Wash-back effect of Iranian students' pre-university English textbook and university entrance examinations: Teachers-based perspectives

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ABSTRACT

In this study, we investigated the possible wash-back effect of the university entrance exam as a high-stakes test and the pre-university English textbook. A 16-item teacher's perspective questionnaire was given to 40 female and male teachers teaching at pre-university schools in Education District No. One, Shiraz, Iran. The data obtained were subjected to SPSS version 17 using Chi-square test to be analyzed. The results showed alignment with those studies which supported the wash-back effect of the high-stakes exams on the teaching materials at different educational levels. Our EFL teachers' perceptions in the study highlighted that the fourth-graders' teachers mostly used supplementary materials geared toward university entrance exams' demand, contrasting with the main textbook's educational objectives. Further pedagogical implications and suggestions for future research would follow.

Keywords: Wash-back, teaching materials, high-stakes tests, EFL teachers.

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INTRODUCTION

The current interest in the wash-back impact that a test exerts on the teaching and learning has become so pervasive and widespread across the globe. This article offers an extended definition and the research done on wash-back, followed by theoretical frameworks. Bachman and Palmer (1996) have made a distinction between the *extent* or *intensity* of wash-back and its *direction* (beneficial or damaging). Bailey (1996) also states that the design of the test and the tasks it includes can guide wash-back in a favorable or detrimental direction. Regarding intensity, Cheng (2005) believes that it is the degree to which the testees adjust their behavior to the demands of a test. If wash-back encourages the forms of teaching or learning intended by the test developers, one can say it has beneficial direction; however, if it discourages the styles of teaching or learning, it has a damaging path. Hamps-Lynson (1998) stated that the appropriateness of wash-back depends on both the judgments made and also the educational goals. Our study focuses on the impact that the entrance university

exams, as high-stakes tests, may have on the teaching materials (textbooks taught in the last year of high schools) and learning of these materials. To see if the direction is mutually positive/negative is another aim of the researchers leading to the extent the two sides of the coin, exams, and textbooks, are aligned and support each other or not.

There are some wash-back studies on high-stakes examinations in different countries in which English is used as a foreign or second language, for instance, Sri Lanka (Alderson and Wall, 1993), Hong Kong (Cheng, 1997, 1999), and Israel (Shohamy et al., 1996). They investigated the effects of high-stakes tests on teaching and learning (Andrews et al., 1997; Burrows, 1999; Lam, 1993; Shohamy et al., 1996; Watanabe, 1997). High-stakes tests influence different stakeholders such as students, classroom teachers, administrators, materials developers, and publishers. However, according to Bailey (1999), learners are the most important participants because the wash-back processes have a direct

relationship with language learning. Moreover, there is a lack of study on the analysis of textbooks and their effects on learners, teachers, learning processes involved, and also teaching methodology employed by the teachers. So, this study is going to fill the gap by focusing on the analyses of the English textbook of Iranian pre-university schools and the university entrance exams using Bailey's framework. To obtain the objective the following research questions and hypotheses are posed.

Research questions

a) Do EFL teachers perceive that contents of the pre-university English textbook and university entrance tests are aligned toward the teaching and learning objectives?
b) Do EFL teachers perceive that the two sources, university entrance tests and the English text support each other to achieve the communicative teaching/learning goals?

Null hypotheses

a) EFL teachers perceive that contents of the English textbook and university entrance tests are not aligned toward the teaching objectives.
b) EFL teachers perceive that the two sources, university entrance tests and the English text do not support each other to achieve the communicative teaching/learning goals.

Theoretical models of wash-back

One of the researchers who proposed a basic model of wash-back was Hughes (1993). He stated that there were some distinctions between the effects on participants such as those affected by the tests, processes, and finally, products, the outcome of these processes. Later, Bailey (1996) developed the model and represented it in the form of a diagram and stated that there were relationships among test design considerations, participant values, motivations and resources, and the perceived importance and difficulty of the test. Because the second and third issues are related to social and individual differences, participants may be affected by a test differently in the same general context.

Figure 1 illustrates the model proposed by Bailey (1996).

Despite the presence of several models of wash-back effect (Burrows, 2005; Shih, 2007; Wall, 2005), the researcher used Bailey's (1996) framework because she specified some different participants, including researchers, and the types of products that might be affected by an examination. Furthermore, she mentioned

that these products might change other products as well (e.g., research results can feed into materials, curriculum design and teaching). Then, she made a distinction between '*wash-back to the learners*', and '*wash-back to the program*.' By the former, she meant the result of supplying '*test-derived information*' to the test-takers, and by the latter, she meant the result of supplying information to all other participants more accurately.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical background

Wash-back or backwash is a term which refers to the influence of testing on teaching and learning (Alderson and Wall, 1993). According to McEwen (1995a), "what is assessed becomes what is valued, which becomes what is taught" (p. 42). The concept of wash-back is that tests or examinations can and should drive teaching, and consequently learning, it is also referred to as *measurement-driven instruction* (Popham, 1987). To achieve the above goal, there should be a "match" or an overlap of the examination and the content and format of the curriculum (or "curriculum surrogate" such as the textbook) which is called *curriculum alignment* by Shepard (1990, 1991, 1993). The aim of this adjustment is improving teaching and learning which is referred to as systemic validity by Frederiksen and Collins (1989), and consequential validity by Messick (1989, 1994, 1996), and test impact by Bachman and Palmer (1996) and Baker (1991).

Wash-back effects can be either positive or negative. Bachman (1990, 2000) stated that positive wash-back would happen when the testing procedure reflected the skills and abilities taught in the language program. Moreover, Pearson (1988) reported that one could design good tests to encourage a positive teaching-learning process, meaning that teachers could exploit the positive wash-back to influence the language curriculum and syllabus. As Davis (1990:24) proposed, "It is foolish to pretend that wash-back does not happen." Therefore, wash-back is inevitable, and one can use testing as a quick way of influencing the teaching. One can change the curriculum and teaching methodology by the use of screening. On the other hand, negative wash-back occurs when a test content or format is based on a narrow definition of language ability consequently the teaching-learning context will be limited (Brown, 2002). In other words, when there is a mismatch between the content and the test, negative wash-back will occur. An example in case is when some students want to learn English communicatively, but the test is discrete-point. So, they have to focus on smaller parts of language instead of integrated skills, narrowing the content of the curriculum.

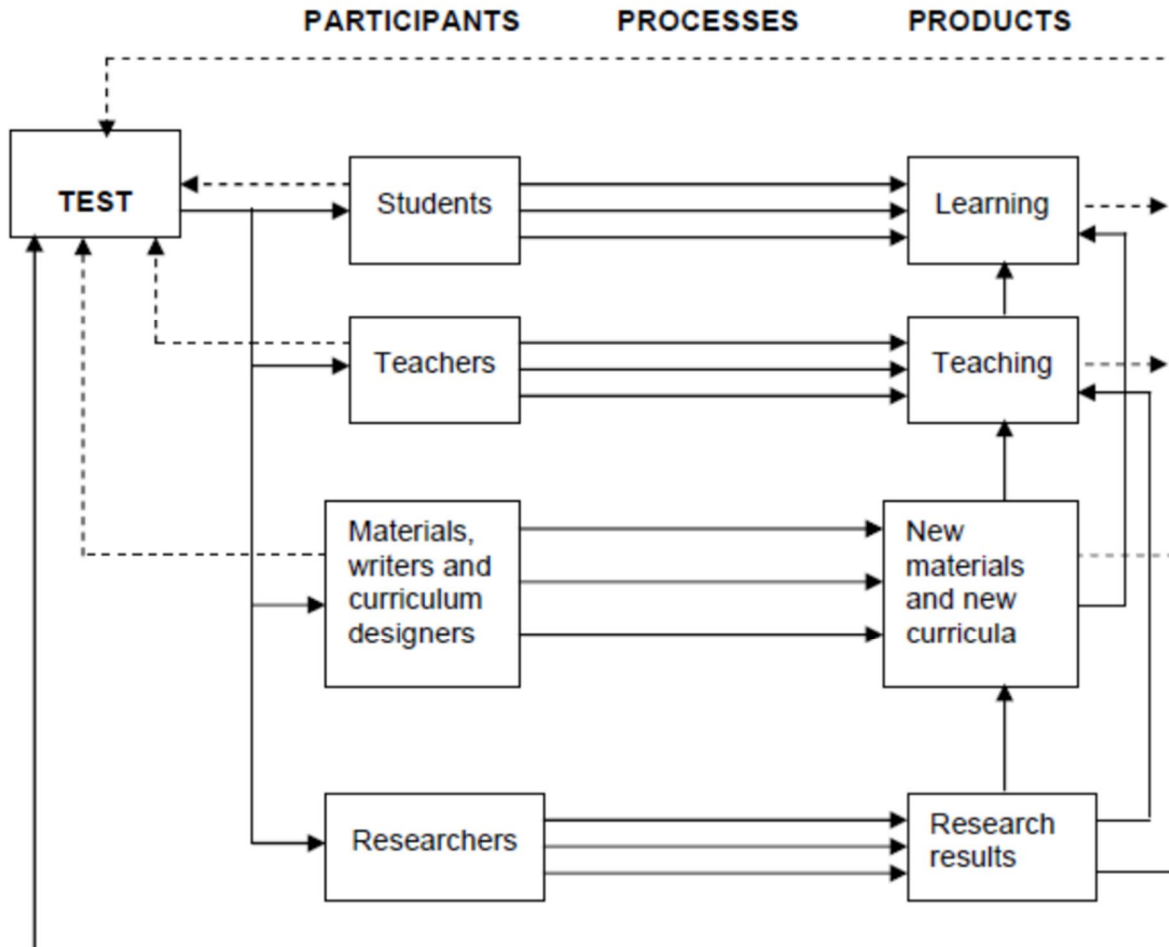The effects of tests on teaching and learning lie on a

PARTICIPANTS   PROCESSES   PRODUCTS

Figure 1. A basic model of wash-back adapted from Bailey (1996: 264).

continuum, stretching from negative (harmful) at one point, through neutral to positive (beneficial) at the other aspect. There has always been a debate on whether only "good tests" can have positive wash-back, or "bad tests" just have negative wash-back (Davis, 1990).

Shohamy (1993) employed four key definitions in understanding the wash-back concept. First, wash-back affects teaching and learning and second measurement-driven instruction meaning that tests should drive learning. Third, curriculum alignment emphasizes the connection between testing and the teaching syllabus. And finally, systemic validity implies the integration of tests into the educational system and that the introduction of a new test can improve learning. Pearson (1988) acknowledged the mutual relationship between a real test and classroom activities. In other words, tests are instruments for teaching or learning activities and vice versa. Therefore, another term for wash-back, namely *measurement-driven instruction*, appeared. The reason is that tests or examinations should drive learning and hence teaching. Shepard (1993) mentioned that there should be a match between the content and format of the

test called curriculum alignment.

High school textbooks and their role

Prator (1991) believes that the significant difference between English as a foreign language (EFL) and English as a second language (ESL) context is that in ESL contexts English is the medium of instruction whereas, in EFL contexts, the subjects in schools are not taught in English. In Iran, English is interpreted as a foreign language, and learning occurs in classroom settings with the use of specific textbooks and the teachers' management of classroom work. Due to the Islamic Revolution in 1979, English was incorporated into the educational system from the 2nd grade of junior high schools. However, currently, English education starts from 1st class of junior high schools.

Before 1990's, the focus of English education was on reading and helping the students translate materials into English. The revised curriculum in the last decade emphasized communicative competence. However, it is

still far from being communicative in our EFL context, Iran. Teachers use grammar translation method through English textbooks and ignore listening and speaking activities (Hosseini, 2007). According to him, the reason is the national exams.

Sheldon (1987) defined textbooks as a kind of published book which was designed to improve linguistic and communicative abilities of the language learners. Furthermore, Ur (1996) believed that books could be used as supporting teaching instruments. Tomlinson (2008) stated that textbooks teachers usually accompanied workbooks, a teachers' book, or some other additional texts for reference. Mares (2003) mentioned that books could give cohesion to the teaching and learning process by providing support and those kinds of activities that would foster quick learning of the language.

Although researchers have agreed upon the importance of textbooks in ELT, they show disagreements on the advantages and disadvantages of the use of books. Some scholars believe that texts can provide ready material for the teachers not to spend time and energy preparing the materials (Edge and Wharton, 1998). Moreover, Allwright (1981) and Lee (1997) state that textbooks can enhance language learning and make it more efficient. On behalf of teachers, books can be used as a reference point so that they can manage their teaching progress (Tomlinson, 2008). According to him, textbooks are like maps that can provide guidance and direction in delivering the lessons. Manuals are more useful for novice teachers as they can provide support and security. In EFL contexts where finding motivating and authentic materials is difficult, the issue of readily available textbooks becomes more prominent (McDonough and Shaw, 1993).

O'Neil (1982) believes that students benefit from textbooks as well. Students could rely on their books as a reference point and can monitor and keep track of their learning process. Teachers could use manuals as a tool in a way that students can become familiar with what is going to be taught. Additionally, textbooks offer a great help to the students in case of having incompetent teachers. According to Cunningsworth (1995), books are useful because the students can learn and study by themselves without teaching staff.

Besides the advantages mentioned above, some researchers highlighted the negative aspects of books. Tomlinson (2008) and Ur (1996) argued against the use of textbooks as they believed that teachers become uncreative in teaching and uncritical of their contents. They found that no book could address different learning styles, individual differences among students, and the requirements of various settings and environments. Tomlinson (2008) stated that teachers might teach the book rather than the language when relying too much on the textbooks. Lee (1997) and Tomlinson (2008) mentioned that in some exam-oriented cultures such as

Hong Kong, textbooks were just used as a practice for the students' exams rather than as a tool for helping the students learn a language. Moreover, McGrath (2002) believed that too much reliance on textbooks might result in the fact that teachers might think that the activities and tasks of the textbooks would be superior to their creativity and opinions. Tomlinson (2008) mentioned that most of the book writers would not apply language acquisition principles in their manuals and they merely relied on their intuition as what to be the best for language learning.

Experimental studies

Lam (1993) defined textbook wash-back as the impact of high-stake tests on teaching materials which led material writers to publish exam-oriented materials designed based on the needs of students and their teachers who wanted to prepare them for such tests. The available studies discussed wash-back on materials regarding their content, classroom use, and their effect on test performance.

Initial research supported the fact that the content of exam-oriented materials had influenced textbook wash-back on teaching materials. For instance, in Hong Kong, Lam (1993) analyzed the content of two books designed for a public proficiency exam (NUE) based on their range of skills, the authenticity of materials and task types contained. Lam concluded that most of the textbooks included exercises which had the exam format. Similarly, Watanabe (1996) in Japan, worked on teaching materials before university entrance examinations, basing them on the past exam papers. Analysis of the content of these materials was based on the calculation of the percentage of task types reflected in the review. The results showed that wash-back existed on materials. A study conducted by Salehi and Tarjoman (2017) about a nationwide MA entrance examination to look for the teachers' and the students' views of the exam and whether or not it had a wash-back effect on the university teachers' teaching methods and their instructions.

They administered a questionnaire to both groups. Their findings revealed that all the participants demanded to have a share and control over the components, the time, and other relevant aspects of the MA entrance exam, as a high-stake test. Likewise, they all asserted that the test should be designed and geared towards the enhancement of the learners' language knowledge and skills in place of test-taking strategies. Their results also showed that the test had a negative wash-back effect on the teachers' academic performance and their teaching methods and curriculum alignment.

However, the following studies suggested that exam-preparation materials could have an uneven relationship to the exam they are preparing. Hamp-Lyons (1996, 1998) focused on the content of five TOEFL test-preparation textbooks. A framework of about 19 criteria

(based on Popham, 1991; Alderson and Hamp-Lyons, 1996) was used to analyze the materials. The results of the study indicated that "*the skills promoted by the textbooks consist of (a) test-taking strategies and (b) mastery of language structure's, lexis and discourse semantics that have been observed on previous TOEFLs"* (Hamp-Lyons, 1996:6). The researcher concluded that the materials could affect teaching and learning negatively. As teachers and learners would consider teaching and learning as "discrete chunks of language rules and vocabulary items without context or even much co-text might lead to '*urricular alignment*'" (Madaus, 1988; Cooley, 1991).

Furthermore, IELTS Exams' teaching materials used to prepare students had impressive results. Wang (1997) used the Instrument of Analysis of Textbook Materials (IATM), designed by Bonkowski (1996). He analyzed sample units of two IELTS exam-preparation textbooks and concluded that the test influenced the content and format of the preparation books regarding content except on writing methodology.

Lam (1994) distributed some questionnaires to teachers in Hong Kong and concluded that teachers were like '*textbook slaves*' and '*exam slaves*' with the former focusing too much on the exam materials and of the latter on past papers in review classes rather than using materials concentrating on students' learning. He believed that this dependency on exam preparation materials was a kind of negative wash-back because instead of authentic materials, they used commercial ones. According to him, teachers did so since they believed reviewing past papers prepares students for exams.

Alderson and Wall (1993) carried out a study in Sri Lanka and via classroom observations found out that teachers relied on textbooks for their teaching content but not for their methods. Based on the follow-up interviews with teachers they understood that the reason was due to teachers' miss- understanding of the approach and philosophy behind the materials on which the new examination was based. In another study in Hong Kong which was done by Cheng (1997b), he concluded that teachers relied on the exam textbooks via teacher questionnaires and classroom observations. The teachers paid more attention to the syllabus of the exam rather than the manuals. This turn of care indicates the effect of wash-back on the content of teaching.

Based on extensive interviews with teachers in Europe, Wall and Horak (2006) found that the TOEFL preparation textbooks were the center of the courses investigated. The teachers used books as a source of information about the exam. The researchers believed that the teachers used the review books as the content and sequence of teaching. Therefore, this was a sign of negative wash-back. Wall and Horak stated that teachers relied heavily on these textbooks to follow the students' expectations, the textbooks' adequate inclusion of exam

preparation, teacher training, and lack of other resources. On the contrary, Saif (2006) stated that the teacher she observed modified and adapted the test materials based on the students' needs and the test objectives.

Besides exam textbooks, supplementary materials were used by teachers to prepare students for examinations. For instance, Nikolov (1999) stated that those materials were local publications that focused on grammar and represented exam wash-back effect. Wall (1999) concluded the same results which were the use of supplementary material books to compensate for the lack of grammar in the course-book. In Hawkey's (2006) study, based on class observation and also a teacher questionnaire about whether the materials other than the primary textbook were used, the researcher revealed that teachers, other than test-oriented teaching materials, even used additional materials targeting specific language skills and components from a variety of sources outside the exam. The examples are the press, TV, radio, and internet.

Alderson and Wall (1993) stressed classroom tests prepared by teachers for their classes. Watanabe also emphasized the need for examination of classroom assessment practices saying: "To observe the nature of wash-back from high-stake entrance exams, it would be valuable to compare wash-backs with the wash-back from smaller-scale tests (e.g., in-class tests, practice tests, placement tests) employed by the same population." (2000, p. 46). Wesdorp (1982), using teachers' questionnaires, looked at the frequency of use of multiple-choice questions in Dutch schools in classroom tests. The researcher concluded that multiple-choice tests did not have any effect on the class test format.

Alderson and Wall (1993) and Wall (1994) conducted a study in Sri Lanka stating that the new examination influenced the classroom assessment especially in the skills tested in the exam (e.g., reading and writing) and also testing techniques (e.g., true/ false, matching, short-answer questions, etc). Wall and Horak (2006) mentioned that TOEFL examination caused several types of classroom tests in the schools they visited (e.g., screening, diagnostic, and practice tests). The tests were in the format of commercial TOEFL test taken from the TOEFL preparation course books used at the observed institutions.

Another critical point is the question whether wash-back from exams has any effect on the students' learning or not. The review of the literature provides mixed results. Hughes (1989) found out that because of the new university exam in Turkey, the students' performance increased. He believed that the test affected the outcome because it was the criterion-referenced test based on the needs of the undergraduate students. However, the approach used in the study was not convincing because the reason why the introduction of the new proficiency test compared to students' results on a test which had no

similarity is unknown. Finally, according to Saif's (2006) study based on analysis of test scores collected before, during and after a language training program, she found a positive relationship between preparation for the (ITA) test and learning outcomes. However, she stressed that the results could not be generalized to other settings because they belonged to an institutional level. Likewise, Read and Hayes (2003) tried to measure learning outcomes in their study. They had two small groups of students (total 17) who took IELTS exam including pre- and post-tests with two intensive and general IELTS courses. The results showed that the participants did not improve significantly. They concluded that time was needed for wash-back to occur.

Context of the study

The 40 randomly-selected teachers involved in our study were from those teachers teaching the pre-university students in one of the districts of the Education Office in Shiraz. Their teaching experiences varied between 2 to 11 years and they were all Persian native speakers. The sampling procedure is a non-probability sampling of the accidental type due to the problems related to the availability of the participants. Table 1 demonstrates of the participants.

METHOD AND DESIGN

The data collection method was quantitative which included teachers' perspectives to achieve our goal. The researcher administered the test during the spring of 2015. Data collection for this research involved the administration of the questionnaire providing detailed information about what teachers did in the classroom while teaching them using the assigned English book.

Instruments

The following questionnaire consisting of 16 items was employed to collect data from our participants. It contained four sections. The syllabus and curriculum (items 1, 2, 3 and 4), tasks and activities (items 5, 6, 7 and 8), materials (items 9, 10, 11 and 12), and teaching methods and techniques (items No. 13, 14, 15 and 16). It was taken from and also validated by Maniruzzaman (2011). According to him, the questionnaire was based on the model of Cheng (2005) and Shohamy (2005), and used a five-grade Likert Scale from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree.' The researcher checked the items of the questionnaire with the supervisors to obtain information regarding the relevance and clarity of the statements, the format, and the amount of time required to fill out the survey. It was translated into Persian by the author and an L1 Persian speaker. It was pilot-tested with

Table 1. Information on the teachers' group.

Variables	N
Gender	
Female	25
Male	15
Total	40
Experience in teaching	
2-5 years	15
5-7 years	5
7-9 years	9
ears	11

ten high school students from an ordinary school in Shiraz. As a whole, the Teacher Questionnaire had a high degree of reliability ("α-0.9478").

Table 2 demonstrates the distributions of the items of the questionnaire and the Cronbach alpha coefficients of the teacher textbook evaluation scale.

Data analyses

To study wash-back, an important factor to consider is the fact that data should be collected directly from the subjects. The respondents' responses were collected and analyzed by the researcher using a quantitative paradigm. The five-point scale was assigned values from 1 to 5. Namely, 1 was assigned to "strongly agree," 2 to "agree," 3 to "no opinion," 4 to "disagree," and 5 to "strongly disagree." The subjects' answers to the questions were computed and analyzed using the SPSS program module (version 17) about four categories. The statistical measurements included means and standard deviations for each item of the questionnaire. A chi square test was also used to find out if the differences between 'strongly agree and agree' and 'strongly disagree and disagree' in each sub-category and the distinctions among the four sub-categories of the questionnaire are statistically significant or not.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results of the teachers' perspective questionnaire (16 items)

Table 3 demonstrates the mean scores and standard deviations of each of the items of the questionnaire, and hence the degree of effect that the university entrance examination had on the syllabus and curriculum, tasks and activities, materials, and teaching methods and techniques as perceived by the EFL teachers and as exhibited in Table 3.

Table 2. The distribution and the Cronbach alpha coefficients of teacher perspective questionnaire.

Distribution of teacher perspective questionnaire	Items	Alpha
Syllabus and curriculum	1, 2, 3, 4	0.970
Task and activities	5, 6, 7, 8	0.840
Materials	9, 10, 11, 12	0.798
Teaching methods and strategies	13, 14, 15, 16	0.930
Total	16	0.924

Table 3. Mean scores and standard deviations of the 16 items of the teachers' perspective questionnaire.

No.	Item	Mean	Standard deviation
1	I am aware of the objectives of the syllabus and curriculum for English language education at Pre-University level.	2.00	0.71
2	I teach everything from the textbook based on the program and curriculum although something may not be tested.	3.05	1.29
3	I teach some lessons in the textbook that are less likely to be tested on the University entrance examination.	4.37	0.70
4	I use some relevant contents to help my students perform well in the University entrance exam.	3.32	0.61
5	I spend more time teaching grammar because grammar is more likely to be tested in the examination.	1.17	0.44
6	I design my classroom activities according to my students' needs and abilities.	1.62	0.70
7	I teach whatever I think is important to teach, no matter whether it is tested or not.	3.40	1.21
8	I teach what is tested in the examination because the students expect me to do so.	1.37	0.66
9	I use supplementary materials (such as test papers, suggestion books, etc.) other than the textbook to help my students succeed in the University entrance examination.	1.80	0.79
10	I advise my students to practice the questions of the previous tests for relatively better preparations for the examination.	1.12	0.33
11	I give students model questions predicted to be set in the University entrance examination.	1.05	0.22
12	I use authentic materials in addition to the textbook to teach the English language.	3.27	1.33
13	I use the teaching methods and techniques that help my students succeed in the examination.	2.40	0.87
14	I prefer teaching test-taking strategies when the University entrance exam is near.	1.15	0.36
15	My EFL teaching methods and techniques are influenced by the University entrance examination.	*1.50*	*0.71*
16	I try to achieve the test objectives throughout teaching the English language.	1.25	0.43

What follows is the results analyzed quantitatively and the related discussion.

The mean score of Item No. 1 related to syllabus and curriculum is 2.00, whereas the standard deviation is 0.71. It shows that 75 % of the teachers (agree plus strongly agree) stated that they were aware of the objectives of the syllabus and curriculum. The mean score and standard deviation of Item No. 2 are 3.05 and 1.29, respectively. It indicates that 37.5 % of the teachers (agree plus strongly agree) confirmed that they taught everything from the textbook based on the syllabus and curriculum although something might not be tested in the examination. While the same number (37.5 %) did not say so. The result remains inconclusive and no judgment can be made.

Based on the findings displayed in Table 4, 87.5% of the respondents chose disagree plus strongly disagree and 92.5% of the teachers chose strongly agree plus agree indicated that the activities covered in classrooms were test-oriented. These findings could be confirmed by the mean scores of Items No. 3 and 4 being 4.37 and 3.32, respectively. In other words, teachers focused on those kinds of materials that would help students do well in examinations.

As the mean score of Item No. 5 was 1.17 while its standard deviation 0.44, it would be clear that the perception of classroom activities was related to the contents of the examination. In other words, because grammar was tested in the UEEs, 85% of the teachers tried to spend more time on grammar regardless of the aim of the textbook to enable the learners to communicate effectively. Similarly, based on Table 4, 87.5% of the teachers tended to teach based on the students' needs and abilities. The mean score and standard deviation of Item No. 6 are indicative of such tendency (that is, 1.62 and 0.70 respectively).

Table 4. Frequency and percent of the 16 items of the teachers' perspective questionnaire.

Item Number		Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	Frequency	10	20	10		
	Percent	25%	50%	25%		
2	Frequency	5	10	10	8	7
	Percent	12.5%	25%	25%	20%	17.5%
3	Frequency			5	15	20
	Percent			12.5%	37.5%	50%
4	Frequency	30	7	3		
	Percent	75%	17.5%	7.5%		
5	Frequency	34	5	1		
	Percent	85%	12.5%	2.5%		
6	Frequency	20	15	5		
	Percent	50%	37.5%	12.5%		
7	Frequency	2	10	6	14	8
	Percent	5%	25%	15%	35%	20%
8	Frequency	28	10	1	1	
	Percent	70%	25%	2.5%	2.5%	
9	Frequency	15	20	3	2	
	Percent	37.5%	50%	7.5%	5%	
10	Frequency	35	5			
	Percent	87.5%	12.5%			
11	Frequency	38	2			
	Percent	95%	5%			
12	Frequency	5	7	9	10	9
	Percent	12.5%	17.5%	22.5%	25%	22%
13	Frequency	8	10	20	2	
	Percent	20%	25%	50%	5%	
14	Frequency	34	6			
	Percent	85%	15%			
15	Frequency	25	10	5		
	Percent	62.5%	25%	12.5%		
16	Frequency	30	10			
	Percent	75%	25%			

According to the findings, the EFL teaching was based on the test. In other words, the teachers taught to the trial and also test-taking strategies rather than teaching communicative skills. The aim of the pre-university

English textbook written by the Ministry of Education was to cover the four skills which required the teachers to follow communicative language teaching. Instead of teaching grammar in isolation, the textbook has integrated grammar items in the lesson activities allowing grammar to assume a more meaningful role in the learning of English. However, the results of the participants' perceptions confirmed that 85% of them taught the grammatical items more likely covered in the entrance university examination.

Likewise, Table 4 indicated that 55% of the teachers (strongly disagree plus disagree) did not pay attention to the achievement of communicative competence for the students. Instead, they taught whatever they thought would be tested in the examination. The mean score and standard deviation of Item No. 7 confirmed the findings (that is, 3.40 and 1.21, respectively). Similarly, 95% of the teachers (agree plus strongly agree) taught what would be tested in the examination with the mean of 1.37 and standard deviation of 0.66. Besides, Table 4 revealed that 87.5% of the teachers used supplementary materials (such as test papers, suggestion books, etc.) as they believed they might help them more in the UEEs. The mean score of 1.80 and standard deviation of 0.79 proved the same results showing the teachers' tendency in supplying the students' with supplementary materials. Also, 87% of the teachers advised their students to practice the questions of the previous examinations for the examination. Item no. 10 had the mean score of 1.12 and standard deviation of 0.33 indicating the same outcomes.

Based on the mean score and standard deviation of Item No. 11 (1.05 and 0.22) 95% of the teachers gave model questions to the students to be tested in the university entrance examination. The above table indicated that 45.5% of the teachers (disagree plus strongly disagree) used authentic materials in addition to the textbook to teach the English language. The mean score and standard deviation of Item No. 12 confirmed the results (that is, 3.27 and 1.23 respectively).

The mean score and standard deviation of item No. 13 are 2.40 and 1.33 in Table 4. Manifested that 55% of teachers did not have an opinion and 45% of them (strongly agree plus agree) stated that they used the techniques that would help students succeed in the examination. Also, Item No. 14 having the mean score of 1.15 and the standard deviation of 0.36 exhibited that 85% of the teachers preferred teaching test-taking strategies when the university entrance examination got closer time-wise.

Based on the above table, 62.5% of the teachers agreed that the university entrance examination influenced their teaching methods and techniques. The mean score and standard deviation of Item No. 15 (that is, 1.50 and 0.71) were consistent with the results. Similarly, 75% of the teachers attempted to achieve the test objectives throughout teaching the English language.

The mean score and standard deviation of Item No. 16 (1.25; 0.43) revealed the same results.

Having explained in detail the result for each item of the questionnaire in each sub-category, the results of the chi-square run for each sub-category displayed in the following tables support the fact that the EFL teachers were mostly under the control and influence of the university entrance examinations held every academic year across the country. This situation, in turn, strongly confirms the negative wash-back of these types of tests on the communicative objective of English language learning and teaching in our EFL setting. Therefore, our two null hypotheses are rejected, i.e. the two sources of input, the English textbook and the UEEs, are not aligned toward the communicative goal of the course and they mutually don't support each other either.

The result of the test in Table 5 showed a sharp distinction between those who agreed that they were influenced by the UEEs and worked toward their goal and those who disagreed.

A shown in Table 6, there is a sharp difference between those who agreed they taught their students to succeed in the university entrance exam than those who did not.

The test shown in Table 7 also supported those who agreed that they used the materials toward the students' success in the UEEs.

Results of Table 8 revealed that the agreeing group manipulated their teaching methods and strategies toward the goal of the UEEs.

Finally we applied Freidman test to determine if there existed any distinction among the four sub-categories and to delineate their rankings as shown in Table 9.

Results of the delineated ranks among the four sub-categories are 'task and activity,' 'syllabus and curriculum,' 'materials,' and 'teaching methods and strategies.' But the differences among the four sub-category rankings are not statistically significant.

DISCUSSION

The elements of Table 4 indicated that teachers focused on those types of contents that would help students in their examinations. Alderson and Wall (1993), Manjarres (2005) and Tsagari (2007) came to the same conclusion that having good grades in a course did not guarantee to be able to communicate in real life situations. Another issue considered was the fact that supplementary materials were provided for the students because the teachers believed that they might help them in their examinations. The findings were in line with the study of Caine (2005) in Japan where he found out that teachers used a hidden syllabus driven by the content of EFL examination. The teachers' perceptions in the study indicated that they were dependent on model questions, guidebooks, and test papers. Cheng (1997) in

Table 5. Chi square test used for the differences between 'strongly agree & agree' and 'strongly disagree & disagree' for syllabus and curriculum

Syllabus and curriculum

Statement	Strongly agree and agree		No opinion		Strongly disagree and disagree		Mean	Std.
	Frq	%	Frq	%	Frq	%		
1	30	75	10	25	----	----	1.25	0.43
2	15	37.5	10	25	15	37.5	2	0.88
3	----	----	5	12.5	35	87.5	2.87	0.33
4	37	92.5	3	7.5	----	----	1.07	0.27

Syllabus and curriculum

Choices	
Chi square	12.35
Df	2
Asymp. sig	0.002

Table 6. Chi square test used for the differences between 'strongly agree & agree' and 'strongly disagree & disagree' for task and activity.

Task and activity

Statement	Strongly agree and agree		No opinion		Strongly disagree and disagree		Mean	Std.
	Frq	%	Frq	%	Frq	%		
5	39	7.5	1	2.5	----	----	1.02	0.16
6	35	87.5	5	12.5	----	----	1.12	0.33
7	12	30	5	12.5	23	57.5	2.27	0.9
8	38	95	1	2.5	1	2.5	1.07	0.35

Task and activity

Choices	
Chi square	24.8
Df	2
Asymp.sig	0.0001

Table 7. Chi square test used for the differences between 'strongly agree & agree' and 'strongly disagree & disagree' for materials.

Materials

Statement	Strongly agree and agree		No opinion		Strongly disagree and disagree		Mean	Std.
	Frq	%	Frq	%	Frq	%		
9	35	87.5	3	7.5	2	5	1.17	0.5
10	40	100	----	----	----	----	1	0
11	40	100	----	----	----	----	1	0
12	12	30	9	22.5	19	47.5	2.17	0.87

Materials

Choices	
Chi square	26.6
Df	2
Asymp.sig	0.0001

Table 8. Chi square test used for the differences between 'strongly agree & agree' and 'strongly disagree & disagree' for teaching methods and strategies.

Statement	Strongly agree and agree		No opinion		Strongly disagree and disagree		Mean	Std.
	Frq	%	Frq	%	Frq	%		
13	18	45	20	50	2	5	Jan-60	0.59
14	40	100	----	----	----	----	1	0
15	35	87.5	5	12.5	----	----	1.12	0.33
16	40	100	----	----	----	----	1	0

Teaching methods and strategies

Choices	
Chi square	15.05
Df	2
Asymp.sig	0.001

Table 9. Freidman test.

Rank	
	Mean rank
Task and activity	2.63
Syllabus and curriculum	2.54
Materials	2.51
Teaching	2.33

Test statistics	
N	40
Chi-square	1.78
df	3
Asymp. Sig.	0.62

Hong Kong found similar results that the content of the tests dominated classroom teaching. Also, it is clear that the teachers should be aware of the test objectives to be similar to the goals of the curriculum. The aim of the syllabus and curriculum is that students need to achieve communicative competence and it can be done by learning the language, not learning about the language. The results of our study revealed that teachers used most of their class time teaching grammatical rules in contrast to the communicative language teaching approach. So, there was a negative wash-back in EFL teaching and learning at the pre- university level (last year of high school) in Iran in harmony with the results found by Salehi and Tarjoman (2017).

In sum, based on the findings of this study, the wash-back effect was related to EFL teachers about the syllabus and curriculum, tasks and activities, materials, and teaching methods and techniques. Lam (1994), Wall and Anderson (1996) and Cheng (1997) reached the same results. They found out that teachers helped the students get good grades in their examinations rather than making them able to learn the skills needed for real-life communication.

Results of the research question no. two (p.3) tabulated in Table 4 indicated that the activities covered in classrooms were test-oriented, and teachers focused on the materials that would help students in their examinations. The results of the study corroborated Hargreaves (1997) in which he believed that the textbook and examination syllabus became one. According to Lam (1993) high-stake tests would have high impact on teaching materials.

Our study revealed that the teachers spent more time on grammar teaching regardless of the aim of the textbook designed in a way to help students to communicate efficiently. They only taught grammar because it was going to be tested in the university entrance examination. In other words, instead of focusing on the achievement of communicative competence useful for the students, they taught whatever would be tested in the examination. Cheng (1997) reached the same outcome emphasizing that teachers paid more attention to the syllabus of the exam rather than the textbooks. Wall and Horak (2006) believed that teachers relied on the exam textbooks because of the students' expectations and lack of other resources.

Likewise, the results of the EFL teachers' views in our study highlighted that teachers gave model questions to the students to make them ready for the university entrance examination. The findings supported Wall (1999) who believed that supplementary materials should be used to compensate for the lack of grammar in the course books. The other finding of this study was the fact that wash-back affected the process of teaching. It was observed that 85% of the teachers preferred teaching test-taking strategies when the university entrance examination got closer. In this regard, Shohamy et al. (1996) concluded that in case of Arabic low-stakes exam no change was observed in teaching. Whereas, high-

stake EFL exams led teachers to teach through simulating the exam tasks or doing the activities that developed the exam skills and strategies. Watanabe (1997) believed that educational background, beliefs about teaching and attitudes toward the exam, and the time of the exam would play a significant role in how teachers teach and the method they use in classrooms. In line with the above findings, our EFL teachers' teaching methods and techniques were influenced by the university entrance examination.

In a nutshell, the results of our study strongly advocated the idea that teachers paid more attention to the syllabus of the university entrance exam rather than the English textbook confirming Cheng's (1997) findings. Also, Wall and Horak (2006) stated that teachers relied on the exam books toward students' expectations and success in the university entrance exam and lack of other resources.

Pedagogical implications

Bearing the importance of wash-back effect concept in mind, the results of this research will have implications for materials developers, institutes' authorities, teachers, and learners. There is a public concern regarding the effects of testing and test scores on the way of teaching and material development and what and how students and teachers do during classroom instructions. Living in testing world leaves no doubt that in education, testing affects methods and methodology.

Firstly, the teachers should be aware of both the objectives of EFL teaching/learning as stated in the textbooks and the syllabus, and they should also be trained and oriented to teach in accord with the syllabus and curriculum. So the Ministry of Education should arrange some training and orientation programs for our teachers to make them capable of teaching in agreement with the learning objectives as stated in the textbooks and developing students' communicative competence in all the four necessary skills integrated.

Secondly, the school authority should monitor the teachers' performance in classrooms to find out whether they teach to the test by giving test-related exercises and skipping some lessons not to be tested in the examination. Or they teach based on the objectives mentioned in the curriculum and develop the skills needed for communication in authentic situations.

Thirdly, the materials should go hand-in-hand with the learning objectives. The teacher's job is to enable students to acquire a good command of English in everyday communication. In other words, material writers should write the contents in a way that meet the needs and interests of the learners. And finally, the university entrance examinations should be consistent with the principles of communicative testing measuring the communicative competence of the students. In other words, the test should determine how well the students can perform in real life situations. All the four skills including listening, reading, speaking and writing should receive equal attention in testing. All in all, the major finding of the study warrants the top education authorities to try to revise and to compensate for the drawbacks existing in the UEE, a stake-holder test, and the teaching materials used to teach the high school students across the country as an immediate and necessary need.

Limitations and suggestions for further research

One has to take care of the constraints of the study before generalizing the findings of the survey. The present study was carried out with 40 EFL teachers in the Education Office District No. One and was restricted to the high schools of fourth graders. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized to other groups with different educational settings. The replication of the present study with more extensive and different samples in different contexts is highly recommended. Another line of research for further investigation is the use of other high school grades (1, 2, 3) teaching materials evaluated against the wash-back effect and the teaching and learning objectives of the program. Likewise, the same type of research can be carried out in other cities selecting teachers and students of the same high school grades for further generalizability of the results. Finally, the implementation of a possible change in the curriculum and university entrance examination to comply with the teaching materials and teaching methods leading to the possible and probable benefit of all stakeholders across the country would be of great significance and benefit. It would be the responsibility of the high ranking administrators to pave the way and provide facilities for those involved in the process of this very crucial task for the success of our future generations to get access to the new and revised program nationwide across the country.

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