

Do tests help
learning?



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CHAPTER NO. 1

INTRODUCTION

Research literature abounds with studies concerning the influence that testing has on teaching and learning, or what has commonly been referred to as wash back (Alderson & Wall, 1993). The majority of wash back studies have focused on the positive or negative consequences of standardized tests on different areas of the curriculum. In general, these tests are considered high-stakes, that is, they are used for making important educational and professional decisions, such as admissions, graduation, employment, or promotions, and therefore affect people’s futures.

However, there has been little investigation into the effect of classroom-based assessment on instructional and learning practices. Classroom

assessment may be differentiated from standardized testing in the degree of formality and the purposes for which they are used.

It has been argued that high-stakes tests have more power to modify teacher and learner behavior whereas low stakes tests, such as classroom-based assessment, are not central to decision making, and therefore have fewer consequences. In any case, it is widely recognized that any type of assessment can act as a lever for educational change.

It has been stressed a lot that tests put a great effect on language learners who take the tests and teachers who try to help them in preparing and taking these tests. Recent studies (e. g., Cheng and Watanabe, 2004) assert that the important question is that how and why the wash back is brought up and how can it be reduced to minimum level (Cain, 2005).

Messick (1996) specifies that wash back is “ not simply good or bad teaching or learning practice that might occur with or without the test, but rather good or bad practice that is evidentially linked to the introduction and use of the test” (p. 254). He is of the view that tests promoting positive wash back mostly contain tests based on criterion Sample- that is, “ authentic and direct samples of the communicative behaviors of listening, speaking, reading and writing of the language being learnt” (ibid., p. 241), and, he does addition that the adaptation from learning exercises to test exercises “ should be seamless” (ibid.).

The wash back is very obvious and of great importance in Pakistan, which has been noticed by many experts at home and abroad. Jilani (2009) gives a view that students have had little incentive to study anything that will not be

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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 textbook. Several reasons, in the author's opinion, contribute to this situation; like Pakistan has a long history of test-driven teaching and learning. Many exams are taken every year to promote learners to upper classes.

Therefore, the test driven value is firmly established in the minds of Pakistani people. The current Examination system is imperial in nature. The examination has so much so importance for Pakistani students since it is the only standard to determine if the student is qualified or not to enter the next upper class. Keeping in view the importance of tests in the minds of Pakistani teachers and students, if Pakistani people want to improve English teaching and learning in Pakistan, the English examination is at a very critical point. Unfortunately, the current English examination in Pakistan is heavily grammar-centered, which has very serious negative wash back on English teaching and learning in Pakistan.

As a result, despite the avocation of CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) methodology of the government, the teaching and learning in Pakistani schools is still grammar-centered. Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to review relative theories and studies about wash back, analyze wash back of English teaching and learning in Pakistan and put forward a new English examination form based on CLT methodology which is expected to have positive wash back on English teaching and learning in Pakistan.

1. 1 Statement of the Problem

Wash Back Effect of English Examination on Teaching Methodology and Learning of Students at Secondary Level.

1. 2 Objectives of Study

The major objectives of the study are:

- To investigate the wash back effect of English examination on the teaching methodology of teachers.
- To investigate the effect of English examination on the learning of students.
- To impart the knowledge that English examination matters in the way of learning English language.
- To point out the fact that teachers develop their teaching methodology keeping in view the nature of English examination.
- To highlight the importance and use of English Examination to test the learning of students.
- To investigate that examination have wash back effect for some teachers.
- To examine that all the teachers have wash back effect of English examination for their teaching methodology.
- To point out that English examination influences some of the students but not all of them.

1. 3 Hypotheses

- English examinations influence teaching methodology and Learning of the students.

- Tests will have wash back effects for some learners and some teachers, but not for others.
- Teachers and learners do things because of the test which they would not necessarily do otherwise.

1. 4 Research Questions

- Does English examination affect teaching methodology and learning of students in a language classroom?
- Will Tests have wash back effects for some learners and some teachers, or for all?
- Do the examinations make teachers and students do the things which they will not necessarily do otherwise?

1. 5 Significance of the study

The greatest significance of this research is to find out the influence of English Examination on Teaching Methodology and Learning of Students. This study has special worth for the teachers because information provided revolves around them and their professional life. It provides them a guide that how and to what extent Examination can influence the learning of their English language learners. It also gives them a glimpse that how their own methodology of teaching gets influenced.

What is the role of examination and its type in the academic life of their students? How examination leaves them and learners, either motivated or unmotivated? In this type of examination (Grammar oriented) where stands the creative and imaginative writing and speaking abilities of their and of their students. This research may be helpful for higher education teachers in

selecting effective methods, achieving personal qualities and competencies and employing useful activities for promoting students interest.

In the light of this research study, institutions may take advantages for improving the teaching and learning of English in their institutions.

1. 6 Limitation of the study

The study is limited only to schools of Punjab Province, due to financial, time and distance constraints.

1. 7 Delimitation of the Study

This study is delimited to only two districts of Punjab province:

Mandibahauddin and Gujrat