

Examination Washback Effect: Syllabus, Teaching Methodology and the Learners' Communicative Competence

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Abstract

Washback is known as the influence of testing on teaching, either positive or negative. In high-stakes examinations, however, the assessment driven curriculum leads to a negative washback effect in the Asian settings. This study was taken to evaluate implications of examination washback effect on teachers' selection of methodology in English language teaching at higher secondary level in Pakistan and, to examine whether the present testing system has any effect on students' communicative competence. A triangulation of data source was applied in this research where 128 higher secondary English language teachers participated. The research tools used for the study were document analysis, questionnaire for the teachers, classroom observation and subsequent interview with teachers. The qualitative and quantitative analysis of data revealed that teachers' selection of methodology is directly influenced by examinations. The learners' communicative competence is consequently affected by the teachers' selection of methodology.

Key words: Washback effect, teaching methodology, communicative competence.

1. Introduction

Examinations are important for students to go either higher grades of studies or find jobs, for teachers to show the effectiveness of their teaching, for the employers to select the best suited candidates for jobs, and, for the other stake holders too, who in one way or the other, influence or are influenced by the examinations and their results. According to Davies (1990:24, also mentioned in Salehi, H. 2012:609), "testing is always used in teaching, in the sense that much teaching is related to the testing which is demanded of the student". Washback is the term used to evaluate the effects of examination on teaching and learning (Alderson and Wall, 1993). Teacher's selection of methodology is highly influenced by the thought that the students have to take certain tests/examination. The intensive use of test scores for various educational and social purposes in society now a day has made the effect of washback a significant phenomenon (Cheng, L. 1997).

Examination washback (also known as 'backwash') effect on students' learning and teachers' choice of methodology has become more popular recently, and the researchers seem to believe that the quickest way to change students' learning is to change assessment system (Elton and Laurillard, 1979:100). Negative examination washback effect on teachers' selection of methodology has been reported in Shepard, 1990 and, Madaus and Kellaghn, 1992. This seems true in Pakistani context too where the high stakes exam results change the lives of its people. Teachers' selection of methodology in English Language Teaching (ELT) has long been under high criticism because of the low communicative competence of the students. The present study is the part of a larger research about teaching methodology and its effects on students' communicative competence. The examination washback effect is hypothetically one of the many causes of producing incompetent users of English language in Pakistan. This part of the research, however, was guided by these research questions: 1) How examination washback effect shapes teaching practices at higher secondary level in Pakistan? 2) How far examination washback affects learners' communicative competence?

1.1 What is washback effect?

According to Buck (1988:17, as cited in Bailey, 1996):

There is a natural tendency for both teachers and students to tailor their class room activities to the demands of the test, especially when the test is very important to the future of the students, and pass rates are used as a measure of teacher success. This influence on the test, on the class room (referred to as washback by the language testers) is, of course, very important; this washback effect can be either beneficial or harmful.

Discussing his finding about washback effect on Japanese students, Buck (1988) further writes that:

There are probably many reasons why most Japanese high school graduates cannot use English for even the most basic purposes, despite receiving hundreds of hours of class room instruction, but surely one of the most important is the washback effect of entrance examinations on the class room.

Taylor (2005) forwarded his interpretation of the washback effect saying that "teachers will be influenced by the knowledge that their students are planning to take a certain test and will adapt their teaching methodology and

lesson content to reflect the test demands". Wall differentiated between *test impact* and *test washback*. According to him test impact implies the effects of examinations possibly exerted on individuals, policy and practice in an educational system, and test washback refers to the effects of examination on teaching and learning practices. Alderson and Wall (1993) wrote that:

Why the teachers do what they do, what they understand about underlying principles of the text book and examination, and what they believe to be effective means of teaching and learning... The washback hypothesis seems to assume that teachers and learners do things they would not necessarily otherwise do because of the test... Studies of washback need to relate teachers' attitude to an understanding of exams to observations of classrooms in order to understand why teachers teach the way they do.

Alderson & Wall (1993) have identified 15 washback hypotheses and the most striking in their study seems that, 'A test will influence **what** teachers teach' and 'A test will influence **how** teachers teach.' Examination washback effects can be observed on macro and micro levels. The exam effects on the educational system, society or institutions at large scale are macro level effects, while micro level effects can be studied at individual level, like teacher or student. The washback effect normally leads to selective study habits in the students. Writing in the Chinese context, Eckstein and Noah (1993) wrote (p 53): "They (students) have had little incentive to study anything that will not be on the examination paper. There is no time in their classes to explore questions that are unlikely to come up in the tests. Classes are devoted to lectures and recitations, and homework consists of reviewing notes and textbooks" (as quoted in Sarah, L.J. 2009).

1.2 Positive and negative washback effect

"Washback is presented as a stimulus for a change and as a bridge for efficient communication between teachers and testers" (Djuric, M. 2008). Wash back operates differently in different situations. In itself, washback is a neutral term which can infer positively or negatively on the stakeholders (Buck, 1988 and Shohamy, et al, 1996). Marry Spratt (2005:17) stated that:

The type and amount of washback on teaching methodology appears to vary from context to context and teacher to teacher. It varies from no reported wash back to considerable washback. The variable in these differences appears to be not so much the exam itself as the teacher... Nevertheless, the empirical studies reviewed (on washback effect) indicate strongly that an exam cannot of itself dictate what and how teachers teach and learners learn. Degree and kinds of washback occur through the agency of various intervening bodies and are shaped by them. An important and influential agent in this process is the teacher.

The following is the summary of positive and negative wash back effect, as summarized by Yi-Ching Pan, 2009.

1.2.1 Positive Washback

- i. Tests induce teachers to cover their subjects more thoroughly, making them complete their syllabi within the prescribed time limits.
- ii. Tests motivate students to work harder to have a sense of accomplishment and thus enhance learning.
- iii. Good tests can be utilized and designed as beneficial teaching-learning activities so as to encourage positive teaching-learning processes.

1.2.2 Negative Washback

- i. Tests encourage teachers to narrow the curriculum and lose instructional time, leading to "teaching to the test."
- ii. Tests bring anxiety both to teachers and students and distort their performance.
- iii. Students may not be able to learn real-life knowledge, but instead learn discrete points of knowledge that are tested.
- iv. Cramming will lead students to have a negative washback toward tests and accordingly alter their learning motivation.

Bailey (1996) also seems of the same point of view on the positive or negative influence of examinations. She holds that the objectives and goals of examination should be clearly articulated to foster beneficial washback, make sure whether the test measures what the program intends to measure, ... and must be based on sound theoretical principles which are widely accepted in the field since a narrow view of linguistic competence has been replaced by a broader perspective on communicative competence. Similarly, Hughes (1989, p44-46) asserted that those skills should be tested which are intended to promote in students, through direct testing and criterion-referenced.

2. Background of the study

The present paradigm shift in educational sector in Pakistan holds institutional administration in general and teacher in particular responsible for students' learning. The sole criterion of judging learning is the examination result. The examination oriented language education has exerted heavy influence on students' learning. It promotes the selection of students for further education and employment instead of educating them. English is taught as a foreign language in Pakistan. From grade one to twelve, it is taught as a compulsory subject (later stages also include English as a compulsory subject in some cases). In grade five and eight, the students take exam under the provincial government examination body (however optional in some cases). In grades 09, 10, 11 and 12 the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education conducts exam which is compulsory for every student to either go to higher education or search for job. Washback in Pakistani context is mediated with students' taking long narrative examinations in the end of every year in the annual system of education. This examination of English does not test all language skills; rather it is strictly confined to reading and writing. Traditionally, grammar, vocabulary, reading comprehension and writing are tested. This may be the biggest hurdle for Pakistani teachers to be innovative and creative in teaching. Or maybe they find a refuge in using Grammar Translation Method (GTM) to meet the heavy burden of examinations. The issue however, is debatable as remarkably very little research is found on the examination washback effect in language education. The current examinations have a negative washback effect on the learners' communicative ability. The focus of teaching and learning remains on the preparation of grammar-based examinations, thus the teachers opt for those teaching strategies which can help students get well prepared for the exams.

3. Research Methodology:

The washback researchers emphasize on a qualitative inquiry or mixed methodology to investigate about the examination washback effect because it encompasses numerous variables; only a quantitative research may not fully depict a complete picture (Cheng, L., 2004). However, a triangulation approach was preferred to collect data in this study. In ethnography, triangulation is the use of two or more perspectives- data set, informants, theories, researchers, etc.(Denzin, 1970). Four research tools were used in this study: the document analysis (syllabus and question papers of the higher secondary class) provided empirical evidence of the phenomenon; the questionnaire was used for collecting preliminary quantitative data from teachers on the factors to be analyzed; the class room observation provided an opportunity to witness what actually takes place in the class room, and; the interviews provided face to face interaction with teachers to explore in detail the issues raised in this study. All these research methods complemented one another.

3.1 Participants of the study

The sample population for this research consisted on 150 English language higher secondary teachers in Pakistan. All the teachers belonged to one district of the Punjab province which was selected on purpose basis. Thus, a comprehensive sampling technique was used. Among 150 teachers, 128 actually responded in questionnaire completion. The respondents belonged to public (92) and private (36) institutions. According to gender classification, 73 participants were male and 55 females. Urban (102) and rural (26) teachers participated. The teachers' age ranged from 25 to 55 years, while their teaching experience ranged from 05 to 35 years. M A/M Sc (117) and M Phil (11) qualified teachers were identified. The participants possessed a variety of professional courses, like B.Ed. M.Ed, TEFL and TESOL, etc.

3.2 Research tools

As mentioned earlier, four research methodologies were used in this study: document analysis, questionnaire for the teachers, classroom observation and, interview with the teachers. A brief detail of these methodologies is given below:

3.2.1 Document analysis

Due to the time constrains, only two documents were selected for this purpose: the prescribed syllabus for higher secondary class by the Curriculum Wing, Education Department, Government of the Punjab (Pakistan). Basically, the contents included in the syllabus were discussed. Its purpose was to evaluate the nature and type of course contents taught during two years of the higher secondary level of education. The other document analyzed was the examination question papers for the 11th grade and 12 grades under annual system of examination held by the concerned examination board. The purpose was to examine which skills are being tested in the examination, and to evaluate which language aspects are included in the test to examine students' knowledge of the target language.

3.2.2 Questionnaire for teachers

The questionnaire provided with the quantitative data for the study. It mainly comprised on two parts: part one asked demographic information of the participants; and part two dealt with teachers understanding and perceptions of washback effect on the selection of teaching methodology, and the consequences of examination in general. A Likert scale with three options (*to a great extent, to some extent and, not at all*) comprised on

eighteen statements. This questionnaire (Likert scale) was the part of a larger study for which data was collected from November, 2011 to February, 2012 in Pakistan.

3.2.3 Classroom observation

Collecting information through class room observation provides direct experience (Koul 1996, Nunan 1992, Wallace 1998). Schmuck (1997) asserted, as cited in Barbara B. K. (2005), that "Observation methods are useful to researchers in a variety of ways. They provide researchers with ways to check for nonverbal expression of feelings, determine who interacts with whom, grasp how participants communicate with each other, and check for how much time is spent on various activities". For class observation, the month of February, 2012 was selected. The purpose was to evaluate in detail class room practices near the examination (normally higher secondary examinations are conducted in March/April in Pakistan under the auspices of Examination Board). Notes were taken during the class room observation. An audio recorder was also used for recording so that any missing links could be found to complete notes taken during this session.

3.2.4 Interview with teachers

The purpose of interview was to fill in the gaps in information already provided by the respondents in questionnaire. As the same teachers were selected for interview whose classes already had been observed, any clarification could be sought regarding class observation. The average length of interview was 30 minutes. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed the earliest possible time.

3.3 Conducting research and collection of data

On the first stage, document analysis was made to provide base for the inquiry. For the document analysis, prescribed syllabus and question papers were collected from the Education Board authority. Then the questionnaire was distributed to the sample population personally. After recollecting questionnaires, twelve teachers (8 from public and 4 from private) were contacted to observe their classes. The idea behind selecting 12 teachers was to maintain at least ten percent of the respondents and their selection was made on the basis of their responses in the questionnaire. Two classes of 45 minutes each of every teacher were observed. The total time spent in class observation was 18 hours. After observation of classes, the same teachers were contacted for interview. Keeping in view the research design, the same teachers had to be interviewed. However, ten out of twelve teachers were available for interview.

4. Data analysis

The data was analyzed using quantitative and qualitative techniques. For document analysis, class observation and interview, qualitative technique was applied, whereas the questionnaire was analyzed quantitatively.

4.1 Document analysis

Madaus (1988:83) reported that, "it is testing, not the 'official' stated curriculum that is increasingly determining what is taught, how it is taught, what is learned and how it is learned" (as also mentioned in Mary Spratt, 2005:05). Yet, it was felt necessary to analyze the *official* curriculum to provide base for this investigation. As mentioned earlier, two documents were selected for analysis: (1) the prescribed syllabus of English for the higher secondary class (11th and 12th classes), taught as a compulsory subject in Pakistan. This syllabus is designed by the Curriculum Wing, Department of Education, (2) the examination question papers of English for the higher secondary classes, 11th and 12th. Both of these documents were collected from the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, Multan (Punjab) which is the examination body for secondary and higher secondary level of education.

4.1.1 The prescribed syllabus

Four prescribed books are taught at higher secondary level in two years, besides grammar and composition. Book I (short stories), Book II (modern prose and old heroes), Book III (one act plays and poetry), and, one novel "Goodbye Mr. Chips" are published by the provincial textbook Board. Grammar and composition books are not prescribed by the Board; rather this is the discretion of class teacher to suggest any book or other helping material to the class. The course contents are detailed below:

- 11th grade syllabus

Book I with 15 short stories covers 20 marks test items in the exam. Book III with 03 one act plays and 20 poems covers 30 marks (15 marks for each portion). Composition part carries 20 marks which covers letter or application writing (10 marks) and story writing (10 marks). Applied grammar portion carries 15 marks which includes three kinds of test items: correct use of tenses, punctuation, and, differentiations in meaning of words (five marks for every part). Translation from English into Urdu language carries 15 marks for this passage which is selected from any one of the short stories (Book I).

- 12th grade syllabus

Book II with modern prose (10 lessons) and old heroes (05 lessons) which consist on 15 marks test items for each part (total 30 marks); the novel "Goodbye Mr. Chips" (20 marks test items in the exam); composition which

covers essay writing (15 marks); applied grammar (20 marks) which covers correction of common errors of language, direct and indirect narration, use of preposition and, phrases of current usage (each part 05 marks), and; translation of a paragraph from Urdu language (unseen paragraph from daily life) into English are the components of 12th grade course.

4.1.2 Examination question papers

The English examination carries 100 marks for each class, 11th and 12th. The total examination time is three hours which is further divided into two parts: 30 minutes for the objective type of questions (20 marks) and 2:30 hours for the subjective type of questions (80 marks). Question paper solving instructions are printed on the face of question paper. The question papers for the two grades are detailed below:

- 11th grade class question paper

In the objective type of portion, there is one question with three parts: part one carries 10 marks which has ten statements from the text book I. Every statement has an underlined word and four words are given as an option to select one the closest to the meaning of the underlined word. This is simply a test of vocabulary. The part two carries 05 marks with five statements asking any information from the text book I stories, and every statement carries four options to select the right one. Part three carries 05 marks and five statements, every statement with a Blank and four options for the correct answer. This is a simple question for the correct use of tenses. In the subjective portion (80 marks), there are seven questions, from Q.2 to Q.8 (Q.1 being counted of the objective portion). The subjective part comprises two sections: section I and section II. Section I covers two text books related questions, while section II covers comprehension, applied grammar and translation. Q.2 covers 12 marks. The candidates are required to give short answers of 3-5 lines of the six questions from the given nine questions. These questions are from the text book I short stories. This is a comprehension of reading text. Q.3 carries 10 marks with eight short questions, each carrying two marks. The candidates have to select five from the given eight questions. This question is from book III (one act plays portion). Every short question item also gives hint of the play it has been taken. Q.4 carries 08 marks which ask short questions from book III (poems portion). Four short questions have to be answered from the given six. Q.3 and Q.4 are also reading comprehension items. Q.5 in section II carries 10 marks which asks to either write a letter (personal letter) or a simple application (normally to the Principal of school/college for fee concession or issuance of certificate, etc.). Q.6 carries 10 marks which asks to write a story on a given moral. Normally two options are given to write on one moral. Q.7 has three parts, two of which ask text based questions: part (a) carries 05 marks which asks to explain a part of poem (from Book III) with reference to the context; part (b) carries 05 marks which asks to punctuate a textual passage (from book I); part (c) carries 05 marks which asks to use any five pairs of words from the given seven. Q.8 carries 15 marks which has a textual passage (from book I) to be translated into Urdu language.

- 12th grade class question paper

The objective part of the 12th grade exam is different in formation from that of the 11th grade. It has Q.1 with twenty statements, each statement with four options to select one. There is no choice given to the candidates in this part. This portion carries 20 marks like that of the 11th grade exam. The first six statements are taken from the Book II (Modern prose and old heroes). These statements basically are the same as vocabulary test in the 11th grade. The next four statements are from the novel 'Goodbye Mr. Chips' and they are also vocabulary test. The next five statements from 11 to 15 are related to the correct use of preposition. The last five statements are related to the correction of common errors of language. The subjective part of this test carries 80 marks, and divided into section I and section II. It is the same in format according to the 11th grade. In section I, Q.2 asks to give short answers of 3-5 lines to any six of the given nine questions. It carries 12 marks. These questions are taken from the first part of Book II (Modern prose). Q.3 asks to provide short answers to any six from the given eight questions. It also carries 12 marks. This question too is taken from the Book II (Old heroes). Q.4 asks to provide short answers to any eight questions from the given twelve questions. It carries 16 marks. This question is taken from the novel 'Goodbye Mr. Chips'. These three questions, Q.2,3,4 are reading comprehension test. In section II, Q. 5 asks to write an essay of 300-400 words on any one of the given four topics. These are the topics of common life, or some historic event or figure, etc. This question carries 15 marks. Q. 6 ask students to use any five idioms/phrasal verbs from the given ten, in sentences of their own. This question carries 10 marks. Q.7 asks to translate the given passage from Urdu language into English. This is a simple passage with 8-10 sentences. This question carries 15 marks.

4.2 Questionnaire for teachers

The teacher is instrumental in making examination washback effect positive or negative. Alderson and Wall (1993:127) negated any washback effect on teachers' selection of methodology. Whereas, Andrews, et al (2002) pointed out a high influence of examination washback effect on teaching. Cheng, L. (1997: 52) observed no change in teaching methodology with the revised examination, though class room activities may change.

Shohamy (1993) reported changed methodology with high stakes EFL examinations, simulations of exam, tasks or creating new activities which directly aim to improve exam skills, like brain storming, pair-work, group work and jigsaw activities, etc. The researchers claimed that such activities intensified as the examination time gets closer. Bailey (2005) wrote, “We may have limited power to influence high stake national and international examinations, but we do have tremendous power to lead students to learn, to teach them language and how to work with tests and test results” (as mentioned in Yi-Ching Pan, 2009). Hence, the teacher factor is considered to be the most influential factor in shaping washback effect. It was covered mainly through the questionnaire. The questionnaire response of the participants is shown in table 1-2.

As the table 1 indicates, the majority (64%) of the respondents have the preparation of examination as their main consideration of teaching. Of course, this consideration by the teachers will decide on the selection of teaching methodology. Teachers’ attitude towards methodology, their experience of students’ preparation of exams, anxiety on the part of teachers and students, the impact of exam results on teachers and students, social pressure, class room practices, etc. were the issues included in the questionnaire.

The table 2 indicates the teachers’ attitude towards examination. Their selection of teaching methodology is directly influenced by the exams. They consider this system unfair to distinguish talented students. They realize that this system is the main cause of students’ low communicative competence. Most of the class room activities revolve around the students’ preparation for examination. The anxiety caused by exams impedes teaching and learning. The results of questionnaire data match with that of the previously conducted research. Read and Hayes (2003) also found greater use of homework tasks, explanation of exam strategies near the examination. Anderson, et al (1990) reported rote memorization on the part of learners as negative washback effect of examination. Cheng, L. (2004) and Shohamy (2001) reported anxiety and fear of failure on learners and teachers. Popham (1987:679) reported that ‘measurement driven instruction is the most cost effective way of improving the quality of public education’ (as cited in Cheng, L 1997).

4.3 *Class room observation*

If asked orally, a number of English teachers would claim to use communicative approach in teaching. However, the situation was found reverse during the observation. The classes were mostly found engaged in the traditional teacher dominant situation and the students acting as passive listeners and notes-takers. The main objective of teaching looked to be to prepare students for exams. Partially it can be due to the impending exams within a month from that period. On a superficial level, private institutes teachers tried to keep in touch with the communicative approach, though most of their teaching moves were also towards the preparation of exams. It was quite interesting to see many teachers worried for exam even more than their students. In majority of classes, the teachers were found delivering complete lectures on the preparation of examination techniques. In such situations, the learning of language was found absent from the scene. Some teachers wrote exam instructions on the black board and also related to the formative tests style students would be taking during the year. The majority teachers displayed the original Board’s exam papers to the class. The general examination skills being taught and practiced in class rooms were:

- Working with time limit—training students to be as quick as possible in examination, being test-wise
- Follow the instructions for filling in the answers—use of blue or black ink as indicated in the instructions, to write in the proper place, no cutting or over writing, no double answers on a single item, mind the word limit for short answers and long narrative answers, etc.
- Avoid exhortation and getting ready for going—promote students to have good sleep the night before examination day, take good breakfast, take necessary things like roll number slips, Students’ I.D. cards, proper exam materials etc.
- Sequencing the answers—attempt those questions first which the students are sure of correctness, or attempt the easiest one first, etc.
- Simulation of examination—preparing students by testing the same kind of questions which will appear in the exam.
- Boosting students’ confidence—encourage students about their knowledge of course contents, learning, test techniques and formative examination results.

4.4 *Interview*

The general attitude of the interviewees about the present system of examination was negative. Most of them looked over obsessed with the result of their students. The public sector interviewees told that there was a time when the result of students in the public institutions had not much impact on teachers’ promotion or survival in the profession. It was only in the private institutions where the result of students affected their survival or promotion. But the time has changed with more involvement of the government agencies and other stake holders in the institutional affairs and the result of students. The majority teachers were found unsatisfied with the examination being used as a tool for evaluating learners’ academic performance. It was blamed by some teachers

to produce parrots rather than learners. Due to the heavy pressure of merit for further education, the students try to cram, instead of learning language as a tool of communication. And, the teachers too, promote this practice to save their skin. In such a situation very few of the enthusiastic teachers would use communicative technique in class room.

There was found slight difference in the use of teaching methodology in the public and private institutions. The public teachers would rely mostly on the traditional Grammar Translation Methodology (GTM), while the private teachers claimed to use CLT methodology, though class observation in private institutions did not support much their claims, for which they tried to justify with the examination washback effect. An interviewee argued that every move of the class room activities is for the exams,

You cannot escape it: the exercises in the end of every chapter of text book, you will find tips for examinations, from the school authority, there are announcements for the forthcoming exams, the helping books teachers normally recommend to their students have full solved exam question papers. Every time you find yourself in a whirlpool of tests and exams.

The majority of interviewees reported that despite the urges from the authority to use communicative approach in teaching, they prefer to use GTM which ultimately hampers students' communicative competence. Some teachers told that due to the awakening caused by media and easy access internet in student folk, the students look fed-up with the current examinations. They want something new, a new system of evaluation which should not consider only marks in the exam to allow them go for further studies or finding jobs. A teacher from the public institute told that this system of examination is not fair to distinguish talented students. It does not promote students who possess creativity or critical thinking.

Overall, the interviewees reported negative influence of examination on their teaching methodology, attitude towards teaching, students' communicative competence and teachers' improvement. Due to examinations, the majority of teachers were reported not using innovative techniques in teaching; they just feel concern with the result of students in examination. Rather they claimed that this system makes them dull and pessimistic in teaching. They avoid taking risks in teaching and follow others in preparing their students for examination. Most of the teachers reported to introduce exam patterns in the beginning classes and the techniques to score maximum marks in the exam.

5. Discussion

The pedagogical implications of examination washback effect on teachers' selection of methodology are evident from the data analysis. The *participants, process and product*, all are highly influenced by examinations (Hughes, 1993). On the part of students and teachers, their major concern seems to be doing well in the examination. Alderson and Wall (1993:126-127) stated that this (washback) effect was that of the narrowing of the curriculum to those areas most likely to be tested.' The selection of teaching methodology is influenced by the thought that students have to sit for exams. They normally recommend those helping books and other materials to the students which can help them preparing for the exam. This situation has turned Pakistani society Exam-sick: the publication of helping books, solved previous question papers and other helping materials is a big business for many, the mushrooming of academies and tuition centers is also a picture of it which involve many teachers, material designers and other stake holders. Students suffer from examinations when their primary concern becomes to perform well in exams, not to learn well. The anxiety on the part of teachers and students also shows negative washback effect of exams. Students are found very conscious of their exam results. For this reason they demand to be taught for examinations. They expect teachers will make them expert in taking exams. This system has also failed in differentiating talented students.

The results of this study were found compatible with that of Anderson (1990), Cheng, L. (1999), Shohamy (1993) and Ozmen (2011). The teaching and learning processes are negatively influenced by washback effect. The teachers' main consideration for teaching is not the knowledge or practice of the use of language in real life situations, rather how to memorize well and prepare exam capsules. For this reason, most of the class room activities revolve around the preparation for exams. The negative washback effect on teachers' selection of methodology can be associated with the contents of syllabus which is highly literature oriented and grammar based. It can also be attributed to the examinations style in which grammar, vocabulary, composition and reading skills are tested. The teacher mostly relies on those teaching tactics which can prepare his students for the exam. This situation has become a big hurdle for the teachers to use Communicative approach (CLT), the old GTM is thought to be beneficial for preparing students for grammar-based examinations. Most of the classroom time is spent for test instructions and teaching techniques, how to produce well in examination. This is evident from the data of class observation too. The current syllabus for teaching is highly based on literary work, grammar and composition. The questionnaire data shows that reading and writing skills are emphasized in teaching on the expense of students' listening and speaking practice.

6. Conclusion and further suggestions

“When a test is designed and results analyzed, it is no longer the end of the job. Test designers turn to evaluate the consequences their test might have brought about in teaching and learning, be it social, psychological, ethical, curricular or educational” (Shohamy, 1993 as also mentioned in Cheng, L., 1997). Traditionally, tests come at the end of teaching and learning process. However, with the advent of high stake public examinations testing nowadays, the direction seems to be reversed. Testing usually comes first before the teaching and learning process (Cheng, L. 1997). The study was taken to evaluate the implications of examination washback effect on teaching methodology in teaching English as a compulsory subject at higher secondary level in Pakistan. One underlying purpose was also to examine the influence of current examination system on the students’ communicative competence. A triangulation of data source was used and mixed method approach was used to collect and analyze the data. The document analysis provided ample evidence of the syllabus contents and the pattern of examination, the questionnaire provided quantitative data about the teachers’ attitude and class room practices, the classroom observation provided with the real classroom situation and, lastly, the interview with the respondents gave an opportunity to one on one interaction with teachers to explore in detail the phenomenon under investigation.

The data revealed that the present examination system exerts negative influence on the students’ learning. The teachers’ main consideration of teaching is the students’ preparation of examination. Their choice of teaching methodology is influenced by the thought that the students have to take examination the result of which is very important for all the stake holders. Hence, they pay least attention on creativity in the classroom. The students’ communicative competence is negatively affected by the grammar-based examinations. The anxiety of exams on the part of teachers and students also plays negative role in teaching and learning English for communication. Most of the class room time is spent on learning examination techniques. The classroom activities have the underneath purpose of preparation for examination.

The effects of examination are not very easy to measure and analyze due to its nature, involving a number of influential factors (Shepard, 1990). Though the study provides some empirical evidences, yet it is not enough to explore fully the pedagogical implications of examination washback effect on teaching and learning. The results however, may not be generalized. Further empirical research is suggested in this direction. The areas for further studies can be the washback effect on examination itself, material development and curriculum design.

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Table 1 Teachers' objective of teaching

Item	Option	Response	
		Frequency	Percentage
Which of the following is your main consideration while teaching?	Students' examination preparation	82	64 %
	Students' knowledge of the target language	34	27 %
	Students' use of the target language	12	09 %

Table 2 Implications of examination washback effect

Sr No	Statement	Options					
		To a great extent		To some extent		Not at all	
		Frq.	% age	Frq.	% age	Frq.	% age
1	Your selection of teaching methodology is related with students' preparation for exam?	91	71 %	22	17	15	12 %
2	Students' are conscious of their results.	111	87 %	17	13 %	-	-
3	Students demand to be taught for examination.	101	79 %	21	16 %	06	05 %
4	This system of examination is suitable for differentiating talented students.	41	32 %	48	38 %	39	30 %
5	Students' communicative competence is hampered because of the present examination system.	83	65 %	37	29 %	08	06 %
6	Do you feel any social pressure for the result of your students?	73	57 %	32	25 %	23	18 %
7	Students' examination results have impact on your promotion or survival in the profession.	39	30 %	51	40 %	38	30 %
8	You feel pressure from parents about the result of your students.	66	52 %	37	29 %	25	19 %
9	Present examination emphasizes reading and writing skills.	99	77 %	23	18 %	06	05 %
10	Listening and speaking skills are neglected.	88	69%	31	24 %	09	07%
11	This system is a big hurdle in using innovative techniques in class room.	74	58 %	36	28 %	18	14 %
12	Class room activities revolve around examination preparation.	100	78 %	19	15 %	09	07 %
13	Examination preparation consumes most of the class room time.	81	63 %	33	26 %	14	11 %
14	The purpose of using teaching material is mainly examinations.	77	60 %	29	23 %	22	17 %
15	Examination announcements have negative effects on students learning.	83	65 %	27	21 %	18	14 %
16	Formative tests results are effective for exam preparation.	96	75 %	24	19 %	08	06 %
17	Examination causes anxiety for the students.	89	70 %	32	25 %	07	05 %
18	Examination causes anxiety for the teachers.	62	48 %	36	28 %	30	24 %

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