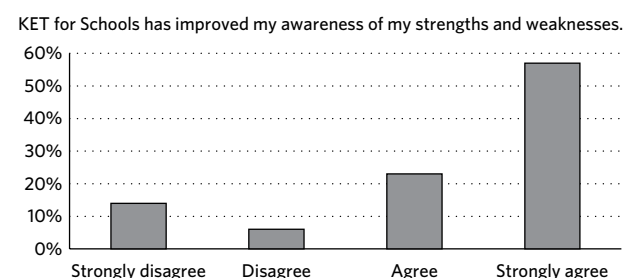
low self-esteem if she did not make anticipated progress. Another mother pointed out that *KET for Schools* offered a step-by-step approach to encourage students to learn, which ended up helping establish her child's confidence in English. Another factor which contributed to the positive impact was the test difficulty of *KET for Schools*. As a mother emphasised, this test, which was more difficult than the tests taken at schools, in return, encouraged their children to study harder. The positive impact on motivation was also attributed to teachers' teaching methods. One parent mentioned that their son became more interested in learning English because of the stimulating lessons given by *KET for Schools* trained teachers, and also because the teachers would award students with good performance pencils as gifts in class, which enhanced children's enthusiasm in English learning.

As for those students with negative attitudes towards *KET for Schools* impact on motivation, several possible reasons were found in the interviews with parents. One reason was that some students took *KET for Schools* because of parents' requirement rather than their own willingness. Another parent also worried that his son's strong motivation for English had decreased due to examination-oriented education. He indicated that his son had to give up the enjoyable way of learning English which he was used to, for example, learning English by watching movies, to get high scores required by his teachers. A mother pointed out that the different test format of *KET for Schools* from the usual tests taken in school made it difficult for her child to make the expected progress, which resulted in a decrease in her motivation to learn English. In addition, several parents mentioned that *KET for Schools* had exerted no impact on their children's motivation at all since their children had long been interested in English. Those students turned out to have generally excellent English proficiency, as indicated by the interviews.

Improve awareness of own strengths and weaknesses

Figure 2 displays students' perceptions of the impact of *KET for Schools* on improving their self-awareness of strengths and weaknesses. A majority of the students (around 80%) strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that *KET for Schools* helped them understand their progress, which indicated that the test mainly had a positive impact on improving awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses.

Parent interviews showed that about 65% of the parents believed that *KET for Schools* helped improve their children's awareness of strengths and weaknesses, which also verified

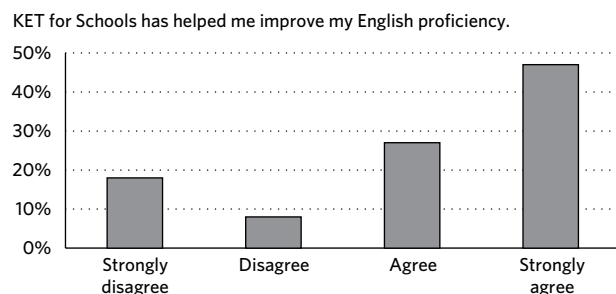
Figure 2: Impact on student self-awareness

the findings from students' questionnaire responses. A further exploration revealed that this positive test impact could be mainly attributed to the nature of *KET for Schools* as a comprehensive measurement instrument. *KET for Schools* as an international standardised test covers all four language skills (reading, listening, speaking and writing). This encourages candidates to practise all four skills while preparing for the examination. Therefore, parents generally expressed a belief that the examination measures students' language proficiency comprehensively. Compared with the usual tests taken in school which were mainly focused on reading and writing, *KET for Schools* offered a good opportunity for students to learn about their weakness in listening and speaking, as a father indicated. He emphasised that preparing for *KET for Schools* made his son aware of his weakness in speaking, and as a result, he invested more effort in improving this skill.

Improve English proficiency

Figure 3 demonstrates students' views of *KET for Schools* impact on their English language proficiency. Most students (around 74%) believe that their proficiency had improved as a result of preparing for *KET for Schools*. In contrast, approximately 26% of students did not believe that preparing for the test helped them improve their English language proficiency. In view of this, the key finding is that *KET for Schools* mainly had a positive impact on the improvement of students' English proficiency, from the perspective of the students themselves.

Figure 3: Impact on the improvement of English proficiency



Further evidence of this positive impact was found through parent interviews, as around 90% of the parents strongly believed that their children's English language proficiency had improved. Some students were reported to have made much progress, particularly in certain language skills. For example, a mother indicated that her child, who could only write single sentences before the test, learned to write short notes while preparing for the test. A possible reason for the positive test impact was the difficulty of *KET for Schools*. As a mother emphasised, her child, who was good at speaking and listening, began to pay more attention to reading since the difficulty level of the reading and writing section of *KET for Schools* was higher than that of the tests they took at school. As for those students who were already excellent in English, parent interviews indicated that *KET for Schools* preparation has strengthened their existing knowledge and skills.

The reasons for the disagreement with the statement that *KET for Schools* has helped improve one's English proficiency (strongly) were also explored through interviews with parents. One parent stressed that, given language learning was a process of accumulation, it was entirely possible that their child had been making progress all the time because he started learning English at the age of 3, long before he began preparing for *KET for Schools*. Therefore, the improvement of English proficiency might not necessarily be attributed to preparing for *KET for Schools* only. Another alternative explanation by a few parents was that students' proficiency was already higher than what *KET for Schools* aims to test. There was, therefore, no wonder that little improvement had been witnessed.

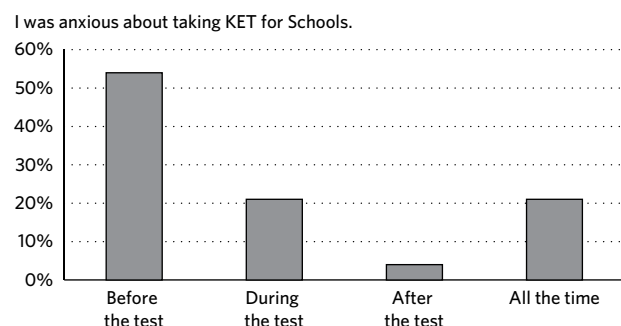
Negative impacts

Some negative impacts of *KET for Schools* on its test takers were also investigated in the study: test anxiety and increased workload.

According to the questionnaire, more than half of the students (approximately 53%) reported that they were anxious about taking the exam, while the remaining students felt no anxiety. As shown in Figure 4, among those who reported feeling anxious, around 54% of them stated that they obviously felt test anxiety before taking *KET for Schools*, while about 21% were reported to feel anxious during the test and another 21% mentioned that they were anxious about the test all the time. It could be concluded from the results that *KET for Schools* had created unintended test anxiety for students to some degree.

The findings from the interviews with parents revealed that motivations for taking the test influenced children's psychological status and test anxiety. Some students who were taking the test for the purpose of experiencing an international test were deemed by the parents to feel less or no pressure compared with those who took the test for fulfilling the teacher's or the school's requirements. It was suggested that students should be guided to establish proper motivation for taking *KET for Schools*.

Figure 4: Test pressure of taking KET for Schools



Another negative impact, as more than half of the parents reported, was the heavy workload resulting from *KET for Schools* preparation classes. A mother mentioned that her daughter used to have great interest in English and was fond of watching English movies or reading English stories during her free time. However, in order to

get well prepared for the test, the daughter had to spend more time finishing her homework assigned by *KET for Schools* teachers, such as reciting English passages or doing sample tests. The mother worried that the heavy workload might be counterproductive for children's enthusiasm in English learning. Moreover, most children were reported to take *KET for Schools* preparation classes in addition to training classes for other subjects. Thus, most children do not have time for fun and social or interpersonal skills development in such a test-oriented learning environment.

Gu and Saville (2012) also discussed this issue. They pointed out that the older the children, the more time they spend on extra-curricular training classes or learning sessions at home. This applies not just to English, but also to other compulsory subjects, such as Chinese and Maths, particularly a few months before the entrance exam to junior middle school.

Conclusions

The present study investigated the impact of *KET for Schools* on its test takers, from the perspectives of test takers themselves and their parents in Beijing, China, as well as the factors contributing to the impact of this test. The findings from the questionnaire and interview data revealed that *KET for Schools* had exerted a positive impact on young learners' motivation to learn English. The preparation for *KET for Schools* has helped increase students' awareness of their own learning strengths and weaknesses and has also resulted in an improvement of their English proficiency, in students' and parents' views. Interviews with parents further revealed that the main factors contributing to this positive impact were the following: the coverage of all four skills (reading, listening, writing and speaking) in *KET for Schools*, the step-by-step learning approach offered by the examination, the relatively higher test difficulty of the exam compared with the tests at school, encouragement of young learners' self-esteem, and the trained teachers' teaching methods. Nevertheless, the findings from both the student survey and the parent interviews demonstrated a noteworthy negative impact of the exam on young learners in terms of test anxiety and a heavy workload for test preparation. A further exploration showed that students' language proficiency and motivation for taking the test were the main two factors affecting test anxiety, while the increased heavy workload was linked to the whole learning environment in China, where most students are expected to attend extra classes or sessions at home. Taking all the results from both student surveys and parent interviews, we have gained a better understanding of the complexity of *KET for Schools* impact within the context of China.

A few limitations of the study still need to be addressed. Firstly, the study is a pilot case study of a longitudinal impact study of Cambridge English on Chinese learners and was conducted in 2011 in Beijing. Considering the rapid development of *KET for Schools* in Beijing, the results stand at the time of the research but need to be interpreted with caution. Secondly, the data

were obtained from Beijing, the capital city of China, so the results may only offer us a limited view of *KET for Schools* in China. Thirdly, test score data which could be used to support students' and parents' views were not collected at this stage.

Despite its limitations, the study is one of the few that have provided insight into the impact of a test for young learners from two major groups of stakeholders—students and parents. The study is also timely in investigating the impact of *KET for Schools* in China. It is hoped that this study merits further investigation within other contexts worldwide.

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Acknowledgements

This paper is funded by Chongqing University Postgraduates' Science and Innovation Fund (CDJXS12041103) and the Fundamental Research Funds for the Central Universities in China (No. 0205005201030). We would also like to thank the internal and external reviewers for their constructive feedback for the revision of the paper.

Measuring the effectiveness of Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT): Mexico case study

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Introduction

This article describes a small-scale study which Cambridge English Language Assessment undertook to understand the effects and consequences of the use of one of its teaching qualifications, *Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT)*, within the Mexican educational context. This investigation is in line with the concept of *impact by design*, which is based on the premise that 'assessment systems should be designed from the outset with the potential to achieve positive impacts and takes an ex ante approach to anticipating the possible consequences

of using the test in particular contexts' (Saville 2012:5).

Within an assessment context, the following are central to the concept of impact by design:

- the construct validation of the test in question and its delivery system (for *TKT* see Khalifa 2008)
- the context within which the assessment is used
- monitoring outcomes of such use over time
- the research methods used in investigating impact and the roles of the researchers.

The goal of this study is to address the above-mentioned points in the Mexican context.

Context

Mexico's education system and its evolution over the last half-century can be characterized by one defining feature: its expansive growth. From 1950 to 2000, total student enrolments in the formal education system – primary school through graduate studies – increased more than eightfold from 3.25 million students in 1950 to 28.22 million students in 2000. Secondary school enrolments in the public sector rose from 1.4 million in 1972 to 5.4 million in 2000. The percentage of the population with a ninth grade education rose from just 9 percent in 1970 to 41.4 percent in 1998, while in the 1990s alone, enrollment in the tertiary sector grew by 46 percent (Rolwing 2006).

This accelerated growth in enrolment was met by several educational reform initiatives such as standardised national admissions and exit examinations at different levels of education, teacher evaluation and professional development programmes, institutional evaluation and accreditation, and a set of rankings for university degree programmes.

This article focuses on teacher education and professional development. More specifically, it investigates the effectiveness of the Cambridge English *TKT*, which is used in Mexico by different institutions as an indicator of teachers' pedagogic knowledge according to international standards. Among these institutions are the Centro Nacional de Evaluación para la Educación Superior (CENEVAL) and the Dirección General de Acreditación, Incorporación y Revalidación (DGAIR) of the Secretaría de Educación Pública y Cultura (SEP), which have recognised and approved the use of *TKT* (performance at Bands 3 and 4) in gaining a degree from the Técnico Superior Universitario en Enseñanza del Inglés. Other uses of *TKT* in Mexico include the following:

- Some universities offering English Language Teaching (ELT) undergraduate degrees incorporate *TKT* in their programmes, e.g. the Universidad Autónoma de Baja California.
- SEP has been using *TKT* as a recruitment tool for teachers in public schools, including in the regions of Aguascalientes, Coahuila, Nuevo León, Sinaloa, and Sonora.
- An increasing number of schools in the private sector use *TKT* for recruiting suitably qualified teachers.
- In recent years *TKT* has come to serve as a 'foundation' for non-qualified teachers of English, and also as a stepping stone towards higher level Cambridge English qualifications such as the *In-Service Certificate in English Language Teaching (ICELT)*, the *Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (CELTA)* or the *Diploma in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (Delta)*.
- Major English Language Teaching publishers such as Macmillan, Pearson, McGraw Hill and Oxford University Press have been offering *TKT* preparation courses to key clients in Mexico and have provided funding for teachers to take *TKT* exams for these clients.

The study reported here sought to understand the effects and consequences which result from the extensive use of *TKT* within the Mexican educational context and society. Being a

small-scale study, it is an initial phase of this investigation. The following section provides an overview of *TKT* and examples of its adoption in contexts similar to Mexico, before the present study is discussed in more detail.

Cambridge English Teaching Knowledge Test

In May 2005, Cambridge English Language Assessment introduced *TKT* for teachers who would like to gain an international qualification recognising their experience, enhance their career opportunities by broadening their teaching experience into specialist areas, keep their teaching skills up to date, or for those who would like to enter the teaching profession and work in an English-medium environment (see Khalifa (2008) for an account of *TKT*'s development and validation).

The construct definition of the knowledge measured by *TKT* is best summarised in Tsui and Nicholson (1999) and in Tsui (2003) as follows:

- *subject matter knowledge*, i.e. knowledge of the concepts and terminology of a subject discipline; the understanding of the facts, concepts, substantive and syntactic structures of a subject discipline
- *general pedagogic knowledge*, i.e. knowledge of general principles (strategies, beliefs and practices) of teaching and learning which are applicable across subject disciplines
- *pedagogic content knowledge*, i.e. specialised knowledge of how to represent content/subject matter knowledge in diverse ways that students can understand (e.g. through examples, analogies)
- *knowledge of context*, i.e. knowledge of the social, cultural and institutional contexts in which teaching and learning takes place.

TKT is divided into separate core and specialist modules (see Table 1) which can be taken individually or together. Results are reported in terms of band performance, with candidates gaining a certificate for each module taken. Band 1 reflects limited knowledge of *TKT* content areas, Band 2 shows basic but systematic knowledge, Band 3 indicates breadth and depth of knowledge and Band 4 illustrates extensive knowledge of *TKT* content areas.

Table 1: TKT modules

Core modules	Specialist modules
Module 1 – Background to language teaching	<i>TKT: Content and Language Integrated Learning (TKT: CLIL)</i> – A test of the understanding of this approach to teaching curriculum subjects through the medium of another language.
Module 2 – Planning for language teaching	<i>TKT: Knowledge About Language (TKT: KAL)</i> – A test of knowledge and understanding of language systems from a teaching perspective.
Module 3 – Classroom management	<i>TKT: Young Learners</i> – A test of the background knowledge related to teaching young learners aged 6–12 years.
Practical – Assessment of teaching competence	–

Since its introduction *TKT* has been adopted at ministerial and governmental level by several countries in similar contexts to Mexico. Some examples of *TKT* adoption and use are:

- Brazil: *TKT* has been used by the Secretaria de Educação, Cultura e Esportes (SEDUC) in the state of Pernambuco. Teachers took Module 1 of *TKT*, attending sessions in time set aside by SEDUC for professional development for state school teachers.
- Chile: With the introduction of educational standards for teachers as a compulsory part of educational reform, Chile's Ministerio de Educación (MINEDUC) used *TKT* as an external measure to enable the Ministry to implement their own standards.
- Colombia: A number of regional educational authorities (Secretarías de Educación) have used *TKT* for their 'bilingual' programmes as a means of introducing minimum standards for state sector teachers of English. Teachers have been sponsored to take *TKT* after completing government-sponsored courses with local teacher training providers in Bogotá and Risaralda, for example. In addition, the Ministerio de Educación Nacional (MEN) has launched a nationwide scheme to retrain state sector teachers in which courses were delivered by 24 universities and *TKT* was used as the final assessment.
- Ecuador: In 2005, the Colegio Balandra Cruz del Sur in Guayaquil and the Ministerio de Educación signed an agreement to deliver *TKT* to all public sector educators in coastal Ecuador. Hundreds of teachers in coastal Ecuador have taken *TKT* since the project started, after completing an approved training programme, and they have benefited from pay increments as a result.
- Egypt: Teachers on government-sponsored teacher training courses have taken *TKT* and those who are recruited by the Nile Egyptian Schools (a governmental initiative) are required to provide a *TKT* certificate for recruitment purposes.
- Italy: Local Education Authorities and the Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca (MIUR) have recognised the need for *TKT*, especially for primary teachers. Consequently, *TKT* modules are being offered to the 20 regional educational authorities in Italy as part of a 4-year national project for training primary teachers to teach English.
- Portugal: *TKT* is recognised by the Portuguese Ministry of Education – a degree plus *TKT* qualifies individuals to teach in Portugal.
- Thailand: The Ministry of Education has adopted *TKT* as the benchmark standard for a project to improve English teaching throughout the country.
- Vietnam: The Department of Education and Training in Ho Chi Minh City is using *TKT* as a benchmark qualification for teachers of intensive English in primary and secondary state schools.

The next section describes the research study.

The research study: Methodology

The research design

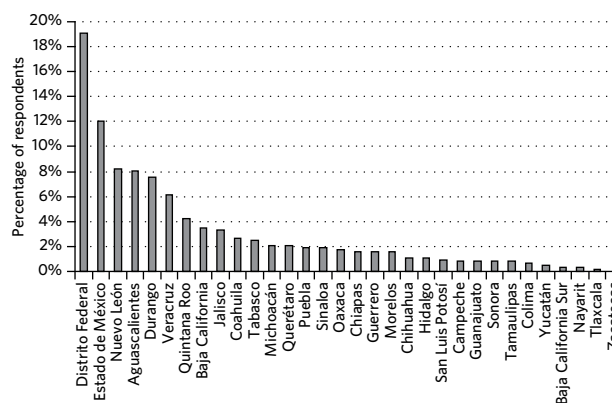
The research study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of *TKT* from the key stakeholders' perspectives. The two key stakeholder groups participating in the study are: a) policy makers, planners and implementers; and b) teachers who have taken *TKT*.

The research design followed a 'mixed methods' approach where data were collected and analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Research instruments included surveys, structured interviews and test takers' score data (i.e. teachers' performance on *TKT* modules). Where appropriate, results were broken down according to subgroups based on teachers' experience (e.g. experienced versus less experienced teachers) and type of educational context (e.g. state versus private, school versus university) as well as the different school stages.

A total of 660 stakeholders across the 31 Mexican states provided their views and their ratings using a Likert scale on a series of questions. Figure 1 shows the percentage of respondents from each state in Mexico, indicating the breadth of the study. The largest groups of respondents came from Distrito Federal (19%), followed by Estado de México (12%), Nuevo León, Aguascalientes, Durango and Veracruz (6–8%) with other states providing less than 5% of the responses. Given the scale of this study and the sample, the results need to be interpreted with caution and should not be seen as representative. However, these preliminary findings can be seen as a potential indicator of the wider impact of *TKT*.

Research participants

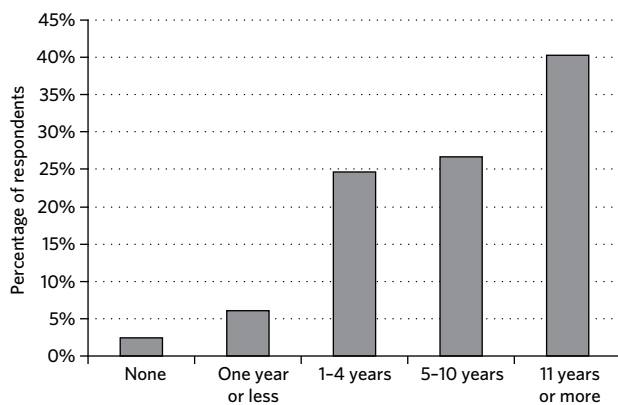
Figure 1: Survey responses by state



The first group of research participants represented policy makers, planners and implementers. Structured interviews were conducted with 27 participants: nine government officials, 16 respondents from the higher education sector and two from private teacher training institutes. The respondents had an average of 8.5 years of experience within their respective workplaces. The structured interviews were conducted in 17 states: Aguascalientes, Baja California, Baja California Sur, Colima, Durango, Estado de México, Hidalgo, Jalisco, Michoacán, Nayarit, Puebla, Querétaro, San Luis Potosí, Sinaloa, Sonora, Tabasco and Tepic.

The second group of research participants were 633 teachers who had taken *TKT*. As they completed the survey on a voluntary basis, the sample should not be seen as fully representative. The highest percentages of respondents came from Distrito Federal (19%) and Estado de México (12%), followed by 8% from the states of Aguascalientes, Nuevo León, Durango and 6% from Veracruz, with other states providing between 0.5–4% of respondents, as shown in Figure 1. Nearly 50% of the respondents would have taken *TKT* for up to one year before participating in this study. Most of the respondents were female (71%). The respondents represented various age groups with 31% in their 20s, 34% in their 30s, 25% in their 40s and 10% aged 50 or above. They teach in various educational settings: state and private primary and secondary schools, and state and private language institutes and universities. Figure 2 illustrates the respondents' range of experience, from novice teacher to highly experienced.

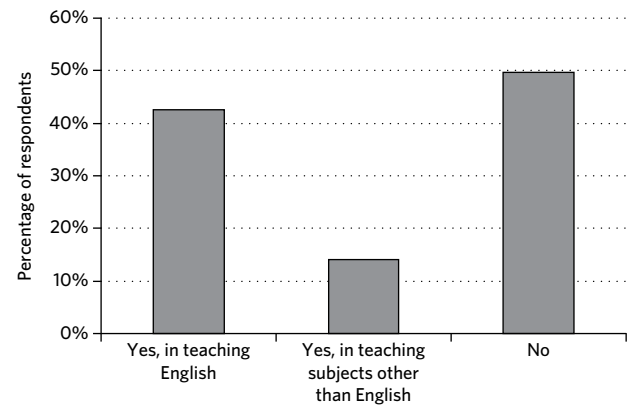
Figure 2: Years of teaching experience



When asked about their academic qualifications, 25% said they had a *Licenciatura en la Enseñanza del Inglés* (a Bachelor of Arts degree in English language teaching), 7% had an *Escuela Normal Superior*, 8% had a Bachelor of Science degree, or a Master of Arts degree in ELT, or a *Licenciatura en idiomas*, or a *Licenciatura en Pedagogía*, or a *Diploma de curso de formación de profesores del Centro de Enseñanza de Lenguas Extranieras Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (CELE UNAM)*, while 60% indicated that they had attended a teacher training course resulting in an attendance certificate. When asked whether they had an internationally recognised teaching qualification other than *TKT*, 50% of the respondents indicated that they did not. This is an indicator of the need for certification of teachers in Mexico. The 42% who gave an affirmative response listed Cambridge English qualifications such as *ICELT*, *CELTA* or Certificate for Overseas Teachers of English (*COTE*), or Trinity College London's Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (*CertTESOL*). The remaining respondents mentioned qualifications in subjects other than English language teaching (see Figure 3).

The majority of respondents had taken the core *TKT* modules, either separately or together. A smaller percentage of respondents – between 5% and 7% – had taken one or more of the specialist *TKT* modules (listed in Table 1).

Figure 3: Teaching qualifications other than TKT



Stakeholder perceptions of TKT – Group 1

Policy makers, planners and implementers provided their views on five interview questions:

1. What made your institution decide to adopt and/or require your academic staff to take *TKT*? What was your motivation?
2. What were your expectations when you decided to adopt/require teaching staff to take *TKT*? What was the impact on your institution, teaching staff, etc.?
3. What has been the impact of adopting *TKT*?
4. To what extent has *TKT* met your expectations? How?
5. If your expectations were not fulfilled, why not?

Government perspective

Within this sector, compliance with the requirements of the Programa Nacional de Inglés en Educación Básica (PNIEB) programme run by SEP (the State Ministry of Education), among other regulatory bodies, was the main motivation for adopting *TKT*. The acknowledgment or realisation of the number of in-service teachers who need to improve their language and teaching proficiency and the desire to raise the standards of language teacher education at the pre-service level were also key drivers for the adoption of *TKT*. Another motivating factor was the ability to partner with an internationally recognised examination board and make use of its teaching qualification to reach the desired goal of higher standards of teacher education and to satisfy the demand for qualified and certified teachers. Typical comments included:

'We consider TKT to be a fundamental tool to certify that the teacher has the essential teaching skills to teach a second language.' (Iván Lenin Durán Alvarado, State Coordinator, SEP, Colima)

'It is an honor to be able to say that our public school English teachers have the profile and the teaching skills that they need, and this is not only something that the state affirms but is certified by a formal exam applied by the University of Cambridge. We are finally on our way to achieving our goal of being able to state that the State of Aguascalientes has the highest quality English teachers.' (Valeria Alvarez Borrego, Academic Coordinator, Instituto de Educación de Aguascalientes)

The expectations of this stakeholder group were met in terms of improvements in teaching practices and students' language proficiency together with an improved ability to measure existing teachers' knowledge and skills as a result of adopting

TKT. According to these respondents, adopting *TKT* has also resulted in a diversity of teaching strategies and a better understanding of the learning process. Furthermore, taking *TKT* has encouraged some teachers to attend professional development events, workshops and conferences, and to undertake postgraduate studies in ELT and education. Moreover, teachers' employability has improved, as they can take on consultancy work at state and regional level and carry out training activities.

'The teachers who certified with TKT came to realize that there is much to learn about second language teaching and they continue to look for ways to improve their teaching skills. The results for the educational community (parents, administrators, permanent teaching staff, etc.) have been very positive. The fact that we have teachers certified by the University of Cambridge is a guarantee of the quality of these teachers' classes.' (Claudia Rocío Valenzuela Ortiz, State Coordinator, SEP, Culiacan, Sinaloa)

Some expectations of this group were not met, especially when teachers had not taken the *TKT* qualification, either due to insufficient funding or lack of interest, or being content with teacher preparation courses which did not provide an internationally recognised qualification.

'Our objectives were not met because our teachers did not proceed with the process; they did not get their TSU [Técnico Superior Universitario, Associate Degree] at the end of the modules.' (Myrna D. Segura C, Assistant Director, SEP, Hermosillo, Sonora)

'We decided not to offer Module 3 preparation for the 2011–2012 school year due to the lack of budget and interest.' (Alfredo Manríquez González, Head Coordinator, PNIEB, Zapopan, Jalisco)

Higher education perspective

The key motivating factors for implementing *TKT* in the higher education sector were certification, accreditation and international recognition, which largely overlap with the goals of the government sector. Two further goals of university decision makers are to train teachers by offering opportunities to learn or improve their basic teaching skills as part of their courses and to equip university students with better skills for the employment market in order to increase their prospects. Compliance with the requirements of regulatory bodies such as SEP is as important as showing educational leadership and offering a competitive edge when compared to universities who do not offer Cambridge English teaching qualifications. Higher education respondents commented:

'We also were looking to unify criteria when hiring English teachers by specifying the training and teaching experience required . . . The impact has been huge and is expanding across all of Baja California. I think it has surpassed our expectations because we have become a point of reference for other institutions both public and private.' (Patricia Columba Godínez Martínez, English Coordinator, Universidad Politécnica De Baja California, Mexicali, Baja California)

'Our expectation was to elevate the quality of our classes and in this way continue to show educational leadership in the city of Querétaro. In order to reach our goals, we have challenged ourselves to obtain certification for all of our teachers from a recognized international institution like Cambridge. We also need to comply with the policies of the state education ministry, which now requires more accreditation for English teachers in the classroom.' (Darío Malpica Basurto, Universidad Contemporánea, Querétaro, Querétaro)

The beneficial effects among universities are seen in good *TKT* exam performance, which has resulted in an increasing number of certified teachers, and in teachers being motivated to attend professional development events and undertake higher level study. Beneficial impact is also seen in improved classroom practice, better understanding of the learning process, higher proficiency levels, and enhanced teacher employability.

'There has been an increase in confidence on the part of employers since we adopted TKT and our students show more confidence in their teaching abilities as well . . . with Band 3 they have obtained employment in the institutes that are known as being the most demanding in their hiring practices in our state.' (Blanca Margarita Tobias Delgado, Coordinator, Universidad Tangamanga, San Luis Potosí)

Like the government sector, the higher education sector also believes that students' language proficiency is a direct result of teachers' language proficiency.

'The academic level of the teaching staff has improved, it is not only required that they have a minimum of the first three levels of the TKT, but they must have the FCE or CAE [Cambridge English: First or Cambridge English: Advanced] as well. Having better prepared teachers has led to an improvement in the English level of our students.' (Olga Laura Ballesteros Huitrón, Department Head, Universidad Politécnica de Durango, Durango)

Private teacher training institute perspective

The third group of respondents who took part in structured interviews were those who have adopted *TKT* in private language institutes. This group opted to offer *TKT* preparation courses and subsequent certification because of their perception of *TKT* as an ideal initial qualification leading to further teaching qualifications.

Expectations in this sector were met with the exception of certification of all teachers in all institutes surveyed:

'Our expectations regarding the preparation courses we offer for TKT have been fully satisfied . . . However we have not reached 100% certification of the teachers we prepared to take the exam, and the reasons for this range from financial difficulties to scheduling problems.' (Rafael Díazgonzález Plata, Administrative Director, Instituto de Desarrollo de Habilidades Docentes SC, Metepec, Estado de México)

In the next section another major stakeholder group is discussed, namely, the candidates themselves – the Mexican teachers who have taken *TKT*.

Stakeholder perceptions of TKT – Group 2

The teachers who had taken *TKT* responded to survey questions with regard to the perceived impact of *TKT* on their knowledge, skills and attitude, as well as personal and professional development. The findings arising from their responses are discussed next.

Teachers' expectations of TKT

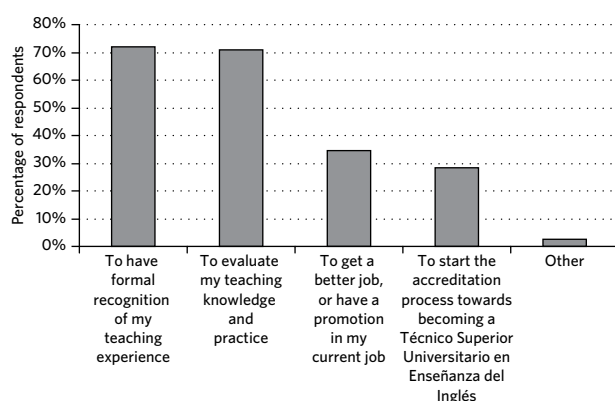
When teachers were asked why they decided to take *TKT*, the majority of them indicated professional development, international recognition and career advancement as main reasons. Around a third had taken *TKT* because their employer required it, or because they did not have an existing teaching qualification, whilst others took it for personal development, as illustrated by the following quotation:

'Because I wanted to know if I really have the skills to teach English. I have been a teacher for the last 12 years but that does not mean that I really know how to teach. Now I feel better, more confident, because I got Band 3, that means a lot to me.' (An experienced teacher, 40s, Aguascalientes)

Figure 4 shows what teachers initially expected to gain from taking *TKT*. In general, teachers expected to gain formal recognition and evaluation of teaching knowledge and practice. Additional expectations in the 'Other' category include personal development, for work abroad, and even to keep their current job.

When asked whether their expectations have been met, 93% of the respondents reported that *TKT* has exceeded their expectations.

Figure 4: Initial expectations of TKT



Teachers' perception of TKT impact

This section looks at the perceived impact of *TKT* on teachers' personal development, professional development, pedagogical practices and beliefs. Representative comments are given in this article.

Impact on personal and professional development

Tables 2 and 3 illustrate the positive effect of *TKT* as perceived by the majority of respondents. These results reflect improved knowledge in terms of a better understanding of theoretical and practical issues, improved skills in terms of self-reflection and self-awareness, as well as improved attitudes in terms of confidence and motivation gained.

Some typical comments from teachers on their personal and professional development include:

'I'm really grateful with my TKT because it makes me feel better when teaching and I improve myself as a person and as a professional person.' (An experienced teacher, 40s, Estado de México)

'The TKT tests help me a lot to get a new and better job. Now I feel more prepared and competent to teach English.' (Teacher, 20s, Quintana Roo)

'Now that I have 4 TKT certifications, I've had the opportunity to work in a University in which they train their students of languages to become teachers of other languages in the future.' (Teacher, 20s, Veracruz)

A closer analysis of the data (with significance testing where applicable), showed that in comparison with experienced teachers, the less experienced teachers feel they have more professional career opportunities in other countries (Chi-square = 9.528, $df = 4$, $p = 0.049$). It is also interesting to note that on average, the perceived improvements were more profound in teachers from state schools than private ones and in teachers in secondary education than primary education.

Table 2: Personal development statements (% agreement)

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. I feel more motivated to continue developing as a professional teacher.	63	30	6	1	0.3
2. I feel more confident in presenting at TEFL seminars and conferences.	37	39	21	3	0.6
3. I feel more confident to take part in discussions about teaching and learning.	49	35	13	2	0.6
4. I feel more confident about my teaching skills.	55	34	9	2	0.3
5. I have developed greater self-awareness of negative aspects of my teaching.	46	41	11	2	0.0
6. I have developed greater self-awareness of positive aspects of my teaching.	53	40	6	1	0.2
7. I now reflect more on my teaching than I used to.	51	37	10	1	0.2
8. I find teaching more enjoyable.	53	35	10	2	0.0

Table 3: Professional development statements (% agreement)

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. I shall have more professional career opportunities in other countries in the future.	44	33	18	3	0.8
2. I shall have more professional career opportunities in Mexico in the future.	53	33	11	2	0.5
3. I can understand articles and books on TEFL more easily.	38	40	18	3	0.6
4. I have developed a better understanding of the communicative approaches in current English Language Teaching methodology.	51	40	8	1	0.1
5. I have developed a better understanding of the theoretical principles underlying my teaching.	52	40	7	1	0.2

Impact on beliefs and pedagogical practices

When asked whether preparing for *TKT* or taking the test changed any of the respondents' previously held beliefs and feelings about language teaching, 50% gave a positive response, summarised in Table 4.

Figures 5 and 6 illustrate responses to statements about lesson preparation and classroom practice.

Table 4: Changed beliefs (according to thematic categories)

Thematic categories	Number of respondents
Teaching methods and preparation	203
Learning new information	107
Desire for further study to improve knowledge	103
Student-centred teaching	49
Perception of ability to teach	47
Lesson planning and schemes of work	45
Teacher-student relationship	27
Importance of teacher training	22
Importance of learning environment	19

Figure 5: Impact of TKT on lesson preparation

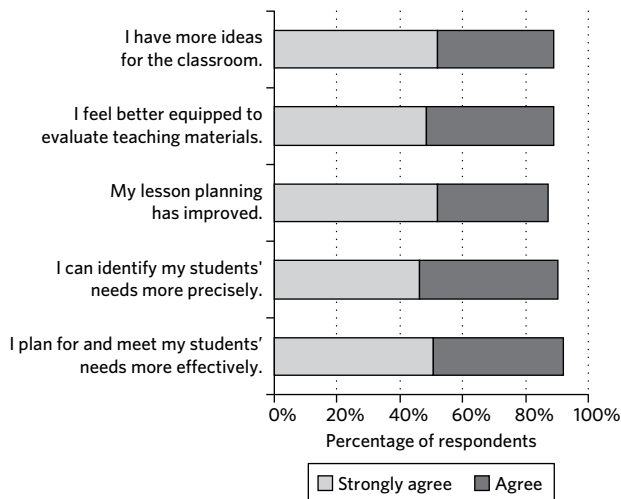
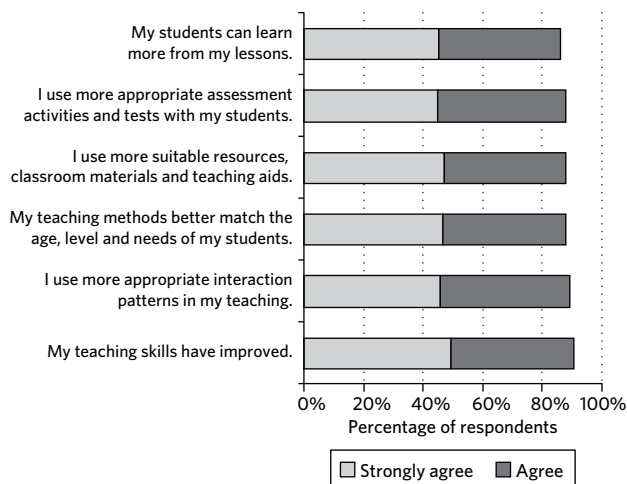


Figure 6: Impact of TKT on classroom practice



Respondents indicated that their teaching skills had improved across most contexts. They can identify their students' needs better and can plan to meet those needs more effectively (especially in state secondary schools, as well as primary schools, both state and private). They use more appropriate interaction patterns in the classroom (especially in state and private primary schools, state secondary and private language schools). They feel better equipped to evaluate available teaching materials (especially in state secondary), and they have more ideas for the classroom (particularly in private primary and in state and private secondary schools). One of the outstanding comments received was:

'TKT has had an impact on the way I communicate, specially with teachers. I am an ICT [Information and Communication Technology] Coordinator as well as an English Teacher and TKT help me to communicate the ICT curricula to the Homeroom Teachers [subject teachers] in an easy, practical and specific way. So much in fact, that I was able to break their paper and pencil dependency due to their inability to relate to technology as English or any other subject teachers. TKT allow me to speak in their same language and to reach students in a more effective way. Even though TKT is designed for English teaching, it can be easily adapted to any school subject. I have also seen the way homeroom teachers react to the way TKT presents lesson planning, instructional approaches and use of resources because it allows them to better understand the Teacher's Materials that come with each student's book.' (An experienced teacher, 40s, Nuevo León)

When examining the educational context, results showed that, in state primary and secondary contexts, teaching methods better match the age, level and needs of students; in both state and private secondary schools teachers use more suitable resources, classroom materials and teaching aids; and state secondary and upper secondary teachers use more appropriate assessment activities and tests with their students. In state language schools teachers feel that their students can learn more from their lessons.

The above sections have dealt with stakeholders' perceptions. In order to complement the picture emerging from the survey and structured interviews, teachers' performance on *TKT* was examined and compared to teacher performance in the rest of the world.

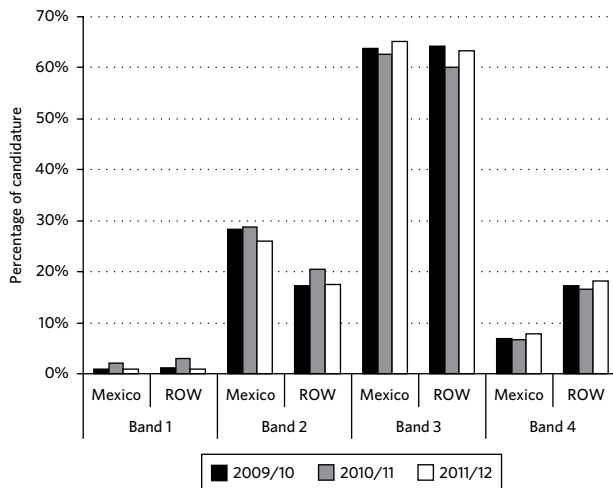
Performance on TKT

Two comparative sets of data on performance on *TKT* modules (whether core or specialist) are presented below. The first compares the performance of Mexican candidates with candidates from all other countries whilst the second compares Mexican candidates with those from other countries in Latin America.

Mexico versus all other countries

Figure 7 is based on data from three consecutive academic years (2009/10, 2010/11 and 2011/12).

This figure provides a clear indication that the standard of Mexican teachers is improving, borne out by the number of candidates achieving Bands 1 and 2 decreasing over time, while the number of candidates achieving Bands 3 and 4 has increased.

Figure 7: Average percentages in each TKT band in Mexico and the rest of the world (ROW) 2009-12

When comparing Mexico with the rest of the world, the performance of Mexican candidates is on a par with those from all other countries as far as Band 3 is concerned (note that Band 3 is the minimum level accepted by certain regulatory bodies in Mexico). Similarly, there is no difference between other countries and Mexico as far as Band 1 is concerned (Band 1 represents a very small minority of all *TKT* candidates worldwide). However, the picture differs if we look at Bands 2 or 4, indicating that candidates from other countries are performing better than Mexican candidates. The percentage of candidates in Mexico achieving Band 2 is higher than all other countries and the percentage of candidates achieving Band 4 is lower than all other countries.

Mexico and other countries in Latin America

Table 5 provides the average percentage in *TKT* performance bands for all test sessions in 2011, showing how Mexico and

Table 5: Average percentage in each band for TKT modules taken in Latin America in 2011 (alphabetical order)

Country	Band 4	Band 3	Band 2	Band 1
1. Argentina	34%	57%	9%	0.5%
2. Bolivia	15%	67%	18%	0.0%
3. Brazil	32%	59%	9%	0.2%
4. Chile	11%	73%	16%	0.8%
5. Colombia	11%	69%	20%	0.3%
6. Costa Rica	22%	60%	18%	0.0%
7. Cuba	15%	73%	13%	0.0%
8. Dominican Republic	4%	84%	12%	0.0%
9. Ecuador	9%	60%	31%	0.4%
10. Mexico	9%	66%	23%	2%
11. Peru	29%	59%	12%	0.0%
12. Uruguay	41%	54%	4%	0.3%
13. Venezuela	14%	74%	12%	0.0%

other countries in Latin America performed (not including absent or ungraded candidates).

We note, of course, that no like-for-like country comparisons can be made from these figures, given the different numbers of candidates taking *TKT* in the countries concerned and their different stages of educational reform.

Beyond TKT

Survey responses revealed that there are a small but growing number of teachers in Mexico who wanted to develop their knowledge further after taking *TKT* by progressing to other Cambridge English qualifications such as *ICELT*, *CELTA* or *Delta*. Table 6 shows the previous Cambridge English qualifications of *Delta* Modules candidates from 2010 to 2012. Although the number of teachers who have taken *TKT* and then progressed to *Delta* via one or more other teaching qualifications is small, it nevertheless suggests that Mexican teachers are committed to their ongoing professional development.

Table 6: Previous qualifications of Mexican Delta Modules candidates 2010-12

Qualification	Number of instances
TKT1	9
TKT2	9
TKT3	9
TKT: KAL	7
TKT: CLIL	7
ICELT	33
CELTA	7

This commitment to continuing professional development also reflects the importance in the Mexican educational context of gaining qualifications. The teachers' comments reflected their desire to take further Cambridge English qualifications, with typical comments including:

'I'd like to continue my professional development by taking the ICELT, this will help me reach easier my career plans.' (An experienced teacher, 30s, Distrito Federal)

'After obtaining the TKT, I felt more interested on giving my best to my students, that is why I decided to continue and take the ICELT course and I hope that I will go for Delta in two years.' (A novice teacher, 30s, Distrito Federal)

Conclusions

This study has provided insights into the perceived effects of the adoption of *TKT* in Mexico. At an individual level, it is mainly seen as a personal and professional development opportunity. At an institutional level, it is generally seen as a way of improving the quality of teaching and the ability level of the teaching staff – both of which have a positive impact on the institutional reputation and ability to deliver reform initiatives. Comments provided by stakeholders attest to the positive effect and the role that *TKT* has in raising teaching standards.

The surveyed teachers felt that *TKT* had improved

their understanding of theoretical and practical issues in teaching and turned them into reflective practitioners. It helped with lesson planning, preparing and structuring their work, as well as with evaluation and choice of suitable teaching materials. Many teachers mentioned an increased understanding of their learners and their needs, and being able to design better teaching activities as a result. This contributed to a changed focus on learners and learning. There is strong evidence that *TKT* helps increase teachers' confidence, and that teachers believe that they will have more career opportunities in Mexico and abroad.

The study reported here was the initial phase of a longer research study. Cambridge English Language Assessment is planning to conduct other studies to track the longer-term effects of *TKT*, especially bearing in mind the range of contexts in which it is used and the fact that these are likely to change over time. It is hoped that future phases of this study will be enhanced with valuable insights from local experts into the effectiveness of *TKT* in Mexico.

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Studies in Language Testing

Volume 40 of the Studies in Language Testing (SILT) series was published in August 2014. This volume is written by Neil Jones of the Cambridge English Research and Validation Group and entitled *Multilingual Frameworks: The Construction and Use of Multilingual Proficiency Frameworks*. Jones describes 20 years of work at Cambridge English to develop multilingual assessment frameworks and presents useful guidance of good practice. The volume covers the development of the ALTE Framework and Can Do project, the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) and the linking of the Cambridge English exam levels to it, Asset Languages (a major educational initiative for UK schools) and the European Survey on Language Competences, co-ordinated by Cambridge English for the European Commission. It proposes a model for the validity of assessment within a multilingual framework and, while illustrating the constraints which determined the approach taken to each project, makes clear recommendations on methodological good practice. It also explores and looks forward to the further extension of assessment frameworks to encompass a model for multilingual education. This volume will be a valuable reference work for academics, education policy-makers and examination board personnel.

Volume 41, *Validating Second Language Reading Examinations:*

Establishing the Validity of the GEPT through Alignment with the Common European Framework of Reference by Rachel Yi-Fen Wu, was published in September 2014. The author describes the development of an empirical framework for test validation and comparison of reading tests at different proficiency levels through a critical evaluation of alignment with the CEFR. It focuses on contextual parameters, cognitive processing operations and test results, and identifies parameters for the description of different levels of reading proficiency examinations. The volume explores procedures for linking tests to the CEFR and proposes both qualitative and quantitative methods that complement the procedures recommended in the Council of Europe's *Relating Language Examinations to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR): A Manual*, piloted in 2003 and revised in 2009. This volume will be useful reference for teachers and curriculum designers who wish to reflect real-life reading activities when they prepare reading tasks for language learning.

Further information on these volumes and the rest of the Studies in Language Testing series can be found at: www.cambridgeenglish.org/silt.

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Cambridge English works with national and regional governments to support the reform of language education. We have produced a diagram (see inside back cover) to show the kinds of services that can be provided to international education institutions in order to complement the expertise already available in country. This diagram also identifies research which plays a practical role in delivering long-term enhancements to the education system.

Language policy and strategy

In order for learners to achieve success in English, a clear language policy and strategy is vital. To support this, we apply the Cambridge English Language Policy Framework to build a customised and context-specific language policy for the ministry of education, university or institution. This language policy sets standards and guides the strategic plan for language education development.

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Using the Cambridge English Situational Analysis toolkit, we help institutions establish an evidence-based baseline of current language levels of students and teachers, as well as teaching competences and abilities. This baseline research also includes a research-based gap analysis and a roadmap for improving the standard of language learning, teaching and assessment.

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We apply the Cambridge English Curriculum Framework to the target learning context so that we can help institutions to analyse what needs to be learned, given the constraints of curriculum hours, school facilities, teacher competences etc. From this we can develop detailed, localised curriculum models, a sequenced syllabus per level, and detailed schemes of work for teachers to follow.

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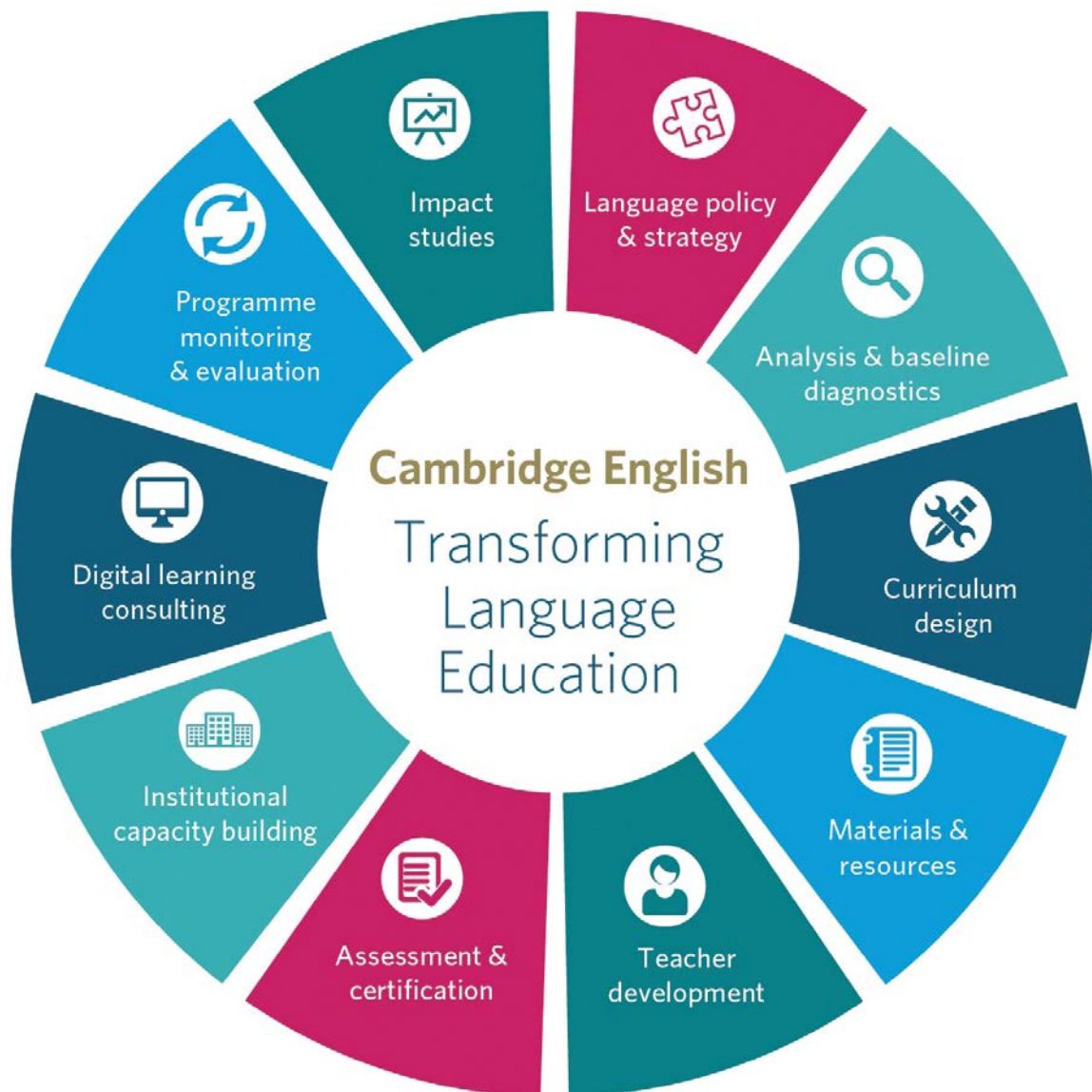
The use of digital learning technology can provide extra support for teachers and learners. Cambridge English can help the development of digital learning in schools by designing new curriculum resources and pedagogical content for students to use both in and out of class, along with tablet-based assessment. We can also train teachers in how to use tablets and laptops effectively.

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