

Washbacked Teacher-Learner's Academic Behavior (the case of Iranian EFL MA Preparatory Course)

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Received: 23 April, 2011

Accepted: 13 January, 2012

ABSTRACT

The effect of test on teachers, students, and their classroom behaviors has ever been amenable to scholarly studies. To explore such an effect, 20 professors offering MA TEFL preparation courses and 30 candidates received PLSP and APALS inventories. Paired-sample t-tests revealed significant differences. However, the respective componential multivariate ANOVA revealed non-significant and significant differences among the components of the styles and maxims, respectively. The teacher's teaching styles and maxims were significantly affected in the light of washback. Pearson correlation coefficients revealed significant correlation among the components like: classroom conduct, facilitation, and agenda. Contrary to the hypotheses made, the results of the similar analyses (t-test, componential multivariate ANOVA and correlation coefficients) run as to the learners' learning styles showed drastically opposite results; meaning that neither the styles as a whole nor their componential individual sub-styles showed to have been significantly washback-determined. These contradictory findings may be attributed to reflective orientations among the teachers.

Keywords: Washback-TEFL Preparation Course- Teaching and Learning Styles and Maxims

Introduction

The issues of washback and academic behavior are reminiscent of two fuzzy terms. Amalgamating these two is even fuzzier. It is not hasty to put these two concepts on either side of a continuum. Nor is it impertinent to maintain a logical linkage between these two. But, the controversial issue which has grasped the attention of not only testers in language education, but also language testers in a broader sense is the effect of the test on teachers, students and their classroom behaviors (Alderson & Wall, 1993. Hughes, 1989).

So many speculations have been made on this issue. Andrew (1994) mentioned that definitions of washback range from simple and straightforward to very complex and it is an ill-defined phenomenon. Alderson and Wall (1993) attributed the impact of testing on teaching to 'backwash' in general education. Spolsky (1994)

refers to washback as the predetermined and intentional effect of the test but not the side effect of the test. On the contrary, he characterizes backwash as the contingent side effects of examination, rather than its intentional effect. Cheng and Curtis (2004) believe that washback is rooted in the notion that test or examination should stimulate teaching and learning which is called measurement-driven education. Bachman and Palmer (1996) have discussed washback as a subset of a test impact on individuals, society, and educational systems. They further hold that "the impact of a test should be evaluated with reference to the contextual variable of society's goal and values, the educational system in which the test is used and the potential outcomes of its use" (p.35).

Away from these conceptual and theoretical perspectives, Scholars like Alderson and Wall

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(1996), Watanabe (1996), and Davies (1968) shifted to empirical investigations of the washback phenomenon. Then, it is not confined to the test itself, rather it hinges not only on teacher but also on contextually varying factors which differ from context to context (Cheng, Watanabe, & Curtis, 2004).

Wantanabe (2004) has also recognized that washback is not a monolithic phenomenon; rather different factors such as the stake of test and the use of the tests' score mediate the effect of it. Meanwhile, the intensity of washback effect equates with the societal and educational use of the test scores. Moreover, Bachman and Palmer (1996) attributed high stake decisions as those types of decisions that cause an influential impact on large numbers of individuals during their lifetimes, or on fundamental programs. Luxia (2005) also states that there is a general acquiescence that high stakes tests generate strong washback, which mainly accommodates two main groups of consumers; teachers and learners. As far as the former is concerned, Richards (1996) introduces the issue of maxim which teachers utilize either consciously or subconsciously whilst teaching in their classrooms. The latter ones are similarly supposed to generate personal images and approach of specific belief system, agenda and principles of learning; counterpart to those of the former's teaching maxims (Abbasian, 2009).

Research on Washback

As pioneers in the field of washback studies, Al-derson and Wall (1993) investigated the effects of the changing of Sri Lankan O Level English Examination on Sri Lankan classes. They found that an exam does not and cannot specify how teachers teach, however, much it might influence what they teach.

Cross and O'Loughlin (2009) concentrated on the effect of continuous classroom-based assessment on teaching and learning within this program. The researchers concluded that continuous assessment should be run in this context, thereby diminishing the emergence of washback. Based on a study, Djurić (2008) believed that complexity of washback encourages either positive or negative type. He (ibid) focuses on its positive effects within an institution as well as on the situations of negative washback. According to Djurić (2008) "certain changes as a result of positive washback point at the opportunities which a test-

ing institution has when it organizes, designs, and administers criterion-referenced tests" (p.14) Manjarrés (2000) , describing the washback effect of the English Test in a public high-school classroom in a school in Barranquilla, Colombia, saw that the introduction of a new test especially for special purposes produces washback effect on both teachers and students. Likewise, he found that there is a strong relationship between classrooms teaching and evaluating practices, and what the examination measures.

Learning and Teaching Styles/Maxims

Defined roughly differently in the literature, styles and maxims are taken interchangeable in this study since they both commonly denote behavior, principles, agenda of learning and or teaching followed by learner and teacher in the course of learning and teaching, respectively. Defining learning styles as different ways of how a learner acquires, retains and retrieves information, Reid (1987) contends that learning styles are internally based characteristics, often not perceived or consciously used by learners, for the intake and comprehension of new information. They are as natural, habitual, and preferred way(s) of absorbing, processing, and retaining new information and skills (Reid, 1995). Brown (2000) defines learning styles as the manner in which individuals perceive and process information in learning situations. Celce-Murcia (2001) defines learning styles as the general approaches—for example, global or analytic, auditory or visual—that students use in acquiring a new language or in learning any other subject. Then learners' learning maxims are also covered by and realized in their learning styles; something which is convincing enough to be taken synonymous at least for the purpose of this study.

Using Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire (PLSPQ), Reid (1987) is taken as the pioneer researcher in the field of learning styles who asked 1388 students to prioritize their perceptual learning style preferences. The results of the study indicated that ESL students emphatically preferred kinesthetic and tactile learning styles. On the other hand, it was revealed that learning styles are the function of various factors such as educational level, sex, age, language background, nationality, culture, among many others. She distinguished four perceptual learning modalities: 1) Visual learning (for example, read

ing and studying charts) 2) Auditory learning (for example, listening to lectures or audiotapes) 3) Kinesthetic learning (involving physical responses) 4) Tactile learning (hands-on learning, as in building models).

Wintergerst and DeCapua's (2002) washback study on students endorses the link between test effect and national and cultural phenomena on both native and nonnative speakers, and the one by Xiao (2006) supports existence of a mismatch caused by culture-based differences in perceptions and expectations of L2 teaching and learning style preferences between Irish English teachers and Chinese students. Based on the results it is claimed that teachers should gain more in depth understanding of their learners' culture of learning encompassing their needs, wants, capacities, desires, potentials and learning style preferences to approach learners' expectations and to foster their guided style-stretching. The findings from this part of the questionnaire showed that neither were the students conscious users of meta-cognitive strategies, such as planning, monitoring, arranging and self-evaluating their own learning process, nor did they have a self-study plan to strengthen their language skills and strategies.

Taking interchangeable here, maxims are also supposed to be subject to test effects. They indicate the totality of behavior, principles, agenda of teaching, syllabus, classroom management, lesson planning, evaluation, application of maxims, etc by teachers for the purpose of teaching (Richards, 1996).

Orhun's (2009) study was a descriptive work whereby he utilized the following teaching styles and approaches for the conduct of the study: Teaching Method in Authoritarian/Dictatorial Style, Appointed Subject / Student in Centered Training and Education, Media and Secondary Teaching Method, Interrogative Style in Education, Assisting Teaching Method Free Style in teaching. When comparing the role of teachers whilst exploiting during the course and of the teachers' approach and methods taken, it was clearly seen that the teachers tended to be more administrative and autocratic in crowded classrooms. It was also reported that the visual art teachers at certain schools managed to activate all of the four teaching styles in courses in addition to an assisting teaching process through benefiting from communicative approach. The teachers, through knowledge transmission were noticed to

try to do best to bring out fuzzy points their students faced. As a result of the data collected, it has been highlighted that a mixture of teaching approaches would seem to be the best way to follow, as each student gains in different ways. Gilbert and Swainer (2008) explored some type of correlation between learning styles and classroom lesson within a specific course.

Purpose of the Study

In a scientific bid to link test to other factors, the test is assumed to affect teachers and learners' cognition and maxims realized in the form of strategies and styles they resort to in the process of teaching and learning, respectively. It means that, besides the maxims, such cognitive issues especially the styles are worthy of investigation in terms of washback effect on them. More specifically, and given the pertinent research trend locally, the issue has obviously received very scant attention here in Iran, however. To fill the gap, this study was an attempt to explore the washback from cognitive perspective; effects on learners learning and teachers' teaching styles or maxims in TEFL MA University Entrance Examination (UEE) preparatory courses.

Research Questions

In order to meet the purpose of the study and to tackle the problem, the following research questions were employed.

1. *Does the general test of TEFL MA UEE have any washback effect on the learners' learning styles/ maxims (i.e. behavior, principles, agenda of learning, etc)?*
2. *Does the general test of TEFL MA UEE have any washback effect on the teachers' teaching styles/ maxims (i.e. behavior, principles, agenda of teaching, etc)?*

Method

Participants

Two groups participated in the present study: The first group included male and female adult candidates for MA preparatory courses who were primarily BA graduates in translation, English Literature and TEFL and the second one included their respective teachers of both sexes holding mainly MA, or PhD holders in TEFL or were PhD candidates, who were teaching at the respective institutes offering general MA preparatory courses.

Instrumentation

Two already validated questionnaires were used in order to collect the required information. As for the learners' learning styles and maxims, Joy Reid's Perceptual Learning-Style Preference questionnaire (inventory) was employed. But in order to probe the teacher's teaching styles and maxims the one developed by Liu, Qiao & Liu entitled Adapted Principle of Adult Learning Scale (APALS) was used. The questionnaire adapted by Joy Reid's Perceptual Learning-Style Preference consists of 30 items. The items are constructed in order to tap the learning style preferences of students in divergent areas including Individual Major Learning Style Preference, Group Major Learning Style Preference, Auditory Major Learning Style Preference, Kinesthetic Major Learning Style Preference, Tactile Major Learning Style Preference, and Visual Major Learning Style Preference. The questionnaire adapted by Liu, Qiao & Liu's (i.e., APALS) consists of 26 items reflecting the teachers' academic behavior, maxims and the preferred ways through which they prioritize in dealing with the students which include: Facilitation, Interaction, Class Conduct, Agenda, and Principles.

Procedure

Resembling features of the Quasi-experimental design, the study was based on pre-test, treatment and post-test in the form questionnaire. To do so, the instruments were first validated and then administered realistically to the main participants prior to the MA Preparatory Course. Following the termination of the Course, both groups received instruments in order to measure the effects involvement in the course on both groups in terms of teaching and learning styles, respectively

Table 1. Paired-Samples t-test Teachers' Teaching Styles prior and after TEFL MA University Entrance Exam

Paired Differences		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference			T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper			
2.50	2.30	.51	1.42	3.58	4.86	19	.000

This amount of t-value is higher than the critical value of 2.09 at 19 degrees of freedom. Based on the results it can be concluded that there is a significant difference between the teachers' teaching styles prior and after the administration of the

Results

As a departure point, the reliability indices both for teachers and students' questionnaires were estimated. Based on the variables involved, Sample paired T-Test, MANOVA, and Correlational Analyses were all run in order to answer the research questions.

Instrument Validation

In order to make the instruments applicable for the purpose, their characteristics were investigated. As for the validity purpose it was evaluated in terms of content by several experts in TEFL fields; mainly agreed on the content validity of the questionnaire. However, to produce strong claims, their reliability indices were estimated based on the Cronbach's alpha indicating that Teacher's and Student's questionnaires enjoyed following indices prior to actual administration to the target participants:

Teachers' Questionnaire reliability index: 0.71, 0.71

Students' Questionnaire reliability index: 0.60, 0.78

Investigating the First Research Question

To address the first research question, a paired-samples t-test was run to compare the mean scores of the teachers' teaching styles prior to and after the administration of the general test of TEFL MA University Entrance Examination. The UEE is a formal field-specific proficiency test administered every year in Iranian context to select MA candidates for the TEFL course. The test covers two areas: general proficiency in English (like TOEFL) and specialized command in three main areas including Language Testing, Linguistics, and Teaching Methodology. The t-observed value is 4.86 (Table 1).

general test of TEFL MA UEE. Since the mean teaching styles of the teachers has increased from 12.27 on the pretest to 14.78 on the posttest (Table 2), it can be claimed that the general test of TEFL MA UEE has a significant washback effect

on the teachers' teaching styles. Thus the first null-hypothesis is rejected; meaning that the teachers' teaching styles were affected in the light of teaching for testing purposes.

Given the multifactorial nature of teachers' maxims, multivariate ANOVA was also run to compare the mean scores of the five components of the teachers' teaching styles prior to the administration of general test of TEFL MA UEE. The F-observed value for comparing the five components is 2.71 (Table 3). This amount of F-value is lower than the critical value of at 4 and 16 degrees of freedom, i.e. 3.

It is seen that there is not any significant difference among the mean scores of the five components of the teachers' teaching styles prior to the

administration of general test of TEFL MA UEE. The descriptive statistics for the five components of the teachers' teaching styles are displayed in the following table.

Components of the Teachers' Teaching Styles (Post-test)

A multivariate ANOVA was run to compare the mean scores of the five components of the teachers' teaching styles after the administration of general test of TEFL MA UEE. The F-observed value for comparing the five components is 6.48 (Table 5). This amount of F-value is higher than the critical value at 4 and 16 degrees of freedom, i.e. 3. This finding is in line with that of paired t-test and statistics.

Table 2 .Descriptive Statistics Teachers' Teaching Styles

	Mean	N	SD	SEM
Pre-test TOTAL	12.27	20	2.33	.52
Post-test TOTAL	14.78	20	1.11	.24

Table 3 . MANOVA for Five Components of Teachers' Teaching Styles Prior to the Administration of General Test of TEFL MA University Entrance Exam

Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
TESTS Pillai's Trace	.40	2.71 ^a	4.00	16.00	.06	.40
Wilks' Lambda	.596	2.71 ^a	4.00	16.00	.06	.40
Hotelling's Trace	.679	2.71 ^a	4.00	16.00	.06	.40
Roy's Largest Root	.679	2.71 ^a	4.00	16.00	.06	.40

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics for Five Components of Teachers' Teaching Styles Prior to the Administration of General Test of TEFL MA University Entrance Exam

	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Facilitation	15.75	.61	14.45	17.04
Interaction	16.90	.98	14.83	18.97
Principles	15.71	.53	14.59	16.83
Agenda	16.13	.85	14.34	17.92
Class Conduct	17.70	.83	15.94	19.45

Table 5. MANOVA for Five Components of Teachers' Teaching Styles after the Administration of General Test of TEFL MA University Entrance Exam

Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
TESTS Pillai's Trace	.61	6.48 ^a	4.00	16.00	.00	.61
Wilks' Lambda	.38	6.48 ^a	4.00	16.00	.00	.61
Hotelling's Trace	1.62	6.48 ^a	4.00	16.00	.00	.61
Roy's Largest Root	1.62	6.48 ^a	4.00	16.00	.00	.61

Based on these results it can be concluded that there are significant differences between

the mean scores of the five components of the teachers' teaching styles after the administration

tion of general test of TEFL MA UEE. The descriptive statistics for the five components of the teachers' teaching styles are displayed in Table 6.

As displayed in Table 6, there are two significant comparisons as follows:

A: The teachers' mean score on Principles, i.e., 21.71 is higher than their mean score on Agenda, i.e., 18.00. B: The teachers' mean score on Classroom Conduct, i.e., 20.80 is higher than their mean score on Agenda, i.e., 18.00.

As a supplementary bid as to the results achieved, the post-hoc tests were run to compare the above mean scores two by two in order to locate the exact places of differences between the means.

It was, however, assumed that the holistic orientation taken to the data realized in running t-test might not reveal probable differences in the subcategories of teaching styles. So, correlational analysis was run to explore possible go togetherness

among the subcategories. Contrary to the t-test and MANOVA statistics, statistically significant correlation coefficients were found among the following pairs of variable (extracted from a bulky table of correlations not reported here due to space limitations):

Posttest of Facilitation and Pretest of Classroom Conduct ($R = .56$; $P = .010 < .05$),

• *Posttest of Facilitation and Pretest of Agenda* ($R = .58$; $P = .006 < .05$),

• *Pretest of Facilitation and Pretest of Principles* ($R = .69$; $P = .001 < .05$),

• *Pretest of Facilitation and Pretest of Agenda* ($R = .62$; $P = .003 < .05$),

• *Pretest of Facilitation and Pretest of Classroom Conduct* ($R = .46$; $P = .038 < .05$),

• *Pretest of Agenda and Pretest of Principles* ($R = .52$; $P = .017 < .05$), and

• *Pretest of Agenda and Pretest of Classroom Conduct* ($R = .62$; $P = .001 < .05$).

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics Five Components of Teachers' Teaching Styles after the Administration of General Test of TEFL MA University Entrance Exam

	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Facilitation	19.80	.84	18.03	21.56
Interaction	19.20	.78	17.55	20.84
Principles	21.71	1.24	19.10	24.32
Agenda	18.00	.74	16.43	19.56
Class Conduct	20.80	.87	18.96	22.63

Table 7. Post-Hoc Comparisons Posttest of Teachers' Teaching Styles

(I) PRETEST	(J) PRETEST	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig. ^a	95% Confidence Interval for Difference	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Facilitation	Interaction	.60	1.14	1.00	-3.02	4.22
	Principles	-1.91	.89	.45	-4.75	.92
	Agenda	1.80	.69	.18	-.40	4.00
	Class Conduct	-1.00	.88	1.00	-3.82	1.82
Interaction	Principles	-2.51	1.48	1.00	-7.21	2.18
	Agenda	1.20	.99	1.00	-1.94	4.34
	Class Conduct	-1.60	1.13	1.00	-5.21	2.01
Principle	Agenda	3.71*	1.06	.02	.32	7.10
	Class Conduct	.91	1.27	1.00	-3.12	4.95
Agenda	Class Conduct	-2.80*	.67	.00	-4.93	-.66

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

As it is shown, meaningful correlations were found just among seven categories including post

facilitation= classroom conduct (56%); post facilitation= pre agenda (58%), pre facilitation= pre

principle (70%); pre facilitation= pre agenda (62%), pre facilitation=classroom conduct (46%) and pre principle= pre agenda (52%), indicating that maxims are meaningfully affected in very few areas; the respective hypothesis is not rejected or better to say the findings are not conclusive.

Investigating the Second Research Question

Similarly, a paired-samples t-test was run to compare the mean scores of the learners' learning styles prior to and after the administration of the general test of TEFL MA UEE. The t-observed value is .049 (Table 8). This amount of t-value is lower than the critical value of 2.04 at 29 degrees of freedom.

Based on the results it can be concluded that there is not any significant difference between the learners' learning styles prior to and after the administration of the general test of TEFL MA UEE. The mean learning styles of the students prior to and after the administration of the general test of TEFL MA UEE are 22.48 and 22.44, respectively. Thus the data fails to reject the second null hypothesis.

The F-observed value for comparing the six components is 1.63 (Table 10). This amount of F-value

is lower than the critical value of 5 and 25 degrees of freedom, i.e. 2.60.

Given the nature of the learners' learning style inventory which in addition to single-trait nature is composed of six separate components, a multivariate ANOVA was run to compare the mean scores of the components prior to the administration of general test of TEFL MA UEE.

Based on these results it can be concluded that there is not any significant difference among the mean scores of the six components of the students' learning styles prior to the administration of general test of TEFL MA UEE. The descriptive statistics for the six components of the students' learning styles are displayed in Table 11. This finding is in line with that of the paired t-test and the statistics reported.

Similarly, a multivariate ANOVA was run to compare the mean scores of the components after the administration of general test of TEFL MA UEE. The F-observed value for comparing the six components is 2.19 (Table 12). This amount of F-value is lower than the critical value at 5 and 25 degrees of freedom, i.e. 2.60.

Table 8 .Paired-Samples t-test for Learners' Learning Styles prior to and after TEFL MA University Entrance Exam

Paired Differences		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference			t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper			
.04	4.99	.91	1.81	1.90	.04	29	.96

Table 9: Descriptive Statistics Learners' learning Styles

	Mean	N	SD	SEM
STOTAL	22.48	30	2.92	.53
STOTAL	22.44	30	3.95	.72

Table 10. MANOVA for Six Components of Students' Learning Styles Prior to the Administration of General Test of TEFL MA University Entrance Exam

Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	
TESTS	Pillai's Trace	.24	1.63	5.00	25.00	.187	.24
	Wilks' Lambda	.75	1.63	5.00	25.00	.187	.24
	Hotelling's Trace	.32	1.63	5.00	25.00	.187	.24
	Roy's Largest Root	.32	1.63	5.00	25.00	.187	.24

Table 11. Descriptive Statistics for Six Components of Students' Learning Styles Measured Prior to the Administration of the General Test of TEFL MA UEE

	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Visual	23.80	.76	22.23	25.36
Tactile	22.46	1.18	20.03	24.89
Auditory	21.40	.88	19.60	23.19
Group	22.86	1.00	20.80	24.93
Kinesthetic	22.53	.97	20.54	24.52
Individual	21.86	.98	19.85	23.87

Table 12. MANOVA for Six Components of Students' Learning Styles after the Administration of General Test of TEFL MA UEE

Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	
TESTS	Pillai's Trace	.30	2.19 ^a	5.00	25.00	.08	.30
	Wilks' Lambda	.69	2.19 ^a	5.00	25.00	.08	.30
	Hotelling's Trace	.43	2.19 ^a	5.00	25.00	.08	.30
	Roy's Largest Root	.43	2.19 ^a	5.00	25.00	.08	.30

Based on these results it can be concluded that there is not any significant difference among the mean scores of the six components of the students' learning styles after the administration of the general test of TEFL MA UEE. The descriptive statistics for the six components of the students' learning styles are displayed in Table 13.

Assuming that holistic orientation to learning styles might not reveal probable differences in the subcategories of learning styles, correlational analysis was run to explore possible go-togetherness among the subcategories. Contrary to the t-test and MANOVA statistics, meaningful correlation coefficients were found among the following variables:

- Posttest of Visual and posttest of Auditory ($R =$

$.50$; $P = .004 < .05$),

- Posttest of Tactile and posttest of Kinesthetic ($R = .47$; $P = .008 < .05$),

- Posttest of Individual and pretest of Auditory ($R = .42$; $P = .019 < .05$),

- Pretest of Visual and pretest of Tactile ($R = .33$; $P = .039 < .05$),

- Pretest of Visual and pretest of Tactile ($R = .33$; $P = .039 < .05$),

- Pretest of Visual and pretest of Group ($R = .66$; $P = .000 < .05$),

- Pretest of Visual and pretest of Kinesthetic ($R = .44$; $P = .015 < .05$),

- Pretest of Tactile and pretest of Kinesthetic ($R = .47$; $P = .007 < .05$), and

- Pretest of Group and pretest of Kinesthetic ($R = .56$; $P = .001 < .05$).

Table 13. Descriptive Statistics for Six Components of Students' Learning Styles after the Administration of General Test of TEFL MA UEE

	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Visual	23.73	1.00	21.67	25.78
Tactile	23.33	1.22	20.82	25.84
Auditory	20.73	.98	18.71	22.74
Group	22.33	1.44	19.37	25.28
Kinesthetic	21.33	1.08	19.11	23.55
Individual	23.20	1.22	20.69	25.70

Then meaningful correlations were found just among nine categories including post visual= post auditory (50%); post tactile= post kinesthetic (47%); post individual= pre auditory (42%); pre visual= pre tactile (33%); pre visual= pre group (66%); pre visual= pre kinesthetic (44%); pre tactile= pre kinesthetic (47%) and pre group= pre kinesthetic (56%), indicating that the respective null hypothesis is rejected when learning styles are investigated discretely

Discussion

As to the *first research question*, relatively speaking, the pertinent findings somehow support the research done by Faez (1999) who found out that repeated quizzes had positive effects on both learners' learning and teachers' teaching, i.e. styles of teaching. Moreover, concerning the mutual academic relationship between learners and teachers in terms of the introduction of a new test and its respective outcomes, Ying (n.d.) found out that the quickest way to change student learning is to change the assessment system. The impact study of the College English Test Band 4 (CET4) in Mainland China challenged that idea. Based on the findings reported, it seems clear that the latest CET4 is exerting some influence on students' learning behaviors. The results also showed that the extent of the CET4 washback on learning has become much greater when the exam approached closer.

Khodabakhshzade (2001) explored the effect of teaching to the test (coaching) or test preparatory courses on students' augmentation in language proficiency in IELTS and TOEFL classes. He found out that various teaching styles and test methods in classroom environment can, to a great extent, affect the academic achievements of learners.

Relatively speaking, Shih (2009) investigated the washback of the General English Proficiency Test (GEPT) on teaching and learning in two applied foreign language departments in Taiwan. The objective behind the GEPT as the first large-scale examination of English in Taiwan is to incorporate listening, speaking, reading and writing tests. It consists of elementary, intermediate, high-intermediate, advanced and superior levels. On the whole, based on the survey, the GEPT did not induce a high level of washback on teaching in either department. Results also asserted that micro-level contextual factors (for example, the objectives of the course) and teacher factors had

a greater impact on teachers' instruction. From the findings, it can be stated that, although the GEPT had been universally taken by students in Taiwan, this test posed some, but not a high level of washback on teaching in both applied foreign language departments investigated. This finding proclaimed that the GEPT requirement had a minute and teacher-specific impact on teaching practices.

Numerous factors affected the degree of washback in the present study. Overall, the objectives of the course and the relation of the course to the school's policy seemed to be the principal factors in identifying the degree of washback on teaching. Beyond these variables discussed, some teacher factors need to be accentuated. For example, teachers' beliefs in the role of formal schooling, to some extent, specified the washback of the GEPT. Moreover, teachers' global understanding of the test and their teaching philosophies had influential effects on their teaching. Concerning *the second research question*, reference here can be made to the study by Heidari (2001) in that he found weak washback concerning some alternatives in assessment including self-assessment, cross-level peer-assessment, same-level peer assessment, and conference on Iranian pre-university learner's achievement. She also studied the relationship between sex and the aforementioned assessment procedures. She recognized no discrepancies between the carrying outs of subjects of different genders. Furthermore, she recognized that only the cross – level peer assessment and conference group led to a greater extent in students' achievement scores. Another job worthy of indication here is the research by Bing-rong (2008). The study shows that formative assessment mode can change learners' autonomous learning beliefs and strategies. Based on learner autonomous questionnaire and student portfolios, there is remarkable diversity between the experimental class and the control class. In other words, the formative assessment mode can change learners' goal-setting beliefs, evaluation beliefs, independent-action strategies and evaluation strategies, learners' autonomous learning beliefs and strategies. Green (2007) investigated whether test preparation classes were advantageous in assisting students trying to boost their IELTS writing scores. Questionnaires examining participants and process variables such as learner background, motivation, class activities, and learning strategy use were

completed after the pre and post tests. Inferential statistics were adopted and revealed “no clear advantage for focused test preparation” (p. 75). These findings have two implications: first, as claimed according to the study, test-driven instruction does not necessarily raise students’ scores. A more constructive way to ameliorate students’ scores is probably to integrate materials covered on the test with regular teaching. Second, concerning this point, intentions for taking the test need to be vivid to both students and teachers to foster English learning (Green 2007). So, corresponding to the hypothesis made, it is seen that learners have been less influenced in this context of study.

The preparatory course has had positive washback in certain areas. Based on a multiphase empirical study, Saif (2006) investigated the washback effects of a needs-based test of spoken language proficiency on the content, teaching, classroom activities and learning outcomes of the International Teaching Assistants (ITA) training program linked to it. The results indicated that the ITA test had some influence on classroom-related areas such as teaching content, teaching methodology, and students’ learning. The results also divulged that the depth, extent and direction of the effect differed from the affected area. The content of teaching seemed to be the area showing changes directly triggered by the test. Likewise, the analysis of the data derived from different stakeholders through interviews, observations and test administration at different intervals before, during and after the training program – showed a positive interdependence between the test and the immediate teaching and learning outcomes. However, the study also divulged that with a high-stakes test like the ITA test, so many factors emanating from sources other than those in the classroom environment were pivotal for helping positive washback continued to occur once the test was in effect. Speaking conclusively, the results of the study indicate that while high stakes language tests that address various needs of test takers and the educational system in general could positively affect teaching and learning activities, the test by itself cannot bring about change in the educational system (Saif, 2006).

The increased impact in the preparation period may perhaps be attributed to the students’ anxiety. However, as the study has divulged, only if the students study tends towards the exam, the

intended qualitative learning hardly occurs especially in the period of exam preparation.

Conclusion

Generally speaking, the results of the present study showed that although TEFL MA university entrance exam is regarded to be high stake in orientation, its washback effects appeared to be first different between the groups involved; the teachers were more affected in the light of its washback effects than the students. Second, both groups received various effects as revealed by various statistical analyses run on the data.

As far as the teacher’s teaching styles and strategies are concerned, data disclosed some significant findings on the rules of preferred styles and strategies utilized by teachers in classroom atmosphere. Moreover, this exam seems to have influential impacts on the application of preferred styles and strategies by teachers. Then some significant discrepancies in terms of some sets of variables prior to and after the instruction were observed.

Furthermore, five categories including Facilitation, Interaction, Principles, Agenda, and Class Conduct were nominated. In order to understand whether or not the utilization of these maxims has been influenced by the exam, MANOVA and correlational analyses were run. Findings revealed some significant prioritization in some specific maxims in the light of test preparatory courses.

An interesting issue contrary to what might have been expected here is that of learner’s inclination toward their preferred styles and strategies. Though this high stake test may have seemed to manipulate the academic preference of learners, no variant styles have been prioritized, or better to say no significant discrepancies students posed in terms of all sets of variables both prior to and after the instruction of MA preparatory courses. Theoretically, the findings are in line with theoretical developments in the area of teaching and testing relatedness. Researchers can benefit the findings in order to enrich their speculations. On the other hand, the findings potentially pave the grounds for further studies as far as washback and learning and teaching styles and strategies are concerned. The findings pave the ways for new horizons on the theory of washback as its various effects on the teachers compared to the students, though enlightening, generate vari-

ous questions necessitating further investigations. Pedagogically, the contributions enjoy vast areas and accommodate various consumers. Teachers have always wanted to know how much their students have learned. Also the government and private institutions which pay teachers and employ the students afterwards are interested in having precise information about student's capabilities. And finally, students, teachers, administrators, and parents all work toward reaching educational goals. It is quite naturalistic that they want to ascertain the degree to which those goals have been perceived. Measurement and evaluation are vital devices to help them approach most of those objectives in order to make vivid educational decisions. Therefore, four major groups can take the pedagogical advantages of this study in their careers:

Learners: learners lay much more emphasis on their preferred learning styles and strategies to accumulate not only authentic knowledge via learning materials at their disposal but also build the blocks of their language more fundamentally. Another implication can be left for the match or mismatch between learning styles-strategies and learning materials being taught. It means, besides the identification of correct styles and strategies, it is compulsory for learners to match their instructional objectives with their pre identified styles and strategies.

Teachers: The same implications can hold true with regard to teachers' conduct in this big enterprise within the time of teaching materials in classrooms. It is, of course, a bidirectional issue in that misapplication of desired teaching styles can not only retard the appropriate teaching conduct in classrooms and thereby provoking negative washback effect but also jeopardize the effectiveness of learners' performance in all aspects. So, it can be postulated that styles here are mutually exclusive on both teachers and learners. *Syllabus designers:* Syllabus designers can generate authentic syllabi considering both teachers and learners and modify their criteria in light of the findings. *Administrators:* Like macro-decision and policy makers and planners, administrators can also take the benefits of studies like these as they can find their macro decisions on language planning on the reports and messages they receive from classroom settings and actual learning and teaching circles. Therefore, administrators, policy makers and material designers, as Farhady (2003) says, should find some relevant

methods to match the content of BA courses with the content of MA TEFL exam to fill this gap thereby diminishing the side effects of such high stakes tests.

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