# VIETNAM NATIONAL UNIVERSITY, HANOI

# UNIVERSITY OF LANGUAGES AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

# \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

# DINH MINH THU

# WASHBACK OF AN ENGLISH ACHIEVEMENT TEST TO TEACHERS:A STUDY AT A UNIVERSITY IN VIETNAM

# Nghiên cứu tác động của bài thi tiếng Anh cuối học phần đối với giáo viêntại một trường đại học ở Việt Nam

# Major: Theory and Methodology in English Language Teaching

# Code: 914023101

# SUMMARY OF PHD DISSERTATION

# HÀ NỘI - 2020

 The dissertation has been carried out at: Vietnam National University, Hanoi. University of

Languages and International Studies.

# This dissertation has been carried out at Vietnam National University, Hanoi. University of Languages and International Studies.

# Supervisors: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nguyen Van Trao

# Dr. Duong Thu Mai

# The thesis will be defended at the Board of Examiners of University of Languages and International Studies – Vietnam University, Hanoi at …………………….. on ………………..

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

[LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS iv](#_Toc44573490)

[Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION 1](#_Toc44573491)

[1.1. Rationales 1](#_Toc44573492)

[12. Significance of the study 1](#_Toc44573493)

[1.3. Context of the study in Vietnam 2](#_Toc44573494)

[1.4. Research Questions 3](#_Toc44573495)

[1.5. Scope of the Study 3](#_Toc44573496)

[1.6. Structure of the study 3](#_Toc44573497)

[Chapter 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND 4](#_Toc44573498)

[2.1. Basic Testing-and-Assessment Concepts 4](#_Toc44573499)

[2.1.1. Concepts of language testing and assessment 4](#_Toc44573500)

[2.1.2. Achievement tests 4](#_Toc44573501)

[2.1.3. Test usefulness 4](#_Toc44573502)

[2.2. Washback, Teachers’ Perceptions and Teachers’ Practices 4](#_Toc44573503)

[2.2.1. Washback 5](#_Toc44573504)

[2.2.2. Teachers’ perceptions 7](#_Toc44573505)

[2.2.3. Teachers’ practices 7](#_Toc44573506)

[2.2.4. The relationship between teachers’ perceptions and practices 7](#_Toc44573507)

[2.2.5. Proposed conceptual framework for the present study 8](#_Toc44573508)

[2.3. Empirical Research on Washback on EFL Teachers’ Perceptions and Practices at the Tertiary Level 9](#_Toc44573509)

[2.3.1. An overall look at the washback research on EFL tertiary teachers. 9](#_Toc44573510)

[2.3.2. Washback of the test on teachers’ perceptions of teaching at the tertiary level 9](#_Toc44573511)

[2.3.3. Washback of the test on teachers’ practices at the tertiary level 10](#_Toc44573512)

[Chapter 3. METHODOLOGY 11](#_Toc44573513)

[3.1. Research Design 11](#_Toc44573514)

[3.1.1. Rationale for the research design 11](#_Toc44573515)

[3.1.2. Research design 11](#_Toc44573516)

[3.2. Selecting the Case 12](#_Toc44573517)

[3.3. Settings for the Case Study 12](#_Toc44573518)

[3.4. Participants 13](#_Toc44573519)

[3.5. The Researcher’s Role 13](#_Toc44573520)

[3.6. Data Collection Instruments 14](#_Toc44573521)

[3.7. Data Analysis Procedures 14](#_Toc44573522)

[3.7.1. Transcriptions 14](#_Toc44573523)

[3.7.3. Analysis of the interview data 15](#_Toc44573524)

[3.8. Truthworthiness 15](#_Toc44573525)

[3.9. Ethical considerations 15](#_Toc44573526)

[CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS 16](#_Toc44573527)

[4.1. EAT Washback on the Teachers’ Perceptions at a University in Vietnam 16](#_Toc44573528)

[4.1.1. The teaching objectives in the teachers’ perceptions 16](#_Toc44573529)

[4.1.2. The teaching contents in the teachers’ perceptions 16](#_Toc44573530)

[4.1.3. The teaching methodology in the teachers’ perceptions 17](#_Toc44573531)

[4.1.4. The professional development in the teachers’ perceptions 17](#_Toc44573532)

[4.2. EAT Washback on the Teachers’ Practices at a Vietnamese University 17](#_Toc44573533)

[4.2.1. The teaching objectives in the teachers’ practices 18](#_Toc44573534)

[4.2.2. The teaching contents in the teachers’ practices 18](#_Toc44573535)

[4.2.3. The teaching methodology in the teachers’ practices 18](#_Toc44573536)

[4.2.4. The professional development in the teachers’ practices 19](#_Toc44573537)

[4.3. The Relationship between Teachers’ Perceptions and Practices under the Washback of the EAT at a University in Vietnam 19](#_Toc44573538)

[CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION 21](#_Toc44573539)

[5.1. EAT Washback on the Teachers’ Perceptions and Practices of Teaching 21](#_Toc44573540)

[5.1.1. EAT washback on teachers’ perceptions of teaching 21](#_Toc44573541)

[5.1.2. EAT washback on teachers’ practices of teaching 22](#_Toc44573542)

[5.2. Factors Affecting the EAT washback on Teachers’ Perceptions and Practices 22](#_Toc44573543)

[CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION 24](#_Toc44573544)

[6.1. Summary of Key Findings 24](#_Toc44573545)

[6.1.1. EAT washback on teachers’ perceptions of teaching at a university in Vietnam 24](#_Toc44573546)

[6.1.2. EAT washback on teachers’ practices of teaching at a university in Vietnam 24](#_Toc44573547)

[6.2. Implications for Classroom Pedagogy, Teacher Education and Research 25](#_Toc44573548)

[6.2.1. Implications for classroom pedagogy 25](#_Toc44573549)

[6.2.2. Implications for teacher education 25](#_Toc44573550)

[6.2.3. Implications for research 25](#_Toc44573551)

[6.3. Research limitations 25](#_Toc44573552)

[RESEARCHER’S PUBLICATIONS RELATED TO THE THESIS 26](#_Toc44573553)

# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| CEFR | **:** | Common European Framework for Reference  |
| CET | **:** | College English Test |
| EAT | **:** | English achievement test |
| EEE | **:** | Exit English Examination |
| EEU | **:** | Entrance Exam of the Universities |
| HEIs | **:** | Higher education institutions |
| HKCEE | **:** | Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination |
| IELTS | **:** | International English Language Testing System |
| INUEE | **:** | Iranian National University Entrance Exam |
| MCQs | **:** | Multiple choice questions |
| MoET | **:** | Ministry of Education and Training |
| NMET | **:** | National Matriculation English Test |
| PD | **:** | Professional Development |
| PET | **:** | Preliminary English Test |
| QĐ-TTg | **:** | Quyết định của Thủ tướng Chính phủ |
| TACS | **:** | Tiếng Anh cơ sở |
| TOEIC | **:** | Test of English for International Communication |
| UEEs | **:** | University entrance examinations |
| VCEE. | **:** | Vietnam’s College English Entrance Exam  |
| VSTEP | **:** | Vietnamese Standardized Test of English Proficiency |

# Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION

The first chapter in the research justifies the reasons for the research implementation, emphasises the research significance and depicts the context of the study in Vietnam. It also raises the research questions, limits the research scopes and frame the research structure.

## 1.1. Rationales

There are three major reasons that motivate the conduction of the present research.

First, it is the pivotal role of language testing and assessment in language education. Testing and assessment exists not for the sake of testing only, but as a determining factor of teaching, learning, informing, selecting, and employing (Alderson & Banerjee, 2002; Avivan, 1991; Bachman, 2010, Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Cheng, Sun, & Ma, 2015; Lemmetti, 2014; Shohamy, 1998). Therefore, test qualities become a matter of considerations. Secondly, washback, a test quality pertaining to test effects on teaching and learning as Bachman & Palmer (1996), Hughes (2003) put it, has been attracting researchers since the latter half of the twentieth century for its contributions to fairness and education promotion. Washback research results help point out factors that boost up or impede learning. Thirdly, washback of an English achievement test on teachers at a university in Vietnam is selected to study due to the significance of the test and the teacher development in the research context. In Vietnam, a B1 minimum level is required as an undergraduates’ graduation condition in the orientation of the national foreign language policy (Decree No 1400/QĐ-TTg, 2008; Circular No 2961/BGDĐT- GDĐH (2010). Higher education institutions have made changes to accommodate although substantial challenges occur. The researched university is of no exception. It has undergone several shifts, which leads to the choice of Preliminary English Tests (PET) as a major tool to measure its undergraduates’ English language outcome. The English achievement test (EAT) in the present research is a PET simulation that prepare for the students to approach the PET. The teachers were selected as participants since previous research argue they are the key role to create positive washback effects (Antineskul & Sheveleva, 2015; Bailey, 1999; Liauh, 2011; Onaiba, 2013; Richards & Lockhart, 2007; Spratt, 2005; Tsagari, 2011; Wang, 2010). Results from the current research can help the participant teachers reflect their teaching and the university empower the teachers more effectively.

## 12. Significance of the study

This study contributes to the testing and assessment field both theoretically and practically.

(1) Theoretically, the research contributes to reviewing the recognized washback models and generating a new washback framework with additional elements. Questions on how washback affects teachers’ perception of teaching aspects and their professional practices have been left unanswered in many aspects, for example their professional development. The research outcomes can help expand the theoretical base of washback model on teachers’ perceptions and practices.

(2) Practically, the conduction of the research offers the participant teachers an opportunity to reflect their own perceptions and practices under the influence of a new achievement test in the PET format deeply and longitudinally. Such insights can promote positive washback effects and hinder negative ones on teachers during their teaching as well as in their future professional practices. Furthermore, the findings inform the authority at the researched university valuable data to appropriate their English language policy. The research not only aims to benefit the research context but also dedicates to a wider similar context in Vietnam regarding the pedagogical innovation and future policy decisions in terms of teachers’ role and teachers’ development.

## 1.3. Context of the study in Vietnam

This section illustrates the context in terms of both the macro-level beyond the institution and the micro-level at the institution as Cheng (2004) suggests.

On the macro-level, MoET has shifted the testing and assessment quality assurance from the traditional national standard to the global framework and then to the modernized national framework. Decree No 1400/QĐ-TTg (2008) on the National Foreign Language Project 2020 (now extended to 2025) encourages the use of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching and Assessment (CEFR) as the tool to measure the Vietnamese users of the English language. In 2010, circular No 2961/BGDĐT - GDĐH placed the requirement that undergraduates should reach a minimum of B1 English level in CEFR. Certificates of globally-recognised international examinations like IELTS, TOEFL, TOEIC and PET were adopted at HEIs for the graduation condition. Then CEFR was adapted to become CVFR (the Common Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching and Assessment) was born in 2014 (Circular 01/2014/QĐ-BGDĐT), resulting in VSTEP (Decree 729/QĐ-BGDĐT).

On the micro-level, the researched university has made substantial changes in its English language education policies and practices on the way to accommodate the MoET’s policy changes in English language testing and assessment. It has undergone two-skill Test of English as International Communication (TOEIC), Vietnamese Standardised Test of English Proficiency (VSTEP), Key English Tests (KET) and Preliminary English Test (PET). The English achievement test (EAT), the key research instrument of the present study, has its mission of preparing the undergraduates for their preparation for a graduation condition test of PET.

## 1.4. Research Questions

The overarching question is “How does the EAT exert its washback on teachers at a university in Vietnam?” To be specific, two sub-research questions are formulated as follows:

1. How does the EAT exert its washback on teachers’ perceptions of teaching at a university in Vietnam?
2. How does the EAT exert its washback on teachers’ practices of teaching at a university in Vietnam?

## 1.5. Scope of the Study

The current study is limited to the washback of an English achievement test to four teachers’ perceptions and practices of teaching at a multi-disciplinary university in the North of Vietnam.

## 1.6. Structure of the study

The present study consists of six Chapters: Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Findings, Discussions, Conclusion and Pedagogical Implications.

# Chapter 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter comprises three themes. The first theme (2.1) is the basic testing-and-assessment concepts that are language testing and assessment, achievement tests, and test usefulness. The second theme (2.2) is washback in terms of its definitions, existence conditions, directions, frameworks, teachers’ perceptions and practices. An updated washback framework was built for the present study. The third theme (2.3) bases on the newly-born framework to critically review previous empirical studies on tertiary teachers’ perceptions and practices under the test influences.

## 2.1. Basic Testing-and-Assessment Concepts

### 2.1.1. Concepts of language testing and assessment

A*ssessment* refers to an ongoing systematic process or strategy to gather the information both qualitatively and quantitatively to make decisions about individuals (Brown, 2004; Cizek, 2010; Messick, 1996, Nunan, 2003). *Testing*, on the other hand, is one of the assessment procedures using an instrument named a *test*, i.e. a method or an instrument of measuring a person’s ability, knowledge, or performance in a given domain by using either a numerical scale or a classification scheme (Bachman, 2010; Nunan, 2003).

### 2.1.2. Achievement tests

Achievement tests evaluate the fulfilled amount of course contents pertaining to the course objectives (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010; Brown, 2013; Hughes, 2003; McNamara, 2000). There are two types of achievement tests, including progress achievement tests and final achievement test. The EAT belongs to the second type.

### 2.1.3. Test usefulness

The test usefulness is largely discussed in research by Bachman (1995), Bachman and Palmer, 1996, Fulcher and Davison (2007) Shohamy (1991). Bachman and Palmer (1996, p. 18) propose a framework of test usefulness with six qualities as reliability, construct validity, authenticity, interactiveness, impact and practicality. Impacts on the micro level, i.e. the classroom context, are referred to as washback (Bachman & Palmer, 1996). It acts as an external link of the test to stakeholders or social effects of the test on stakeholders

## 2.2. Washback, Teachers’ Perceptions and Teachers’ Practices

This section reviews the concepts that are very closely related to the current study, which are the concepts of washback (2.2.1), of teachers’ perceptions (2.2.2) and of teachers’ practices (2.2.3) as well as the relationship between teachers’ perceptions and practices (2.2.4). More importantly, the review reaches the conceptual framework (2.2.5) which guides the data collection, analysis, findings and discussion.

### 2.2.1. Washback

#### 2.2.1.1. Conceptualization of washback

Morrow (1986) raises the first concept of “*washback validity*” to describe the quality of the relationship between a test and teaching. It is also consequential validity. Messick (1996) regards washback as “only one form of testing consequence that needs to be weighted in evaluating validity, and testing consequences are only one aspect of construct validity needing to be addressed” (p. 243). Hughes (2003, p. 53) defines washback as “a part of the impact a test may have on learners and teachers, on educational systems in general, and on society at large”. Pearson (1988, p. 7), cited in Cheng et al. (2004) states washback from the psychological perspective that “Public examinations influence the attitudes, behaviours, and motivation of teachers, learners, and parents, and because the examinations often come at the end of a course, this influence is seen working in a backward direction, hence the term, washback.” The above analysis yields a new shape of washback. Washback denotes the test influence on teachers’ and students’ psychological mechanism and actions to reach the educational goals of teaching, learning and testing. In the washback process, teachers are “the ‘front-line’ conduits for the washback processes related to instruction” (Bailey, 1999, p.17).

#### 2.2.1.2. Conditions for washback existence

Washback can be tracked when: (1) the *same* teacher teaches the exam-preparation class differently from non-exam-preparation class *differently*, and (2) *different* teachers teach *different* classes of exam preparations the *same* (Watanabe, 2004, p.28). Hughes (1994, pp. 2- 3) lists six conditions for possible washback, which can be summarized into two major factors including the importance of students’ success to both students and teachers, and their familiarity with the test and the availability of necessary test resources. Bailey (1996; pp. 276-277) also mentions the participants’ understanding of the test, especially the test purpose and the intended test result use, and the participants’, including teachers’ and students’ investment into the assessment procedures.

#### 2.2.1.3. Washback directions

Washback *direction* can be negative or positive (Alderson & Wall, 1993; Cheng & Curtis, 2004; Hughes, 1989; Pan, 2009).

##### 2.2.1.3.1. Negative washback

Tests can cause certain hindrances in the educational practices (Cheng et al., 2015; Pan, 2009; Shih, 2007, 2009; Shohamy, 1996, Tsagari, 2007, 2011; Wang, 2010). Pan (2009, p.61) presents four major aspects of negative washback: (1) teachers’ teaching-to-the-test, (2) test anxiety impact, (3) students’ limited learning points, and (4) students’ under-expected learning motivation.

##### 2.2.1.3.2. Positive washback

Albeit to the existence of negative washback, positive washback is the key interest of language educators by large and washback researchers in particular because new tests are introduced not for only the sake of an expected score achievement but the improvement in language competence. Pan (2009, p.61) summarises three beneficial washback effects: (1) teachers’ strict alignment with the teaching contents and the time frame, (2) students’ efforts and achievements, and (3) good teaching from good tests. Totch (2006), Haggies (2008), cited in Onaiba (2013) praise the economy in the administration of discrete-point tests, but this should be considered deleterious effects because this test form may destroy communicative competence.

The current study expects to find out in the test positive washback to promote and negative washback to prevent.

#### 2.2.1.4. Previous washback models

The washback documentation enjoys six popular washback models proposed by Alderson and Wall (1993), Hughes (1993), Bailey (1996), Bachman and Palmer (1996), Green (2007) and Shih (2009). On reviewing these models, washback aspects pertaining to teachers and their teaching will be highlighted for the research aim.

Alderson and Wall (1993) have eight out of fifteen hypotheses mentioning the influence of the test on teachers and teaching (number 1, 3, 4, 7, 9, 11, 14, 15).

A very general statement is claimed first: a test will affect teaching, tailing specific affecting factors embracing teaching contents, methods, rate, sequence, degree and depth of teaching. Teachers’ attitudes to test factors named in H.11. H.14 state the test impact on *all* teachers, while H.15 on certain groups of teachers. Hughes (1993, p.2) discusses the trichotomy of *participants, process,* and *products*, which the test may affect. He specifies *participants* as language learners and teachers, administrators, materials developers, and publishers, whose perceptions, attitudes, motivations and actions can be impacted by the test. Bailey (1996) develops Hughes’ (1993) trichotomous model into a washback framework (Figure 1.3) portraying the complicated reciprocal interactions among all the components. A new participant as *researchers* is involved; however, “researchers” and “materials writers and curriculum designers”, compared to “students” and “teachers”, are far from direct teaching and learning. Bachman and Palmer (p. 147) provide aspects concerning washback on teachers by questioning the consistence between (i) **“**the **areas of language ability** to be measured” and “those that are **included in teaching materials”, (**ii) “the **characteristics of the test and test tasks”** and “the **characteristics of teaching activities”,** (iii) “the **purpose of the test”** and “the **values and goals of teachers** and **of the instructional program**”. Green (2007) portrays washback effects in its *direction, variability* and *intensity.* In 2009, Shih provides the most detailed washback model of washback on teaching. The advanced aspect of the model is the dynamic convergence of well-listed contextual factors, test factors and teacher factors to impact teaching practices.

### 2.2.2. Teachers’ perceptions

With regards Cambridge Dictionary, *perception* is defined as “a belief or an opinion” or “an understanding”. Perceptions in the current research can be understood through the definitions of beliefs. Rokeach (1969, p. 113, cited in Skott, p. 17) sets beliefs as an “integrated cognitive system” or “any simple proposition . . . inferred from what a person says or does, capable of being preceded by the phrase ‘I believe that …”. Pajares (1992, p. 316) defines beliefs as an “individual’s judgment of the truth or falsity of a proposition, a judgment that can only be inferred from a collective understanding of what human beings say, intend, and do”. In washback research, teachers’ perceptions are grounded on the label “attitudes”, “feelings” (Mahmoudi, 2013; Tsagari, 2011, p. 434-435), “beliefs” (Wang, 2010; Mahmoudi, 2003, p. 49-50), “understanding” (Cheng, 2004; Hsu, 2009). From the above review, teachers’ perceptions of teaching under the influence of the test denote how teachers feel, think about, believe and understand the test objectives, formats and their classroom teaching practices

### 2.2.3. Teachers’ practices

Teachers’ practices can be mentioned simply as actions (Cheng, 1999), teaching (Ahmed, 2015; Cheng & Curtis, 2004); classroom teaching (Cheng, 2004) teachers’ instructional practices (Hoge, 2016; Onaiba, 2013), teachers’ behaviors (Hsu, 2009). The teachers’ practices include “what teachers do in the classroom” (Hsu, 2009, p.88), which pertains to the medium of instruction, teacher talk, teaching activities, teaching materials, lesson planning and professional development.

Some or all of these aspects are found in other washback researchers’ studies on teachers’ practices (Ahmed, 2015; Cheng, 1999; Cheng & Curtis, 2004; Onaiba, 2013 and others). This study conceptualizes teachers’ practices as their behaviours of teaching, which include their introduction and actualization of the teaching objectives, selection of the teaching materials, planning of the lessons, instructions in classes, self-reflection and participation in professional development events.

### 2.2.4. The relationship between teachers’ perceptions and practices

Perceptions or beliefs are believed to be “the best predictors of individual behaviors” (Pajares, 1993, p. 45), or “a reflection of what they know and believe” (Richards and Lockhart, 2007, pp. 29). Perceptions/beliefs are argued to have a driving force to practices (Onaiba, 2013; Pajares, 1993; Skott, 2015; Wang, 2010; Zeng, 2015). Skott (2015, p.16) assumes “beliefs as an explanatory principle for practice”. He believes that teachers will transmit their understanding of the subject to their classroom practices. Zeng (2015) deems that teachers’ beliefs have a “filtering effects” on all teachers’ thoughts, actions and decisions. Clancey (1997), cited in Le (2011), asserts that “every human thought and action is adapted to the environment, that is, situated, because what people perceive, how they conceive of their activity, and what they physically do develop together” (pp. 1-2). Their perceptions support their instructional capacity and quality which entails students’ commitment in their learning and achievement.

### 2.2.5. Proposed conceptual framework for the present study

#### Figure 2.6. The conceptual framework for washback of the EAT to teachers’ perceptions and practices

**TEACHER FACTORS**

1. Learning experience

2. Teaching experience

3. Professional status

4. Familiarity of contextual factors

5. Familiarity of test factors

6. Commitment to teaching

7. Accountability to student success

8. Willingness to innovate teaching

**CONTEXTUAL FACTORS**

1. National English language policy on testing and assessment

2. Institutional English language policy on testing and assessment

3. Institutional English language training curriculum

4. Institutional class size

5. Institutional student major and language proficiency

**TEST FACTORS**

1. Purpose

2. Format

3. Contents

4. Weighting

5. Resources

**PERCEPTIONS**

1. ***Contents***

1.1. Course objectives

1.2. Resources

1.3. Topics

2. ***Methodology***

2.1. General teaching methods

2.2. Lesson planning

2.3. Means of instruction

2.4. Instructional time

2.5. Classroom environment

2.6. Prioritised skills/contents

2.7. In-class assessment

2.8. Home assignment

***3. Professional Development***

3.1. Self-reflection

3.2. Participation in the professional community

**PRACTICES**

1. ***Contents***

1.1. Course objectives

1.2. Resources

1.3. Topics

2. ***Methodology***

2.1. General teaching methods

2.2. Lesson planning

2.3. Means of instruction

2.4. Instructional time

2.5. Classroom environment

2.6. Prioritised skills/contents

2.7. In-class assessment

2.8. Home assignment

***3. Professional Development***

3.1. Self-reflection

3.2. Participation in the professional community

## 2.3. Empirical Research on Washback on EFL Teachers’ Perceptions and Practices at the Tertiary Level

This review section comprises of three parts. Part one (sub-section 2.3.1) provides an overview of washback research on EFL tertiary teachers. The conceptual framework (Figure 2.6 in sub-section 2.2.5) supports the reviews of the findings of the previous research on the washback on teachers’ perceptions (sub-section 2.3.2) and on teachers’ practices (subsection 2.3.3).

### 2.3.1. An overall look at the washback research on EFL tertiary teachers.

The overall look has revealed several facts. First, more research on teachers’ practices than teachers’ perceptions is recorded, which echoes Papakammenou's (2013) view. Second, most research is conducted in the Asian region, with one of the earliest research taking place in China (Alderson & Wall, 1993; Barnes, 2017; Cheng, 1997; Lam, 1993; Thuy Nhan, 2013, Tran, 2016; Sadighi, Yamini & Bagheri, 2018 and others). Third, Vietnam has raised its interests in washback-to-teacher research in the recent years (Bui, 2016; Nguyen, 2017; Thuy Nhan, 2011; Tran, 2016), especially when MoET highlighted the measurement of undergraduates’ English language proficience. Another salient point is high-stakes tests in the secondary level have attracted more researchers’ attention (Alderson & Wall; 1993; Li, 1990, cited in Tsagari, 2007; Sadighi, Yamini & Bagheri, 2018; Shohamy, 1993; Tayeb et al.; 2018; Tsagari, 2011; Watanabe, 1996) than the tests at the tertiary (Read & Hayes, 2003; Wall & Horák, 2006; Nguyen et al.. 2008; Liauh; 2011; Thuy Nhan; 2013; Tran 2016; Nguyen, 2017; Barnes, 2017; Wenyuan, 2017). Last but not least, more research on proficiency tests is found than that on achievement tests.

### 2.3.2. Washback of the test on teachers’ perceptions of teaching at the tertiary level

In terms of teaching contents, the first sub-aspect as teachers’ awareness of the teaching objectives have not been mentioned.

The publications reveal that teachers perceive the washback on the teaching contents in two opposite trends. A number of teachers believe that there should be/is an alignment between the taught contents and the test contents, while another number see the incompatibility between them. Wall and Horák (2011) report the washback effects of the TOEFL iBT on the teaching contents positively from European HEIs. VSTEP in Vietnam (Nguyen, 2017) exerted positive effects on teaching resources. In addition, Saif (2006), in his study on the international teaching assistants inclining positive washback, sees the participants believe the textbook strategies enhance students’ learning of presentation skills well.

Regarding teaching methodology, mixed perceptions are reported from different research. It is interesting that nearly half of the informants in Liauh’s (2011) study disagree on the teaching-to-the-test approach but they are concerned about teaching-for-the-test. Teachers in Antineskul and Sheveleva's (2015) research on Business English Certificate (BEC) exams reflect positive washback of BEC to their perception of teaching, accompanied by explanations like: “goal-orientation of BEC exam”, “individual approach to teaching English”,

Professional development was not much concerned in the reviewed research, except few words voiced by Wall and Horák (2006), Thuy Nhan (2013), Antineskul and Sheveleva (2015)and Liauh (2011). Liauh (2011, p. 179) reports teachers believe in their ability to evaluate their own teaching effectiveness and can boost up their teaching methodology as well as enrich their teaching materials. Antineskul and Sheveleva (2015, p. 12)prove teachers appreciate BEC as a career development opportunity by developing their Business English vocabulary systematically. Another unstated professional benefit in their study is the teachers’ collaboration.

### 2.3.3. Washback of the test on teachers’ practices at the tertiary level

With regards to teaching contents, most research findings to date have revealed that the test can impact teaching contents although course objectives have not been obviously stated (Hamp-Lyons, 1996, 1998; Hsu, 2009; Read & Hayes, 2003; Wall &Horák, 1996; Wenyuan, 2017). The test-format course books determine the skills taught in classes.

In terms of pedagogy, most classes are described teacher-centered with traditional methods like grammar-translation (Alderson, Wall & Hamp-Lyon, 1993, 1996; Barnes, 2016a, 2016b, 2017; Hsu, 2009). The test-format course books determine the skills taught in classes. While communicative approaches and integrated-skill lessons are appreciated in language classes, teaching actually shadows test tasks with test-taking tips. In many cases, linguistic knowledge is priorised to communicative skills (Hsu, 2009; Wall & Horák, 2006). As for the means of instruction in class, the mother tongue is preferable in Hsu’s (2009) research. Chu (2009) as cited in Liauh (2011, p. 174) finds their behavioural changes in adapting the school common test into mock tests of the EEE in his study of EEE influences on teachers.

Concerning the issue of professional development, little information has been revealed, except in Thuy Nhan (2003), Wall and Horák (2006) and Antineskul and Sheveleva (2015). Wall and Horák (2006, p. 114) complain that all teachers receive no training of teaching methodology for TOEFL tests.

# Chapter 3. METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methodology adopted for the study. It begins with the research design of a qualitative case study (Section 3.1), the descriptions of the selected case (Section 3.2), the setting (Section 3.3), the participants (Section 3.4) and the researcher role (Section 3.5). Then, it illustrates the processes of designing the data instruments and collecting the data (Section 3.6) as well as analyzing the data (Section 3.7). The research trustworthiness (Section 3.9) and research ethnics (Section 3.9) close Chapter Methodology.

## 3.1. Research Design

This section is divided into two sub-sections. The first sub-section (3.1.1) justifies the qualitative single case study design applied to the research from both the theoretical and empirical perspectives. The second sub-section (3.1.2) specifies the research design.

### 3.1.1. Rationale for the research design

A qualitative case study research design is selected for the current research. Theoretical and practical justifications for the selection will be presented herein.

Theoretically, the research follows a qualitative single case study research design as suggested by researchers like Richard (2003), Cohen (2007), Creswell (2003) and Nunan (1992). The present research fits into the qualitative naturalist inquiries when it seeks washback effects of an English test on teachers’ perception and practices of teaching in a natural setting of a university in Vietnam. Qualitative research pertains to the “subjective assessment of attitudes, opinions and behavior” (Kothari, 2004, p 5). Amongst the qualitative strategies, a case study appropriates the current research. A case study allows a thorough analysis of an issue from the participants’ perspectives within a context (Harrison, Birks, Franklin and Mills, 2017), and it is effective in understanding the natural classroom context (Cohen et al., 2007; Dörnyei, 2007; Wisker, 2001; Yin, 2009).

Empirically, washback research has experienced the qualitative approach with multiple methods. The qualitative approach was exploited in a larger number of washback studies (Antineskul & Sheveleva, 2015; Furaidah et al., 2015; Thuy Nhan, 2013; Taqizadeh & Birjandi, 2015; Wall & Horák, 2006; Watanabe, 2004) or mixed methods (Hsu, 2009; Liauh, 2011; Onaiba, 2013; Rahman, 2014; Tayeb et al., 2014; Tayeb et al., 2018; Wang, 2010; Wenyuan, 2017).

### 3.1.2. Research design

The current study investigates washback effects of the EAT to the teachers’ perceptions and practices in an English course which prepares for an undergraduates’ English graduation condition test. A baseline study via a semi-structured interview and document analysis releases washback triggers as specified in Figure 2.6: contextual factors, test factors and teacher factors. This step helps set light to the subsequent discussion about the research findings. No previous research on washback on teachers has conducted a preliminary investigation on the washback conditions as detailed in the proposed framework (Figure 2.6) prior to a major study on washback effects on teachers’ perceptions and actions. This can be seen as a contribution to methodology of washback study. The major study includes three principal phases: interviews with the individual teachers of their perceptions and reported teaching practices under the test washback, and classroom observations of their actual class teaching, followed by short interviews to clarify hidden points in teachers’ actions.

## 3.2. Selecting the Case

As for the selection of a case study, Stake (2000) suggests researchers should approach:

those cases that seem to offer the opportunity to learn…That may mean taking the one most accessible, the one we can spend the most time with. Potential for learning is different, and sometimes superior to representativeness. (p.146)

The case to study in this research was a university in the North of Vietnam. Four teachers played as units of analysis in the case. This case was selected not because the individuals were specially compelling and unusual. The major reason was the opportunistic convenience of the case when I was a key teacher at the researched university and I had a good relationship with the teachers in the foreign language department of the university.

## 3.3. Settings for the Case Study

The university bounding the case will generally be depicted in terms of its geographical and historical features, English training programme, and English classes.

Geographically, the research site is a university located in a big city in the South East of Hanoi.

English is considered a key foreign language in the foreign language programme, which has undergone remarkable changes since the National Foreign Language Project 2020 demanded the English language outcomes for the undergraduates of a minimum of B1. It has undergone two-skill Test of English as International Communication (TOEIC), Vietnamese Standardised Test of English Proficiency (VSTEP), Key English Tests (KET) and Preliminary English Test (PET). The English achievement test (EAT), the key research instrument of the present study, has its mission of preparing the undergraduates for their preparation for a graduation condition test of PET.

The English classes at the target university faced certain challenges to be successful in the updated curriculum. There were large classes of up to 60 students of mixed abilities. Most of them possessed limited English proficiency. The students majoring in Finance and Banking or Economics seemed to be better at English than those majoring in Physical Education or Primary Education.

## 3.4. Participants

The profile of the participants is illustrated in Table 3.1, revealing the diversities in the teacher factors, especially in their teaching experience, professional status, commitment to teaching, accountability for student success and student major. Little washback research has reported the significance impact of the teachers’ age, gender and qualification on their perceptions and practices. Nonetheless, teachers’ experience, familiarity with the test and accountability for student success are some examples of influential factors for washback to occur differently in different classes (Cheng, 1999; Hughes, 2003; Shohamy, 1998; Wantanabe, 2004)

#### Table 3.1. Teachers’ profile

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Teacher** | **Lam** | **Mai** | **Tran** | **Lan** |
| 1. Age | 1984 | 1976 | 1974 | 1986 |
| 2. Gender | Female | Female | Female | Female |
| 3. Highest degree/institution | Master’s Degree/ULIS-VNU | Master’s Degree/ULIS-VNU | Master’s Degree/ULIS-VNU | Master’s Degree/Victoria University |
| 4. Years of teaching experience | 15 years | 18 years | 24 years | 2 years |
| 5. Professional status | Head of the Division | Secretary of the test designer board | Senior | Novice |
| 6. Familiarity with contextual factors | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| 7. Familiarity with test factors | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| 8. Commitment to teaching | High | High | Normal | High |
| 9. Accountability for student success | High | High | Normal | High |
| 10. Students major | Foreign Trade | Math Education | Business Administration | Primary Education |

## 3.5. The Researcher’s Role

It is vital to identify the researcher’ role in qualitative research because the researcher is a research instrument herein, and this helps to reduce the threat of subjectivity in this research approach (Duff, 2008; Le, 2011). Firstly, I have been an English lecturer at the researched university for nearly twenty years where I have built up good relationship with the teachers. Secondly, my personal and professional relationship with the teachers at the university might hinder several truths because they might not speak out what they really think and teach the way they really teach because they are afraid of being evaluated negatively. Finally, my position as a PhD student at the top-tier university, ULIS-VNU and my seriousness and the heavy PhD study helped me to gain respect and belief from the researched university; therefore, they were willing to support my data collection.

## 3.6. Data Collection Instruments

Four research instruments, including document analysis, interviews, observations and follow-up interviews were exploited in this research. First, an intensive review and analysis of the EAT format, the course book and the syllabus was conducted. Generally, the EAT format mirrored the PET format despite the reduction of the part number in each paper in the EAT. The textbook selected for Course English 2 was Complete PET, equipping students with the daily life topics, the test task samples related to the topics and the test-taking skills. Second, in order to investigate the teachers’ perceptions of teaching under the influence of the EAT, I selected semi-structured interviews. It is interesting that while I aimed to interview the teachers’ perceptions, teachers’ practices, or behaviours, could occur in the form of reported practices. One-to-one semi-structured interviews were chosen for this research because they allowed the interviewed gave their opinion freely while I had a set of guided questions (Borg, 2006; Cohen et al, 2007). Third, classroom observations added their complementary relationship to interviews “to ascertain selected participants’ perspectives on their actions or behaviours” (Duff, 2008, p.114). Finally, follow-up semi-structured interviews were conducted basing on the questions I had from observing the classes, listening to the collected audios and watching the collected videos.

## 3.7. Data Analysis Procedures

Section 3.7 illustrates the data analysis procedures, which embrace two sub-sections. Sub-section 3.7.1 presents the transcription and translation of the collected data, while sub-section 3.7.2 specifies steps in data analysis Braun and Clarke (2006) propose.

### 3.7.1. Transcriptions

The recorded information was transcribed verbatim and checked with the original recordings and the participants to ensure the data accuracy. Regarding the interview data of the four teachers’ perceptions in two rounds in the main study, eight copies were produced, accounting for a total of 151 pages. The classroom observation data and the post interview data were transcribed slightly differently. Only relevant data were extracted and transcribed. The data extracted in Chapter Findings were translated into English.

### 3.7.3. Analysis of the interview data

Braun and Clarke (2006) propose a six-step thematic analysis, including data familiarization, initial code generation, theme searching, theme revision, theme naming and reporting. This study has underwent these six steps, coding, copying and pasting, finding themes to present and discuss in Chapter Findings and Chapter Discussion.

## 3.8. Truthworthiness

While validity and reliability are two key issues to value quantitative research, “trustworthiness” (Guba, 1981, Rallis & Roseman, 2009) or “believability” (Schreiber & Asner-self, 2011, p.116) are taken into serious considerations for a qualitative study. Rallis and Rossman (2009, p. 264) define “trustworthiness as a set of standards that demonstrate that a research study has been conducted competently and ethically”. Criteria of trustworthiness include credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of a qualitative study, which correspond internal validity, generability and objectivity of its quantitative counterpart (Guba, 1981).

The credibility was reached when I built the harmonious relationship with the teachers and encouraged them say the truth and act naturally in class. I reported the data honestly. The data were seen by my supervisors. The data were also triangulated for credibility. I described the methodology transparently which allows the research methodology to be transferred to other research contexts. The dependability of the research referred to my flexibility in making changes during the research time. For example, I changed the interview questions twice. Last, the research confirmabilty was achieved by the data and findings coming from more than one source. Document analysis, interviews and observations enabled confirmabilty.

## 3.9. Ethical considerations

Protecting participants from psychological, emotional and physical harm acts as a radical requirement for the researcher (Cohen et al, 2007). My selection of participants was largely based on their willingness to be interviewed, observed and to get involved in further discussions. I obtained the permission from the department and consents from the participants by informing them research purpose, the collection procedures and promising their confidentiality and anonymity. Pseudonyms for the participants as Lam, Mai, Tran and Lan were used for reader-friendliness. Furthermore, I was fully aware of my responsibility to the research community by providing true and informative information.

# CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS

Chapter 3 identified the methodologies that were selected to empirically investigate the research problem. This chapter presents the findings from the data analysis in relation to the overarching question:

*“How does the EAT exert its washback on teachers at a university in Vietnam?”*

Two sub-questions will be addressed:

1. *How does the EAT exert its washback on teachers ‘perceptions of teaching at a university in Vietnam?*
2. *How does the EAT exert its washback on teachers’ practices of teaching at a university in Vietnam?*

This chapter is organized into two major sections. Section 4.1 elaborates the analytical outcomes of the teachers’ perceptions from interviews, while Section 4.2 mainly presents the findings about the teachers’ practices from classroom observations and follow-up interviews.

## 4.1. EAT Washback on the Teachers’ Perceptions at a University in Vietnam

The findings in this Section are presented in four principal themes: the teaching objectives in the teachers’ perceptions (sub-section 4.1.1), the teaching contents in the teachers’ perceptions (sub-section 4.1.2), the teaching methodology in the teachers’ perceptions (sub-section 4.1.3), and the professional development in the teachers’ perceptions (4.1.4). Compared to the pre-set themes in the conceptual framework (Figure 2.6), the first theme has emerged from the data of this study as a new theme.

### 4.1.1. The teaching objectives in the teachers’ perceptions

The interviews revealed the participants’ opinions of two main course objectives, which are their teaching objectives: the necessity of supporting students’ success in the EAT and the requirement of enhancing students’ communicative ability. The findings of the first theme have revealed that the EAT exerted its impact on the teachers’ perceptions of their teaching objectives to some extent. Positively, the teachers were conscious of the students’ immediate need of EAT pass and thought they would meet this need. Plus, they believed in the students’ communicative need as required by the university. Negatively, the teachers’ perceptions of the first objective may lead to a large amount of teaching to the test. Other findings from other sources would help to reach a more reasonable conclusion on the washback effect directions.

### 4.1.2. The teaching contents in the teachers’ perceptions

The above findings have presented the teachers’ perceptions of their general teaching objectives, in which some factors of teaching contents have been listed such as the linguistic input and the learning resources. Further findings of the teaching contents are presented below, which are an appreciation of the textbook for success in the EAT and the practicality of reducing the topics in the textbook to those in the EAT. It was found that the EAT exerted its washback on the teachers’ perceptions of the teaching contents strongly. The EAT in the form of PET led to the choice of Complete PET as the textbook. Other materials, if any, were selected in terms of its relevance to the EAT contents. The teachers reported the topics in the textbook were limited to certain topics in the EAT. This reduction can generate either positive or negative washback, depending on the benefits or harms it might brought to the students in the researched context. Limited learning points can be harmful, but suitable learning points in a specific context should be appreciated.

### 4.1.3. The teaching methodology in the teachers’ perceptions

This section discusses the teachers’ perceptions of teaching methodology. Although the conceptual framework (Figure 2.6) suggested eight categories and the interviews followed its guidance, the findings reshaped these categories into six ones, depending on the data analysis. They comprise the belief of communicative language teaching, more efforts in lesson planning, a mix of both English and Vietnamese as means of instruction, the necessity of supplying EAT skills and format and linguistic input in teaching four language skills, light homework toward the EAT, and the significance of the EAT mock test. It is reminded that the teacher participants’ answers on their perceptions of teaching also reported their practices, which I named them as reported practices. The EAT exerted its obvious washback on prioritized language skill to teach and the classroom assessment, while there were different washback degrees on the teachers’ attitudes toward their general teaching approach, lesson planning, instructional time and language as well as homework necessity. When the teachers believed the EAT support students’ learning, it was evidence of positive washback, and vice versa.

### 4.1.4. The professional development in the teachers’ perceptions

The last theme to investigate the EAT washback on the teachers’ perception is their professional development. Two categories emerged from the data were the teachers’ positive self-reflection and the need of more professional socialization. There was positive washback of the EAT to the teachers perceptions of their professional development at the target university. The teachers felt pleased with their teaching and the development of the course and the test. Onsite collaboration in the course development was appreciated. Nonetheless, beyond-site collaboration was not much of teachers’ needs.

##  4.2. EAT Washback on the Teachers’ Practices at a Vietnamese University

Four major themes are discussed in the investigation of the EAT washback on the teachers’ practices at the researched university in Vietnam: the teaching objectives in the teachers’ practices (subsection 4.2.1), the teaching contents in the teachers’ practices (subsection 4.2.2), the teaching methodology (subsection 4.2.3), and the professional development in the teachers’ practices (subsection 4.2.4). Although the themes were the same, the categories could be different because there were factors that were explicit in the perceptions but hidden in the practices and vice versa. Plus, there were factors which were interwoven; therefore they could be presented under the same categories.

### 4.2.1. The teaching objectives in the teachers’ practices

The classroom observations lasted from the first lesson of the course until the lessons of correcting the mid-course test (see subsection 3.6.3). I aimed at observing how the teachers introduced the teaching objectives of the whole course to the students in the first lesson. Findings from these observations revealed two major general course objectives, which the teachers set for their students. The first objective was to help the students pass the EAT and the second was to increase their communication ability. The EAT washback was showed obviously in the teachers’ initial practices. Test pass was emphasized more than communication in the teachers’ introduction of the teaching objectives to the students.

### 4.2.2. The teaching contents in the teachers’ practices

As it was presented in subsection 4.1.2., the teaching contents were investigated under two categories, which were the teaching resources and teaching topics. This part also based on these two aspects to observe the teachers’ practices. Positive washback was seen through the alignment between the taught contents and the test contents. Topics reductions can be considered a detrimental fact due to its restriction of students’ learning. However, the limitation of time and student ability as well as the role of an achievement test enabled this action.

### 4.2.3. The teaching methodology in the teachers’ practices

The theme of teaching methodology that the teachers practiced in their class comprises two main categories: teaching four language skills and treating the progress test in the orientation of the EAT. The teachers’ teaching of four skills, particularly the speaking skill, uncovered EAT washback evidence, both positive and negative. EAT factors were dense in these lessons. Positive washback happened when the students felt relaxed and confident in class and they had good learning activities, including the stretch to the real life. The teachers oriented the students the way to deal with the EAT tasks. Higher-order thinking skills were encouraged. Vietnamese was used to support students’ understanding and saving class time. However, there were many teacher-centred classes and too much Vietnamese was used, especially in Trang’s classes. Beside higher order thinking skills, a lot of lower order thinking skills were facilitated during Mai’s, Trang’s and Lan’s lessons. Another warning is different teachers provided different sets of assessment criteria. Only Lam presented the criteria like in the PET speaking. The final lessons in the research observations showed the strong washback of the EAT on the teachers’ classroom behaviours toward the EAT mock test. The EAT format, test skills, test administration were listed by the teachers to support the students’ pass. All the teachers showed their high commitment to the students’ success. Such support was an evidence of positive washback.

### 4.2.4. The professional development in the teachers’ practices

The teachers’ professional development under the influence of the EAT in terms of their self-reflection and socialization was hard to observe through the researched time. During the time bound, several professional events like other courses, including division meetings, break time chats took place. It is noteworthy that the meeting was hold to decide the test format and then the book was selected to match the test format. After that, the syllabus was designed and the test was actually born. The meeting was attended by all the teachers who taught the programme. This is a positive procedure when the teachers were informed what they were assigned to teach clearly. Plus, the observations revealed an increasing amount of the teachers’ understanding the test factors and their commitment to students’ success. In this way, EAT was operating its washback positively, too.

## 4.3. The Relationship between Teachers’ Perceptions and Practices under the Washback of the EAT at a University in Vietnam

The triangulated data from the major three sources of interviews, observations and follow-up interviews showed the connection between their perceptions and practices. Their common patterns as well as their personal distinctive ones were presented. Overall, the teaching objectives and the teaching contents enjoyed the most similarities whereas more diversities were seen in the teaching methodology and the professional development. The most powerful teacher Lam had the best consistencies between these two areas under the EAT washback.

#### Figure 4.1. Summary of the research findings: A washback model of the EAT to teachers at a Vietnamese university

**PET**

**EAT**

1. *Format*

2. Difficulty

3. *Status*

4. Examiner

5. Administrative time allowance

6. Weighting

**UNIVERSITY**

1. MOET’s requirement of undergraduates’ English B1 level

2. Internal needs to improve undergraduates’ English competence

3. Limited infrastructure

4. No training provision to teachers

5**.** *Large classes*

6. *Low proficiency students*

**TEACHER**

1. *Teaching philosophy*

2. Teaching experience

3. Learning experience

4. Familiarity with the contextual factors

5. *Familiarity with the test factors*

6. *Commitment to students’ success*

7. Image care

8. ***Professional status***

9. ***Professional development needs***

TEXTBOOK

1*. Test tasks*

2. Test contents

3. Test skills

 **TEACHING OBJECTIVES**

**EAT Mock test**

FOUR-SKILL TEACHING

Pronunciation

Vocabulary

*Grammar*

English

 *Vietnamese*

Student-centredness

Test skills

*Teacher-centredness*

*Test tasks*

Higher order thinking skills

***Lower-order thinking skills***

Homework

 Motivation

Collaboration

*Self - reflection*

Assessment criteria

# CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

This Chapter is organized into two major parts. Section 5.1 discusses the washback of the EAT on the teachers’ perceptions and practices at a university in Vietnam. Section 5.2 justifies the roots of the EAT washback on teachers’ perceptions and practices.

## 5.1. EAT Washback on the Teachers’ Perceptions and Practices of Teaching

There is little washback research on achievement tests (Antineskul et al., 2015; Nguyen, 2018). The current study contributes to fulfilling that gap, finding out and sythesising the positive and negative washback evidence of the EAT on teachers’ perceptions and practices. The sections comprise two sub-sections: EAT washback on teachers’ perceptions of teaching (5.1.1), and EAT washback on teachers’ practices of teaching (5.1.2).

### 5.1.1. EAT washback on teachers’ perceptions of teaching

This part discusses the beneficial and detrimental washback of the EAT on teachers’ perceptions of teaching. Positive attitudes overwhelmed negative ones in terms of four finding themes. First, the teaching objectives is a new theme compared to the themes in previous washback models. Regarding this theme, if teachers are only interested in students’ pass rates in the test, negative washback may occur (Alderson & Hamp-Lyons, 1996; Bachman, 2010; Pan, 2009; Shohamy, 1996; Wall, 2005, Watanabe, 1996). However, the teachers in this study also aimed to enhance their students’ communication ability while having clear understanding of the course objectives, which can be evidence of some positive washback of the EAT (Hughes, 2003, Onaiba, 2013). Second, there is evidence of positive washback of the EAT on the teaching contents in the participants’ viewpoint. All loved the new textbook with almost all EAT skills, format and contents. Similar positive washback on teaching contents was reported by Nguyen (2017), Saif (2006), and Wall and Horák (2011). The reduction of topics in the teaching materials can be considered as evidence of negative washback (Pan, 2009; Shohamy, 1996; Bachman, 2010, Alderson & Hamp-Lyons, 1996; Wall, 2005, Watanabe, 1996). Nonetheless, in this study, the teachers talked about the contextual factors to justify such limitations (Bachman, 1990; Messick, 1996; Pan, 2009; Pearson, 1988; Turner, 2005; Wang, 2010). Concerning teaching methodology, the findings suggest that there is a mix of both positive and negative washback of the EAT. There is evidence of positive washback that the teachers perceived their teaching followed communicative language teaching methodology and maintained motivation, for example. These beliefs were contradicted to worries raised by Cheng (2005), Pan (2009), and Onaiba (2013), which mentions the practice of teaching-to-the test will kill the students’ learning motivation. Plus, the teachers’ positive attitude toward their PD under the EAT washback. They held a positive self-reflection. In addition, they thought of more investment in learning and more opportunities for collaboration are positive washback signs like in Antineskul and Sheveleva (2015) and Liauh (2011).

### 5.1.2. EAT washback on teachers’ practices of teaching

This sub-section gives a discussion about the the teachers’ practices of teaching under the EAT influence regarding four themes. As presented in 5.2.1, teaching objectives is a new theme which has not been obviously stated in the previous washback frameworks. The current research adds this new theme to the research washback theory. The teachers acted positively in the practice of this theme. Regarding the teaching contents, the teachers in the research context relied heavily on the textbook. This dependence can generate positive washback because there is a good match between the contents articulated in the curriculum and contents and tasks of the test (Bachman, 1990; Messick, 1996; Hamp-Lyons, 1996, 1998; Wall and Horák, 1996, 2006, 2009; Wang, 2010). The situation can be blamed to be negative like teaching-to-the-test; nonetheless, the present research context of of limited course time, large classes an low proficiency students matched this behaviour. Hence, positive washback should be names as stated in part 2.2.1.3.2. Teachers’ practices of methodology had certain positive and negative evidence. Communicative teaching was sometimes seen, but teacher-centred classes were more prevalent. Two observed pieces of the EAT washback evidence were seen in professional development. The first one was the on-site collaboration amongst the teachers to decide the teaching materials which best served the EAT orientation, decide the syllabus and develop the EAT specification and samples. This procedure was the same as Saif (2006)’s discussion about aiming at the positive washback of a test. Antineskul and Sheveleva (2015), Liauh (2011), Wall and Horák (2006), and Thuy Nhan (2013) also showed the teachers’ collaboration. The second one was the teachers’ developmental commitment in the students’ success.

The above discussion have presented the washback effects of the EAT on the teachers’ perception and practices. It has shown more positive washback than negative washback in comparison with the findings in previous research. The present research contributed to the washback theory of the teaching objectives and professional development.

## 5.2. Factors Affecting the EAT washback on Teachers’ Perceptions and Practices

There are three sources of washback as portrayed in Figure 2.6 section 2.5) and updated in Figure 4.1 (section 4.4), which include the university factors, the test factors and the teachers’ factors. The university factors affected the test factors and had a relation with the teacher’s factors to generate the EAT washback effects on the teachers’ perceptions and practices. Previous research has mentioned this correlation (Cheng & Curtis, 2012; Le, 2011; Liauh, 2011; Shih, 2009). The most impressive factors on the university level include the large classes and low proficiency students at the university. On the test level, the format, status and assessment criteria of the EAT accounted for the most significance. In terms of the teachers’ factors, their teaching philosophy, familiarity with the institutional factors and the test factors, commitment to the student’s success, professional status and professional needs were most paid attention to analysed the causes of the EAT effects. Amongst these teachers’ factors, the professional status and the professional development needs were the new elements that dedicated to the washback theory.

# CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION

The following part addresses the research questions briefly, proposes the implications for pedagogy and research, and lists the research shortcomings.

## 6.1. Summary of Key Findings

### 6.1.1. EAT washback on teachers’ perceptions of teaching at a university in Vietnam

*How does the EAT exert its washback on teachers’ perceptions of teaching at a university in Vietnam?*

The English achievement test, EAT, measuring the students’ learning outcomes of course English 2 at a university in Vietnam has exerted its washback on the teachers’ perceptions variably, depending on the aspects and the teachers. Positive washback was noted with the clear perceptions of the teaching objectives, the alignment between the the contents to teach and the ones to test, the promotion of productive skills in class and the motivation, the positive self-reflection. Negative washback was also present in the teachers’ perception. They include the promotion of traditional linguistic focus of grammar and vocabulary than pronunciation, the test focus, the lower order thinking skills, the restricted homework quality and quantity and the limited beyond-site professional development activities. Overall, the teachers owns positive feeling toward the test. They understood the university policy of testing and assessment, the teaching and learning conditions, the students and the test. The teachers of some leadership role were more confident and more engaged in their thought about the test and the teaching. By comparison, the pure teacher owned a free-care attitude. The novice teacher was affected more by the top-down policy. Teachers’ interests in teaching and in student success generated more positive washback. The findings of the current share some features with those of the previous research in such a way that washback operates on teaching contents rather than teaching methodology.

### 6.1.2. EAT washback on teachers’ practices of teaching at a university in Vietnam

*How does the EAT exert its washback on teachers’ practices of teaching at a university in Vietnam?*

The teachers’ practices under the influence of the EAT have released both beneficial and detrimental washback. There were similarities between the washback effects on the teachers’ perceptions and their practices in terms of the teaching objectives and teaching contents (see 6.1.1). With regards the teaching methodology, apart from a volume of positive evidence, a negative washback evidence like the dominance of teacher-centred classes is worth considering for more students’ autonomy and English communication. Furthermore, little profession development was observed. Popular reasons given for these shortcomings by the teachers were the large classes, the achievement test status, the low level student level and the limited class hours. The leadership teachers showed the high consistency between their perceptions and practices while the pure teachers and the novice teachers had variations amongst these aspects.

Significant contributions of the current research are the addition of the new themes “teaching objectives” and “professional development”, and the new factors of the teachers’ status and their needs of professional development in relevance to the washback.

## 6.2. Implications for Classroom Pedagogy, Teacher Education and Research

### 6.2.1. Implications for classroom pedagogy

There were three implications for classroom pedagogy to promote teaching and learning in relevance to testing and assessment. First, the teachers should increase their agency in their teaching. They should be more aware of this right and the institution should give them more. Second, they should have integrate technology and other twenty-first century skills related to assessment in their teaching appropriately. Last but not least, students’ learning can be facilitated more effectively through the teachers’ provision of various forms of motivation, enhancement of leaner autonomy and delivery of more types of homework and assessment.

### 6.2.2. Implications for teacher education

Two principal issues related to teacher education include self-education and formal education. First, self-training refers to the teacher’ continuous self-reflection and active participation in the ELT professional community. Second, teachers need a provision of more updated and practical methods to practice them appropriately. Plus, they should receive formal training of assessment literacy and practice.

### 6.2.3. Implications for research

The research findings open promising research agenda not only in the washback field but other fields as well. In the washback area, the research conceptual framework (Figure 2.6) and the research finding summary framework (Figure 4.1) can be applicable in other research contexts. The research problems can be the ones raised in 6.3 or any other interested washback topics. Wilder research areas can be motivated from the findings of the current research. In language assessment, the issues of teacher identity, testing and assessment culture, teacher assessment literacy, teachers’ and students’ motivation, learner autonomy, code switching, technology application, etc. have not been reached much. In addition, Figure 2.2 can be used to investigate not only English language but other subjects.

## 6.3. Research limitations

Six limitations are be listed. First, there were no data from the student source to triangulate with that from the teacher data source. Second, no quantitative methods like a survey were conducted for richer data. Third, the washback evidence would be persuasive if the researcher had an access to both the exam-preparation class and the non-exam preparation class. Fourth, the researcher had intended to attend more than one class taught by a single teacher to see whether the teacher applied different treatments to different classes. The intention failed because of both the teachers’ and the researcher’s overlapped schedules. Fifth, only a small number of participants and one university was studied, which prevented data diversity and generalization. Last but not least, test scores of the EAT should be collected to expectedly find out the correlation between each teacher’s teaching and their student success. These shortcomings are solvable in favorable conditions.

# RESEARCHER’S PUBLICATIONS RELATED TO THE THESIS

1. Dinh, M. T. (2018). Developing a conceptual framework for washback of English tests to EFL teachers’ perceptions of teaching aspects. *Proceeding of the International Graduate Research Gymnasium.* pp. 620-633. Vietnam National University Press, Hanoi.
2. Dinh, M.T. (2019). Developing a washback framework of English tests to teachers’ perceptions and practices. *Proceeding of the International Graduate Research Gymnasium.* pp. 757-767. Vietnam National University Press, Hanoi.
3. Dinh, M.T. (2020). Washback of an English achievement test on teachers’ perceptions at a Vietnamese university. *VNU Journal of Foreign Studies*, Vol.36, No.3 (2020) 1-16