EXPLORING THE ALIGNMENT OF THE SECONDARY SCHOOL CERTIFICATE ENGLISH EXAMINATION WITH CURRICULUM AND CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION: A WASHBACK STUDY IN BANGLADESH

by

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Abstract

In the nearly three decades of research, washback research has explored a range of factors such as teachers, students, and social contexts in order to understand how testing influences teaching and learning globally. However, little research has been done on how (mis)aligned assessment systems may create test washback on classroom teaching and learning. In South Asian contexts, test washback is especially noticeable due to the region’s extremely examination-oriented education system, yet studies on washback in this part of the world are extremely limited especially in Bangladesh. This doctoral dissertation attempted to bridge this gap in the literature by investigating the alignment of curriculum, textbook, and examination in Bangladesh to examine how alignment or misalignment relationships created washback effects on classroom teaching and learning. The Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examination is the most high-stakes examination in Bangladesh. Approximately two million students take the SSC examination each year. High scores on this examination, particularly SSC English-language scores, are needed to gain admission to higher education and top universities; high SSC scores can also help students obtain better jobs. Also, getting a better grade in the English subject is a badge of status marker for students and their parents. Thus, securing the highest possible score on the SSC English examination is essential for test takers. To explore how the SSC English examination influenced English classroom teaching and learning, this study used a multimethod, qualitative approach.

Drawing on an adapted argument and evidence-based validation framework (Pellegrino et al., 2016), I collected evidence from multiple stakeholders to build the instructional validity of the classroom instruction. Instructional validity seeks evidence about the alignment of examination with the defined knowledge and skills in the curriculum, and how examination guides classroom teaching and learning (Pellegrino et al., 2016). Data were collected through documents, interviews, classroom observations, and focus groups. Three main findings of the study highlight the complex and non-linear nature of washback in the context of Bangladesh. First, the SSC English examination was largely misaligned with the national English curriculum and the prescribed textbook because of bureaucratic and contextual problems
in the country’s educational system. Second, because of this misalignment, teachers taught to the test rather than the curriculum. Since high SSC English examination scores were the most highly valued outcome, English skills not on the examination were ignored by teachers. Third, students prepared only for the examination, fulfilling their short-term goal of high SSC English scores while neglecting their long-term goal of improving English proficiency. While students took intense test preparation, they were privy to the fact that test preparation was not going to improve their English skills. For national curriculum and textbook developers, these washback effects were unintended. However, for teachers and students, these results were intentional and what they wanted, as students and teachers prioritized high SSC examination scores over English proficiency which was the original goal in the English curriculum.
Acknowledgments

This doctoral degree and my feelings of accomplishment are all due to Professor Liying Cheng’s supervision and unconditional mentorship. I learned about her work in 2010 during my MPhil studies in India. After completing the degree, I went back to Bangladesh with the hope that one day I would be able to work under Professor Cheng. I did get the chance to work with her, and I flew to Canada to pursue my lifelong desire to earn a PhD. I went through a metamorphosis as a person and a scholar under her guidance. She is less a supervisor and more a mentor and a philosopher. Due to her constant guidance, when I started writing the results, I realized how ready I was. Writing came naturally to me. I enjoyed writing every piece of this dissertation. I completed this dissertation within four years because of Professor Cheng’s constant pushes and quick feedback. If there is anything I did well in this dissertation, it is to Professor Cheng’s credit. Thank you, Professor Liying Cheng, for making me the scholar I am today. No matter what I do in life, you will always be my idol.

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more articulated about the connection between washback and validity in this study. Dr. Chahine’s questions about value of examinations in Bangladesh encouraged me to speak more about the education system of the country.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASL</td>
<td>Arabic as a Second Language</td>
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<tr>
<td>B.Ed.</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>BA degree</td>
<td>Bachelor of Arts degree</td>
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<tr>
<td>BEDU</td>
<td>Bangladesh Examination Development Unit</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBA</td>
<td>Classroom-Based Assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBSE</td>
<td>Central Board of Secondary Education</td>
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<td>CEFR</td>
<td>Common European Framework</td>
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<td>CET</td>
<td>College English Test</td>
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<td>CLT</td>
<td>Communicative Language Teaching</td>
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<tr>
<td>DSHE</td>
<td>Directorate of Secondary &amp; Higher Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>EAP</td>
<td>English for Academic Purpose</td>
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<td>EFT</td>
<td>English for Today</td>
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<td>ELL</td>
<td>English language learner</td>
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<td>ELT</td>
<td>English Language Teaching</td>
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<td>ESL</td>
<td>English as a Second Language</td>
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<td>FCE</td>
<td>First Certificate in English</td>
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<td>FGD</td>
<td>Focus Group Discussion</td>
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<td>GEPT</td>
<td>General English Proficiency Test</td>
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<td>GPA</td>
<td>Grade Point Average</td>
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<td>GTM</td>
<td>Grammar Translation Method</td>
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<td>HKCEE</td>
<td>Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination</td>
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<td>HSC</td>
<td>Higher Secondary Certificate</td>
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<tr>
<td>IELTS</td>
<td>International English Language Testing System</td>
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L1  First Language
L2  Second language
LO  Learning Outcomes
LOI/CF  Letter of Information/Consent Form
MA degree  Master of Arts degree
MCQ  Multiple Choice Questions
MoE  Ministry of Education
MPhil  Master of Philosophy
NGO  Non-governmental organization
NCLB  No Child Left Behind
NCTB  National Curriculum and Textbook Board
NMET  National Matriculation English Test
OSSLT  Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test
SHED  Secondary & Higher Education Division
SLC  School Leaving Certificate
SSC  Secondary School Certificate
TOEFL  Test of English as a Foreign Language
TTC  Teachers Training Colleges
Glossary of Important Terms

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

CLT is a highly contextualized approach to language teaching. It advocates teaching four language skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) in a naturalistic way. The ineffectiveness of GTM and other language teaching methods have led to the rise of CLT as the most popular instructional approach (Savignon, 2018).

Curriculum

Generally, curriculum is a comprehensive framework presenting the goals, principles, and assessment for the key stages of education (Atai, 2018). In this study, the term curriculum refers to the English National Curriculum (2012) in Bangladesh. This curriculum states the objectives and learning outcomes of English teaching and learning at the SSC level.

Curriculum Alignment

Curriculum alignment refers to the degree to which curriculum standards, classroom teaching, and testing are in agreement with one another (Webb, 1997a, 2007). Curriculum alignment focuses on the link between testing and classroom instruction (Cheng & Fox, 2017). Hence, the weaker link or the lesser degree of alignment among the curriculum, classroom instruction and testing is referred to as misalignment.

Examination

In this dissertation, the terms examination, assessment, and test are used synonymously.

Grammar Translation Method (GTM)

This instructional method is an influential method used to teach Latin and Greek languages and literature. GTM concentrates on teaching grammar rules, translations, and vocabulary with no focus on communication skills such as listening and speaking (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). The popularity of GTM began declining in the 19th century when the focus of language teaching shifted to the development of oral communication (Benati, 2018).
High-stakes Testing

High-stakes tests are examinations that can cause life-changing consequences for students (Madaus, 1988, Marchant, 2004; Paris, 2000; Shepard & Dougherty, 1991). The scores of high-stakes examinations can be used for securing admission into colleges and universities, gaining social status, or obtaining jobs.

SSC

Secondary School Certificate (SSC) is the most important secondary school leaving examination in Bangladesh. Students study for the SSC examination during grades 9 and 10. This is a matriculation examination taken at end of grade 10.

Washback

In language education research, washback is known as the influence of teaching and learning (Alderson & Wall, 1993). In this dissertation, washback is used to denote how teaching and learning meet the demands of the SSC English examination.
Chapter 1: Introduction

Rationale

This doctoral dissertation examines the washback effect of the English Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examination on classroom teaching and learning in Bangladesh. Specifically, the study examines washback effects on teaching and learning as a result of the degree of alignment between the English curriculum, textbook, instruction and the SSC English examination. In other words, the study explores how the national SSC examination shapes the teaching and learning of English in Bangladeshi schools. My experiences as a student in Bangladesh inspired my construction of a washback study. In 2000, I was in the last cohort of students taking the Grammar Translation Method (GTM)-based English SSC examination at the secondary public examination in Bangladesh. The examination at this level is known as Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examination and is a national examination. When the transition from the SSC examination to the new Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)-based examination was taking place around me and millions of students in Bangladesh, I heard a great deal about how the CLT examination was going to change the teaching and learning of English in the country.

Later, during my Master of Philosophy (MPhil) studies in 2010, I learned about the washback effect: the influence of tests on teaching and learning (Alderson & Wall, 1993) from a book by Dr. Liying Cheng (Cheng, 2005). As a student from a test-driven culture, I was fascinated by the idea of washback. However, it was not until I started teaching at the university level that my research interest about the examination and its washback was rekindled. I found myself working with students who had the highest score points (A+) on their SSC English examinations, and yet they were not proficient in English. They were very poor in all four English language skills. As an academic, the poor performance of my students made me curious about what they had learned at their SSC level of education that enabled them to score highly but
still have poor language skills. Therefore, I decided to conduct this research project to examine the washback effects of the English examination at the SSC level.

Secondary education is the most important schooling stage in Bangladesh’s educational structure (Begum & Farooqui, 2008), and was identified as one of the priority areas in the 2017/18 budget (CPD, 2017). At the secondary level, the SSC is an important, high-stakes matriculation examination. An increasing number of students are taking the SSC examination each year. In 2016, approximately 1.30 million students took the examination, over 1.78 million students took it in 2018, and in 2019, around 2.1 million students sat for the examination. The SSC examination results are now extensively used to make high-stakes decisions in academic and professional contexts. In the social context of Bangladesh, the SSC is regarded as one of the most prestigious and important examinations due to its long history in the education system and culture as the first terminal school leaving examination (Sultana, 2018a). When the SSC results are published, they make the page one news in the country. Thus, the SSC directly and indirectly influences students’ academic and career opportunities. Good results on the SSC examination enable students to create better lives, while failure or low scores on this examination impede the students from getting into their desired educational institutions, achieving academic degrees, or even entering their coveted professions (Sultana, 2018a). Better results of the SSC examination create access to the wider avenues of life (“Cutting secondary,” 2019). Without successfully passing the SSC examination, students are not allowed to enroll in the next two years of education, which lead to tertiary education. The SSC scores are even counted along with the scores from the higher secondary examination for admission into universities. The stakes of this examination are so high that sometimes students commit suicide if they fail or earn lower scores than they had hoped for (“Two SSC examinees commit suicide,” 2019).

SSC scores not only dominate individuals’ lives, but there are also repercussions at the institutional level. After the 2019 SSC examination, it was found that 107 institutions saw no
students pass the SSC examination. As a result, the government may recommend cancelling funding for these schools (Abbas, 2019). Likewise, good scores on the SSC examination bring a wide range of benefits for schools and teachers. So, in the context of Bangladesh, the SSC examination has great consequences for the lives, educations, and career prospects of students.

**Importance of English in Bangladesh**

Bangladesh is a South Asian country with a land area of 147,000 km². The population of this small country is 168,065,920 (Bangladesh Population, 2019). The national language of the country is Bangla. English does not have a defined official status, but it carries immense social, economic, and cultural significance in Bangladesh (Rahman & Pandian, 2018a, 2018b). Hamid and Erling (2016, p. 32) reported, “with over 30 million students learning English as a compulsory subject from Grade 1 in the different streams of pre-tertiary education, Bangladesh has one of the largest English learning populations in the world.” Cheng (2018) noted that none can deny the ever-growing influence and power of the English language worldwide. Thus, since its independence in 1971, Bangladesh has been keen to develop English proficiency in its citizens (Karim, Shahed, Rahman, & Mohamed, 2019). Rahman et al. (2019) reinforced the importance of teaching and learning English for sustaining the economic growth of Bangladesh. The present English education policies are, thus, derived from the country’s intention to enhance the economy through better English language teaching and learning (Erling, Seargeant, & Solly, 2014; Seargeant & Erling, 2011).

The *National Curriculum* (2012) and the *National Education Policy* (2010) place equal or more emphasis on teaching and learning English as Bangla (the national language of Bangladesh). “Officially, [English] does not have any social function as such. However, it is the most important foreign language, taught in schools as a compulsory subject” (Sultana, 2014, p. 74). Rahman (2007) noted that English is the medium of instruction at the tertiary level as the required textbooks in higher education are mostly available in English. In addition to textbooks,
Sultana (2010) found that most of the judiciary books and papers are written in English; therefore, English skills are needed to be able to access the judiciary system of the country. While Bangla is primarily the language of instruction at the school level, English is the main instructional language at the tertiary level and is widely used for official purposes in the country (Hamid, Jahan, & Islam, 2013). Banu and Sussex (2000) pointed out the international status of English in Bangladesh:

> English in Bangladesh is strongly linked to socio-economic status. In independent Bangladesh, English is principally an international language and is most evident in the areas like commerce, tourism, science, technology and education, where Bangladesh interacts with international community, or reacts to the prestige presence of English. The continued presence and vitality of English in Bangladesh are all the more surprising. (p. 125)

English is not viewed merely as one of the subjects taught in schools, but, as noted in the *National Curriculum* (2012) (see Appendix A), the English language can help contribute to the areas of national development, such as, “to achieve developments in science, technology, higher education, business, industry and particularly in communications and IT skills” (2012, p. 73). Thus, English is also a vehicle of economic development with both intrinsic and extrinsic values in the country (Rahman, 2007). On learning English, the President of Bangladesh stated, “with a view to promoting employment abroad and encouraging transfer of technology; emphasis will be laid on teaching English language along with the mother tongue” (as cited in Imam, 2005, p. 477).

As a result, among all the subjects at the SSC level, English is favored due to its highly valued status in society and culture. Students at the SSC level are required to enroll in a total of 10 courses, with English as one of the five compulsory subjects. However, compared to other subjects in the curriculum, English enjoys a privileged position. For example, the score of the
SSC English examination is used as a decider for students with the same overall scores for admission into the higher secondary level of education (Secondary and Higher Secondary Division, 2018).

Despite the importance of the SSC English examination at the secondary level, researchers in Bangladesh have paid scant attention to its washback. To my knowledge, there is only one relevant doctoral study on the washback effect, but it examined a different examination—the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) examination (Hoque, 2011). The claims that the revised examination will achieve enriched English teaching-learning have not become a reality (Abedin, Mojlis, & Akhter, 2009; Hamid, 2011; Chowdhury & Ha, 2008; Rahman & Pandian, 2018a; Rahman, 2015) and the level of English proficiency in all spheres in the country is questionable (Naik, 2018). Students’ English proficiency is still reported as poor and unsatisfactory (Brunfaut & Green, 2017). Hamid and Baldauf (2014) further indicated a reduction of English proficiency among the Bangladeshi users which complemented Hamid’s (2010) concerns about the dearth of quality English education in the country. Considering all these factors, the washback of the SSC requires close academic scrutiny to understand its effect on English teaching and learning in Bangladesh.

**Research Purpose and Research Questions**

This dissertation examines the washback effects of the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) English examination on classroom teaching and learning in Bangladesh. Specifically, the study examines the alignment of the SSC examination with the national English curriculum and its textbook, and classroom instruction, focusing on if and how that alignment relationship produces washback effects on teaching and learning. The following research questions were formulated to guide the study.
Operational Definitions of Terms in the Research Questions

For operational purposes, the key terms found in the three research questions in this study are defined as the following:

RQ 1. Are the national English curriculum and textbook (mis)aligned with the SSC English Examination at the policy level? If so, how are they aligned? If not, how are they misaligned?

Align refers to the word alignment, that is, the range of agreement among curriculum standards, instruction, and assessments (Cheng & Fox, 2017).

Policy refers to the ways various policy documents, including the curriculum, textbook, and examination question papers, correspond with each other. Scholars (Case, Jorgensen, & Zucker, 2008; Webb, 1997a, 1997b) considered curriculum standards, assessments, and textbooks
as policy documents, as these documents are the vehicles to disseminate the decisions taken at the policy level.

RQ 2. Does this (mis)alignment relationship produce any washback effects on the classroom instruction at the SSC level? What is the nature of that washback, if any?

*Classroom instruction* refers to all sorts of class activities in which a teacher uses in the classroom to purposefully direct the learning process (Joyce & Weil, 1996). In this study, the classroom instruction denotes all processes of teaching and learning.

*Objectives* refer to curriculum standards. According to Anderson (2002), in today’s vocabulary, the terms *curriculum standards* and *objectives* can be used synonymously. In this dissertation, I used the word “objective” as it is used in the English *National Curriculum* (2012). As this study examines education in Bangladesh, the terms standards and objectives are used interchangeably.

RQ 3. Does this (mis)alignment relationship produce any washback effects on the students’ learning at the SSC level? What is the nature of that washback, if any?

*Students* specifically refers to the students of grade 10, who were the immediate candidates for the SSC English examination.

The scholarship on learning literature generally has been centered on how classroom instructions, teachers and learners together create the scope for the best possible learning to take place (Richards, 2015). *Learning* in this dissertation refers to what students report they learn in the classroom instructions preparing them for the SSC English examination as well as improving their English proficiency, and what learning looks like when they prepare for the examination.

**Context and Background of the SSC Examination**

Since there is a dearth of international research and wide publication on washback research in the context of the English SSC examination in Bangladesh, it is necessary to explain...
the context, educational structure, schooling system, and describe the English SSC examination to provide a context for the study.

**The Educational Structure in Bangladesh**

The education system in Bangladesh is based on a three-tiered system: primary, secondary, and higher secondary. There are two streams in primary education (general and religious), while there are three streams in secondary education (general, technical-vocational, and religious). General education is the mainstream education system of the country in which most pupils are enrolled. Primary education is a 5-year cycle while secondary education is a 7-year one with three sub-stages: 3 years of junior secondary, 2 years of secondary, and 2 years of higher secondary. Within the general education track, students can choose one of the three groups: humanities, science, and business education. This diversification of courses and curriculum starts at the beginning of secondary education (from grade 9). After higher secondary, the next phase of education is tertiary education, which ranges from 3 to 5 years. The following chart explains the educational system of Bangladesh:
Bangladesh’s Ministry of Primary and Mass Education is responsible for primary education (grades 1 to 5), and the Ministry of Education oversees secondary and post-secondary education. This includes religious education (taught at Madrasahs, which are Islamic schools) and technical and secondary vocational education. An equivalent level of education is offered in Madrasahs too. *Dhakil* offers the educational equivalent of junior secondary and secondary schools, and *alim* offers the path to higher secondary. The government recognizes this equivalency, and graduates from Madrasahs are given the same opportunity to continue schooling at higher levels. Apart from these, there are also private English medium schools operated by the UK based examination boards, such as Edexcel and University of Cambridge International Examinations. These schools are highly expensive and beyond the reach of most students and
their families. These English medium schools are mostly located in cities and their students make up a tiny fraction of the overall student population in Bangladesh (Dewan, 2010).

**Types of Schools in Bangladesh**

There are five types of schools in Bangladesh: public schools, private schools, schools run by non-government organizations (NGOs), Madrasahs, and English medium schools (see Figure 1.3). Public schools are fully funded by the government, and hence the tuition fees are very low. There are two types of private schools: fully private schools that do not receive any government funding and are thus expensive, and government-aided private schools that do receive government funds and thus are little less expensive. However, in case of post-primary schools, they “are private only in name because 100% of their salaries and wages, and the costs of their physical infrastructure development, durable educational supplies and equipment are provided by the government (Rahman, Hamzah, Meerah, & Rahman, 2010, p. 115). There are also schools run by the NGOs that provide free education to poor students. The Islamic schools, known as Madrasah, offer courses in Bangla and Arabic. They also teach English, following the national curriculum of the country. Except for the private English medium schools, these four types of schools usually follow the national curriculum in teaching. While a different type of schools exists in Bangladesh, many of the students attend the Bangla medium of instructions (Imam, 2005), and this is regarded as the mainstream of education in the country.
The school year in Bangladesh begins in January and ends by November. Although a Christian calendar is used to schedule the school year, the schedule is adjusted based on many religious and cultural festivals, which are based on a Lunar calendar. Generally, there are two internal examinations in an academic year; however, the number of tutorial examinations, class tests, or preparation tests varies from school to school.

**SSC Level Education in Bangladesh**

Students sit for the SSC examination at the end of grade 10. Preparation for the examination occurs as a two-year program throughout grades 9 and 10. The examination is conducted under the eight general education boards across the country. The content of the SSC examination is the same nationwide, but the examination is administered regionally (Imam, 2005).
Table 1.1

*The Structure of SSC Level Education*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EIGHT EDUCATION BOARDS</th>
<th>Three groups of studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Humanities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 subjects to study</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 compulsory subjects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.1 presents a visual structure of SSC level education in Bangladesh. Under the eight education boards, there are three groups of disciplines that the students choose to study: humanities, science, and business education. Students study 10 subjects at the SSC level. There are five compulsory subjects, and students choose the other five subjects based on their group of study.

Unlike primary schooling, secondary schooling is not free or compulsory. Thus, access to secondary education from students of poor households is very low (Hunt, 2005). According to a World Bank report in 2016, the net enrollment at the primary level was 98% in 2015, whereas the net enrollment at the secondary level was 54%. In 2017, the World Bank reported that less than 70% of students continue to the secondary level after completing the primary schooling, and less than 60% of those who continue complete grade 10 (World Bank, 2017). Since most of the government-owned secondary schools with low tuition fees are in the urban areas, most of the children from rural areas cannot access to this level of education (Rahman et al., 2010). Private school tuition fees are high and are beyond the financial means of most families in Bangladesh. The cost of education causes many students to drop out after primary schooling. Due to poverty, around 37.81% of students drop out after the primary level, and the highest level of drop out happens after grade 8 (“42pc girls,” 2018). Hence, the SSC examination carries great social and
economic value. Ilon (2000) reported that a graduate with this certificate could earn a 200% higher salary than graduates without this certification. The importance of this level of education is recognized in the 2017/18 government budget, which allocated US$ 18.2 billion to develop secondary education (Ministry of Finance, Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, 2017). In the 2018/19 budget, the education minister also stressed improving the quality of secondary education in the country (“Allocation for Education,” 2018).

**English Education at the SSC Level**

In Bangladesh, English is introduced from grade 1 as a compulsory subject and is taught through the tertiary level of education. The *National Curriculum* (2012) viewed English as the vehicle for reaching the government’s “Digital Bangladesh 2021” goal, as English is considered the language of science, technology, and globalization.

Since the birth of the country in 1971, GTM was used to teach the English language at schools. In 1996, CLT was introduced at the secondary level of education with the goal of bringing positive changes to English language teaching and learning. “This change in pedagogy and approach, replacing the traditional grammar-translation method, was necessary to help learners communicate in English meaningfully and spontaneously” (*National Curriculum*, 2012, p. 73). Further, according to *National Curriculum* (2012), the communicative use of English can contribute to national development in the areas of science, technology, higher education, business, industry, communications and IT skills and so, “to help prepare the country’s younger generation for the competitive globalized world of the 21st century, this curriculum for secondary English has been developed” (p. 73). The first CLT-based English SSC examination took place in 2001.

The stated objectives in the English *National Curriculum* (2012) were:

1. To acquire competence in all four language skills, i.e. listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
2. To use the competence for effective communication in real life situations at pre-
intermediate level.

3. To acquire necessary grammar competence in English language.

4. To develop creativity and critical thinking through English language.

5. To become independent learners of English by using reference skills.

6. To use language skills for utilizing information technology.

7. To use literary pieces in English for enjoyment and language learning.

8. To be skilled human resources by using English language skills. (p. 74)

However, most studies on the subject found that these stated objectives were not realized
Khan & Lubna, 2007; Tarannum, 2010) identified a number of common factors contributing to
the failure of CLT-based English education in Bangladesh. These factors included teachers who
did not understand the basic tenets of CLT, teachers with low motivation, exclusion of teachers in
the policy making process, inadequate teacher training programs, large class sizes to
accommodate CLT-based instruction or assessment, and inadequate infrastructure to implement
CLT-based activities. In addition to these obstacles, Ansarey’s (2012) study revealed a mismatch
between the curriculum and the testing system. Listening and speaking skills were not tested at
the SSC English examination and thus were not practiced in class (Alam & Sinha, 2009; Hossain,
Momtaz, Sultana, & Hossain, 2006; Roshid, 2008). Thus, the public examination does not follow
the core principles of CLT because speaking and listening skills are not included on the
examination. Further, these skills are not even realized at the classroom level. Rahman and
Bhuiyan (2007) stated:

The existing examination system is mostly based on writing and reading skills.

Regrettably, the two important skills, listening and speaking, are being completely left
out in the English examination system… as there are no marks allocated for speaking
skill in the examination system, students are not motivated to practice speaking.

(p. 99-100)

As a result, teachers stress practicing reading and writing skills so that students can do well on public examinations (Hasan, 2004). “Notebooks and guidebooks are a lifeline to most learners and the negative backwash effect of the examination on teaching and learning strategies complete the cycle of monolithic pattern of knowledge and education” (Rahman, 1999, p. 109). This routine teaching and learning of English ensure a better grade at SSC English examinations but level of English skills remains very poor. Imam (2005) reported that the average English language skill level of the university students is equivalent to that of the students in grade seven. At present, all public and private universities have mandatory English foundational and remedial courses for all incoming undergraduate students due to the poor proficiency in English. Billah (2017) reported that even after two decades with CLT-based English education in Bangladesh, the standard of English language learning seems to have declined. CLT-based English education in Bangladesh has remained only a theory. It has not been put into practice, as noted by Ahmed (2006): “the government made the right decision [by] introducing the approach to SSC and HSC levels. But unfortunately, [the] government did not ensure suitable academic and socio-economic environment for the proper implementation of the approach” (p. 8). Few studies have explored the connection between the failure of CLT and its assessment (Ali, Hamid, & Hardy, 2018). However, researchers (Khan, 2010; Rahman et al., 2018a, b, c; Rahman et al., 2019) claimed that there is a close relationship between the failure of English language teaching and learning and assessment methods in the context of Bangladesh. Scholars and researchers in Bangladesh have rarely attempted to study whether the SSC English examination produces any unintended washback effects causing the curriculum goals failing in classroom instruction. Thus, this doctoral dissertation attempted to understand the classroom teaching and learning of English at the SSC level from a washback perspective.
Description of the SSC English Examination

This SSC English examination is an achievement test which is designed to measure students’ command of the materials taught in the classrooms and represent the goals of the learning objectives. According to the National Curriculum (2012), the SSC English examination is expected to assess students’ creativity and ability to use English in their own contexts. The English curriculum emphasizes the importance of real-life contexts in learning and teaching of the language. Thus, assessing the contextual knowledge of the learners is the main purpose of the SSC English examination. However, the broader perspective of this examination is to assess “learners’ different skills- cognitive, comprehension, application, and higher skills,” (National Curriculum, 2012, p. 26). Students must pass the SSC examination to advance to the next two years of higher secondary level education (Ali et al., 2018; Khan, 2010). SSC examination score is one of the decisive factors for undergraduate admission tests at the tertiary level.

The English examination at the SSC level is a 200-mark examination, which is divided into two parts of 100 marks each. These parts are known as English first paper and English second paper. These two examinations take place on two different, usually subsequent, days. This is a paper-pencil based examination. The examinations boards select the test venues and this is test-takers’ responsibility to be physically present at the test venues. The examination lasts three hours with no break time. All written instructions are given in English. The test writers are not allowed to use any materials used in the textbook, English for Today (EFT) (see Appendix B), or any other commercially published materials; they must write the questions by themselves. The test is written by experienced teachers selected by the examination board from various schools across the country.

The English first paper consists of two sections: reading (50 marks) and writing (50 marks) (see Appendix C). The reading section contains test items such as Multiple-Choice Questions (MCQ), answering questions based on passages, matching, gap filling, information
transfer, rearranging, and summarizing. The writing section contains test items such as writing a paragraph, completing a story, writing informal letters, describing graphs, and dialogue writing.

The English second paper has two sections: grammar (45 marks) and composition (55 marks) (see also Appendix C). The grammar section consists of test items such as gap filling with and without clues, substitution table, right forms of verbs, narrative style, changing sentences, completing sentences, use of suffix and prefix, tag questions, sentence connectors, and punctuation. The composition part contains test items such as writing a CV, writing formal letters/emails, paragraphs, and writing compositions. The structure of English SSC examination is presented in the following table.
### Table 1.2

*Structure of the English Examination*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Papers</th>
<th>Total Marks</th>
<th>Skills Marks</th>
<th>Test items</th>
<th>NO. of Items</th>
<th>Scores for Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English First Paper</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>50</td>
<td><strong>Questions from unseen passage-I</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• MCQ</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Answering open ended questions</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Questions from unseen passage- II</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Information transfer</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Gap filling without clues</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Summary</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Other questions (Not based on any passage)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Matching</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Rearranging- order to make a story</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Writing Paragraphs (clues are given to compose the paragraph)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Completing a story</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Writing informal letters</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Describing graphs/charts</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Dialogue writing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Second Paper</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>• Gap filling with clues</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Gap filling without clues</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Substitution table</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Right forms of verbs</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Narration</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Changing sentences</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Completing sentences</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Use of suffix and prefix</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Tag Question</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Sentence connectors</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composition</td>
<td>55</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Group A (Any two items will be given in the question paper)</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Writing CV with cover letter</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Formal/informal letters/e-mails</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Group B (Any two items will be given in the question paper)</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Completing stories</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Shor paragraphs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Dialogues writing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Analyzing graphs and charts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Group C</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Composition based on personal experience, everyday problems, events, etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Test writers are instructed to set items in contexts, and therefore, isolated sentences cannot be given as questions. According to the question paper, there is no scope for testing listening and speaking skills, although the curriculum suggests practicing these skills in the classroom.

**Overview of the Dissertation**

This doctoral dissertation has five chapters. The following figure offers a quick overview about the structure of the dissertation.

![Diagram](image)

*Figure 1.4. Five chapters of the dissertation at a glance.*

This Chapter discussed my personal motivation for choosing washback as a research topic and introduced the study’s rationale and research questions. The latter half of the Chapter provided necessary details about the education system, and the SSC English examination in Bangladesh. This brief introduction to the education system of Bangladesh will be useful in comprehending the data and findings. In Chapter 2, washback literature starting from 1993 to 2019 is reviewed; emphasis is given to the most recent studies in order to focus on recent shifts in washback research. In addition to washback studies, the literature review establishes the link between alignment and washback. It also identifies the trends and gaps in washback literature as
they relate to the conceptual framework of this study. Chapter 3 details the study’s methodology. It describes the adaptation of the conceptual framework into a functional one, the role of the researcher, provides a detailed description of the research design and methods, and explains how the rigor of this qualitative research was ensured. Chapter 4 presents the results of the analysis of documents, interviews, classroom observations, and focus groups with relevant examples through the uses of infographics. Finally, Chapter 5 discusses the findings explored in the previous Chapter, directions for future research, and the study’s limitations, contributions, implications, and conclusions.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

This Chapter presents the literature review that provides empirical evidence to support the dissertation. There are three sections in this Chapter. The first section provides key definitions of washback, the evolving development of earlier washback studies, and a discussion of major washback models. The second section delves into the findings of important washback studies conducted around the world and outlines the gaps that need to be researched. This section is first divided into five sub-sections: washback on teaching, washback on learning, washback and curriculum alignment, washback within a classroom assessment context and washback in the South Asian countries. Based on these empirical studies, I then discuss key issues and methods in washback research and point out the research gaps. The final and third section of the chapter offers a conceptual framework used for this washback research, which is then applied as the dissertation’s operational framework in Chapter 3.

The influence of tests on stakeholders, the educational system, and society at large has been a rising concern among scholars and researchers. As a result, there is a growing body of literature examining the intended as well as unintended relationships between teaching, learning, and testing (Cheng, Sun, & Ma, 2015). This influence of testing on teaching and learning is known as washback (Alderson & Wall, 1993). Washback studies in language education primarily focus on the high-stakes test, for example, public examinations, National English matriculation tests, high school-leaving tests, university English exit examinations, the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), and the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) (Wei, 2017). Cheng and Curtis (2004) noted that the widespread use of test scores for various educational and social purposes has made washback an important educational phenomenon.

Research on washback is marked by Alderson and Wall’s (1993) seminal work proposing 15 hypotheses that, when summarized, state: tests influence what and how teachers
teach, and students learn; tests influence the degree, depth, contents, methods, and attitudes of teaching and learning; important tests with consequences have washback and vice versa, and tests have a different range of washback effects on different teachers and learners. These washback hypotheses have guided many studies on washback in the years that followed, which explored the complex nature of this phenomenon. This complexity creates complications in washback research; for example, Tsagari and Cheng (2016) noted that researchers need to recognize the intensity, length, intentionality, and value of washback to realize how, where, and when the features of teaching and learning are affected by the test.

**Evolving Development of Washback Studies**

In the following section, various definitions offered by washback researchers are discussed to obtain a comprehensive definition of washback; the earlier washback studies are then tracked.

**Washback: Definition and Origin**

Earlier applied linguistics used various other terms to label the idea of the influence of tests, such as, "test impact" in Bachman and Palmer (1996), "systematic validity" in Messick (1989), "measurement-driven instruction" in Popham (1987), "curriculum alignment" in Shepard (1990), and "backwash" in Biggs (1995). Among these diverse terms, the two terms “washback” and “backwash” have been in use from the beginning. In both the Oxford and Collins Dictionary, backwash is defined as the unpleasant after-effects of an event; in Webster’s Dictionary, it is defined as “the consequences of an event- especially a catastrophic event.” The negative connotation attached to the term is apparent, especially considering the adverse effects attached to the impact of tests on various stakeholders. Spolsky (1994) defined backwash as the “accidental side-effects of examinations” (p. 55); on the other hand, Cheng (1997) defined washback as the “intended and directed function” of an examination change (p. 36). However, Cheng and Curtis
(2004) and Bailey (1996) used backwash and washback interchangeably, but with a preference for the term washback. It is evident from the discussion that the term backwash denotes the adverse repercussion of testing, which is not the original purpose of washback. Washback is the inherent quality of a test, and the outcome of washback is likely to be defined by the stakeholders and its uses in context (Cheng, 2014). Even though earlier researchers used washback and backwash interchangeably, in this paper, I have chosen to use only the term washback.

One of the earliest explanatory definitions of washback was offered by Pearson (1988), who stated that the way examinations influence the attitudes, behaviors, and motivation of teachers, learners, and parents is known as washback. The simplest but most dominant definition was given by Hughes (1989), “the effect of testing on teaching and learning is known as backwash” (p. 1), which was strongly supported by Bailey (1996). Referring to washback, Shohamy (1992) wrote that washback is the outcome of the powerful authority of external tests, which has influence on the test takers’ lives. Going one step further, Alderson and Wall (1993) stated that washback compels teachers and students to do things they would not necessarily otherwise do in the absence of a test. Thus, washback is the connection between testing and learning (Shohamy, Donitsa-Schmidt, & Ferman, 1996). Later, Messick (1996) described washback as the extent to which tests influence teachers to do things they would not otherwise do that promote or inhibit language learning. The root of washback thus lies in the fact that tests have effects on teaching and learning. Thus, washback is a natural outcome of any high-stakes test, intended or unintended, when the future of the test-takers is influenced by the outcomes (Cheng, 2005; Beikmahdavi, 2016).

From the initial review of the definitions of washback we can generalize that washback is referred to as the influence of high-stakes tests on classroom instruction, both on
teaching and learning. To understand more about this influence, we need to know its root, which is discussed in the following section concerning how studies on washback began.

**Earlier Washback Research**

Cheng (2008) noted that serious discussions of the impact of testing in language education started in the early 1990s. Cheng (2014) further pointed out that washback research in the 1990s explored the existence of this phenomenon, i.e., whether washback exists, whereas research in the 2000s provided empirical evidence of the relationship between teaching and testing. Tsagari (2006) categorized the development of washback studies in three phases: a) the pre-1993 step; b) the 1993 step; and c) the post-1993 step. The first, the pre-1993 step, could be called a myth step, where a few works were published based on self-reported data or direct test results or outcomes, which argued strongly for the absence of anything such as the influence of tests. The second, the 1993 step, is marked by the publication of Alderson and Wall’s (1993) and Wall and Alderson’s (1993) seminal works on washback. These two authors were the first to question the characteristics of the influence of any examination on teaching and learning and started the academic conversation on washback. The third, the post-1993 step, which Tsagari called the reality step, is marked by empirical studies and projects on washback, followed by various working models of it.

The rise of washback is indebted to the “encroaching power” (Latham, 1877, p.2) and influences associated with high-stakes tests. High-stakes tests have always been used as gatekeepers for education and employment. Linn (as cited in Cheng & Curtis, 2004) pointed out five powerful roles of tests and assessments: their selecting role in the 1950s; their accountability role in the 1960s; their competency testing role in the 1970s; their school accountability role in the 1980s; and their standard based accountability role in the 1990s. “Aware of the power of tests, policymakers in many parts of the world continue to use them to manipulate their local
educational systems, to control curricula and to impose (or promote) new textbooks and new teaching methods” (Cheng & Curtis, 2004, p. 6). Despite that examinations tend to be at the center of controversy because of their negative as well as powerful influence over educational components, they are the darling of the policymakers (Madaus, 1985) because of their ability to bring changes into the system without changing any other components. Shohamy (1992) pointed out that the washback phenomenon is the offshoot of the power and authority of tests on individual lives in particular, and the overall educational system in general. So, studies in washback are the result of the ever-growing power of tests on various stakeholders.

The set of relationships planned or unplanned, between teaching and testing is complex. Over time, washback researchers have developed various models to study this complex set of relationships, which are the focus of the next section.

**Review of Washback Models**

To examine the washback effects of different tests, a number of frameworks have been suggested by various scholars over many years; however, it remains unclear how various forces interact together in an educational system to produce washback. Thus, researchers have always struggled to come up with a working theoretical framework to uncover the “black box” of washback (Green, 2013, p. 44).

Hughes (1993) was the first scholar who attempted to construct a basic model of washback that suggested the nature of a test may first influence participants’ perceptions of and attitudes towards their teaching and learning tasks, which, in turn, would affect teaching and learning processes, and then the teaching and learning processes would affect learning outcomes. Alderson and Wall (1993) made the first attempt to look at the relationship between teaching, learning, and testing critically. They offered 15 hypotheses about how tests influence various aspects of teaching and learning, which later guided many washback studies. Considering the
importance of tests in teaching and learning, Messick (1996) argued, "It is problematic to claim evidence of test washback if a logical or evidential link cannot be forged between the teaching or learning outcomes and the test properties thought to influence them" (p. 247). He, therefore, suggested minimizing construct under-representation and construct-irrelevant variance in the test design to get the maximum benefit of washback. Messick is one of the very few scholars who realized the importance of test design in washback studies; to date, none of the later washback models have explicitly included his ideas about the test design features in engineering the intended washback effect into the system.

Based on Hughes’ (1993) trichotomy and Alderson and Wall’s (1993) 15 washback hypotheses, Bailey (1996) developed a dominant washback model illustrating how the test not only affects the products, processes, and participants, but also how feedback provided by them may in turn bring changes in the test (see Figure 2.1). Here, the direct influence of the test makes the participants go through various processes, which result in products specific to each category of participants. The dotted lines represent how teachers, students, researchers, and curriculum and material developers influenced by the test reciprocally might also have an influence on the test.
Bailey's (1996, p. 264) model is intricate and comprehensive, in a sense, since it does not demonstrate a linear relationship between tests, teaching, and learning. However, the model lacks a demonstration of the processes that participants go through because of the test washback. Without understanding the processes, it is not possible to unpack the complexity in washback research.

Cheng (1999) later applied Bailey’s (1996) washback model to a study of the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE), with a slight change. Prior to this, Cheng (1999) had offered an explanatory washback model, which is related to the curriculum change cycle (see Figure 2.2)
Figure 2.2. Explanatory washback model

Compared to other models, Cheng’s (1999, p. 257) washback model is an operationalized one, because it identified the gaps in the cycle of curriculum implementation and in the educational system as a whole. After the decision is made at policy level and recommendations are given by the textbook publishers, it is up to the schools, teachers, and students to translate those recommendations into their teaching and learning situations. Therefore, the author recommended the necessity of identifying gaps to “improve our knowledge and understanding of how and in what areas a public examination change can actually influence” the curriculum (p. 257) to guide empirical research. However, Cheng did not design this model to study learners and their learning, as she focused primarily on teaching.

Unlike the creators of the earlier washback models, Green (2007b) was a pioneer researcher who offered a model to study learners and their learning. His model was developed to study students’ perceptions of test importance and their characteristics. Developed from the works of Hughes (1993), the ideas of Bailey (1996), and Cheng (2005), in particular, about the intensity of washback, Green’s (2007b) model explains how washback is more intense if participants view the test and results as important (see Figure 2.3). This inclusive model
demonstrates the relationship between test design, context of test use, and “the extent to which participants (including material writers, teachers, learners, and course providers) are aware of and are equipped to address the demands of the test and are willing to embrace beliefs about learning embodied therein” (Green, 2006, p. 339). This model links the intensity of washback with participants’ belief in and attitude towards the test. The more importance the test carries in participants’ lives, the more they will be influenced by it. However, this model fails to illustrate the interconnectivity between the test design and different participants in the program in engineering the washback effect.

**Figure 2.3.** A model of washback direction, variability, and intensity

Considering the interconnective nature of the variables in washback, Shih (2007, p. 151) suggested a model of the effect of washback on learning demonstrating how intrinsic and extrinsic factors, along with test factors, influence students’ learning and psychology (see Figure 2.4). This washback model also takes local contexts and students’ sociocultural surroundings into consideration, which are critical in understanding the complexity of washback.
Figure 2.4. A washback model for students’ learning

The models described in this section are the most well-cited washback models that have shaped our understanding of the phenomenon. However, except Cheng’s (1999) exploratory model, none of the models offers us guidance as to how to empirically study washback incorporating its various interplaying variables. As washback researchers, we need a framework that is closely linked with classroom teaching and learning situations so that we can unpack the complex nature of washback to inform classroom instruction.

After reviewing the existing washback models, the next section presents an analysis of major washback studies from 1993 to 2019.

Empirical Washback Studies

The causal washback relationship of teaching, learning, and testing has not yet been proved, as pointed out by Tsagari and Cheng (2016), as most of the studies offer only an exploratory view of the relationship. It is, therefore, crucial to review the empirical studies to identify what needs to be done in future. This section is divided into five sub-sections: washback
on teaching, washback on learning, washback and curriculum alignment, washback within a classroom assessment context and washback in the South Asian countries. These subsections are based on the focus of the empirical studies reviewed. Premised on the findings from the review, the key issues and methods in the washback research are discussed, which lead us to the research gaps in the washback research.

**Washback on Teaching**

Regarding the most researched hypotheses that a test influences teaching, what teachers teach, and how they teach, Wall and Alderson’s (1993) longitudinal investigation based on interview and classroom observation of the then newly introduced English test in the O-level examination in Sri Lanka was pioneering. This was the first study that used classroom observation to look at the reality of the classroom. The authors noticed that there was a clear change in the teaching content, however, which was more the effect of the new textbooks. Initially, the researchers did not understand why the examination had “virtually no impact on methodology” and “no impact on how teachers taught” (p. 65), as teachers were not using communicative teaching in their classes. Later phases of observation revealed an intensive use of commercially published materials to prepare the students for the tests as the examination drew nearer. The study reported what teachers did in their classes, but did not inform us of the reasons behind teachers’ decisions regarding teaching, or their understanding and perceptions of the new test.

The next influential study on washback was conducted by Cheng (1997, 1998, 1999, 2003, 2004, 2005) on the washback effect of the revised HKCEE on teachers and students in Hong Kong secondary schools. This study shed light on how only changing the examination might not be enough to produce the expected washback effect in the system. This large-scale research, based on questionnaire, interview, and classroom observation, pointed out the
“superficial” (Cheng, 2005, p. 235) change in the classroom, because by apparently following the test requirement, teachers put more emphasis on listening and speaking; however, no major changes were noticed in terms of teaching methodologies. Cheng’s study confirmed Wall and Alderson's (1993), Wall’s (2005), and Tsagari and Cheng’s (2016) conclusion that changing the content or methods of a test cannot bring the desired changes in teaching and learning.

However, Cheng’s (1999, 2004, 2005) study filled the gap in the earlier study by Wall and Alderson by including teachers’ perceptions of and attitudes towards the new examination. She found that although teachers’ positive attitude towards the new examination was reflected in their examination-oriented teaching activities, the reluctance to change teaching methods might have stemmed from the actual classroom situations. A recent study of the CET (College English Test) Spoken English test in China by Zhuo (2017) also highlighted the related results, namely that teachers’ encouraging attitude towards the test did not change how they taught in the class. A possible explanation could be that they experienced ‘false clarity’, that is, they thought that they had changed, but the change was artificial in nature (Wall, 2005).

In contrast, another recent study, conducted by Froehlich (2016) on the newly-introduced oral test in German at the secondary level aiming at communicative teaching and learning, found that although the test created positive washback in teaching methodology, materials, and learning in general, it failed to achieve overall positive feedback from students and teachers. A crucial factor behind the disappointment could be the ‘top-down approach’ of introducing a new test without consulting the teachers, as pointed out by the researcher, that the “test designer had forgotten what it was like to be in a classroom” (p. 175). This concern was also pointed out in Cheng’s (2005) study. In the same vein, Qi’s (2004, 2005) study in China revealed the desired washback effect on teaching methodology was absent in the classroom, primarily because of the mismatch between the test designers’ intended purposes and teachers’ understanding of those
intended purposes. The desired washback cannot be achieved if all the key stakeholders in the system are not included in making the decisions, especially teachers who are the central piece of implementing the intended washback. The gap between test designers’ intentions and teachers’ understanding will lead to an undesired washback effect.

In engineering washback into a system, teacher-related factors cannot be ignored. Employing interview and classroom observation tools, Papakammenou (2016) studied the washback effect of multi-examination classes on teachers’ teaching practices in Greece, where teachers were preparing the students for more than two examinations in the same class. It was found that the washback effect on the multi-examination classes was less than on the one-examination preparation classes. This was because, in the former, teachers used a common course book and materials to develop language skills in general, not paying attention to any of the exams, whereas in the latter, teachers were following examination-centered textbooks and materials. Most importantly, the complexity of washback was noticed when the same teacher behaved differently as the examination drew closer. As noted by Papakammenou (2016), the degree of washback can fluctuate not only among teachers but also within the same teacher. However, in this process, teachers’ personal philosophy, educational background, parental pressure, organizational pressure, and test-driven culture played a major role, as reported by the teachers in the study. These findings are consistent with Watanabe’s (1996) study based on past examination papers, classroom observations, and interviews with teachers on the washback effect of university entrance examinations in Japan on the dominant use of the GTM. Later, in 2004, Watanabe’s other study on the teacher factor in engineering washback, which was an extension of his previous work, found that teachers’ psychological factors were responsible for producing beneficial washback.
Achieving beneficial washback usually depends on how the stakeholders perceive the power and prestige attached to the examination. The findings of Shih’s (2009, 2010) study on the General English Proficiency Test (GEPT) in Taiwan reported how teachers’ consideration of GEPT as not high-stakes created a limited washback impact on their teaching. The teachers were not under the pressure of undergoing any sort of repercussion if students did not do well. This could also be a reason for not taking the test seriously, which was echoed in one of the earlier studies carried out by Shohamy et al. (1996) in Israel. The study illustrated how Arabic as a Second Language (ASL) had a minor washback effect, unlike English as a Foreign Language (EFL), because of the high-stakes nature of the EFL examination and the importance of that test in the educational system, in students’ and teachers’ lives, and in society. It was perceived that the more importance the teachers give to a test, the more their teaching activities are affected by it. In this connection, Khan, Aziz, and Stapa’s (2019) study on the teacher trainees in Malaysian context explored a layer where teachers’ instruction was still examination-oriented in the context of a low-stakes school assessment because teachers considered the school assessment as important. Realizing how teachers’ attitudes influence teaching, as well as the degree and depth of teaching, Cheng (2003, 2005) suggested these issues be addressed systematically in teacher professional development programs. More recently, Khan et al. (2019) also called for more assessment exposures in the teachers training programs which possibly may create positive washback.

Even studies on the washback effect of international tests such as IELTS and TOEFL have also found similar trends. Alderson and Hamp-Lyons’s (1996) interview- and classroom observation-based study of TOEFL investigated whether the examination exerts any undesirable washback effect on language teaching and learning. The study concluded that the administrators, teachers, and material developers were more responsible than the test for creating the washback
effect on teaching. Sometimes, washback effects vary because of teachers’ educational background and degree of experience (Hayes & Read, 2004). Green’s (2006) observational study comparing IELTS writing classes and English for Academic Purpose (EAP) perceived there was no significant difference between the two class types. Instead, many of the differences found could be linked to teachers’ professional training and beliefs about effective teaching, rather than the influence of the test itself. Green, however, did find that some features in the IELTS classes are closely linked to the test design of the test, such as timed writing and specific writing topics, and that this suggests the presence of washback. The design of the test made the students do certain activities to achieve the desired scores.

Tsagari’s (2011) study of the First Certificate in English (FCE) test in Greece explored how teachers’ methodologies were affected by examination pressure, as they were teaching only examination techniques and not communication skills. The study showed teachers’ heavy reliance on published examination preparation materials, such as, past papers and model questions, to prepare students for the test. Teachers’ negative attitudes towards the test, their lack of understanding about the actual goal of the examination, and parental intervention created an overall negative teaching and learning environment in this particular context. So, the washback complexity is created not only because of the test influence but also because of other interplaying contextual and social factors in the system (Tsagari, 2011). The influence of the contextual variables on the FCE examination was explained in detail in Loumbourdi’s (2016) study in the same context. The findings suggested that the influence of the test goes beyond the classroom practices to affect parents, publishers, test administrators, and Greek society as a whole. Teachers felt pressurized by the examination-oriented mindset of the involved stakeholders to direct their content and methodology according to examination requirements. On the other hand, in some cases, not the test but other factors in the education system, financial barrier, and teaching culture
are responsible for activating negative washback. For example, Kirkpatrick and Gyem’s (2012) study in Bhutan examining the washback effect of the changed English testing at the SSC level on teaching and learning explore that even though the teachers and students considered assessment as “a fundamental part of the entire teaching and learning process” (p. 13), negative washback stemmed out because of the vagueness in methodological approaches, time constraint to cover the heavy syllabus, lack of training to implement the new system, lack of curriculum syllabus and lack of assessment literacy among the teachers. To understand the nature of washback, therefore, we need to understand how other factors are interacting with each other in the educational as well as social structure.

Washback studies in teaching have primarily explored two major themes: one, how tests influence teachers’ classroom practices; and two, how teachers’ personal and psychological factors affect their own teaching.

**Washback on Learning**

It was not until recently that washback research into learners and learning started gaining importance (Cheng, 2008; Watanabe, 2004). How washback is translated or realized in learning has remained under-explored compared to its counterpart, teaching (Xie & Andrews, 2012).

A common belief, as argued by Brown (1997), is that “if you want to change student learning then change the methods of assessment” (p. 7), because “tests are also the simplest and most effective form of extrinsic motivation” (Prodromou, 1995, p. 209). Contrarily, it is noted that the pressure of tests leads students towards test preparation, rather than enhancing their authentic intended learning. Tsagari (2009) used a diary study to examine a group of students preparing for an FCE examination in Greece. She found that even though students were suffering from boredom and anxiety, they spent much time preparing for the examination because of its importance in their academic lives. Shih’s (2007) study found that students were keener on
practicing listening and reading skills in GEPT in Taiwan as these skills were predominantly tested in the first level of the examination. This led Shih to conclude that “the nature of tested skill and the structure of the test affect the degree of washback on students’ learning” (p. 143), which complemented one of the recent washback studies conducted in the context of an entrance examination Japan by Sato (2019). Sato found that students’ test preparation was closely based on the test constructs and how they perceived those constructs. This study is important because the researcher identified a detailed learning behavior of the students which were slightly different than the earlier studies. For an instance, Pan and Newfields (2013) compared two groups of students from two Taiwanese universities, one with the English certification exit requirement and one without. The findings showed the exit requirements did not enhance students’ motivation to study for the examination. These students were, instead, more interested in a teacher-centered test preparation to pass the course as per the requirement which contradicted Sato’s findings. Sato, instead, revealed that students with higher level of self-efficacy rather created customized test preparation strategies which suited their individual needs. These students’ learning and test preparation were closely linked with the test content and design. These findings were echoed by Pan’s (2016) study in the same context, investigating learner factors as well as Sun’s (2016) study on students’ perceptions about CET4. Sun explored test’s powerful influence in creating extrinsic motivation to prepare for the test, which turned out to be one of the unintended consequences of the test. These studies significantly pointed out that “tests are not a panacea that will always succeed in promoting student learning” (Pan & Newfields, 2013, p. 12). It would, therefore, appear that the tests probably influence test preparation, but not the motivation towards learning.

Test constructs play a significant role in students’ test preparation. A recent study conducted by Kim (2017) the on washback of TOEFL writing on students’ learning raised the question of whether students learn academic writing by preparing for the test. Based on data
collected from over 150 pages of anonymous online forum postings made by Korean TOEFL-takers from two websites, Kim found that students had improved their test scores by memorizing the templates provided by the test preparation centers, which created a threat to the validity of the test itself. Kim’s study indirectly raised concerns about the relationship between test design, student performance, and interpretations of that performance. This concern was also highlighted by Cheng and Sun’s (2015) study on the impact of the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) on second language (L2) students in Ontario, Canada. The researchers revealed that the high-stakes literacy tests, rather than assessing only reading and writing, also tested students’ knowledge of vocabulary, which was not one of the test constructs. Therefore, L2 students could not perform well because of their lack of vocabulary skills compared to their counterparts, L1 students. This construct-irrelevant aspect had a negative washback effect on the L2 students, as they were tested on something that was not part of the test. Cheng and Sun (2015) suggested more alignment between the test and classroom teaching, and more collaboration among the stakeholders in designing the test. Sun (2016) pointed out the possibility of better-quality learning by improving the test design. These studies make us aware that tests should be designed more carefully if we want to achieve positive test washback on learning.

Students’ motivations, goals, and perceptions and expectations of the test largely shape their learning. One earlier study of students’ expectations of the IELTS test in the Romanian context (Gosa, 2004) found that learners’ expectations were the only deterministic factor shaping their attitude towards teaching and their own learning. As their classroom expectations were not fulfilled, they took the initiative to practice more outside the classroom to do well in the test. Students’ personal motivation is a deciding factor in their own learning, which also resonated in Green’s (2007a, 2007b) research. Green studied whether four to 14 weeks’ intense IELTS preparation improved the writing score and found that two groups of students made major
improvements: students who were planning to retake the course and students who had low scores initially. Green (2007a) thus concluded that, instead of the narrow focus of the test, students’ personal goals, motivation, and understanding of the test determined their score gain. He suggested that to contrive beneficial washback, the goal for taking the test should be clear to both the teachers and students. However, one of his earlier studies revealed how students’ perceptions of the test were shaped by the teachers. Green (2006) revealed that learners’ perceptions of a test were based on how their teachers viewed the test. Apparently, it was the teacher factor, more than the test itself, which was influential in building their perspectives of examinations, which in turn influenced their test preparation activities. Green’s call for further research to examine exactly which aspects are influential in students’ learning was taken up by Ma and Cheng (2016).

Interviews with Chinese students who were enrolled in various academic programs in a Canadian university revealed that teachers’ native English background had influenced them the most in their TOEFL test preparation course in China. This variable is not directly related to the test or test preparation; however, it acted as a motivation trigger. Based on Green’s model, Ma’s (2017) doctoral study further revealed that even though test preparation did not increase the score immediately, students valued test preparation for equipping them with focus, strategies and resources which motivated them to score well as well as to learn English. These findings increase the intricacy of washback research by highlighting that one factor alone cannot work as the catalyst in the process of washback. Although all these studies discussed the influence of students’ personal factors or preferences on their test preparation, we still do not know what personal factors may trigger their desire for learning.

Cheng, Andrews, and Yu (2011) reported how students with higher self-rated English proficiency practiced more test-related activities both inside and outside the class in the context of school-based assessment in Hong Kong. These findings are supported by Xie and Andrews’
(2012) study. Based on expectancy-value motivation theory, Xie and Andrews (2012) reported that two factors, expectancy and value, triggered test-takers’ test preparation. Test-takers who had instrumental purposes to take the test and took the test design positively attached more importance to the test and tended to be more confident, as well as more engaged in test preparation. How test-takers valued the test, as well as how they valued their own abilities, appeared to trigger their learning. More than external examination pressure, it appears that students’ confidence in their own abilities can create beneficial washback on their learning.

Knowledge of the test is also crucial in students’ learning, as it may boost their confidence level in taking the test or may create a harmful washback effect because of lack of information. A recent study conducted by Kim (2017) on TOEFL writing revealed students’ frustration about not knowing how the writing part was scored. One of the test-takers wrote: “I’ve taken the TOEFL several times, but since I receive only a score, and receive no feedback on my writing, I don’t know how to improve” (p. 9). As a result of this lack of feedback and information about scoring, distrust was created between the test-takers and test-providers. This also affected students’ self-confidence about taking the test. In this regard, Choi (2016) reported how students felt confident in taking the admission test at one university in Korea out of two, as they had test information about the first university but not the second, which did not reveal adequate test information to the test-takers. This lack of knowledge about test information created a sense among the students that the test was unfair. Froehlich’s (2016) research in Germany also confirmed the claim that lack of required information about the test and the sense of unfairness affected students’ learning and attitude towards the test. Contrarily, Allen’s (2016) study on IELTS preparation in Japan explored how test-takers’ knowledge of the test requirements was developed from their peers’ shared knowledge, which was not accurate and how that, in return, misdirected their test preparation. This folk knowledge (Bailey, 1999) may disrupt the flow of the
washback process because information about the test acquired from the peers may not be accurate. The intended washback might take a wrong turn because of test-takers’ assumptions about the test. Correct information about the test is important for beneficial washback in students’ learning.

In learners’ washback literature, one of the least researched areas is how tests influence learners’ out-of-class learning. Learning does not happen only in the classroom; in fact, the most authentic learning takes place in learners’ own space and time. Pan and Newfields’ (2013) study showed that the exit examination requirement for the graduates at Taiwanese universities failed to motivate the students to invest their own time in enhancing their learning. Very few students in the study were keen to achieve learner autonomy; rather, they were more interested in teacher-centered test preparation for the examination, supporting the earlier findings from a study conducted by Tsagari (2009) in Greece. Zhan and Wan (2013) researched the influence of the revised CET examination on the Chinese non-English major undergraduates’ out-of-class English learning practices. They followed two participants from one university over time and found the washback of the examination on participants was more visible as the examination grew nearer and they did more examination preparation. These findings are consistent with those of Pan and Newfields (2013) and Cheng et al. (2011). Later, Zhan and Andrews (2014) reported on three freshmen’s perspectives of how the revised CET-4 influenced their out-of-class learning by gaining insights from ‘possible self’ theories. According to the results, all three participants were readier to change “what they had learnt than how they had learnt” (p. 85). They were practicing listening skills based on the previous test papers instead of using authentic materials. They practiced more for the listening and reading skills than speaking and writing skill, because the first two were predominantly tested in CET-4. They were found to do what was required for the test, instead of directing their learning towards a communicative approach, which was the original
intention of the revised examination. Thus, their out-of-class test preparation had limited washback effect. In line with Zhan and Andrews’ (2014) findings, Allen’s (2016) research with Japanese IELTS test-takers in an uninstructed setting revealed that, when they were confronted with a new test, the test-takers were willing to bring a change in their test-taking strategies. The study demonstrated how students were using various techniques to improve their speaking skills, which created a positive washback in their learning. These studies revealed that students’ out-of-class learning is mostly guided by the expectations of the tests and the perceptions of the students about the test. The out-of-class learning also takes different shapes in different contexts, which again reminds us of the complicated nature of washback studies and that washback is never deterministic.

To sum up, there are two major themes in the discussion above. First, it was noticed that test washback leads learners to an extensive test-preparation environment. Second, learners’ motivation, perception, preferences, background, and context play a key role in creating washback on their learning.

**Washback and Curriculum Alignment**

Curriculum alignment is another subset of washback studies. However, very few scholars have focused on the value of curriculum alignment in language education from a washback perspective, yet they are important. Studying the relationship between washback and curriculum alignment, Sultana (2018c) pointed out that washback and curriculum alignment both focus on improving classroom instruction, whether it is said or not. For example, one of the pioneer scholars in the field of washback, Cheng (1997) defined washback as the “intended and directed function” (p. 36) which influences both written and taught curriculum. Although this definition in a way pairs up washback with curriculum, Cheng did not explicit the relationship. Sultana (2018c) underscored that alignment studies offer a valuable window for washback researchers to
identify the strengths and weaknesses of tests (in particular) and programs (in general). She further noted that by taking a broader focus, curriculum alignment can inform us as to how various components in an educational system interact with each other in generating test washback in teaching and learning. (Sultana, 2018c, p. 155). The following sections explore the issue in depth. However, since not many studies were found in the field of washback highlighting the issue of curriculum alignment, this review incorporates alignment studies conducted in general education.

Alignment is the extent “to which expectations and assessments are in agreement and serve in conjunction with one another to guide the system toward students learning what they are expected to know and do” (Webb, 2002, p. 1). Simply put, alignment is the degree of agreement among standards, assessments, and classroom practices (Cheng & Fox, 2017; Webb, 1997a, 1997b, 2007). Shepard (1990) conducted one of the earliest studies on curriculum alignment in the USA, in which she surveyed state testing directors regarding narrowing the curriculum and teaching to the tests. Shepard (1990) found that while test-curriculum alignment did not lead to inflated score gains, narrowing the curriculum did, as teachers ignored the overall learning goals of the curriculum to teach the test objectives. Other studies have also found that teachers mainly focus on test content rather than on the standards articulated in the curriculum (Stecher & Barron, 1999; Stecher, Barron, Chun, & Ross, 2000). Ignoring the overall teaching and learning goals can produce undesired washback influence on teaching and learning. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 is repeatedly cited as an example of curricular narrowing. Because of the NCLB policy, in the context of English language learners (ELLs), teachers have been found to narrow the curriculum to the test through increased amounts of English instruction at the classroom level (Menken, 2006). Similarly, Von Zastrow and Janc (2004) reported decreasing amounts of instructional time on elementary school subjects that were not being tested such as social studies, art, geography, and history. Further, studies have suggested in some classrooms,
the focus on tested materials may supersede the focus on students’ learning (Darling-Hammond & Wise, 1985; McNeil, 2002; Ross, 1997; Smith, 1991). As a result, negative washback springs out of classroom instruction that targets test preparation and cramming the content instead of focusing on teaching the curriculum standards. To counteract these trends, Webb (1997b) recommended aligning assessments with curriculum expectations for an improved and effective education system:

Both expectations and assessments are important statements of what the system believes students should know and do. Better aligned goals and measures of attainment of these goals will increase the likelihood that multiple components of any districts or state education system are working towards the same ends… Aligning goals carefully with the assessment system… is an important tool for mapping students’ learning progress.

(p.10)

On the other hand, the misalignment between curriculum objectives and tests can create a gap between instructional practices and standard expectations (Wilson & Bertenthal, 2006; Biggs, 1999, 2003; Resnick, Rothman, Slattery, & Vranek, 2004). In fact, the absence of alignment among the educational components in the system produces undesired washback. For example, Chen (2002, 2006), in an investigation of curriculum innovation in the junior high school EFL context in Taiwan, found misalignment between the test and the curriculum. The MCQ-based test contents failed to address the communicative objectives of the curriculum. Thus, the targeted communicative goals of the curriculum were never achieved through the test. The author suggested that “positive washback effects are more likely to occur when a curriculum and a test are highly matched” (p. 5). This assertion was echoed in Tan and Turner’s (2015) study on the context of high-stakes secondary five ESL exit writing examinations in Quebec, Canada. They found that, since the examination closely reflected the requirements of the curriculum, the intended washback effect was achieved (Tan & Turner, 2015). In the same line of thought, a
washback study conducted in Indonesia attempted to align assessment with classroom instruction to achieve positive washback on teaching and learning (Nopita, 2019). Upon observing the success of the project, Nopita suggested that course designers use measurement-driven instruction to get the maximum washback on instruction.

Fox and Cheng’s (2007) study on Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) in Canada reported that the test failed to address classroom practices and curricular goals and caused increased anxiety in L2 test takers. The study reported that, although the use of dictionary was emphasized in the curriculum and in the classroom instruction, the OSSLT examination did not include the use of the dictionary. This created anxiety, especially for the L2 learners. The authors suggested incorporating test taker’s account in the research to promote positive washback. Au’s (2007) metanalysis of 49 qualitative studies also noted that, “the nature of high-stakes-test-induced curricular control is highly dependent on the structures of the tests themselves” (p. 258), which complemented the findings of Qi’s (2004, 2005) studies on the National Matriculation English Test (NMET) in China. Findings indicated the gatekeeping nature and purpose of the NMET encouraged teaching to the test instead of fostering changes in teaching and learning intended in the curriculum. These studies reported the existence of misalignment; however, to understand the nature of washback, more systematic alignment studies are needed to fully understand the extent of misalignment in the system and the reasons it occurs.

Abdulhamid’s (2018) doctoral research may be the first and only study to systematically study the link between alignment and washback in a Libyan context. Employing an explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach, the researcher examined the relationship between washback of a revised secondary English examination in Libya and the degree of alignment in the Libyan educational system. Instead of providing a linear answer, Abdulhamid’s study explored the highly complex nature of washback. The findings suggested that the educational system was highly misaligned and that there was some negative washback on some teachers, whereas there
was no washback on some other teachers. These findings illuminated alignment studies in relation to test-washback, however, the researcher concluded that misalignment was only one of many factors contributing to the washback of the examination. This is in agreement with Webb’s (1997a) idea that aligning the standards, instruction, and examination is dependent on available resources, time, legislative issues, and other factors.

A recent study in Slovenia, conducted by Ferbežar, Svetina, and Lutar (2014), examined the alignment of textbooks and examinations with the Common European Framework (CEFR). They reported that it was not possible to apply the CEFR manual in the Slovenian context because of insufficient financial and human resources. However, even though the alignment process was not completely successful, it allowed the stakeholders to identify the weaknesses and strengths of the examination, Ferbežar et al. (2014) indicated. Another similar study highlighted that in judging the alignment, it was unknown “to what extent the shared educational/cultural background of the panelists affected their judgments” (Ilic, Stopar, & Gabrovce, 2014, p. 301). Tan and Turner’s (2015) study in Canada offered a good example of how the process of alignment could be beneficial. The authors argued that teachers involved in the process of alignment more fully understood the examination and curriculum; this produced “a ripple effect of positive washback among the teachers” (Tan & Turner, 2015, p. 47). These studies are significant because they show that the process of alignment is not a singular, isolated task; rather, various relevant factors must be considered. Also, even if the alignment task might not be a total success, the process of doing it is beneficial as it creates better insights about the program in question.

In conclusion, curriculum alignment studies are closely linked to the structures of the test. Tests have an impact on the curriculum, positive or negative, desired or undesired, which in turn influences classroom teaching and learning. Moreover, “the development and implementation of large-scale assessment programs represent one approach to aligning classroom instruction with
state curriculum standards” (Roach, Elliott, & Webb, 2005, p. 220). Here is the link between curriculum alignment and washback studies. They both address the same issue: they influence classroom instruction.

**Washback within Classroom Assessment Context**

Recently, washback researchers have begun to pay attention to the influence of Classroom-Based Assessment (CBA) on learners and their learning, in addition to high-stakes tests. Within the search period, I found only seven research studies directly related to washback within the classroom assessment context. One such study, by Meletiadou and Tsagari (2016), explored the impact of peer assessment on participants’ attitudes. The results indicated that students had a positive attitude towards peer assessment, as it helped them to be confident, reflective, self-reliant learners by developing their critical thinking abilities and metacognitive skills. However, it also created anxiety in a very small number of students. The significance of the findings lies in the idea of using peer assessment in a synthesized framework, where feedback from CBA could be used to induce positive washback in a high-stakes test. Another related study was conducted by Hung (2012), implementing an e-portfolio project as an alternative assessment technique in an EFL teacher preparation course. Based on multiple instruments, including interviews, observations, document analysis, and reflective journals, the study suggested e-portfolio assessments generated a community of practice and peer learning, enhanced the learning of content knowledge, promoted professional development, and cultivated critical thinking. This is supported by Lam’s (2016) recent claim that an e-portfolio teaches students how to learn and assess their own learning, which creates positive washback in both learning and teaching. However, like Meletiadou and Tsagari’s (2016) study, Hung’s (2012) study showed a slight negative washback in forms of learning anxiety and resistance to technology.
Fournier-Kowalesk’s (2005) doctoral washback study focused on the teachers’ behaviors in the low-stakes testing environment of an intermediate level Spanish class within a large university program in the USA. The study followed a group of five teachers over two-quarters. A greater washback effect was noticed in the second quarter of the teaching phase because of increased knowledge of the test. Teachers changed their instruction based on the test so that students could perform better, even though it was a low-stakes test. In this connection, past teaching experience and teacher beliefs were also found to be influential in teachers’ changed instruction. Consistent with Meletiadou and Tsagari (2016) and Cheng (2005), Fournier-Kowalesk (2005) concluded that to create positive washback in teaching, adequate guidance should be provided in teacher training courses. In the same vein, Muñoz and Álvarez (2010) reported the washback effect of an oral assessment system on the teaching and learning of EFL in Colombia by comparing the teaching of two groups: experimental and comparison. The result indicated that teachers in the experimental group were more aware of establishing the connection between objectives and activities. They taught the students in a more communicative way, which raised the scores of the students compared to the students of the non-communicative group. The researchers concluded that constant guidance during the teaching period helped the teachers in the experimental group to achieve beneficial washback.

Weigle (2004) studied a test that was being used to meet a university writing examination requirement for non-native speakers of English in a university in the USA. The students who failed the course were required to take a remedial writing course that was intended to prepare them for the test. Interviews with the instructors revealed that the test preparation involved more of the critical thinking and text analysis abilities, which were useful in all other academic courses. In this case, the test could create a positive washback effect both in teaching and learning.
Burrows (2004) examined the washback effect of implementing CBA in an Australian adult migrant English program employing questionnaire, interviews, and class observation tools. The researcher observed a different degree of washback effect on the teachers influenced by their own beliefs and experiences. Based on the findings, the author assumed that, unlike in high-stakes testing situations, CBA offers teachers a degree of choice about their decisions in classroom teaching. As with teachers, the washback effect varied on students, according to their understanding and abilities. In this regard, Huang (2011) compared convergent and divergent assessment to examine how they influenced students’ motivation and learning at a Taiwanese university in their EFL listening and speaking classes. Results indicated that convergent assessments were better received by high scorer students and divergent assessments by low scorers. However, further research is needed to address the reasons behind these differences in degrees of washback on different teachers.

Classroom-based washback studies show that CBA practice is closely tied to bringing beneficial washback in students’ learning and classroom teaching. Classroom assessment generates more positive washback because it is designed to inform and guide teachers’ classroom instruction.

Washback in South Asian Countries

Because my research was conducted in Bangladesh (one of the South Asian countries), this section explores the washback phenomenon specifically in the South Asian region to understand the embedded complexity and uniqueness of this issue in this part of the world. The South Asian region has eight countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Maldives, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. According to the latest World Bank (2019) report, South Asia is the world’s fastest growing region which accounts for world’s 24% of population. However, compared to the washback studies conducted in the other parts of the world, there is a scarcity of
washback research in the South Asian countries (Sultana, 2018b). In the comprehensive table by Cheng et al. (2015) listing the major washback studies by country, the Sri Lankan impact study by Wall and Alderson (1993) is the only large-scale, well-cited work that has been conducted in the South Asian zone. In my literature search, I did not find any washback studies in the context of Afghanistan or Maldives. The highest number of washback studies were found in Pakistani and Bangladeshi contexts.

In most teaching contexts in the South Asian countries, teaching to the test is a typical result of negative washback. One doctoral study on the HSC examination in Bangladesh, conducted by Hoque (2011), found that the HSC examination had a strong negative washback on the classroom teaching, syllabus, and curriculum, teaching content, methodology, and learning. The test triggered a direct change in the classroom teaching contents but was unable to change teacher’s attitude and behavior towards teaching methodology. “The primary effect of this high-stakes testing is that curriculum content is narrowed to tested subjects, subject area knowledge is fragmented into test-related pieces, and teachers increase the use of teacher-centered pedagogies” (Hoque, 2011, p. 368), the researcher stated. This doctoral study revealed a higher level of teaching to the test to prepare the students for the HSC English examination. Two studies have examined the washback of the SSC examination in Pakistan. Soomro and Memon (2016) found that due to the extreme pressure of the examination, teachers followed the objectives of the examination when selecting the teaching methods, contents, and materials. Khitab, Ghaffar, Zaman, and Ali (2016), working in the same context, explored how teachers ignored the prescribed curriculum and syllabus to follow the test objectives because they wanted the students to score highly.

In the South Asian countries, teaching to the test happens because of teachers’ beliefs and attitudes towards the curriculum and examination. One study about the washback of HSC examination in Bangladesh, researched by Hoque (2016), disclosed that teachers did not
distinguish between teaching to the test and teaching to the syllabus. Most of them did not realize the importance of knowledge about the curriculum, which was also revealed in his earlier study (Hoque, 2011). In other words, teachers were not aware of the curriculum goals. However, in some cases, even if teachers were aware of the goals stated in the English curriculum at the SSC level, they were heavily influenced by the examination goals (Maniruzzaman, 2012). Because of the extreme examination-driven nature of test preparation, sometimes teachers and students fail to perceive the larger purpose of examinations or education. For example, Hoque’s (2011) study revealed that teachers and students in Bangladesh did not have a clear idea about the actual purpose of examinations or education. Aftab, Qureshi, and William (2014) found that many students in Pakistan did not realize the actual reason for studying English as a subject in the schools; for them, it was merely one of the papers which they needed to pass to gain access to higher education or obtain a better job.

Thus, there is an incongruity between the objectives of the curriculum and classroom teaching. Rind and Mari’s (2019) recent study, conducted on the HSC examination in Pakistan, indicated that while students’ learning strategies, teachers’ teaching, and test preparation materials were in alignment, they contradicted the English curriculum of the country. The same was found in Hoque’s (2011) doctoral study on the same examination in Bangladesh. Maniruzzaman and Hoque’s (2010) study investigating the same examination noted a heavy mismatch between teaching objectives and curriculum objectives which led the test to narrow down the curriculum. Similar findings were revealed in Mathew’s (2012) study in India: the mismatch between the assessment scheme of the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) examination and classroom teaching made the test a de facto curriculum. Mathew (2012) noted that the visions of the curriculum and test developers were unable to cater to students from all social and economic backgrounds, and concluded, “the gap between curriculum-as-intention and curriculum-as-reality can be closed only through a research and development approach to one’s
own teaching and that long-term improvement of education hinges on the effective utilization of curriculum research” (p. 199). However, Mathew’s (2012) study, which was based on document analysis, did not reveal the nature and function of washback in context; it simply reported the existence of a negative washback on teaching.

The existence of negative washback in the South Asian countries stems from the associated examinations, which fail to promote learning. One of the first doctoral studies on washback was conducted by Khaniya (1990), who examined the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) English examination in Nepal. Khaniya (1990) indicated that the SLC examination had negative influence on teaching and learning because the examination did not create scope for the teachers and learners to work for positive washback. Thus, it is always the examination which drives teaching and learning. The same issue was voiced in Soomro and Memon’s (2016) study in which the teachers agreed that they would have attempted to teach English language if the examination were not creating extra pressure on them. This study complemented an earlier study by Rehmani (2003), which found that up to grade eight, the internal school examinations promoted a higher order of teaching and learning of English. But, when students moved to grade nine, they started preparing for the upcoming SSC examination, which essentially did not foster learning.

Teachers focus more on objectives of the test, drilling previous question papers, and practicing with the commercially published examination preparation guides that are popular in teaching in South Asian countries. Hoque (2016) demonstrated teachers’ heavy reliance on test preparation materials, such as test papers, past questions, and model questions. Test preparation seems to be a predominant in the teaching culture of the South Asian countries, as pointed out by many researchers (Ahmad, Ghani, Alam, & Sadiq, 2012; Adnan & Mahmood, 2014; Aftab, Qureshi & William, 2014; Ahmad et al., 2012). These findings about the test-oriented culture resonate in studies related to the learning of the students. Likewise, Maniruzzaman and Hoque’s
(2010) research on HSC students and Maniruzzaman’s (2012) research on SSC students in Bangladesh confirmed the test preparation mindset of the teachers. They did not cover the whole syllabus of the test due to the examination pressure. Rind and Mari’s (2019) study in Pakistan showed that memorization-based learning, which targeted test preparation, was producing serious negative washback on teaching and learning. In the case of the IELTS examination, Memon’s (2015) found that teachers did not try to adapt the materials and were teaching to the test as they were habituated to do. These studies illustrate that learners and teachers at all levels of education in the South Asian countries prepare only for the test, which by default creates unintended washback effect on the teaching and learning.

However, to a large extent, the test design itself is responsible for pushing both the teachers and students to focus more on preparation (Aftab, Qureshi, & William, 2014). For example, in Pakistan, the examination did not allow the communicative language teaching since it did not test listening and speaking skills (Aftab, Qureshi, & William, 2014). Moreover, its multiple-choice question pattern and negligence towards assessing critical thinking abilities encouraged poor teaching practices by linking classroom activities directly to the questions of the examination. Thus, researchers (Ahmad et al., 2012; Adnan & Mahmood, 2014; M. N. Soomro & Memon, 2016; Khitab et al., 2016; Soomro & Shah, 2016) found that teachers did not practice listening and speaking in the class, because these skills were not tested in the SSC and HSC examinations in Pakistan; instead, the teaching time was used to practice reading and writing skills following the objectives of the test. In alignment with these findings, teachers and students in Bangladesh have been found unwilling to practice speaking and listening because the board examinations did not test these oral-aural skills (Rahman & Pandian, 2018; Rahman et al. 2019). In the same line of thought, Maniruzzaman’s (2016) washback study on EFL assessment on the undergraduate students found that learners considered attaining communicative competence was less important than practicing the tested items. The author suggested designing communicative
tests that included all four language skills to promote language learning. Likewise, Rind and Mari’s (2019) research on the HSC examination in Pakistan concluded that when the examination ignored the prescribed contents in the English curriculum, teachers and students did not include those contents in their test preparation. These studies demonstrate that students’ learning is always closely tied to the test itself. To achieve desired washback effects from any instructional situations, tests must be the central focal point, particularly where there is an extreme examination-oriented culture.

Studies conducted in the South Asian countries identified a range of contextual elements which generate examination-based teaching and learning (Ali et al., 2018; Islam et al., 2001; Rahman & Karim, 2015; Rahmatuzzaman, 2018). Hoque (2011) pointed that Bangladesh sociocultural factors played a key role in determining teaching methods: teachers had to cope with large classes, lacked freedom to choose the textbooks, were obligated to follow institutional policies for teaching, and were working within a centralized, knowledge-based, examination-oriented culture. These studies show not the test itself, but rather a web of interconnected factors in the system, are the deciding factors in generating the washback.

These studies explore a very common theme across most of the South Asian countries: the misalignment between the stated curriculum and the examination, which by default encourages teaching to the test culture in the classroom. In her review of washback, Sultana (2018b) indicated the misaligned nature of education system in the South Asian countries. Throughout the region, a CLT-based curriculum has been introduced to induce positive washback on teaching and learning. However, the tests in most of these countries still fail to endorse the basic principles of CLT. Consequently, there exists unintended washback of testing on teaching and learning. These limited number of studies only inform about the existence of misalignment causing negative washback, but fail to fully explore the unique nature of that washback. Further
research is needed to know the exact nature of washback in specific contexts and how it operates on classroom instruction and on students’ learning.

**Key Issues and Methods in the Washback Research**

Based on the review, the common researched areas in washback studies are compiled in the following table:

Table 2.1

*The areas of washback studied in empirical works*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major themes</th>
<th>Aspects of teaching and learning</th>
<th>Specific areas of teaching and learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Washback to the program</strong></td>
<td>Teaching Methodology</td>
<td>- Which teaching methods teachers are using (CLT based);</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- If those methods are aligned with the test objective or curriculum objectives;</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- How teachers instruct in teaching in implementing the new curriculum;</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>- Change in teaching techniques based on the examination;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Classroom activities (role play, conversation)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Teachers’ and students’ attitude towards the exam</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Contents of classroom teaching (textbook, materials)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teaching content/ textbooks</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Change in teaching contents based on the exam objectives;</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Narrowing down the content;</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Designing new textbook;</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- If exam makes the teachers implement the curriculum;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher factors</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Personal beliefs, education, psychological factors</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Experience and level of training;</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Beliefs about effective teaching;</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>- Teachers’ positive or negative attitude towards the test</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>- Teacher’s misunderstanding of the goals of the test</td>
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<td>Prestige associated with a test</td>
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<td>- How one test didn’t create any significant level of washback effect unlike another one, which was regarded as important;</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Level of impact depends on how much importance the exam has in a context;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Test preparation</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Test materials’ influence on teaching (practicing test-like items)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Test materials’ influence on methods (more teaching instruction, less student-student interaction, as per the demands of the test. More teacher involvement;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Test design</td>
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<td>- How technique and contents are affected by the test design of a test</td>
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<td>- Relationship between test constructs and test performance;</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Interpretations of test performance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parents factor</td>
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<td>- Parental intervention;</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Relation between parents’ and students’ perception about the test;</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Empirical studies show that most washback studies have tried to explore how tests directly influence classroom teaching and learning. A large volume of washback studies has focused on teachers’ methodologies, teaching contents, techniques, and beliefs influenced by the tests. In addition to this, teachers’ personal and psychological factors, such as motivation, academic and social background, personal beliefs, perceptions of teaching and tests, and attitude towards the test, have also been studied in various contexts by researchers. The next most researched area in washback studies is how student factors, such as motivation for taking the tests, and attitude and perception towards tests and teaching, creates washback on learning. Related to these two issues are many studies exploring the washback effect on test preparation. These apart, few studies were found in the areas of curriculum alignment, test design, and classroom-based assessment.

About methodology, class observations, interviews, questionnaires, and document analysis are the most popular methods among washback researchers (see Appendix O). Thanks to several

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Washback to learning</th>
<th>Student factors</th>
<th>- Students’ attitude towards the exam (as important or not);</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Attitude towards the success or failure in the examinations;</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>- Student’s personal goals and motivation in taking an exam;</td>
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<td>- If students are aware of the intentions of the test;</td>
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<td>- Familiarization with the exam format/ test preparation;</td>
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<td>- Sense of being unfair;</td>
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<td>- Lack of knowledge about the scoring;</td>
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<td>- Motivation related to type of assessment;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Out-of-class learning/</td>
<td>- Time allocated for personal study;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>uninstructed situation</td>
<td>- What kind of learning takes place;</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- What affects the learning;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Strategies used;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum alignment</td>
<td>Alignment</td>
<td>- Misalignment between the test and the curriculum;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Policy makers/ test</td>
<td>- What policy makers’ expectations are of test preparation classes;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>developers</td>
<td>- Test designer’s intended purpose VS. teacher’s understanding;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washback within the classroom-based assessment context</td>
<td>Classroom-based assessment</td>
<td>- How peer assessment creates positive washback;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Teachers’ teaching practices in multi-exam classes;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Teachers’ strategies, tasks, and activities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
studies conducted using these methods on the same tests or within the same context, future researchers can replicate the instruments in a different setting. The key informants in most of the studies were teachers and students. Very few studies included parents, test designers, curriculum planners, and policy makers as the data source.

The compilation and appraisal of the studies of various facets of washback help us to point out the areas where further studies are needed.

**Research Gaps**

The literature review offers insight into the non-deterministic nature of washback studies and identifies underexplored areas that need to be studied carefully, considering their localized variables and importance in producing intended teaching and learning. In the field of language education, there are few studies investigating washback in the context of CBA and curriculum alignment. However, it is important to understand that washback studies are essentially rooted in the context of high-stakes examinations. On the other hand, CBA may or may not have repercussions on the lives of the students. Further, the studies conducted in the South Asian countries reported a trace of unintended washback because of misaligned educational systems in those countries. There is no study examining misalignment that incorporates evidence from various sources to understand exactly how curriculum misalignment causes washback effects on teaching and learning in the South Asian region. Future researchers need to study curriculum alignment from a washback perspective to understand the reasons for misalignment and how various stakeholders in an educational system create intended or unintended washback, which is the focus of this doctoral dissertation. To conduct research of this nature, the following operational framework was used.
The Conceptual Framework for this Study

Considering the research focus, that is, to study alignment of the curriculum with the test from a washback perspective, I employed the following conceptual framework to guide my study.

The argument- and evidence-based framework for CBA proposed by Pellegrino, DiBello, and Goldman (2016) served as the conceptual framework to guide this qualitative multimethod research. There were four reasons for choosing this conceptual framework. First, the earlier models of washback studies (Bailey, 1996; Cheng, 2002, Green, 2007; Hughes, 1993; Shih, 2007) did not provide a framework to study the alignment of tests with curriculum and instruction to inform classroom teaching and learning. For this doctoral study, I needed a framework to study classroom teaching and learning by incorporating evidence from various sources in the educational system. Therefore, I borrowed a non-washback research design from another discipline to use their ideas to conduct this washback studies. Second, in reference to the first point made, washback studies were hardly studied using a validation framework. In one of the recent studies, Booth (2018) called for applying the validation frameworks to research the influence of tests to guide the methods of investigation. Third, Pellegrino et al.’s (2016) suggested framework was flexible in nature which allowed me to collected data from multiple stakeholders using multiple methods. Fourth and the most importantly, the strength of this framework lied in its close connection with classroom practices, as Pellegrino et al. (2016) proposed this “framework that identifies salient components of validity for instructional settings in which assessments can be used to provide direct benefits to both instructors and students” (p. 2), which is the core nature of washback studies. It is well established that CBAs are qualitatively connected to, and rooted in, classroom activities (Knoch, 2017), and that this close connection to classroom teaching and learning plays a powerful role in fostering students’ academic achievement in schools (Pellegrino et al., 2016). The frameworks from classroom assessment are
developed to be keenly aware of how assessment influences teaching and learning, which is the central theme of the washback phenomenon - the link between testing, teaching, and learning. Thus, there was no better model than this classroom-based framework to guide my washback study.

This framework focuses its attention on three components of validity: *cognitive validity, instructional validity, and inferential validity*. The component of cognitive validity is concerned with information about how the domain knowledge and skills of the students have developed over time with classroom teaching, and how students use them while interacting with the test. Instructional validity addresses the extent to which testing is aligned with the curriculum and classroom instruction, and how it may support teaching practice to create students’ opportunities to learn. Instructional validity should be based on the evidence about the alignment of the tests with the objectives of the curriculum, the practicality and usefulness of the test, and outcome of the test information for teachers and students as a guide to teaching and learning. The component of inferential validity is concerned with the issue of whether testing yields accurate and reliable information about the performance of the students. This coordinated argument- and evidence-based framework provides a comprehensible basis for the collection, organization, and interpretation of evidence for testing intended to support classroom teaching and learning. Unlike many other washback models, this framework provides a guideline for how tests and test information can support teaching and learning, which is the core of washback studies.

To support their arguments about these three components of the framework, Pellegrino et al. (2016, p. 10) offered a table illustrating the sources of evidence to be collected and analysed:
### Table 2.2

**Data collection activities to validity components**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Collection Activity</th>
<th>Cognitive Validity</th>
<th>Instructional Validity</th>
<th>Inferential Validity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expert analyses</td>
<td>How well the design incorporates cognitively critical forms of knowledge and understanding; ethnic and cultural sensitivity review.</td>
<td>How well the design supports and aligns with instructional needs and uses and promotes teacher understanding</td>
<td>How well the intended constructs are incorporated within the design; appropriateness of scoring rubrics and inferential models.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student cognitive protocol studies</td>
<td>How well does student engagement with assessment activities correspond to design intent; how well do scoring and assessment outcomes reveal actual student thinking and proficiencies; issues regarding linguistic and cultural diversity?</td>
<td>How well do assessment outcomes including test and item scores interact with instructional goals and with other instructional indicators and benchmarks; how well do assessment outcomes support teacher decisions and actions?</td>
<td>How well does actual student engagement with assessment activities support analytic models, including model parameter interpretations, covariance analyses, and relationships to other variables?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher surveys</td>
<td>How well do teacher interpretations of student outcomes align with design intent of assessment activities; what is revealed about student understandings; what responses would be expected?</td>
<td>How well do teachers understand and use the assessments and assessment outcomes; how well are differential decisions and actions supported; what was teachers’ actual use?</td>
<td>Teacher knowledge about and use of score reliabilities, item difficulties, expected student responses and variations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher logs</td>
<td>How sensitive are assessments to opportunities to learn relative to assessment activities; how does actual instruction support measured proficiencies?</td>
<td>How faithfully do teachers use assessments and what use do they make of assessment outcomes?</td>
<td>How sensitive is assessment performance and statistical and psychometric modeling to variability in instruction and conditions of assessment administration, and classroom uses of assessment outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher interviews</td>
<td>How well do item and test performance support underlying cognitive processing demands; how well do assessment outcomes at test and item levels reflect underlying cognition?</td>
<td>How well do assessment outcomes support instructional needs including formative uses, summative monitoring of progress, and connections to external assessments.</td>
<td>How well do model-based analyses support the intended purpose and use of assessments; including scale score and diagnostic profile reliability, model-data fit, dimensionality; differential functioning for linguistic and ethnic groups; predictive validity; alignment with other tests.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In this framework, the relationship between the validity components and sources of evidence is not a deterministic one. Researchers can choose the sources of evidence to answer their own research questions as it is suggested in Table 2. Further, these three components could be used individually or collectively to evaluate the validity of the tests intended to support classroom teaching and learning.

The next chapter describes how this conceptual framework was adapted to guide this washback study and explains the methodology of this research study.
Chapter 3: Methodology

This Chapter outlines the research design by illustrating how the conceptual framework was operationalized to answer the three research questions (see Figure 3.1). Next, an overall description of the research design and other details, including the research sites, data sources, research instruments, data collection, and analysis procedures are presented. Finally, the Chapter includes an explanation of how the rigor of this study was maintained.

A Qualitative Multi-Method Research Design

My doctoral dissertation aimed to examine the washback effects of the SSC English examination on classroom teaching and learning in Bangladesh. Specifically, the study examined the alignment of the SSC examination with the national English curriculum, its associated textbook, and classroom instruction, focusing on if and how that alignment relationship produced washback effects on teaching and learning. The following research questions were formulated to guide the investigations of this study.

RQ 1: Are the national English curriculum and textbook (mis)aligned with the SSC English Examination at the policy level? If so, how are they aligned? If not, how are they misaligned?

RQ 2: Does this (mis)alignment relationship produce any washback effects on the classroom instruction at the SSC level? What is the nature of that washback, if any?

RQ 3: Does this (mis)alignment relationship produce any washback effects on the students’ learning at the SSC level? What is the nature of that washback, if any?

Figure 3.1. Three research questions of the study.
To answer the above research questions, a qualitative multi-method research design and a triangulation approach were used. The qualitative approach seeks “in-depth information” from “an insider’s view,” as noted by Burns (2000, p. 13), which is capable of offering “real,” “rich,” and “deep” data (Reichardt & Cook, 1979, p. 10). The research design incorporated multiple stakeholders, which offered multiple lenses to examine the research questions and interpret the findings from a wide perspective. My research questions simply did not aim to find out what happened with the SCC English examination; rather, they intended to understand how and why the washback phenomenon took place in a unique context such as Bangladesh. To conduct a study in which it was necessary to acknowledge various social, political, and contextual variables, a qualitative research design was the most suitable design. Such an approach endorses the flexibility to adapt to the contextual realities, acknowledges the importance of researching in a natural environment (such as schools), and offers a “holistic,” “in-depth,” “complicated, contextual, interactive and interpretative” accounts of a study (Staller, 2010, p. 1159). Further, a qualitative approach attempts to involve the voices of the participants to offer a complex set of interpretations (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), and not only answers the question of what but also explains how and why. Therefore, a qualitative approach was the most suitable one to employ in this washback study.

My choice of a multi-method research design in this study was also determined by the research questions. Because this study looks at washback from the point of view of curriculum, textbook, and SSC examination alignment, in addition to classroom teaching and learning, it was necessary to collect evidence from multiple sources including curriculum documents, textbooks, and examination question papers, and from multiple stakeholders, such as test developers, teachers, and students. This comprehensive investigation necessitated multiple methods of data collection. As Denzin and Lincoln (2011) noted, the use of multiple methods offers an in-depth understating of the problem and adds “rigor, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth to any
inquiry” (2011, p. 5). Thus, this study took a methodological triangulation approach by using multiple methods to validate the interpretations and compare the results obtained from the different data collection methods.

Triangulation in qualitative research means comparing and verifying the consistency of the data obtained by various methods at various times (Patton, 2015). Methodological triangulation leads to a deeper understanding of the research issue (Olsen, 2004; Steinke, 2004). Triangulation reduces the researcher’s biases, increases the reliability and validity of the data (Johnson & Christensen, 2004), and confirms the research findings obtained from various sources (Jakob, 2001). Earlier washback researchers (Bailey, 1999; Cheng, 2005; Wall, 2005; Watanabe, 2004) supported the idea of using multi-method research and triangulation to explore a complex phenomenon such as washback.

**Researcher’s role in this study**

My position in this study is best articulated in the following quote:

> The qualitative researcher’s perspective is perhaps a paradoxical one: it is to be acutely tuned-in to the experiences and meaning systems of others—to indwell—and at the same time to be aware of how one’s own biases and preconceptions may be influencing what one is trying to understand. (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p. 123)

As the authors mentioned above, I conducted this study as objectively as possible, although, as we know, no study is entirely objective (including the quantitative ones). However, being an insider of the context, I was well aware of my biases and limitations. How I dealt with the researchers’ biases are described in the last section of the Chapter, which is through triangulation. On the flip side, qualitative researchers need to situate themselves in the research to understand the context and study (Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, & Steinmetz, 1991). For me,
being insider enhanced the depth and breadth of this research because I understood the population and could understand what they meant when working with the data in Bangla or a mix of Bangla and English plus local dialect usage. Having said that, I did not consider myself as one of the participants in this research. Rather my role was a ‘peripheral researcher’ (Adler & Adler, 1987). As suggested by Asselin (2003), I kept my eyes open to gather and comprehend all types of information but assumed that I knew nothing. This mindset helped me to collect and analyze the data from an objective lens.

**Operational Framework**

In Pellegrino et al.’s (2016) framework, cognitive validity focuses on how domain knowledge and skills are tested in examinations, while instructional validity focuses on alignment of curriculum, teaching, and testing and inferential validity focuses on test scores and their uses. Among these three validity components, I chose instructional validity because the focus of my study was to explore the alignment of curriculum, teaching, and testing at the SSC level in Bangladesh from a washback perspective. Instructional validity seeks evidence about the alignment of tests with the knowledge, skills of interest (as defined in the curriculum), and how testing guides classroom teaching and learning. This component addresses the scope of washback; that is, the effect of testing on classroom teaching and learning as well as how they are aligned with the curriculum. Hence, a framework based on instructional validity was able to guide the study and answer my research questions. Based on the conceptual framework, I developed the following operational framework outlining the methods used, and participants recruited for my study.
Figure 3.2. An argument- and evidence-based framework (adapted from Pellegrino et al., 2016).

According to this framework, I collected data from three sources: curriculum documents, interviews and focus groups, and classroom observations, which, according to Patton (2002), are the most common sources of qualitative data. The first source of data was three core sets of curriculum-related documents, namely: 1) the English National Curriculum (2012); 2) the textbook English for Today; and, 3) a set of question papers for the English SSC examination of the previous years. Analyzing these documents related to curriculum, testing, and teaching at the policy level provided insights into the expectations for student knowledge and test performance. This analysis helped me understand the quality of the test, too. As Green (2007a) and Zou and Xu (2016) noted, the more a test reflects focal constructs, the more it ensures quality. The second source was data from the interviews and focus groups. Interviews were conducted with teachers at the SSC level and one curriculum specialist, who worked in developing the national English curriculum, textbook, and English examination papers. Focus groups were conducted with students at the SSC level. This helped me understand their perspectives and understandings about the relationship between testing and classroom teaching-learning. The third source of evidence, classroom observations, offered a window into how teachers (and students) interacted together to achieve domain knowledge, and how tests and curriculum were reflected in classroom teaching and learning.
Figure 3.3. Triangulation of a multi-method research framework.

Figure 3.3 illustrates the triangulation approach to answer the research questions. Document analysis and interviews with the curriculum specialist answered RQ 1 and explored how alignment was achieved at the policy level. Interviews and classroom observations answered RQ 2 by exploring how the alignment relationship was realized at the classroom level and if there was any washback effect in classroom teaching and learning. Focus groups with grade 10 students answered RQ 3, which explored the washback effect on students’ learning, test preparation, and English language proficiency. Data collected from these various sources were triangulated to form a rich overall picture of the findings.
The following diagram illustrated the research design of my doctoral dissertation.

![Diagram of research design](image-url)

The research design was multimethod qualitative, involving operational framework adaptation, data collection methods, and triangulation for integration of the results. The methods included documents analysis, interviews & focus group discussions, and classroom observation.

**Figure 3.4.** A visual diagram of the planned research design of the study.

**Research Sites**

I chose two unique schools as my research sites (to be referred to as School A & School B for this dissertation) for three main reasons. First, both schools were situated in Dhaka, Bangladesh, which was my hometown. There was an eight-kilometre distance between the two schools. As a qualitative researcher, I planned to spend a good amount of time at the research locations to understand the institutions and people there. Further, I knew that I had to work with the schedule of the schools, teachers, and students to collect data. Because Dhaka is my hometown, I had the opportunity to spend quality time at the research locations, and it was easy to arrange locations for interviews and focus groups. Also, I could easily commute from one school to other because of the small distance between them. If I had chosen schools from other...
cities, I would have collected the data as an external researcher not being able to emerge into the data the way I did in this data collection period. Second, School A and School B were different in terms of students, teachers, rankings, settings, and facilities. These differences provided an in-depth understanding of the contextual factors contributing to this or any washback study.

As washback effects are contextual and unpredictable (Tsagari & Cheng, 2017), studying two settings offered a better understanding of this phenomenon. As a result, I was able to develop an understanding of how washback differed in two different settings. Instead of going to many sites, I chose to conduct an in-depth investigation at these two selected schools to explore how contextual variables interacted with each other to produce a manifestation. Finally, qualitative studies, such as this one, seek an extensive understanding of the phenomenon in question.

Therefore, Creswell and Poth (2018) suggested to purposefully choose participants who have experienced the phenomenon, so that the researcher can generalize the findings. Purposefully selected samples can offer richer data as they are chosen based on the needs of the study (Patton, 2015; Creswell, 2009). My aim was to choose two schools based on the students’ performances on the SSC examination over the previous five years. School A was one of the top performer schools, and school B was one of the low performer schools.

**School A.** This school was chosen based on its previous five years’ high performance in the SSC examination. It was in the center of Dhaka, Bangladesh’s capital. This was one of the top-ranking, government-aided private schools in Bangladesh. This school had long been known as one of the elite and top-ranking schools for its continuous performance at the SSC examination. 66% test takers from this school secured the highest grade (A+) in the 2019 SSC examination (Web based result, n.d.). It usually attracted excellent students. Most of the students were from upper-middle-class and wealthy families. There were approximately 25,000 students (both male and female) studying from grade 1 to grade 10. Girls attended the morning classes (around five hours), and boys attended the afternoon classes (around five hours). Being a majority
Muslim country, coeducation at the school level is not a common practice in Bangladesh, especially in the Bangla medium education system. As a female researcher, it was not appropriate for me to collect data from the male students during the afternoon shift. Hence, I conducted the classroom observations and focus groups only with the female students in the morning classes. However, I did interview both female and male teachers. It should be noted that there were male teachers teaching the female students at this school. When I was collecting data at School A, there were 12 English teachers (both males and females) teaching at the SSC level in this school.

When I was collecting data, approximately 1,500 students were preparing for the SSC examination to be held next year. The class size at this school was big; the average class size ranged from 60 to 70 students. This school maintained a high standard of discipline and regulations both for teachers and students. For example, teachers were quick to start the classes, and they never missed classes. School supervisors were seen roaming between classes throughout the day. Students were not allowed to walk around the school premises during class hours. Parents had to wait for a long time to meet the teachers. Inside the classroom, the students seemed confident in doing their classwork. At this school, English was taught every day, and the duration of each English class was 35 minutes. English teachers were not allowed to use any guidebook in the classrooms but brought handouts for the students. As a result, I never found students bringing the prescribed *English for Today* textbook in the classroom too. Based on my observations and a close look at the academic calendar, I found that most of the days in the academic year were devoted to conducting various types of examination tasks (tutorial examination, class test, internal examinations, model tests).

I completed the SSC examination at this school. In Bangladesh, outsiders are not encouraged to do classroom observations or collect data from the teachers and students. Researchers usually do not have easy access to the schools if they do not have an inside
connection. As a graduate of the school, it was easier for me to get access to the site. Further, to understand the washback effect in the context, I needed to sink into the context to grasp the teaching and learning environment of the institution. Once I started visiting the school, I realized that the teachers considered me part of their community because I had been one of their students. This school was the right fit for my research needs.

School B. This school was chosen based on its low performance on the SSC examinations over the past five years. This was also a government-aided private school. In the 2019 SSC examination, 15% test-takers from this school secured the highest grade (A+) (Web based result, n.d.). After being rejected by a few schools, I gained access to this school. Schools that had not been doing well on the SSC examination were not comfortable with anybody collecting data from their classes. Finally, I got permission to collect data from School B because one of my friends introduced me to the principal. However, still, it was not easy. I visited the school for a couple of weeks to build rapport with the school authorities and helped them complete some of their administrative tasks before finally, I got my permission to start collecting data. It was in Dhaka, the capital of the country. The distance between School A and School B was approximately eight km. Compared to School A, this was a smaller school with approximately 6,000 students from grades 1 to 10. While I was collecting data, there were six English teachers (both male and female) teaching at this school. Unlike School A, these English teachers teach other grades in addition to grades 9 and 10. Like School A, girls went to the morning classes, and boys attended the afternoon classes. Students came from a wide range of social and financial backgrounds, and most of the students were from the surrounding locality.
About 400 students were preparing for the next year’s SSC examination when I was collecting observational data. The class sizes were slightly smaller than those at School A. There were approximately 50 to 60 students in the three classes I observed. The teaching environment at this school was relaxed, and not disciplined like School A. For example, teachers were sometimes little late in starting the classes and had a stress-free attitude in conducting the classes. Parents could visit the teachers frequently, and the teachers’ common room was always a welcoming place. At this school, English classes were conducted only three out of five school days. Each of those classes lasted 40 to 50 minutes, depending on the time slot of that class. English teachers used a guidebook in the form of a textbook in classroom teaching. During my observational period, students brought their textbooks to the classroom. Unlike School A, this school did not have many examinations: students were expected to appear at the internal examinations and model tests before the SSC examination. Teachers sometimes gave them unmarked surprise exams, but students did not seem to take these seriously. School B was less examination-oriented than School A.

**Data Sources: Documents and Participants**

I collected data for this study from documents, curriculum specialist, teachers, students, and classroom observations (see Table 3.1). I employed Patton’s (2002) purposeful sampling to decide the sample size. “This means that the inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 158). There are no specific strategies or calculations to establish an exact sample size in qualitative research (Emmel, 2013). According to Patton (2015), “there is no rule for sample size in qualitative inquiry. Sample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources” (p. 311). The logic behind purposeful sampling in a qualitative study rests on the intention of collecting a comprehensive set of data to conduct an in-depth study. Likewise, in this study, all
participants had experienced the phenomenon under inspection, which is washback, so that a richer set of data could be collected. The purposeful selection of the participants allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the research questions as well as the research context.

Table 3.1

Data Sources used in the Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Data sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Prescribed textbook English for Today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Question papers of the 2018 SSC English Examination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>One Curriculum Specialist (directly involved in designing and writing the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>curriculum, textbook, and SSC English question paper)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>School A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Teachers</td>
<td>5 teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10 teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus groups</td>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(22 students)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(26 students)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>49 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom observations</td>
<td>two weeks at each of the schools - four weeks in total (total 830 minutes of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>observation at both schools)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Documents

There are several types of policy documents in an educational system, including curriculum standards, assessments, educational philosophies, textbooks, and students’ test results (Case, Jorgensen, & Zucker, 2004; Webb, 1997a). For this study, I collected three types of official public educational documents in Bangladesh, which I used to determine the range of alignment at the policy level. They were: 1) The English National Curriculum (2012); 2) English for Today, the prescribed textbook at the SSC level; and, 3) a set of question papers for the 2018 English SSC Examination. All these documents were official public documents in Bangladesh.
Curriculum Specialist Participant

One of the test developers (known as a “curriculum specialist”) for the English SSC examination from the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) was invited to participate in this study. In Bangladesh, NCTB is responsible for designing the national curriculums, the school-leaving public examinations, and the associated textbooks. This curriculum specialist participant had bachelor’s and master’s degrees in English literature from Bangladesh and later earned another MA in English Language teaching (ELT) from England. Within the field of education, he was a professor, but at the NCTB, he worked as a curriculum specialist. He had been working closely to develop the English curriculum, the SSC English examination, and the English textbook at the SSC level for many years. His other job responsibilities were multi-faceted and included conducting the revisions and reviewing the curriculum, conducting teacher's professional development training, and developing instructional materials for teaching English. He, along with his colleagues, developed guidelines for teachers and test markers as well as sample questions for the present SSC English examination. Throughout his 22-year career, he had worked as a classroom teacher, teacher trainer, and finally, curriculum developer. So, this participant possessed valuable insights about how the curriculum was expected to be used in classroom instruction as well as the relationship of SSC English examination with curriculum and classroom practice.

My goal in interviewing this curriculum specialist from NCTB was to use his practical knowledge and opinions to validate the data I got from the documents. This participant was the key informant to understand the perceived alignment of the English SSC examination with the English National Curriculum and classroom instruction at the policy level in the country. Since he was involved in planning and designing the curriculum, textbook, and English examination at the SSC level, he was able to shed light on the relationship among curriculum, textbook,
classroom instruction, and the English examination. For readership purposes, I used the pseudonym “Aslam” for this participant.

**Teacher Participants**

I invited English teachers at the SSC level (specifically grade 10) from the selected two schools to conduct one to one interview and later observed their classes. My target number was five teacher participants from each of school; that is, I planned to conduct 10 face-to-face interviews in total. Considering the time constraints in my data collection schedule, conducting 10 interviews seemed feasible. The purpose of conducting in-depth interviews with the teachers was to explore their perceptions about the alignment of curriculum, teaching, and SSC English examination and how those perceptions shaped up the test-washback. Moreover, since I interviewed teachers from two schools, I hoped to find out whether teachers from the different schools perceived washback differently. These teacher participants were of a mixed population consisting of both female and male teachers between 28 and 55 years old.

Table 3.2 charts the information about the 10 interviewee teachers including the six teachers (T1, T2, T3, T6, T7 & T8) whose classrooms I observed (marked in green in Table 3.2). All of them were English teachers teaching at the SSC level. There were two male teachers (T3 & T9), and the rest of the participants were females. For the sake of clarity, these 10 participants are tabulated according to the schools. Pseudonyms are used for the sampled 10 teachers for readership purposes.
### Table 3.2

**Teacher participants’ demographic information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Teaching Experience</th>
<th>Academic and Professional Qualifications</th>
<th>Experiences as marker/question setter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School A</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T1</td>
<td>Porshi (Female)</td>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>BA &amp; MA in Economics B.Ed. (1 year) Received two training courses on teaching the language (14 days each)</td>
<td>Exam script marker (1 year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2</td>
<td>Laboni (Female)</td>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>BA &amp; MA in English literature B.Ed. (1 year) Received several training courses on teaching the language, educational policy, classroom management, lesson planning</td>
<td>Exam script marker Question setter (5 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T3</td>
<td>Forid (Male)</td>
<td>32 years</td>
<td>BA &amp; MA in English literature B.Ed. (1 year) Received several training courses on English teaching, educational policy, classroom management, lesson planning, curriculum, and a one-day training in question designing</td>
<td>Exam script marker, question setter, question moderator (15 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T4</td>
<td>Faria (Female)</td>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>BA &amp; MA in English literature B.Ed. (1 year) 24 days training on CLT curriculum, classroom teaching, and lesson planning</td>
<td>Exam script marker Question setter (5 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T5</td>
<td>Roji (Female)</td>
<td>28 years</td>
<td>BA &amp; MA in English literature B.Ed. (1 year) Received many professional training courses on curriculum, educational policy, classroom teaching, and a one-day training in question designing, Worked with non-govt organizations as EFT specialist, Worked as a guidebook writer,</td>
<td>Exam script marker, head examiner, question setter, question moderator (9 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School B</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T6</td>
<td>Shakira (Female)</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>BA &amp; MA in English literature B.Ed. (1 year) One-week-long training in classroom management, lesson planning, and curriculum Few in house training courses</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T7</td>
<td>Marzina (Female)</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>BA in English literature &amp; MA in ELT (specialization in English Language Teaching) B.Ed (1 Year) 3 training courses- each lasted 2/3 weeks Few in house training courses</td>
<td>Exam script marker (4 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T8</td>
<td>Diba (Female)</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>BA &amp; MA in English literature A week-long training course on curriculum and mostly on educational policy Few in house training courses</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T9</td>
<td>Sonju (Male)</td>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>BA in English literature &amp; MA in ELT (specialization in English Language Teaching) B.Ed (1 Year) Attended several training courses on curriculum, classroom teaching</td>
<td>Exam script marker (7 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T10</td>
<td>Shoha (Female)</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>BA &amp; MA in English literature</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teachers from School A had more teaching experience than those from School B. Although they did not have specialized academic degrees in teaching English, all of them had B.Ed.\(^1\) degrees, along with several training experiences. In this one-year program, teachers learned about the curriculum, CLT methods, lesson planning, and practice tips on conducting the English classes. However, they did not remember much about the testing module except that the question patterns of the SSC English examination were introduced to some extent. According to them, the emphasis was on teaching the four English skills in the classroom.

All five teacher participants from School A had been working as the SSC English script markers at the education board level for a range of years. Except for one teacher Porshi, other four teachers (Laboni, Forid, Faria, and Roji) had experiences working as question setters. Along with the question setter role, Forid worked as question moderator, and Roji worked as a head examiner, a textbook specialist with various organizations, and a guidebook writer with a local publishing house. Both Roji and Forid received a one-day training on question designing in 2018 (the education board took this initiative for the first time in 2018).

Teacher participants from School B had less teaching experiences than those at School A. Shakira, Diba, and Shoha had BA and MA degrees in English literature, whereas Marzina and Sonju had specialized MA in ELT degrees. Diba and Shoha did not have B.Ed. degrees, unlike their colleagues. Like the teachers at School A, Shakira, Marzina, and Sonju noted that the B.Ed.

\(^{1}\) B.Ed. (Bachelor of Education) is a one-year teaching certificate course, which is undertaken after completing the bachelor’s degree. In most of the schools, especially, in the typical good schools having a B.Ed. degree is mandatory.
course primarily focused on training how to teach the language communicatively. Except for Shoha, all the teachers had attended a few training programs in curriculum, education policy, classroom teaching, and lesson planning. None of them had any experience as question setters, but Marzina and Sonju had been working as the SSC English scripts marker for four and seven years, respectively. The details of each of the participants are given in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3

*Profiles of the Teachers from School and School B*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the teachers &amp; schools</th>
<th>Profile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>School A</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(T1) Porshi</td>
<td>Porshi had BA and MA in Economics and had been teaching English at the secondary level for last 14 years. Before joining the teaching profession, she earned a B.Ed. degree (a professional teaching degree). She never worked as a script marker or question setter at the exam board of the country, although she was responsible for setting various internal examination questions as well as marking the scripts. Porshi received a few numbers of training courses on teaching English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(T2) Laboni</td>
<td>Having BA and MA degrees in English literature, Laboni had been teaching English at the secondary level for last 12 years. She had a B.Ed. degree, along with several training sessions on teaching the language, educational policy, classroom management, and lesson planning. Laboni had been working as a script marker and question setter at the examination board for last five years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(T3) Forid</td>
<td>Forid had a BA and MA in English literature, and later he earned the one-year B.Ed. degree as a professional teaching qualification. In 32 years of a teaching career as an English teacher, Forid had work been working as the script marker, question setter, and question moderator at the exam board for last 15 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(T4) Faria</td>
<td>Faria had BA and MA in English literature and later earned a B.Ed. degree. Along with having 12 years of teaching experiences, Faria attended training on CLT curriculum, teaching, and lesson planning. Also, she had worked as the script marker and question setter at the SSC level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(T5) Roji</td>
<td>Roji had BA and MA in English literature along with a B.Ed. degree. In addition to the 28 years of a teaching career, she had worked for nine years in various capacities, such as Exam script marker, head examiner, question setter, question moderator. Roji had attended many professional development workshops including training on curriculum, policy, teaching, and the recent 2018’s one day workshop on question designing. She even had worked as a guidebook writer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School B</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(T6) Shakira</td>
<td>Shakira, who had BA and MA in English literature, along with a B.Ed. degree had been teaching English for the last ten years. She attended one training program on lesson planning and curriculum and attended a few in-house training sessions organized by her school. Shakira did not have working experience as a marker or question setter.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(T7) Marzina

Marzina was the only teacher who had a BA in English and MA in specializing in English language teaching. She had been teaching English for the last ten years. She had a B.Ed. degree along with three one-week long training programs on classroom management, lesson planning, and English curriculum. Besides, she attended a few in-house training sessions organized by her school. Marzina has been working as the script marker at the exam board for last four years.

(T8) Diba

Having a BA and MA in English literature, Diba had been working as an English teacher since last seven years. However, she did not have a professional B.Ed. teaching qualification like her colleagues. Along with the in-house training programs, so far, she had received one training program which was mostly on curriculum and educational policy. Diba did not have the experience of working as a marker or question setter.

(T9) Sonju

Sonju earned BA in English literature and MA in English Language Teaching (ELT) and B.Ed. degree. He had 12 years of teaching experiences and had been working as a script marker for the last seven years. Over the years, Sonju attended several training sessions on curriculum and teaching.

(T10) Shoha

Shoha had a BA and MA in English literature and had been teaching for the last two years. She did not have B.Ed. degree or any professional training.

Student Participants

I conducted 10 focus group discussions (FGDs) with 49 grade 10 students from the selected two schools (Table 3.4). I collected data from the girls’ morning shift/class, so all FGDs included only female students. The purpose of conducting FGDs with the students was to gain insights into the washback effect on their learning, test preparation, and English language proficiency. The students for FGDs were candidates for the SSC examination.

Table 3.4

Participants at School A and School B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School A</th>
<th>School B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FGD</td>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total students</strong></td>
<td><strong>22</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In total 49 students
At School A, the age range of the students was 14 to 16, whereas the age range of the participants at school B was 13 to 15 years old. The size of 10 FGDs ranged from four to six students in each group. There were 22 students in five FGDs from School A and 26 students from the other five FGDs from School B. In total, there were 49 students in 10 FGDs from both schools.

**Rationale and Timeframe for Data Collection**

SSC level consists of grade 9 and grade 10. I aimed at collecting data from the teachers and the students of grade 10 because compared to grade 9 the ‘washback intensity’ (Cheng, 1997, 2005) was supposed to be higher in grade 10 as these students were the immediate candidates for the SSC examination of 2019. On the increasing intensity of test preparation, Tsagari (2011) pointed out that intensive test preparation usually takes place when the examination is nearer. Therefore, my data collection was limited to the classrooms in grade 10.

Broadly, both School A and School B had two pre-test examinations: one pre-test (pre-selection examination) and one test (selection examination) at grade 10, along with a set of tutorial examinations (class tests) before the SSC examinations began (see Figure 3.5). School A had other internal examinations to prepare the students for pre-test, test, and finally for SSC examination. In Bangladesh, these two internal examinations (pre-test and test) given in grade 10 were considered very important in preparing the students for the final public examination.
Generally, schools are expected to complete their SSC English examination syllabus by the pre-test examination, i.e., by July/August. The test examination is more of a gatekeeping examination to see if students are ready for the final SSC examination. Usually, if students fail the test examination, they are supposed to sit for another examination or extra classes to prepare them. In many of the top-ranking schools, students who fail the test examination may not be allowed to sit for the SSC examination. While preparing for the test examinations, many students prefer to do self-study and to go to the coaching centers where they strictly do test preparation activities. After the test examination, the classes for grade 10 are suspended until the SSC examination begins. Therefore, I decided to collect data when teachers were preparing students for the pre-test examination and when there was a possibility to examine a high level of test-washback on classroom instruction. I aimed to get the most revealing data about the nature of the washback of the SSC English examination on classroom teaching and learning when both students and teachers were preparing for the pre-selection examination. Table 3.5 presents the schedule for data collection.
Table 3.5

Timeframe for Collecting Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phases</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
<th>Data collection activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethics preparation</td>
<td>March</td>
<td>• Applying for the ethics clearance;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| First phase (preparation phase) | April     | • Obtained permission from the schools’ authorities to use the schools as the research site and started informal school visits and classroom observations to understand the setting and to build the rapport with the teachers; started recruiting teacher participants;  
|                              |           | • Collected three types of official public documents: 1. The English National Curriculum (2012); 2. The prescribed textbook at the SSC level, English for Today; 3. A set of question papers of 2018 SSC English Examination; |
| Second phase (data collection phase) | May       | • Recruited interview participants (curriculum specialist & teachers from School A & School B);  
|                              |           | • Completed interview with the curriculum specialist participant;  
|                              |           | • Completed four interviews with the teacher participants;  
|                              |           | • Started recruiting student participants for the FGDs;  
|                              |           | • Scheduled the classroom observations;                                                     |
| June (first three weeks)    | No data collection | Schools were closed for Eid-Ul-Fitar – one of the two biggest religious festivals in Bangladesh. (I spent this time to transcribe data from the three interviews with the teachers and the curriculum specialist. Also, I started analyzing the documents) |
| June (last week) & July (first week) |           | • Classroom observations at School A and School B  
|                              |           | • Completed interviews with the teachers at School A  
|                              |           | • Completed two FGDs at School A  |
| July (third and fourth weeks) |           | • Classroom observations at School A & School B  
|                              |           | • Completed interviews with the teachers at School B  
|                              |           | • Completed two FGDs at School B  |
| August                      |           | • Completed remaining six FGDs with the students at School A & B  |

The duration of my data collection was approximately five months (from April to August). March, as I mentioned in Table 3.5, was spent in preparing and applying for the ethics approval (see Appendix M). There were two phases of data collection. The first phase was the preparation phase: I spent April getting permission from the schools, getting to know the research...
context and teachers, and collecting documents. The second phase was the actual data collection period. I sequenced the data collection procedures so that I could dive deeper into the context of each school. With every data point, my understanding of the research questions became clearer. However, according to Bogdan and Biklen (1982), “a qualitative educational researcher is more like a loosely-scheduled traveler than one with detailed travel plans” (p. 55). I was able to accommodate to any possible changes, and, considering the political instability in Bangladesh during my data collection phase in 2018, I had to change my plan and schedule many times to collect data.

Research Methods

Instruments

This section explains the instruments used in this study (see Table 3.6). The instruments were document analysis, interviews, FGDs, and classroom observations.

Table 3.6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instruments</th>
<th>RQ 1</th>
<th>RQ 2</th>
<th>RQ 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Document Analysis</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview with the curriculum specialist from NCTB</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview with the teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Observation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Groups with the students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Document analysis. To answer RQ 1, I conducted document analysis (Bowen, 2009) of the English National Curriculum (2012), the textbook English for Today, and a set of question papers from the 2018 English SSC Examination. I hoped to understand the extent of alignment among these chosen policy documents. One of the most cited scholars in alignment studies, Webb (1997a) identified document analysis as one of the major approaches for determining the range of agreement among documents at the policy level. According to Bowen (2009), “the rationale for
document analysis lies in its role in methodological and data triangulation…and its usefulness as a standalone method for specialised forms of qualitative research” (p. 29). In this study, there were two specific purposes for document analysis. One was to find out the extent to which the objectives of the national English curriculum were aligned with the objectives of the associated textbook. The second objective was to explore the extent to which the textbook activities were aligned with the examination tasks of the SSC English examination. Investigating these two objectives helped me explore the range of alignment in these three policy documents.

**Interviews.** The interview with the curriculum specialist supported RQ 1, while interviews with the teachers answered RQ 2. I conducted semi-structured, face to face individual interviews with one curriculum specialist and 10 teachers from two schools. The purpose of using semi-structured interviews was that they offer flexibility for conducting an in-depth interview (Creswell, 2008). Interviews pave the way to understanding other people’s experience or opinions (Seidman, 2013). Interviews are used to collect information that cannot be gathered by any other methods; without interview data, observation would be akin to watching a silent cinema (Tierney & Dilley, 2001).

Guiding questions for the semi-structured interviews were developed based on the research questions and elements of the adapted framework (see the operational framework section of this Chapter). Interview questions for the curriculum specialist from NCTB focused on how the alignment was perceived by the governmental policymakers who were involved at the policy level and how they intended those assumptions to be realized at the classroom level (see Appendix D). Q1 to Q5 asked about the background of the curriculum specialist to set the ground for the upcoming key questions. Q6 to Q17 explored how the national English curriculum and its associated textbook were aligned with the SSC English examination at the policy level and how the alignment relationship created washback on teaching and learning of English. Q18 to Q21
asked a few closing questions about the participant’s overall impression on alignment and washback effects of the SSC examination on teaching and learning.

Interview questions for the grade 10 teachers focused on their classroom practice to investigate how they perceive washback effects on their classroom instruction and students’ learning (see Appendix E). Q1 to Q4 was about the academic and professional background of the interviewee, and Q5 to Q16 investigated how teachers perceived the washback of the SSC English examination. Q17 to Q18 were closing questions to understand the teachers’ overall impressions about the alignment and washback of the SSC examination on teaching and learning of English.

**Classroom observation.** I conducted classroom observations to answer RQ 2, which also supported the data collected from interviews with the teachers. Most of the major doctoral studies on washback conducted over last 20 years used classroom observation as one of the crucial instruments in their studies (Cheng, 1997; Pan, 2010; Sun, 2016; Tsagari, 2007; Wall, 1999). Classroom observation is a reliable source of data because it enables the researcher to experience how washback takes place in classroom instruction because a classroom is a place “where the real activity of education occurs” (Chapman & Snyder, 2000, p.458). Thus, observation is considered one of the key data collection tools in qualitative research, where the researcher inspects the subject in the field setting (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The main goal of observation is to report the in-depth and details of what is happening by going into the setting, observing, and describing what one notices (Patton, 2015).

I conducted classroom observations for two reasons. First, since my research was centered on how alignment relationships created washback on classroom instruction and the nature of the washback, I needed to observe real classroom situations. Second, data collected from classroom observation validated the teachers’ claims in interviews as what teachers said might vary what happened in the classroom (Wall & Alderson, 1993; Watanabe, 2004).
Moreover, classroom observation allowed me to see how the alignment expectations at the policy level were achieved at the classroom level.

In this study, class observations were used to collect the empirical evidence of how the relationships between curriculum, textbook, testing, and teaching were reflected in actual classroom instruction. I used a field note observational protocol (see Appendix G). Field notes are defined by Bogdan and Biklen (1982) as "the written account of what the researcher hears, sees, experiences, and thinks in the course of collecting and reflecting on the data" (p. 107). So, my field note approach was based on Bogdan and Biklen’s ideas, with the guiding principles based on the need of the study. The guiding principles were: a) how curriculum objectives are aligned with 1) the textbook objectives and 2) classroom instructional objectives; b) how the examination tasks are aligned with 1) the textbook activities and 2) classroom activities; c) how classroom activities are supporting students 1) English language learning and 2) test preparation for the examination; d) what influences the examination has on classroom teaching and learning.

**Focus group discussions (FGD).** FGDs were conducted to answer RQ 3 and gain an integrated understanding of how students at the SSC level perceived washback in their learning of English.

The purpose of conducting FGDs is to gain a better understanding of people’s ideas and opinions by conducting several focus groups with a similar type of participants (Krueger & Casey, 2015). The researcher can identify trends and patterns in their perceptions from the data collected from several focus groups. Kitzinger and Farquhar (1999) noted that focus groups could offer an in-depth exploration of issues by uncovering a deeper layer of discourse. One of the strengths of focus groups as a methodology is that they can be used as a powerful tool for groups whose voices are often ignored in making decisions (Wilkinson 1998, Smithson 2000), such as students in the educational structure. Usually, students are supposed to act as passive recipients since their perceptions and opinions are ignored in making any educational decisions. I
chose focus groups as the instrument for two main reasons. First, focus groups are less threatening, so they encourage participants to be more open about their views (Krueger & Casey, 2015). Since participants in my focus groups were students under 16, they may have been afraid to speak their minds. In a focus group, there is no fear of being singled out, and speaking with friends might help people be more open. Second, Liamputtong (2011) stated that findings from the focus groups can provide a comprehensive view of the topic, which fit my purpose as well. I wanted to get a holistic picture of students’ views on the washback of the SSC English examination.

I conducted 10 FGDs (five FGDs from each of the schools) with a total of 49 students. Krueger and Casey (2015) suggested conducting at least three focus groups to gather sufficient data on the issue under scrutiny. Conducting 10 FGDs offered me a richer set of data. I recruited students from the 10 teachers’ classrooms I interviewed. Students taught by different teachers from different sections provided a wide range of insights on the teaching-learning situation.

The FGD guided questions focused on understanding how students realized the washback effect on their learning, test preparation, and English language proficiency (see Appendix F). The questions were designed based on the research focus of the study, elements of the adapted framework, and Krueger and Casey’s (2015) guidelines for designing focus group questions. Q1 and Q2 were opening questions to start the conversation, Q3 to Q7 were key questions aimed specifically at answering RQ3, and Q8 and Q9 were the closing questions to gain an overall summary of the discussion.

Data Collection

This segment presents the data collection procedures for documents, interviews, focus groups, and classroom observations.
Document collection. My data collection started with gathering the necessary documents for the study. All the three documents I analyzed were publicly available and accessible. The English National Curriculum (2012) and the textbook English for Today were downloaded from the NCTB website (see Appendix A & B). I collected the 2018 SSC English question papers (see Appendix C) from the commercially published question banks.²

Interviews. Data collection from the curriculum specialist participant was forthright. I contacted the potential participant from NCTB with an email containing a recruitment letter. A combined letter of information and consent form (see Appendix J) was emailed to the curriculum specialist participant while scheduling the interview time. My first interview was with the curriculum specialist because my conversation with him offered an overview of the alignment situation across the system. The interview took place at his residence at his request. The duration of the interview was about two hours. I talked with him several times after the initial interview when I was confused by any of his ideas he expressed in the interview. I used a digital recorder to record the interview. The interview was conducted in English because the participant decided to speak in English. The confidentiality and anonymity of his information were assured, along with storage and security procedures for interview data.

For collecting interview data from the teachers, I directly contacted the principals (headmasters) of School A and School B to seek permission to use the schools as my research

² In Bangladesh, this question banks are commercially published books known as test papers. Test papers consist of questions papers of previous SSC examinations and question papers from the test examinations of various top-ranking schools in the country.
sites. In the typical top-down context of Bangladesh, it was not possible to interview the teachers without permission from the principals. Once I got permission, I requested that they distribute recruitment letters among the English teachers who were teaching grade 10 students. Initially, my plan was to interview the first five teachers (from each of the schools) who expressed interest in participating in this study. However, it took a long time even to recruit five teachers from each of the schools, because teachers were either busy with classes or were not interested in speaking with me.

The face to face interviews mostly took place either in the teachers’ workplaces after the school hours or at their residences, according to their preferences. When scheduling the interviews, I gave them the combined letter of information and consent form (See Appendix K) to sign. I assured participants about the confidentiality and anonymity of their participation and clarified that the information would be used only for research purposes. I explained the context of the research and the importance of their data in conducting the study. Interviews were conducted mostly using Bangla with occasional code-switching to English since teachers were comfortable speaking in Bangla. The interviews were recorded using a digital recorder. The duration of the interviews was around 60 minutes.

While interviewing the participants, even though they were audio recorded, I took quick field notes to scribble any follow-up questions or ideas I wanted to keep in mind while collecting other types of data. In addition to this, I maintained an informal journal log to note my own reflections about the interviews, participants, or their behaviors. Patton (2015) suggested constructing field notes immediately following an interview to record reflections of the session and get the most out of the interviews.
**Classroom observation.** To gain access to the classrooms to collect data, I requested the teacher interviewees to allow me to observe their classes. Initially, I had planned to observe one teacher’s classroom from each of the chosen schools, but none of the teachers were ready to let me sit in their classes continuously for two weeks. It was, in fact, a blessing in disguise. I got to observe more classes (those of three teachers from each of the two schools). I scheduled the classroom observations with the first three teachers who agreed to be observed from each of the schools. I observed the classrooms at each of the school on alternate weeks (See Table 3.5). During the four weeks of the observation period, I spent week 1 and week 3 at School A and spent week 2 and Week 4 at School B. This alternate observation schedule allowed me to observe the immediate difference between the classrooms of these two schools. Most of the classes at both schools were observed when teachers were preparing for the pre-test examination, whereas a smaller number of classroom observations took place after the pre-test. These data offered information about how washback took place in the classrooms when teachers and students were preparing for the examination.

Usually, people become self-conscious when they are observed, and they may change their actions because of the presence of the observer (Marvasti, 2014). Therefore, to make the observed teachers feel relaxed, I started building rapport from the very beginning of the data collection period. I kept visiting the schools, spent longer time with the teachers, and did some random informal class visits before I officially started observing their classes. So, by the time I started observing them, the teachers were more relaxed and used to my presence inside their classrooms. In the beginning days of classroom observation, I tried to find out the teaching cycle of the teachers. Understanding their instructional cycles and plans helped me to understand their classroom instructions too.

Further, my role was that of a non-participant observer, because non-participant observation is a more nuanced and dynamic appreciation of situations that cannot be as easily
captured through other methods (Liu & Maitlis, 2010). I sat at the back of the classroom as a non-participant observer, without interrupting the flow of the class, filling the observation forms (see Appendix G) and taking necessary notes. I tried to capture what I saw, what I heard, and what I thought by using the guiding principles listed above. The audio recording was not possible due to the crowded classrooms; also, the teachers seemed uninterested in being audio-recorded while teaching. So, I relied on my field notes and attempted to capture as much detail as I could.

**Focus groups.** Data collection for the focus groups was quite delicate as I wanted to recruit a few students from each of the interviewed teacher’s classrooms from two schools. For this purpose, I aimed at recruiting approximately 12 to 13 students from each of the schools. I requested that the interviewed teachers talk about the recruitment in their classrooms and distribute the combined consent letters and letter of information (See Appendix L) among all the students so that the parents could read the letters and decide if they wanted their children to participate in this study. Since the students were aged 14 to 16, I needed to get permission from their parents. The combined consent letters and letter of information was translated in Bangla for the families. Interested students contacted me with the letters signed by their parents. For the focus groups, I arranged meeting rooms near the schools, so that students could commute easily.

According to Krueger and Casey (2015), the size of focus groups should range from 4 to 12 participants, and there should be at least three groups to get the best results. Therefore, in my study, I divided 22 students from School A into five groups and 26 students from School B in another five groups. Each group contained 3 to 5 students. In this way, I was able to identify key perceptions of the participants after comparing data across groups (Krueger & Casey, 2014; Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech, & Zoran, 2009).
In the sessions, I tried to create a natural environment stressing trust and openness in the beginning so that the students felt comfortable expressing their opinions in the group. I assured their anonymity as well as the importance of their opinions to my study. Conversations were held in Bangla so that students did not feel the pressure of speaking in a foreign language. I believe that speaking in our mother tongue created ease among all participants to express their opinions with each other. The beginning of the focus discussions was light, and my body language was relaxed so that the participants were not stressed out. I usually started the discussion by introducing myself, then requested that they introduce themselves, and gradually moved to the key questions of the study. The focus group sessions were audio-recorded and lasted for around 45 to 55 minutes. I decided the discussions were over when participants started repeating things that were already discussed.

**Follow-up interviews with teacher participants.** I conducted follow up interviews with a few of the teacher participants. The key reason for conducting these follow-ups was that I wanted to clarify the concerns and questions I had after I started analyzing the data. I believe that the follow-up interviews were helpful in validating the data and my personal assumptions about the results from those data. Also, it worked as one of the ways to ensure the rigor of the study (see the methodological rigor section at the end of this Chapter) These interviews were mostly done over the phone and in an informal manner.

**Data Analysis**

There are several approaches to analyze the qualitative data; indeed, according to Green and Thorogood (2004), most researchers tend to use a combination of approaches. Although Pellegrino et al.’s (2016) adapted framework (see Figure 3.2) was an underlying approach in analyzing the data, specific data analysis strategies were used, which are described in the following section.
Document analysis. For the analysis of the three chosen documents, RQ1 was my primary guideline. I carried out a content analysis (Elo et al., 2014) to understand 1) how curriculum goals stated in the National Curriculum (2012) were realized in stated objectives of the English for Today (textbook); and, 2) the extent to which the textbook activities were aligned with the examination tasks of the SSC English examination. In the case of the textbook, I only examined the objectives and activities listed in English for Today (Appendix B), and I did not analyze the pictures, cultural themes, and texts in the textbook, which were beyond the scope of this study. While looking for techniques to analyze the documents, I was unable to find a technique to fit my research objectives. With the ideas of content analysis, I broadly used the following steps to understand the alignment among the three policy documents used in my study (see Figure 3.6).

Figure 3.6. How the documents were analyzed to answer RQ1.

First, I explored the documents individually, which helped me to identify the portions I needed to answer RQ1. Then I carried out a content analysis of the selected portions and placed
them side by side while I created two separated alignment tables to check the alignments: 1) between curriculum goals and textbook objectives; and, 2) between textbook activities and examination tasks. Finally, I used the alignment tables to analyze the data. These alignment tables illustrated the larger picture of the alignment at the policy level demonstrate to what extent the policy documents were aligned or misaligned with each other.

**Interviews.** For analyzing the interview data, I used a transcript-based analysis approach (Krueger & Casey, 2015). I transcribed the entire interview with each of the participants, supplemented with the notes taken by me during the time of the interview (see Appendix H). Although transcript-based analysis is a time-consuming process, it reduces the possibility of overlooking important element in the data (Seidman, 2013). Interviews which were conducted in Bangla, I first transcribed in Bangla and later translated into English. The English translations were checked and verified by one of my colleagues from Bangladesh to ensure the reliability of the data. This colleague worked as an Associate Professor of English for many years at a renowned university in Bangladesh. I chose him to help me as his level of English was near to native, and he understood some of the contextual expressions.

To analyze the interview data from the curriculum specialist and the teacher participants, I employed both inductive and deductive thematic analysis (Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen, & Snelgrove, 2016) because it enables researchers to answer the research questions (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Vaismoradi et al. (2016) proposed four stages of theme development: *initialization, construction, rectification, and finalization*, which I used in analyzing the interview data (see Table 3.7).
Table 3.7

Four stages of Theme Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phases</th>
<th>Stages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Initialization</strong></td>
<td>Reading transcriptions and highlighting meaning units;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coding and looking for abstracts in participants accounts;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Writing reflective notes;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Construction</strong></td>
<td>Classifying;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comparing;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Labelling;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Translating &amp; transliterating;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Defining &amp; describing;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rectification</strong></td>
<td>Immersion and distancing;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relating themes to established knowledge;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stabilized;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Finalization</strong></td>
<td>Developing the storyline;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the initial phase, I read and reread the transcripts to have an overall understanding of the data and the main issues under study before coding them. I did individual coding for each of the transcripts and kept reflective notes. This phase was important to understand the depth and breadth of the data. In the construction phase, I reflected on the process of organizing codes, compared them in terms of similarities and differences and clustered them together to assign a label to each cluster of codes in terms of the research question. This phase consisted of five stages: classifying, comparing, labeling, translating and transliterating, and defining and describing. The rectification phase was the verification process, where I ensured the reliability and validity of the developed themes. This phase had three stages: immersion and distancing, relating themes to established knowledge and stabilizing. In the finalization phase, I described and connected the themes to answer the research question; in other words, I analyzed the results. Broadly, the interview data analysis could be visualized through the following diagram.

**Classroom observation.** I used “template analysis” technique to analyze the data obtained from the classroom observations at School A and School B. Template analysis involves the development of a coding template, summarizing the major themes identified by the researcher.
and organizing them in a meaningful and useful manner (King, 2012). Usually, when there is a large volume of data to work with, template analysis effectively reduces the amount of data. I took the following template analysis steps to analyze the classroom observational data:

**Figure 3.7.** Steps in conducting the template analysis of the observational data.

1. I read through the fieldnotes to familiarize myself with the data;
2. I carried out preliminary coding with a subset of the data to create codes, went through the data and codes several times to create as many codes as possible. Then I clustered the codes together to have the initial themes based on the subset of data. In this way, I got my initial template;
3. Then I used the template while coding each of the fieldnotes;
4. While using the template each time, I revised the initial template: included codes, inserted new ideas, deleted unnecessary codes, changed themes, and changed order classification. This process involved lots of back and forth within the data to ensure that the template captured the full scope of the data;
5. Finally, I produced the final version of the theme, which also was my final template for the classrooms observation data;

Using the template analysis technique, I first went through the field notes (See Appendix H) collected from classroom observations to see the differences and similarities across the data and to gauge the scope of the data. This gave me a sense of the categories. I produced the initial template with codes and initial themes based on a subset of classroom observational data, which is shown in Figure 3.7. This initial template was used to code the rest of the field notes. Each time, I came across few more codes and assigned them under various themes. In fact, with each new set of field notes, the template went through reviews and revisions before I reached to the final set of themes, which is shown in the final template that I created based on the data. To analyze the data collected from the classroom observation, I used thematic analysis (Vaismoradi et al. 2016). The purpose of classroom observation was to see how teachers conduct the classes and to validate the interview data.
**Focus groups.** I used a tape-based analysis method, wherein I listened to the audio recordings of the focus groups to create an abridged transcript (Krueger & Casey, 2015; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). This transcript was a shorter version of the discussion where unnecessary conversation was removed from the discussion to make the analysis process less time-consuming (see Appendix H). I only transcribed and translated portions which offered insight about the research interests, and in this way, I was able to concentrate on my research questions. First, I listened to the audio of the focus group discussion to understand the scope of the research and decided which portions were important to transcribe. Unlike interview data, data obtained from focus groups are unique in nature as well as type. Wilkinson (1998) argued that the unique aspects of the focus group are ignored when data obtained from them are treated as identical to individual interview data. Therefore, tape-based analysis method was more helpful in this context.

I used constant comparison analysis (Glaser, 1978, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967, Strauss, 1987) as the focus groups data analysis approach as interpreting focus groups means analysis of contents (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2014). Focus groups were treated as units of analysis (Smithson, 2000) to understand the emergent themes in a group. Constant comparison analysis allowed me to compare those themes across the groups. This approach creates an opportunity for data saturation, especially when there are multiple focus groups in one study (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009), which was the case in my study. The value of constant comparison lies in creating meaningful and refined themes across groups (Charmaz, 2000). In coding and categorized the data (see Appendix N for a sample of focus group coding), I employed open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The process of coding, categorizing, and creating themes are illustrated in the following flow chart:
Once I had themes from all 10 FGD groups, I identified common themes the students expressed regarding their perceptions of the washback of the SSC examination on their learning, test preparation, and English proficiency. It is to be noted that I reached data saturation in case of FGDs because from the seventh FGD onward, I started getting repeated information from the students.

**Triangulation**

In this study, data from the analysis of the documents, interviews with the teachers and curriculum specialist, focus groups with the students, and classroom observations were triangulated to illuminate the alignment of the SSC English examination with curriculum and teaching and the washback of the examination on classroom teaching and learning of English. Triangulation in research warrants that the findings of the research are not outcomes of one method (Green & Chian, 2018; Flick, 2018). Triangulation offers “a confluence of evidence that breeds credibility” (Eisner, 1991, p. 110). Patton (2015) mentioned that triangulation guards the
researcher from the accusation that the study is the result of a single method, which might contain the researcher’s biases. “By examining information collected through different methods, the researcher can corroborate findings across data sets and thus reduce the impact of potential biases that can exist in a single study” (Bowen, 2009, p. 28). In this way, triangulation in qualitative research adds depth and richness to the data (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Accordingly, this doctoral study employed multiple methods of data collection to arrive with the research findings (see Chapter 5). By triangulating data, I was able to extrapolate its embedded and messy meanings, which, as Denzin (2012) imagined, allowed me to look at the data through a crystal to perceive all the viewpoints of the data. Thus, “the importance of triangulation cannot be underestimated to ensure reliability and validity of the data and results” (Fusch, Fusch, & Ness, 2018, p. 21). The way I visualized and experienced the process of triangulation is shown in the following figure:

![Visualization of triangulation.

Figure 3.9. Visualization of triangulation.
In this study, triangulation was like a funnel where I put all the findings from document analysis, interviews, FGDs, and classroom observations together. By using various data sources, I was able to see and interpret the data from different perspectives. The process of triangulation made me see the bigger picture of the data to answer the research questions of the study.

**Methodological Rigor**

In qualitative studies, maintaining methodological rigor is the key to building trustworthy research. In providing the guidelines for qualitative research, *TESOL Quarterly* (2010) stated that qualitative research should be “credible, valid and dependable rather than impressionistic and superficial” (pp. 219-220). To establish rigor and trustworthiness, Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) widely cited article suggested four criteria that have been used and adapted by many other researchers (Booth, 2012; Forero et al., 2018; Morse, 2015). The following table shows how Lincoln and Guba’s four key criteria were used to validate the interpretations of this study.
### Table 3.8

**Strategies adapted from Lincoln and Guba to Ensure the Rigor of this Study**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria to ensure rigor</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Original strategies</th>
<th>Strategies I used in this study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Credibility</strong></td>
<td>To establish the confidence of the findings</td>
<td>- Prolonged engagement</td>
<td>As a researcher, I spent on an average 7-8 weeks at each of the research sites to conduct interviews, classroom observations and FGDs;</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Establishing the researcher’s authority</td>
<td>I was well-aware about the context of the research. Being a student, teacher, and researcher working in Bangladesh for many years, I was already familiar with the educational context of Bangladesh. Moreover, I prepared myself to conduct this in-depth research for about a year before I started working, e.g., doing extensive literature review and detailing out the instruments and design;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Triangulation</td>
<td>I used the triangulation method;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Reflexivity</td>
<td>I maintained an informal field note throughout the data collection period;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Peer checking/ member checking</td>
<td>Translating the transcription in from Bangla to English, I asked one of my colleagues working at a Bangladeshi university to check the translations; I presented the emerging themes at conferences and seminars; I conducted follow-ups with a few of the participants;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transferability</strong></td>
<td>To show that the findings are applicable in other research context</td>
<td>- Dense description</td>
<td>I provided a rich description of the contexts, participants instruments, and the data;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Purposeful sampling</td>
<td>I used a purposeful sample in selecting the research sites and the participants;</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Data Saturation</td>
<td>Data saturation was performed in case of FGDs;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dependability</strong></td>
<td>To establish that the findings are repeatable if carried out with the same participants and context</td>
<td>- Dense description of the research method</td>
<td>I presented minutes details of the methods and protocols throughout the dissertation;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Establishing an audit tail</td>
<td>Details of the data collection procedure was recorded;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Triangulation</td>
<td>Data was triangulated;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Peer checking</td>
<td>Translating the transcription in from Bangla to English, I asked one of my colleagues working at a Bangladeshi university to check the translations; I presented the emerging themes at conferences and seminars;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Confirmability</strong></td>
<td>To ensure the neutrality of the findings that they are not influenced by the researcher’s biases</td>
<td>- Reflexivity</td>
<td>I maintained an informal field note throughout the data collection period;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Triangulation</td>
<td>I used the triangulation method;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Credibility

I spent an average of 7 to 8 weeks at each of the schools. This extended time helped me build rapport with the participants, to understand them as humans, and to understand their workplace as an institution. This strategy allowed the researcher to be familiar with the study context, and participants also got opportunities to be more acquainted with the researcher and the research itself (Forero et al., 2018). In this way, I was also able to ensure my authority to warrant the credibility of the study. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested considering issues such as familiarity with the research context, research skills, theoretical knowledge, and ability to conduct multidisciplinary research when establishing the authority of the research. In this study, I was already familiar with the context because of my background as a student, teacher, and researcher in Bangladesh. But I worked to further enhance my understanding of the research context. For a year prior to data collection, I conducted a thorough literature review and had informal discussions with teachers, students, and researchers working in Bangladesh. This helped me comprehend the depth and complications of the setting and improved my theoretical knowledge about the research constructs. Under the guidance of my supervisor and committee members, I developed detailed protocols by using a framework from a different discipline, which prepared me to conduct this study.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) are often cited to emphasize the use of peer checking in qualitative research, which, while useful, is not necessary (Smith & McGannon, 2018). In the limited scope of this research, I used a peer checking technique to minimize the errors in translations of the quotes of the teachers, students, and the curriculum specialist. Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) suggested member checking to strengthen a study’s rigor. Member checking is often conducted by asking the participants to provide input that the collected data reflect what they meant (Smith & McGannon, 2018). In the case of this doctoral study, whenever I was
confused about the content of the interviews or classroom observations, I followed up with teacher participants for clarification. However, I could not do the same with the students’ FGDs because it was often not possible to contact students. Regarding peer checking, Heigham and Croker (2009) recommended “critical and sustained discussion with valued colleagues in a setting of sufficient trust so that emerging ideas, tentative hypotheses, and half-developed ideas can be shared” (p. 269). I presented the emerging ideas at three conferences (Sultana 2019a, 2019b, 2019c). My colleagues and other researchers at the conferences provided valuable suggestions and insights about the findings of the research. Later, I used a detailed data identification system so that all the quotes used in this dissertation can be traced back to the transcriptions. Details of data identifications are included in Appendix I. Further, triangulation was employed to increase the validity, reliability, and trustworthiness of the findings. The background, values, and ideologies of the researcher may induce biases in the interpretation of the findings (Fusch, 2001), which can be mitigated by triangulation. Triangulating the findings from four different data sources kept me in check to reduce my biases. I was able to see the same issue from different viewpoints and thus was able to deduce the interpretations solely based on the findings, free of my personal judgments.

Throughout the data collection period, I maintained a typed journal to write down my thoughts, observations, and reflections. In fact, “scratch notes,” or field notes, have historically been considered a key component of qualitative research (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011) and more recently, field notes are understood as an essential component to enhance the rigor of qualitative research (Creswell, 2013; Lofland, Snow, Anderson, & Lofland, 2005; Mulhall, 2003; Patton, 2002; Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). These field notes were often not directly related to
my research questions but helped me to understand the data from various perspectives (see Appendix P). I stored these notes securely and confidentially for future research as I could not use them directly in this study.

**Transferability**

Transferability of this research can be measured by the dense description, purpose of sampling, and partial data saturation I did while conducting this study. I did a purposeful sampling of the research sites and participants to derive a richer data to fit my research questions. I provided a thick description of the research phenomenon, context, constructs, and my observations about them in Chapter 1, Chapter 2, and Chapter 3. Geertz (1973) introduced the idea of “thick description,” which refers to a dense description of the research phenomenon, including investigators’ observations (Paltridge & Phkiti, 2010). Accordingly, I included as many details as possible throughout the dissertation. Chapter 4 of this dissertation provides in-depth examples of the data presented through a wide range of tables, charts, and figures. Chapter 5 addresses the findings in reference to previous and future research, ensuring the rich descriptions of the issues. For the focus groups, although I mainly relied on emergent themes, voices of the dissenters were not ignored. While coding the data, I included the argumentative interaction (Sim, 1998) to reach within-group data saturation aiming at descriptive validity, interpretive validity, and theoretical validity of the themes (Onwuegbuzie at el., 2009). However, the findings of this study would not be entirely applicable in a different situation because of the contextual nature of the washback studies. Krefting (1991) noted that because of the contextual uniqueness of qualitative research, “the particular group studied may not relate to others, and hence conclusions may not be transferable. A key factor in the transferability of the data, then, is
the representativeness of the informants for that particular group” (p. 220). I have addressed this issue as one of the limitations of this study in Chapter 5.

**Dependability**

According to Silverman (2005), dependability in qualitative research refers to “the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions” (p. 224). The purpose of this criteria is to establish that the findings are repeatable if carried out with the same participants and context. To achieve dependability, from the beginning of this doctoral dissertation, I did an extensive literature review about the research construct and context. Based on the review and guidance from my supervisor and committee members, I developed the protocols which went through several phases of revisions. While getting ethics approval as well, I revised the study methods and protocols. I provided transparent descriptions of the methods and protocols (see Appendix D, E, F, G) and the rationale for using them. The protocols used in this doctoral study were distinctly mapped out with the research questions which further dependability.

Establishing an audit trail refers to providing an exemplary account of data collection, analysis, coding, and emerging themes (Dörnyei, 2007). To this end, Chapter 2 details the step by step processes of data collection, analyzing, and coding. To show the emerging themes, I have added the transcription and coding samples in the Appendices (see Appendix H & N). To improve the trustworthiness of the findings, I developed detailed data identification keys (see Appendix I).

**Confirmability**

As discussed earlier in this Chapter, I kept an informal field notebook to record my observations and ideas, which later helped me to crosscheck my biases as a researcher (see Appendix H). Another approach was a triangulation of the findings, which validated the results
and allowed me to confirm that the findings obtained from each of the methods were free of researcher biases.
Chapter 4: Findings

This Chapter presents the findings of the study, which address the three research questions shown in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1. Three research questions of the study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question (RQ)</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ1</td>
<td>Are the national English curriculum and textbook (mis)aligned with the SSC English Examination at the policy level? If so, how are they aligned? If not, how are they misaligned?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ2</td>
<td>Does this (mis)alignment relationship produce any washback effects on the classroom instruction at the SSC level? What is the nature of that washback, if any?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ3</td>
<td>Does this (mis)alignment relationship produce any washback effects on the students’ learning at the SSC level? What is the nature of that washback, if any?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1 presents the methods, data sources, and the main issues associated with the research questions of the study. In order to address RQ 1, three key documents were analyzed, and a face-to-face interview was conducted a curriculum specialist who was an SSC English curriculum, textbook, and question designer. Content analysis (Elo et al., 2014) was used to study the document data, and thematic analysis (Vaismoradi et al., 2016) was used to explore the interview data with the curriculum specialist. To answer RQ 2, face to face interviews were conducted with 10 English teachers from two schools. Six teachers’ (all of whom were also interviewees) English classrooms were observed. Both classroom observational data and interview data were analyzed using template analysis method (King, 2012). To answer RQ 3, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted with 49 students from the same two schools. Constant comparison analysis was employed to analyze data from the focus groups (Glaser, 1978, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987).
Table 4.1

Methods, Data Sources, and Issues Explored for each Research Questions Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Data Sources</th>
<th>Issues Explored</th>
<th>RQ addressed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Document analysis</td>
<td>a) English <em>National Curriculum</em> (2012), the associated English textbook <em>English for Today</em>, English question papers from 2018</td>
<td>How the alignment is realized at the policy level</td>
<td>RQ 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Interview with one curriculum specialist</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>a) 10 teachers from two schools</td>
<td>How the alignment relationship produces washback effects on classroom instruction</td>
<td>RQ 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Classroom observations of six teachers (total 22 classes) at two schools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>a) 10 focus groups from two schools with a total of 49 students</td>
<td>How the alignment relationship produces washback effects on students’ learning</td>
<td>RQ 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom observations</td>
<td>b)如何与政策方向的SSC英语考试对SSC政策层的宏观政策相关性关系如何与政策方向的SSC英语考试对SSC政策层的宏观政策相关性关系如何与政策方向的SSC英语考试对SSC政策层的宏观政策相关性关系如何与政策方向的SSC英语考试对SSC政策层的宏观政策相关性关系如何与政策方向的SSC英语考试对SSC政策层的宏观政策相关性关系</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Findings reported in this Chapter focus on the themes and categories developed through qualitative analysis of the data collected from documents, interviews, classroom observations, and focus groups shown in Table 4.1. Details of the procedures of data analysis were discussed in Chapter 3. This Chapter consists of three major sections: a) alignment at the policy level; b) washback on classroom instruction; and, 3) washback on learning.

Alignment at the Policy Level

This section addresses Research Question 1; that is, how the English *National Curriculum* (2012) and the associated textbook *EFT* at the SSC level are aligned with the SSC English examination at the policy level. RQ 1 has two sub-research questions shown in Figure 4.2.
The data collected to answer the research questions were derived from the analysis of three policy documents: 1) English *National Curriculum* (2012); 2) *English for Today* (*EFT*); and, 3) SSC English question papers from 2018. In addition, the interview with the curriculum specialist from NCTB provided valuable data. Together, the data from the documents and interview provided insights into RQ1 and its sub-research questions.

**Analysis of Policy Documents**

Analysis of the English *National Curriculum* (2012), *English for Today* and the English question papers from 2018 revealed two major alignment issues: a vague alignment of the curriculum goals and textbook objectives, and a misalignment between textbook activities and examination content (see Figure 4.3).
Vague alignment of learning outcomes. To guide teachers, the *National Curriculum* (2012) offers a list of 15 specific learning outcomes (see Appendix A). Likewise, each unit of *EFT* starts with a list of learning outcomes. The analysis of the documents showed the alignment between the learning outcomes stated in the English curriculum and the outcome identified in the textbook (*EFT*). Table 4.2 maps the stated learning outcomes across the 14 units of *EFT* as derived from the data. While the learning outcomes stated in the curriculum were addressed in the associated textbook, they were not articulated adequately (See Appendix A & B). As shown in Table 4.2, there are discrepancies between the curriculum and textbook, which may create unnecessary friction in classroom instruction.

Table 4.2

Mapping the Learning Outcomes in the English National Curriculum and in the Textbook

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>LO1</th>
<th>LO2</th>
<th>LO3</th>
<th>LO4</th>
<th>LO5</th>
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<th>LO12</th>
<th>LO13</th>
<th>LO14</th>
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<td>U8</td>
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<td>U13</td>
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<tr>
<td>U14</td>
<td></td>
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<td>✓</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

U1-14= Units from the textbook  
LO1- LO15= Learning outcomes stated in the English curriculum

Out of 15 National Curriculum learning outcomes, 11 of them were directly found as the learning outcomes in *EFT*, whereas four National Curriculum outcomes (LO 2, 7, 12 and 14) were not addressed at all in *EFT* (see the color marking in Table 2). For the most part, there was
alignment between the curriculum and textbook, as learning outcomes 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 8, 10, 11, 13, and 15 were addressed in the textbook. Learning outcomes 3, 6 and 13 were the most fully addressed outcomes in *EFT*. In some cases, the curriculum learning outcomes were not directly identified as the learning outcomes in the units of the textbooks, but the activities encompassed the learning outcomes. For example, Unit 2 of *EFT* included activities on giving opinions, but this was not one of the directly identified outcomes of the associated unit of the textbook.

The major problem was the uneven distribution of learning outcomes throughout the textbook. Some outcomes were recurrently addressed in many of the units of the textbook, while others were only addressed in one unit (i.e., learning outcome 5, 8, and 9). Those outcomes which were addressed possibly might create a vagueness in the understanding of the teachers. The learning outcomes stated in the curriculum were overlapping with each other (see Appendix A). For example, in Unit 1, phrases like “narrate incidents or describe something” were used as the stated learning outcomes; however, in the curriculum “describe” was the dominant word. There is a difference between narrating and describing. In both the curriculum and textbook, outcomes such as “giving suggestions, opinions, participating in the conversations, debates” were used almost interchangeably. As a researcher, I found it difficult to map the curriculum and textbook because there was so much overlap and confusion. This may also create confusion for teachers.

The learning outcomes included in the curriculum were tagged with specified skills to be taught, but the activities in *EFT* were written in an integrated manner—this is one of the basic tenets of any CLT-based textbook. For instance, learning outcome 15 (“read maps, charts, graphs”) was associated with reading and speaking skills in the curriculum, and it corresponded with the stated outcomes in Units 2, 4, and 13 of the textbook. But the activities included in those
units targeted teaching writing, vocabulary, and grammar along with speaking and listening (see the example in Table 4.3). So, hypothetically, if teachers looked at the curriculum for help, they would be confused about their classroom activities and how to use the textbook in classroom instruction. Table 4.3 provides a sample of how the learning outcomes of the curriculum are misaligned with the textbook activities. This chart explains how writing and grammar were identified to be taught as reading and speaking skills in the curriculum.

Table 4.3

A Sample of How the Learning Outcomes are Misaligned in Curriculum and Textbook

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LO stated in the curriculum</th>
<th>Sample associated activities in the textbook</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LO15 read maps, charts, graphs etc. (Class periods: 4) Reading and Speaking skills</td>
<td>Unit 4, pp. 54 &amp; 55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Read the chart and fill in the gaps with information from the table. Use comparatives and superlatives where necessary.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E Write a paragraph about the population situation of China. Use the facts given in the chart in D above.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Moreover, all the activities in EFT attempted to teach four language skills. However, no CD or tape was provided with the textbook to practice listening skills in the classroom.

**Misalignment between textbook and examination.** The textbook *English for Today* included activities targeting teaching four skills of language learning (speaking, listening, reading and writing) in accordance with the English *National Curriculum* (2012). However, the SSC English examination assessed only reading and writing. So, there was no reason to check the alignment in case of listening and speaking skills in any detail, as it was misaligned with the textbook activities. The SSC English examination had 12 items: six items were designed to assess reading skills and six items assessed writing skills (see sample question paper in Appendix
C). Based on the analysis of the alignment between the textbook activities and SSC English examination tasks, Table 4.4 outlines the alignment between them.

Table 4.4

Alignment between the English for Today Textbook and the English SSC Examination

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>U1</th>
<th>U2</th>
<th>U3</th>
<th>U4</th>
<th>U5</th>
<th>U6</th>
<th>U7</th>
<th>U8</th>
<th>U9</th>
<th>U10</th>
<th>U11</th>
<th>U12</th>
<th>U13</th>
<th>U14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

U1-14= Units from the textbooks; 11- 12= Items from the examination questions ; ●= items included as activities

According to Table 4.4, MCQ and opened ended questions (Items 1 & 2) were included almost in all the 14 units of the textbook. On the other hand, gap filling (Item 3), information transfer (Item 4), and matching (Item 6) did not have enough practice opportunities, whereas summary writing (Item 5), rearranging to tell a story (Item 7), and story completion (Item 9) did not have any direct practice activity in the textbook. For reading passages, guidelines prepared by the NCTB suggested using unseen passages, although, in all previous years, the SSC English examination included direct passages from *English for Today*. In the question paper for the 2018 English SSC examination, the first two passages were taken from page 176 and page 65 of *EFT* (see Appendix C). Additionally, on the 2018 SSC English examination, the paragraph on
“deforestation” was discussed on page 62 of *English for Today*. It is evident that the assessment tasks were not strongly based on the stated principles of the CLT-based English curriculum. The tasks were built on the activities given in the textbook, but they did not address the principles of the curriculum. Using passages from the textbook on the examination promotes memorization, which was neither the goal of the textbook nor the CLT-based curriculum. However, at face value, the textbook activities seemed to be aligned with the examination activities.

Except for story completion (Item 9), the other items for assessing writing skills, writing paragraph (Item 8), a graph describing (Item 10), letter/email writing (Item 11) and dialogues (Item 12) were included in the textbook to some extent. Since there were not enough practice activities included in the prescribed textbook, *EFT*, teachers, and students, by default, relied on external sources for practice in this situation.

Although most of the examination-tasks were included as activities in *EFT*, they were designed as group work or pair work; that is, as integrated practice activities. Table 4.5 describes the way activities were designed in one unit of *EFT*. 
Table 4.5

*Example of how Activities are Integrated into Unit 1*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading, Speaking and writing</td>
<td>▪ Discussing in pair and write the open-ended answers based on a reading passage:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D Answer these questions. First discuss in pairs, then write the answers individually.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 Why did the young man leave his house?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 Where did he make a hut? What did he make the hut with?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Matching answers with the pictures and texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E Look at the pictures (a–j). Read the following texts (1–10) and match the pictures with the texts. Write the numbers of the texts next to a, b, c, etc. The first one is done for you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening, reading &amp; writing</td>
<td>▪ MCQ based on listening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B Listen to the teacher / CD and answer the following questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Listening text 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Questions: Tick the best answer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 Which is the correct statement according to the information in the listening text?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a Good character does not mean special qualities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b Good citizens must have good character with other things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ MCQ based on the gap filling did previously (reading activity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C Fill in the blanks in the following passage with appropriate words from the box.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>harmonious allow behaviour respect good doing family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>class others sense qualities believe personally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Citizens having good character live a life of virtue. They may belong to any social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1) _________, upper or lower. Their thoughts and 2) _________ show</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>high moral values. That is, they have a strong 3) _________ of right and wrong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Paragraph writing based on the topics of listening tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F Write a paragraph about how tolerant or intolerant you are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>towards your classmates. Give examples.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As Table 4.5 shows, most of the activities in Unit 1 were designed for practicing in a pair or a group. The success of these activities for test preparation would depend on how the teachers had used them in the classroom; in order to be useful, the activities required modifications and a lot of extra work at the teachers’ end. The successful use of the textbook activities seemed largely dependent on how well trained the teachers were, as there was no supporting teachers’ book as well to explain how EFT could be used in classroom teaching. And, since listening and speaking were not tested on the SSC examination, teachers may not have appreciated the value of practicing integrated practice activities from EFT. Further, students were not able to practice individual skills on their own since no supporting workbook was provided with the prescribed textbook.

The discussion above illustrates that the prescribed English textbook, EFT, mostly corresponded with the goals of the English National Curriculum (2012), although it was misalignment with the SSC English examination. However, the activities included in EFT appeared to be deceptively aligned with the SSC examination tasks.

A Policymaker’s Perspective on Alignment

This section explores how the alignment relationship of curriculum, textbook, examination, and its washback effect were perceived by a lead curriculum planner, developer, textbook writer, and examination question developer, Aslam. Interview with Aslam primarily revealed three reasons behind the discrepancy across the policy documents (see Figure 4.4).
Gaps created by bureaucracy. Aslam pointed out the unique bureaucratic situations in Bangladesh that had led to coordination problems across the various organizations working under the Ministry of Education. He elaborately explained the individual and autonomous roles that NCTB, the directorate of secondary education, and the education board played in creating and designing the curriculum, textbook, classroom practices, and examination in the country. Although all these organizations operated under the Ministry of Education, they were not in alignment with each other. Aslam explained:

There is minimum coordination among these organizations. If NCTB designs and develops the curriculum and textbook, they should take the lead of classroom practices and drafting assessment policy and administer that as well. Contrarily, in our case, the curriculum is a book—only a written document by us but attempted to implemented by other people who do not realize the vision of this document. NCTB is only responsible for developing the curriculum; it is directorate of secondary education who implements
the curriculum. It is a different organization with different organograms with entirely
different people. What NCTB asks, ‘Hey, this is my curriculum, take this and
implement.’ They might feel that this is NCTB’s curriculum (IA-L11-18-P3).

Aslam explicitly mentioned that the major problem was the disconnected relationship
amongst various implementing agencies involved in curriculum distribution. The above interview
excerpt indicated that since the curriculum document was solely written by the experts at NCTB,
people from the implementing organization might not accept it. Aslam further noted that, “Even
the test administrators are assessment-illiterate” (IA-L12-P7). Aslam pointed out that people
involved in implementing the examination based on the curriculum did not possess assessment
literacy either. Monitoring the classroom practices also came under the jurisdiction of the
Directorate, but because of the long bureaucratic process and lack of manpower, they were not
able to monitor the classroom teaching of English, a frustrated Aslam added. He stated:

In many countries, there are experts to judge the difference between implemented and
intended curriculum to measure the gap. We do not have the consistent efforts to
measure the gap. Sometimes we measure, but we do not take the right efforts to
minimize the gap (IA-L19-21-P3).

However, according to Aslam, the bureaucratic gap between NCTB and the education
board was the major obstacle in bridging the curriculum goals and examination goals. “The
education boards are in charge of the administration of the SSC examination but not NCTB.
Boards select the question setters, markers and administer the process,” Aslam mentioned (IA-
L3-5-P4). Aslam hinted that the SSC English examination often was not built on the standards of
the curriculum because the examination questions were prepared by some other people who
might not understand the goals of the CLT curriculum. He even questioned the role of the
Ministry of Education:
The purpose of the ministry of education is very dubious. They are the least bothered about the quality. They are unaware of what a valid test is; they have no idea about reliability or any other components of testing. They only want to see how many students are scoring, passing, and getting GPA 5 and they want to politicize this (IA-L28-31-P4).

Dealing with issues of curriculum and textbook misalignment is not simple. The researcher’s conversation with Aslam illustrated the frustrating nature of political and bureaucratic processes of curriculum alignment in Bangladesh.

**Problematic examination.** As someone deeply involved in the process of developing an English curriculum and writing the textbook, Aslam seemed satisfied that the curriculum goals were largely reflected in *English for Today*. “The textbook is written following the learning objectives stated in the curriculum, and all test items are included in the textbook,” he noted (IA-L7-8-P7). But the problematic area appeared to be the mismatch between the SSC examination and the curriculum goals. Aslam explained:

The suggestions we made in the curriculum are implemented partially and sometimes in a faulty way in setting the question paper. Let me give you an example: when it is an issue of reliable assessment, CLT does not allow you to take reading texts directly from the textbooks. Because it is already in the textbook, it will promote memorization. The provision is that question setter will prepare the unseen reading texts, and students will read and answer them in the examination. But, in reality, in the SSC examination texts are used from the prescribed textbooks (IA-L34-38-P2).

The problem of question setting was that NCTB did not have any control over education boards or how they set the questions. At first glance, it seemed that the questions were set following the CLT guidelines, but they were applied in a flawed way. Aslam unequivocally spoke about how the topics of the writing section in the SSC English examination promoted memorization:
Look at the topics for compositions, letters or stories for last many years in this country: bus stop, winter morning, tea stall, train journey are fixed topics in the English SSC examination. Students memorize a few common topics, and they will easily score high in the examination (IA-L36-39-P9).

The result of this predictability was that textbook activities were not needed to practice anymore. Students could simply memorize the important topics as part of their test preparation. The English National Curriculum (2012) recurrently stressed the use of real-life situations in teaching English, so that students could use English in real life communications. Although the curriculum did not specify the real-life situations, the interview with Aslam revealed that students at the SSC level were expected to be able to describe “their real situations, experiences, everyday activities, meal plans, schools without memorizing them, would be capable enough to fill the basic school forms in English, immigration cards, or important forms in their daily life in English” (IA-L28-30-P9). This concept of using English in real life situation was reflected in the prescribed textbook as well. However, Aslam explained that since the SSC English examination did not include any real-life English uses in the examination, the classroom teaching and learning of English was also devoid of any real English skills.

**The absence of required resources.** The activities in EFT were designed in an integrated manner to practice all four language skills, as encouraged by the curriculum, which stated that “skills should be practiced in an integrated manner- not in isolation” (National Curriculum, 2012, p. 75). Despite that, no CD was included with the textbook to practice skills in the classroom. About this discrepancy, Aslam commented:

> There might be some gaps, but generally, there is a very good coordination between the textbook and curriculum. Even though the ministry promised us that CDs would be provided with the textbook, they hurriedly disseminated the textbooks without the CDs. The first year passed by but we could not give them the CDs—not even the audio files.
As a result, students could not practice them. What we observed from 1995 to 2012, no practice of listening, little practice of speaking. Then after 2-3 years, by 2015 we developed the audio files being funded by a donor agency. Later, the audio clips were uploaded on the NCTB website. Still teachers are not using them. A good number of teachers are at all not aware that audios are available. Since they are not practiced, they are not assessed as well (IA-L15-20-P2).

The goals of the curriculum to teach English communicatively fell flat when the teachers and students did not have the required audio-visual materials to practice them in the class. To use the textbook activities effectively, audios clips were needed. Even though the curriculum specialist claimed that the audio clips were uploaded on the website, I could not find them myself. Document analysis also revealed that in the case of teaching listening skills, there was an obvious gap between the textbook and the curriculum. Moreover, implementing the curriculum goals of teaching the English language effectively were hindered by some contextual factors. For example, in the rural schools of Bangladesh, there was no regular power supply or devices to run the audio clips for listening. The following excerpt sheds light on this issue:

The schools did not have the instruments to use tape or CD. Then the donor agency agreed to provide the instruments. Then came the question of the power supply. If we do not have any power supply, how would we play the cassettes or CDs? Alternately, we thought to supply the dry cell batteries. Then came the question of who will continuously supply the batteries. And there was no consensus (IA-L29-33-P1).

In Bangladesh, aligning the curriculum goals depended on the financial infrastructures of the country. Because of financial limitations in the first few years of the new English curriculum and textbook, the curriculum developers could not create the audio clips. Once they had a donor agency to support the project, there were issues related to power supply and devices. Aligning
the curriculum with the textbook level in classroom instruction in nationwide was problematic because the country did not have supporting infrastructure to support the communicative goals.

Large classroom sizes were also a common barrier in implementing the principles of the CLT-based curriculum in the classroom as well as in the SSC English examination. Aslam questioned, “we have 80 or 100 students in the classroom, and in the public examination, there are many hundred thousand students. What would be the modality to teach and assess speaking or listening skills?” (IA-L24-26-P1). He thought that the high number of test-takers was not ideal for assessing the listening and speaking skills in the country.

Aslam identified the lack of proficient question setters as one of the other reasons causing disagreement between the curriculum and the examination. “Bangladeshi teachers are generally test-illiterate. The test is a very fragile area of this unfortunate country and much neglected. There are hardly any selection criteria for question setters and markers” (IA-L9-10-P7). The following excerpt from Aslam’s interview helps illuminate this point:

The alignment exits either partially or in the wrong form. People who are working in this field do not have a crystal-clear idea about testing and assessment. After showing them how to set the question papers also, they couldn’t do that. Their proficiency level of English is very low (IA-L16-19-P7).

To properly implement the CLT-based curriculum in the examination, Bangladesh needed proficient practitioners with language assessment and testing knowledge. Aslam opined that the design of the question papers never matched the objectives of the curriculum because the English teachers who worked as the question setters did not have assessment knowledge. Aslam even indicated that the absence of language assessment literacy is doubled by the problem of their poor language ability. In clarifying his point, Aslam offered another example:

People who are teaching at the SSC level, their English proficiency level is equal to the standard of class seven. Second is, the question papers they are preparing, their own
English is not correct. For example, the curriculum and guideline say to provide an unseen passage. The quality of the questions is very low, which are done based on the text. In one of the previous year, SSC English question paper had a text on Savar Memorial in Bangladesh. The question was how the structures of that memorial stand. Distractor one says, horizontally, two says vertically, and three says oblique. Now you tell me to answer this question, will the students need to read the text? This is a fact, and all Bangladeshi citizens know this fact (IA-L20-27-P7).

This example raises questions about the quality of the question setters of the SSC English examination in the country. When the teachers did not have adequate proficiency in the language, they were not able to grasp the communicative goals of the curriculum, instructions, and examination.

The points raised by Aslam clarified the reasons for discrepancy at the policy level in the country. The analysis of the documents and interview with the curriculum specialist revealed a complicated alignment situation in the case of SSC English teaching in Bangladesh. Data from the document analysis revealed that the SSC examination was misaligned with the curriculum and textbook. In providing a further understanding of the alignment relationship of these policy documents, the interview with the curriculum specialist provided insights about these discrepancies. While discussing the existing differences between the English National Curriculum (2012), English for Today, and the SSC English examination, Aslam stated that the major problem began and ended with the vision of curriculum planning: “the vision of the English curriculum remained only as a vision” (IA-L27-P10). He was frustrated by inconsistencies among the key policy documents and the resulting adverse effects of the examination on English teaching and learning. To summarize, the English curriculum agreed with the associated textbook, whereas the SSC English examination was largely in disagreement.
with the curriculum as well as the textbook. The next section discusses how this alignment relationship creates test-washback in English classroom instruction at the SSC level.

**Washback on Classroom Instruction**

This section presents the results of the interviews and classroom observations at two schools. School A was one of the top performing schools in Bangladesh, whereas School B was one of the low performing schools. One to one in-depth interviews were conducted with 10 English teachers and six teachers’ (out of the same 10 interviewed teachers) classrooms were observed from both schools. The results obtained from the interviews and observations answered Research Question 2 regarding how teachers perceived the examination effects in their classroom instructions. RQ 2 has four sub-research questions which are listed in Figure 4.5. The first three sub-research questions focused on how the alignment between curriculum objectives and classroom instructional objectives, alignment between textbook activities and classroom activities, and alignment between classroom activities and examination tasks might create examination washback in classroom instruction. The last sub-research question explored whether examination washback was perceived differently by the teachers in School A and School B.

*Figure 4.5. Interview and classroom observation data answering RQ 2.*
This portion of this Chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section presents the results of the interview data, focusing on what teachers perceived as washback in their teaching. The second section presents the results of the observational data and focuses on how washback was realized in classroom instruction.

**What Teachers Say: Interviews**

The following section presents the results of the interview data. Six themes were derived from the data: 1) instructional practices; 2) uses of textbook & supplementary materials; 3) examination preparation vs. real-life performance; 4) institutional and family factors; 5) constraints to follow the curriculum objectives; and, 6) problematic examination. To make the themes more visual, I used different colors in Figure 4.6, which are consistent with the colors used in the frequency table (see Table 4.6). The themes in the following figure are arranged clockwise according to the most mentioned themes to the least mentioned themes in Table 4.6. The themes in Figure 4.6 are presented along with their categories.

**Figure 4.6.** Themes and categories found in the interview data.
A frequency table (see Table 4.6) shows the frequencies of the corresponding categories of each of the themes. Table 4.6 shows how frequently the categories were found across the 10 interviews, and the themes are arranged accordingly (see Figure 4.6).

The categories listed under Theme 1 were the most commonly mentioned across the 10 interviews. Except for the category “giving exam tips,” which emerged only in the interviews from School A, the rest of the categories (“examination-based lesson plans,” “importance of examination,” and “examination preparation”) appeared in all 10 interviews. Thus, “instructional practice” was labeled as the most frequently mentioned theme. The second most frequently mentioned theme was “uses of textbook & supplementary materials.” In Theme 2, the category “EFT is not enough for test preparation” was found in all 10 interviews, whereas teacher-made materials emerged in the interviews of the teachers from School A and guidebooks were mentioned in School B’s teacher interviews. In Theme 3, the first category, “examination score vs ability to use” appeared in all interviews, but the other one, “limited use of English within classroom,” surfaced in most of the interviews. Theme 4 has two categories: “supporting school/accountability for the results” and “parents/family.” The first category emerged only in the teacher interviews from School A, and the second one emerged in the majority of the interviews from both schools. In Theme 5, categories such as “large classroom,” “time constraints,” and “lack of equipment/infrastructure/library” were mentioned by more than half of the interviews, mostly in the School A’s interviews. The other category, “lack of teacher training,” occurred in a few interviews. Finally, Theme 6 had the least frequently mentioned categories: “problems in question setting” and “poor evaluation of the script.”
Table 4.6

The Frequency of the Conceptual Codes Across 10 Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
<th>T3</th>
<th>T4</th>
<th>T5</th>
<th>T6</th>
<th>T7</th>
<th>T8</th>
<th>T9</th>
<th>T10</th>
<th>Freq Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Instructional practices</td>
<td>Exam based lesson plans</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Importance of exam/exam scores</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
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Note: (T1 Porshi, T2 Laboni, T3 Forid, T4 Faria, T5 Roji, T6 Shakira, T7 Marzina, T8 Diba, T9 Sonju, T10 Shoha)

Table 4.6 is essential to understand which categories emerged from which interviews. It clarifies the intensity of the categories as well as shows the differences between School A and School B.

Themes obtained from the interviews are presented below. I have presented each of the themes with a visual diagram to increase the reader’s comprehension. Some of the diagrams (Figure 4.7, 4.8, & 4.10) are presented along with the codes (the most right-handed tabs) because as categories they are too informative. The codes would provide added clarity to the descriptions.
Theme 1: Instructional practices.

![Diagram of instructional practices]

Figure 4.7. Teachers’ instructional practices (theme, categories, and codes).

The instructional practices that teachers explored in the interviews revealed three major issues: examination-based lesson plans, examination preparation, and giving examination tips. Examination-based lesson plans and the importance of examination scores. While setting teaching objectives, the sampled teachers from both schools prepared the lesson plans based on the examination syllabus. Diba (School B) described her process of setting the teaching objectives: “while writing the class objectives, I keep the examination topics in my mind that I need to complete to prepare for the examination” (T8-SB-L10-11-P3). Faria, from School A, stated that she divided her class schedule into two parts; that is, difficult examination items and easy items, which helped her to complete the examination items before the examination. While discussing the lesson plans, two of the teachers narrated their experiences as follows:

In my brain, I know that I have to prepare them for 200 hundred marks of examination, and I have to complete the syllabus within the given time. For example, if I have one month to prepare them before the examination, I will divide the examination topics in
four weeks. Each week I have to complete a few of the test topics and give them class tests on those topics (T3-SA-L23-24-P7).

I planned weekly; that is, which topic to cover which week before the examination. For example, I may teach a subject-verb agreement for two days (two periods). Then I make the students practice the exercises from the guidebook and give them homework to practice at home. After that, I give them a small class test on this topic. So, I am done. This is how I plan for examination preparation (T10-SB-L17-21-P2).

Teachers’ classroom objectives were to teach the examination items which would prepare the students for the SSC English examination. As Forid described in the above quotation, his planning of the objectives was based on the examination topics that he needed to complete within the given time. He always thought about the scores in planning the classroom lessons. Compared to Forid (School A), the much younger and less experienced teachers from School B, including Shoha, also aimed to complete the examination syllabus. Apparently, examination preparation and classroom objectives were the same in her mind. Shoha considered her work as “done” once the examination syllabus was completed. Including Forid and Shoha, none of the other teachers articulated any teaching objectives which would develop the English proficiency of the students. Moreover, Forid, while outlining his teaching topics, explained, “if I have five classes in a week, I think two of them should be on grammar, one of them should be on reading skill, and two of them should be on writing skill” (T3-SA-L26-28-P7). However, all the teachers pointed out that as an English language teacher, they wanted to improve the English language of the students. Laboni (School A) expressed a utilitarian purpose for learning English: “I want the students to be a better user of English because, for higher education or better job, they need to be proficient in English. But, without a better score, they wouldn’t get the entry to their desired positions” (T2-SA-L6-8-P2). The same idea was stated by Porshi and Faria from School A, and Diba, Shakira and Marzina from School B. Even though they wanted their students to be able to use English in
higher education and jobs, their classroom teaching objectives always remained examination syllabus oriented because they knew the importance of score in the context of the country.

Noticeably, teachers’ examination-oriented teaching objectives were the result of the fact that they took examination scores seriously. While discussing the importance of examination, Marzina (School B) questioned, “the most important thing is examination result, isn’t it?” (T7-SB-L5-P20). In the same line of thought, Roji (School A) revealed, “the sole objective of classroom teaching of English is ensuring high score in the board examination” (T5-SA-L11-P20). Another teacher from the same school, Porshi, stated, “the primary aim is to do well in the board examination” (T1-SA-L8-P6). Shoha (School B) explained, “according to our education system, the examination is the most important thing. When we go to the class, our top priority is examination” (T10-SB-L4-P18). All 10 interviewees termed the examination or the score of the examination as “the most important” factor in their teaching agenda. Few teachers, like Porshi (School A) and Marzina (School B), thought that the examination was important because it made the students feel pressure to study. Marzina thought that examination would motivate the students to study where they otherwise wouldn’t, whereas Porshi believed that examination was needed to keep the students on track.

**Examination preparation.** At both schools, teachers spent time in grade 10, preparing the students for the upcoming SSC examination. The plan was to complete the syllabus by grade 9, and grade 10 would be used for revising, preparing, and giving model tests and exams. In explaining the teaching plan, Porshi (School A) noted, “we always plan to complete the SSC syllabus by grade 9. We do not have time to teach anything new in Grade 10” (T1-SA-L10-11-P8). One of the other teachers from School B stated almost the same, saying, “grade 10 is for preparing the candidates for the examination” (T6-SB-L9-P18). The concentration on examination preparation was so high that one of the teachers almost boastfully stated, “we make
students practice so much that they become expert in taking the examination. Anytime you give them a surprise test in English; they still will be able to write the examination” (T2-SA-L31-33-P6). It was apparent that test candidates spent almost a year practicing the examination related materials and getting the pattern of the examination.

When asked what types of activities teachers did explicitly for the purpose of the examination, teachers from both schools mentioned practicing previous years’ board question papers and solving the test papers (test papers are the collected question papers of the selection examination from various top schools). In fact, during the whole duration of the SSC program, teachers only practiced reading and writing skills aligned with the examination tasks, and usually did not practice listening and speaking skills. Most of the teachers from both schools did not allocate any of the class periods to teach listening and speaking skills. They divided their teaching time to teach grammar, reading, and writing skills because these skills were tested in the SSC English examination. Roji (School A) claimed that she tried to teach speaking and listening skills occasionally. However, “after selection examination, we only solve the test papers and make them practice important question papers from various other good schools,” she further added (T5-SA-L1-2-P15). Similarly, Laboni (School A) noted, “we practice examination-related materials repeatedly so that at least they do well in the examination” (T2-SA-L38-P6). This was reflected when teachers were teaching writing skills. Teaching was spent in explaining the basic structure of the compositions and stressing the important topics (which were repeated in the previous SSC English examinations). These 10 sampled teachers directly or indirectly pointed out practice examination materials as the key to becoming successful in the SSC English examination. For example, Marzina (School B) claimed, “students might be knowledgeable about many things, but if they do not know the examination patterns, they will not do well in the examination” (T7-SB-L11-12-P17). She further added, “there is no other way to do well in the
examination except practicing the examination tasks” (T7-SB-L1-2-P16). The teaching content was narrowed to the examination syllabus so much so that Shakira (School B) stated, “the guidebook that we use contains many unnecessary practice materials which I don’t use in my classes because usually, those questions don’t come in the SSC examination” (T6-SB-L6-8-P7).

Practice exams became most intense in the last two months before the SSC examination, as Forid (School A) mentioned: “in the last two months there are no classes- test candidates take model tests” (T3-SA-L1-2-P12). Unlike the School B, School A took the model tests more seriously. Regarding this, Laboni informed, “students study harder for the examinations which are given before the SSC examination. If they have poor marks, they might not be allowed to sit for the board examination” (T2-SA-L13-15-P19). On the other hand, regarding the same matter, Marzina (School B) commented, “we try not to make the internal examinations harder for the students because they would pass if they can sit at the board examination” (T7-SB-L29-30-P7). Another teacher from the same school, Shakira, remarked that students preferred not to come to the coaching classes (School B had special coaching classes for the SSC test candidates) once the selection examination was over. From the conversations with Diba, Sonju, and Shoha (School B), it appeared that School B was not that strict about the examination giving policy. These comments illustrate how the test preparation was more intense and rigorous at School A compared to School B.

All 10 interviewed teachers stated that students prepared or practiced a limited number of topics. Thus, they were highly dependent on memorization. Forid (School A) who always encouraged creative writing, noted that “90% students” in his school memorized to prepare for the examination. According to him, the memorization took place because of the fixed syllabus and fixed topics, so that “students already know what topic to memorize for the examination” (T3-SA-L15-P10). Another teacher from School B expressed almost the same idea, stating that,
“students are studying the same topics since Grade six” (T9-SB-L20-P12). Shoha (School B) explained: “from grade 6 to 10, the topics of letters, emails, paragraphs, and compositions are the same. With a higher level of grade, the length of compositions increases but the topics remain the same” (T10-SB-L3-6-P10). When the examination was nearer, some selected topics for the writing part were suggested to the students, which they practiced before the examination. One of the teachers clarified:

We know which topics are important for the examination. We are the moderator; we are the question setters, we know it. In Class 10 we generally make the students prepare on 15 to 20 writing topics and right before the examination students sort out eight to ten topics based on suggestions from various teachers and one out of that ten topics come in the examination (T3-SA-L5-10-P10).

It appears that students generally prepared based on a small list of suggestions given by the teachers. This above mentioned statement shed light to one factor that is probably working at the board as question setter or moderator helped those few selected teachers to prepare a suggestion list for their students, which might not be an option for teachers who did not work in these capacities. The following two excerpts show how examination suggestions were created:

For example, composition on ‘flood’ came in the last five years of SSC examinations across the various boards. It means that it is a must topic to prepare for the students. Or maybe, ‘national flag’ has come in this year’s question, we cannot remove it from the list of topics. Usually, topics get repeated; ‘national flag’ came as the composition topic repeatedly for two/three times (T5-SA-L4-8-P15).
Practicing topics which frequently come to the board examination and solving the previous examination question papers are enough to prepare for the writing part. Usually, there are four or five common topics which frequently appear in the SSC English examination. Occasionally, there might be one new topic (T10-SB-L23-28-P14).

In the above passages, Roji’s and Shoha’s techniques for finding out important composition topics for the examination illuminate the reason that students did not try to learn new topics and why they were dependent on memorization. Students not only memorized the compositions but also they used the same memorization techniques in case of grammar items. Regarding this Shakira (School B) commented, “I try to teach the grammar rules so that students can use them. However, students who cannot understand- they memorize” (T6-SB-L9-10-P16). The idea of preparing suggestions demonstrated the intensity and fixity of the SSC English examination preparation procedures that test candidates went through. Further, this fixed and limited test preparation raised a question on the quality of the SSC English examination test design as well. The SSC English examination directly pushed the students to take an intense but limited test preparation.

Although after-school coaching did not count as teachers’ classroom practices, interviews with the teachers showed that teachers were aware of this matter. Except for two teachers (Forid and Porshi, School A), others refrained from commenting on coaching. Since private coaching was discouraged at both Schools A and B, aside from Porshi (School A), the teachers ran private coaching centers, but they did not want to give any feedback on coaching. Forid (School A) blamed coaching for destroying the English education of the country and questioned, “what do they do in the coaching except solving the sheets?” (T2-SA-L7-P17). Faria from the same school also did not see any value in coaching other than arranging model tests. She remarked, “the sole
goal of coaching is to prepare the students for higher score in the examination. In my coaching classes, I only give them model questions to solve” (T4-SA-L27-29-P16). On the other hand, Porshi (School A) praised the efforts that the coaching centers gave to prepare the students for the SSC examination, saying, “Students get more practice opportunities at the coaching centers, which teachers cannot provide in the classrooms. Students practice sheets and take more exams which help them getting ready for the board examination” (T1-SA-L11-13-P15). Regardless of what teachers’ opinions, they acknowledged that most students preferred going to the coaching centers for better examination preparation.

**Giving examination tips.** Teachers, especially from School A, taught more specific examination techniques to the students than the teachers at School B. Roji (School A) gave an example how students from her schools knew the examination patterns better than students from other schools:

We made the students write within 250 words as the question has this specific instruction. Students from another school who come to me for coaching did not know about this instruction. Many of them are not informed about the basic difference between an essay and paragraph. We teach our students to read the questions before they answer (T5-SA-L8-12-P7).

This quotation shows that School A’s teachers carefully prepared students so that they could fulfill the requirements to get extra marks. Roji stressed the importance of understanding the exact prerequisite of the questions to secure perfect scores. For example, she coached her students not to write more than 250 words so that they did not lose marks. Even though most of the teachers recognized the problem of memorization, Forid (School A) said in the interview, “I always encourage my students to write something novel. As a marker, I know that this would
give them extra marks in the SSC examination” (T3-SA-L20-21-P4). None of the teachers from School B articulated specific information like this while talking about how they prepared their students. Teachers who worked as markers at the education board used to share that marking criteria information in their classrooms. Marzina (School B) explained, “sometimes good students ask how to score the highest, then these tips are beneficial” (T7-SB-L9-10-P8). Porshi from School A specifically mentioned that her experience as a marker at the education board helped her inform her students about “how much mark is deducted for what kind of mistake” (T1-SA-L19-P4). She further added, “while marking the scripts, we get some specific information about marking from the board, which I always share with my students” (T1-SA-L21-24-P4). Elaborating on this idea, another colleague from the same school stated, “after checking hundreds of scripts every year, we get ideas about the common mistakes which students tend to make. We prepare our students about these common mistakes” (T2-SA-L5-8-P3). Teachers from School A possessed more examination knowledge because of their long teaching experiences as well as their backgrounds as markers or question setters.

**Theme 2: Uses of textbook and supplementary materials.**

![Diagram](image)

*Figure 4.8. Uses of textbook and supplementary materials (theme, categories, and codes).*
Interviews with 10 practicing teachers revealed that none of them used the activities from the prescribed textbook *English for Today* in their classroom teaching. Since the SSC English examination used some reading comprehension passages in the question paper (known as the seen passage, as the texts are taken from *EFT*), teachers made the student read the texts. In fact, the use of *EFT* was limited to reading the passages. In narrating her classroom activities, Laboni (School A) said, “I write the activities on the board and ask them to use their textbooks to read the corresponding passage, or sometimes I give them printed handouts” (T2-SA-L18-19-P6). Faria (School A) pointed out why the use of *EFT* was minimal in her teaching: “only a smaller portion comes directly from EFT, so why would we waste our time teaching EFT in the classroom?” (T4-SA-L5-6-P8). The same idea was suggested by Marzina (School B). She said, “the SSC English examination does not include much from *EFT*, so if we teach only the textbook, then the preparation for the examination will not be complete” (T7-SB-L1-2-P13). Based on their experiences, teachers did not see the value in using the textbook activities for the examination preparation since those activities were not directly built on the examinations. Diba (School B) clearly articulated the reason for not using EFT activities; that is, as she stated, “the question patterns of the SSC English examination do not match the *EFT* activities. I do not think that EFT is at all helpful in classroom teaching” (T8-SB-L16-18-P7). Since teachers could not practice the question patterns through the activities included in *EFT*, they did not want to use it. The following excerpt expands on this line of thinking:

I feel that *EFT* is only 5% relevant to the SSC examination. The activities in *EFT* includes instructions such, conversing with a friend, doing group work or pair work. All the activities are given in a group or pair work format. The students have to sit for various internal examinations to be ready for the public examination. Within this short period of time, it is not possible to relate those *EFT* activities when we are under examination
pressure. The SSC examination question includes some of the passages from the textbook, but not the activities (T9-SB-L15-21-P19).

Sonju, in the above quotation, clarified that activities in the EFT were too luxurious to prepare the students for the examination within a short period of time, especially when these activities directly did not contribute to the examination preparation. Probably, if the teachers would have more class time and less examination pressure, they would be motivated to use those EFT activities in teaching English in the classroom.

Teachers who wanted to use EFT to some extent taught only vocabulary words from the reading texts, as pointed out by Faria, Laboni, and Forid from School A, and Shakira, Shoha, and Diba from School B. These teachers thought that learning vocabulary would help students solve examination questions. Forid described his uses of EFT in this way:

I ask the students to read the passage. Then I write the important vocabularies on the board and teach them their synonyms and antonyms. Sometimes I teach the formation of words, that is, suffix and prefix, which are helpful for the grammar part. In this way, if they read only 10 passages, they will learn the expected vocabularies which are important for the examination. It will be easy for them to answer in the board examination. Then I give them the questions, and they solve those (T3-SA-L24-30-P11).

This excerpt explains that teachers wanted to use only those things from the textbook, which would be beneficial for the examination preparation. Forid suggested learning vocabularies only from 10 passages to be ready for the examination, which again indirectly pointed to the limited teaching and learning opportunities that the SSC examination had created in the classroom. Teaching vocabularies and grammar items were needed as part of the examination preparation. So, a few teachers attempted to use EFT to some small extent.
In terms of uses of supplementary materials, the primary difference between the teachers of Schools A and B was that School A’s teachers used their personal materials complied from various guidebooks, whereas School B’s teachers used a commercially published guidebook which contained sample questions, model tests, and previous board questions. When asked about the source of their personal materials, Laboni (School A) answered, “I use texts from variously available guidebooks, test papers, and previous question papers” (T2-SA-L2-P8). It appears that even though she did not take a guidebook to the classroom, she still took activities from various commercially published guidebooks. Four other teachers from School A did not provide a clear answer about their source for materials. However, from the interviews, I understood that School A’s teachers took help from a range of guidebooks to prepare their classroom activities.

Teachers from School B had exclusively used a guidebook that replaced the textbook in classroom instruction. “We do not touch the activities from the textbook, because we get all the important questions and topics in the guidebook” (T8-SB-L15-16-P12). In explaining why they preferred using a guidebook instead of the textbook, Shakira (School B) said:

To prepare the students for the examination, we do not need to carry or use EFT in the classrooms. The suggested activities in that book are not used in the board examination. Yes, I know that some passages are directly used in the examination, but all guidebooks also have those text passages with the required following activities. So, instead of using the textbook, we use the guidebook, which is more helpful to prepare the students. From the guidebooks, they can practice lots of activities based on the passages from the EFT textbook, which prepare them for the SSC examination (T6-SB-L24-31-P17).

Teachers at School B used guidebooks because they did not have to prepare the activities in this case. The textbook activities needed input from the teachers’ side to mold them from fitting the examination activities. On the other hand, guidebooks had readymade examination activities, which students could drill to take preparation for the board examination. In this
connection, Shoha from School B commented, “using this guidebook in the classrooms save lots of our time” (T10-SB-L3-P11). Diba (School B) thought that having a supporting workbook would have been helpful in using the prescribed textbook. She questioned, “since there is no activity book, from where should we make the students practice for the examination?” (T8-SB-L17-18-P12). Discussions about the uses of the textbook in English classroom instruction indicated that teachers primarily did not use EFT because they did not see the direct match between the activities and examination tasks. As a result, they chose to use previous question papers and guidebooks to prepare the students for the examination.

**Theme 3: Examination preparation versus real-life performance.**

![Diagram](image.png)

*Figure 4.9. Examination prep versus real-life performance (theme and categories).*

Teachers appeared to be confident about their students’ success in the SSC English examination. However, the same teachers did not think that getting a good score validated their ability to use the English language in real life. One of the teachers explained the problem:

For the examination, students prepare within the limited topics. For example, the story completion test item is usually set based on some known stories, and students take preparation based on those few limited stories. They practice each of the test items, maybe for 100 times. They are trained for the examination. But, if you ask them to write 10 sentences from their day-to-day life, you will see blank faces. In this situation, we cannot predict their ability based on the score (T4-SA-L12-17-P16).
Several of the teachers discussed the issue of limited examination preparation. The SSC English examination required the students to practice and drill a few common and fixed topics, which eventually did not develop their ability to use English in real life. Forid (School A) expressed frustration that students could not write if the topics were not known and practiced. The same frustration was voiced by Marzina (School B) when she said:

Students don’t have the opportunity to do real-life communication. The classrooms don’t have the environment to practice real-life communications and the way the English examination is set, students can do well by drilling, but that doesn’t develop their communication skills (T7-SB-L12-15-P11).

Classroom instruction was drilling-based and helped the students to be prepared for the examination, but this examination preparation did not prepare them for real-life communication in English. This reveals how students in Bangladesh have limited uses of English within the classroom. Indeed, Laboni (School A) noted, “students do not have the scope to use English out of the classroom, and so they are happy as long as they score high, even if their language skills do not get improved” (T2-SA-L20-22-P17). Since students did not need English to carry their regular activities, they considered English at the SSC level only as a subject in which they wanted to score highly. Because students did not need to use English outside of the classrooms, they did not feel motivated to learn English. Shakira commented, “you cannot expect the students to work hard to learn something for nothing- which does not have a use” (T6-SB-L19-20-P19).

Explaining the issue further, Sonju (School B) stated:

Once students are out of the class, they don’t use English. In fact, English doesn’t have a contextual use in our country. So, the classroom is the only place to learn and practice English. Therefore, students are not proficient users of English even after learning English at the school level for many years. Unfortunately, in Bangladesh, English is seen merely as one of the subjects (T9-SB-L11-18-P20).
The above-mentioned excerpt indicates that the teaching and learning of English in the country was trapped within the walls of the classroom instructions. Shoha from the same school illuminated more:

Students do not get to talk to anybody in English after coming out of class. They do not get an English-speaking environment. Of course, we need English in higher education and in professional life, but kids at the SSC level do not realize how much they need English. We teach them a composition on the importance of learning English. So, if you ask them, most of them would answer that they need English for education, jobs, or global communication. But they do not realize the same primarily because the SSC examination fails to create learning opportunities. Thus, they don’t feel the interest or motivation in learning the language other than scoring in the examination (T10-SB-L1-6-P3).

Not only Sonju and Shoha but also other eight teachers from both the schools directly or indirectly indicated that there were no out-of-class uses of English for the students, which made it harder to feel interested or motivated to learn the language. Contrarily, the higher score in the examination was considered as more valuable in the context of the country. Moreover, the way English was taught in the classrooms and the way English was tested in the SSC examination, students’ score was no more reliable to predict the actual ability of the students. Teachers were not confident in their students’ performance as an English user, even if the students scored well on the examination.
Theme 4: Institutional and family factors.

Figure 4.10. Institutional and family factors (theme, categories, and codes).

All the teachers from School A mentioned that they had nurtured their students from the beginning of their academic life. In general, School A’s students were good at English because of the extra support and care they received from teachers. It seemed that teachers from School A felt more accountable to the school authorities for students’ result in the SSC examination. One of the teachers said, “our goal is to complete the syllabus much before the examination. Otherwise, I have to answer to the authority for not being able to do that” (T1-SA-L25-26-P7). Laboni from School A felt accountable for maintaining the goodwill of the school by ensuring the good results of the students. In discussing the reasons for good results, the most experienced participant among all the interviewees stated, “the main driving force is school monitoring. In many of the other schools, there is no monitoring in teaching, and thus, they don’t do well in the public examination” (T3-SA-L27-28-P8). This echoed in the interviews with the teachers from School B. Even though, they also cared about the better results of their students, monitoring and accountability did not seem as prevalent as it was at School A. Interviews with School A’s
teachers indicated that they worked under an accountable school system, where they had to answer for the poor scores of the students. In this situation, they focused on examination preparation to please school authorities. At the end of the day, they were accountable not for learning, but for good test results. However, responsibility for good results and obligation to the school authorities was missing from the discussions with the teachers at School B. Also, teachers at School A claimed that they had been nurturing the students from a young age to develop the English proficiency. Laboni stated:

We nurse the students from grade 1 to create love for the language. Thus, from the childhood they get a strong background of English language. The way we nurture them, there is a slim chance of not getting A+ in the SSC examination (T2-SA-L24-28-P5).

Students at School A received extra care from the teachers in strengthening their English language. The excerpt illuminates how Laboni connected nurturing the language of the students with securing the highest scores on the examination.

Family background and parental guidance also acted as the influential factors behind students’ good results on SSC English examination, and their overall English proficiency. One of the teachers from School A commented:

Usually, students from educated and financially solvent families come to our school [top ranking schools]. Can a rikshaw puller’s [a local vehicle in Bangladesh pulled by a running person] children study at one of the top-ranking schools? The number will be almost nothing if you find one or two rare examples. Parents who send their kids to our school are concerned about the results. They value and know that proficiency in English is needed for higher studies or better career. They do every possible thing so that the students do well in the examination and become good users of English (T5-SA-L16-19-P8).
Since most of the students at school A belonged to prosperous, educated families, they received parental nurturing as well. The financial state of the parents created opportunities for these students. For example, Laboni (School A) mentioned that many of her students took extra classes from the British Council to improve their English; this training was not connected with the SSC English examination. She pointed out that if students improved their overall proficiency in the English language, their chances of getting higher scores in the SSC examination were also likely to be higher.

On the other hand, Shoha and Shakira from School B indicated that some of their students came from lower-middle class families and that their parents were not that worried about students’ examination results. Thus, those students were not as studious. “We have a mixed population here. Some of the parents are not enough educated to care about the children’s results,” Shakira mentioned (T6-SB-L27-28-P9). Her colleague from the same school, Shoha, believed the same: “Often our students fail to score good because they do not get any support from their home. School is their only support system, which is not enough to do good results” (T10-SB-L2-4-P13).

These teachers’ perspectives shed light on the fact that students’ institutional and parental background played a role in securing better scores on the SSC English examination. In cases where the parents and school considered examination results important, students worked harder to ensure better scores. This happened more frequently at School A than at School B.

**Theme 5: Obstacles to achieving curriculum objectives.** The teachers discussed several problems in achieving the curriculum goals for teaching English. These issues are outlined in Figure 4.11.
Figure 4.11. Obstacles to following curriculum objectives (theme & categories).

**Large classrooms and time constraints.** Teacher participants at School A unanimously identified large classrooms and shortages of time as two major problems in achieving the curriculum goals. “Managing the pair work with 70 students within the limited 35 minutes difficult. Since I must complete the examination syllabus, I rather give them individual tasks to control the classroom,” mentioned by Forid (T3-SA-L33-35-P11). The same problem was voiced by his colleague Laboni: “since I have 80 students, I cannot do speaking activities in the class in fear of making it chaotic” (T2-SA-L11-12-P18). Laboni chose not to do any speaking activities because of her large number of students. Another fellow teacher from the same school expressed concerns, saying, “I do not have enough time to complete the examination syllabus to prepare them for the examination. With 82 students in my class, I even do not know if they understood the lessons” (T5-SA-L28-29-P14). Teachers at School A were concerned that because they had to manage a large number of students, and on top of that they had to complete the examination syllabus in a short period of time, they chose to concentrate on teaching the examination contents instead of trying to follow the curriculum goals. One teacher articulated the problem clearly: “within this short period of time when we have to complete so many things. Obviously we focus on the examination” (T1-SA-L21-22-P8). Directly or indirectly, the teachers addressed that they did not have the opportunity to teach the language because they had to complete the examination syllabus within the given time.
On the other hand, the teachers from School B did not mention about the large classroom as an important problem. Only one teacher, Shakira (School B), seemed to be frustrated with the class size and said, “Because of a number of students, I cannot do authentic tasks like role-playing in my classes” (T6-SB-L8-9-P9). Rest of the teachers from School B expressed their frustration because they did not have time to prepare for the class. Marzina (School B) stated, “I am so busy with administrative tasks, I cannot take extra preparation to maintain a CLT-based curriculum” (T7-SB-L3-4-P9). Diba, from the same school, commented, “I am so occupied with extra classes, my coaching classes, and personal tasks, when would I make posters or activities to follow the curriculum?” (T8-SB-L12-18-P2). Shakira accepted that because of class loads, scripts checking and administrative tasks she could not pay attention in real language teaching activities. From the discussions with the teachers from School B, it appeared that they unconsciously believed that doing CLT-based language teaching activities need preparation for which they did not have enough time.

*Infrastructure problems.* Teachers expressed frustration that due to the absence of required infrastructure, they could not teach the language in a communicative way as suggested in the English curriculum. Teachers from School A voiced that they could not practice listening skills due to lack of required technology in the classroom:

Neither the board has provided us with CDs to practice listening, nor the school has the CD player. I heard that NCTB uploaded the audio clips onto their website, but I couldn’t find them. If I had them, probably I could have tried to practice them by using a laptop or mobile (T2-SA-L33-36-P8).

Laboni pointed out that the basic prerequisite to teaching listening—the audio clips—were not available for teachers to use. Even if the school had supporting equipment (as mentioned by Forid and Roji, School A), few teachers would have wanted to use their personal
devices for teaching. Teachers from School B did not mention this problem, as they had the
appropriate equipment in their classrooms, however, they also never used them.

Another point, which was raised by Sonju and Marzina (School B) and Faria (School A),
was that the surrounding and classroom environment were not supportive of teaching four
language skills with authentic materials following a CLT curriculum. The following two excerpts
help clarify this point:

I cannot teach the way I want to. When I teach about fish population, I wish I could take
them to an aquarium or pond to show them practically. Or I wish at least I could show
them a video about fishes. This would make the students more interested in learning. We
do not have the environment to teach the language communicatively (T4-SA-L7-10-P10).

CLT is a western concept. Bangladesh does not have those logistic supports which are
needed to implement a CLT-based teaching in this country. Most of the schools do not
have required supporting instrument to implement this concept at the school level (T9-
SB-L1-3-P26).

In the first excerpt, Faria raised the problem of not having an authentic setting to teach
the language in an interesting way of connecting it with real life. The problem lies in the limited
infrastructure that Bangladesh has. In the second selection, Sonju questioned whether the schools
were ready to implement the concept of CLT in their classrooms when they clearly did not have
the logistical support.

**Lack of teacher training.** The above problems apparently relate to teachers’ lacking the
academic background and professional training. Sonju (School B), who had an academic degree
in ELT paired with several professional training, stated, “we know how to manage large
classrooms, but most of the teachers do not have enough training to manage larger classrooms”
(T9-SB-L6-7-P27). He implied that teachers with the academic background in teaching English
know how to manage a large classroom; for academically trained teachers, implementing CLT-
based curriculum should not be a problem even if the class size is large. Teachers who failed to understand assessment and use them constructively in classroom teaching usually also had a lack of academic and professional training, as Forid (School A) revealed. Forid remarked, “Teachers in our country do not have enough constructive training to understand the assessment properly to benefit their teaching” (T3-SA-L21-22-P21). On the other hand, Roji, a teacher benefitted from various types of professional development opportunities expressed:

Few of us are up-to-date about the changes in the curriculum or question patterns; we are marking examination scripts, preparing the questions, conducting and attending workshops and our school is very conscious. It’s not true for most of the teachers (T5-SA-L11-13-P25).

Roji acknowledged that how teachers from top-ranking schools were knowledgeable about the curriculum and examination unlike teachers who might not have the opportunity to attend the regular workshops to learn about policy changes and the examination. The same sentiment is revealed in the following quote:

Teachers do not know why MCQ tests are given or what is the purpose of behind setting MCQs. So, something they do not know, they cannot use. Teachers training programs have failed to make the teachers understand the assessment or curriculum, let alone implementing them in classroom teaching. I doubt that many of us neither know the purpose of curriculum, nor the purpose of the SSC English examination (T9-SB-L13-18-P2).

This excerpt shows that a few of the sampled teachers were aware that a lack of knowledge about assessment could create barriers in implementing the English curriculum in classroom teaching. The main problem, as pointed out in the excerpt, was a lack of understanding about the purpose of the curriculum, and thus, the inability to translate it into classroom teaching. Commenting on the lack of comprehension of the curriculum and

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examination objectives, Roji (School A) questioned, “why does NCTB never involve the teachers in planning the curriculum and examination?” (T5-SA-L2-P4). Roji thought that since teachers were not involved in developing or designing the English curriculum, there could be a possible gap between the curriculum designers’ understanding and teachers’ understanding. All the teachers raised questions about why teacher training did not offer specific guidance about the SSC English examination. They believed that teachers need to be assessment literate in order to prepare students and avoid simply teaching to the test.

**Theme 6: Problematic exams.**

*Figure 4.12. Problematic examination (theme and categories).*

This theme of problematic exams was not frequently mentioned in the interviews (see Table 4.6), but I have included it considering the importance of practicing teachers’ criticisms of the public examination. A few of the sampled teachers did not trust that examination preparation would produce substantial, useful English skills. Sonju (School B) commented, “When we all know that memorizing would earn full marks, nobody is going to use their creativity to risk on the examination” (T9-SB-L9-10-P11). His point was that the format of the SSC English examination was conducted did not make the students learn the language or be creative on the examination. In this connection, he further added, “if the examination is set following the curriculum goals, it will create positive influence on teaching” (T9-SB-L4-5-P7). The teachers questioned the process of the script evaluations. Roji (School A), a regular script marker and question setter who had worked as the head examiner, stated:
While serving as the head examiner, I found that some teachers took ten to twelve thousand examination scripts to mark to earn some extra. I always wondered how they would mark them within this short period of time. I heard that these people took help from their partners, children or even office clerks to complete the marking. I remember that once I was told that if students can get 10 out of 10 in mathematics, then why wouldn’t you give full marks in English? They used to be angry if we gave exact marks in the scripts. But the situation is a little better since last two years. That is why there was a fall in the passing rate in 2018 (T5-SA-L7-13-P5).

This poor script checking led to the issue of inflated markings on SSC English examination papers. Sonju (School B) pointed out, “because of this easy marking, most of the students know that they would pass easily, and they do not try to study harder” (T9-SB-L5-6-P11). The problem lay in the fact that because of the ease of scoring high in the SSC examination, students felt that they were proficient in English, when they were not. Highlighting this issue, the same teacher further commented, “this examination has created an I know it all delusion in the students” (T9-SB-L10-11-P12). The same idea surfaced in the conversation with Marzina (School B) when she revealed that working as an SSC script marker gave her the idea that students who could not pass the internal examination also easily passed the board examination. She, therefore, started marking the internal examination less strictly. The inflated score of the SSC English examination made the score as well as the examination unreliable. The following excerpt illustrates the situation:

How do you rely on the score earned in the SSC examination? In the last year, some of our students got A+ in the SSC English examination, who didn’t deserve to earn even the passing grade. Even the government also wants to show better results. So, the score has no value- even though many students work hard to score the highest. After the
publication of the results, some students are surprised by the A+ score in the English subject (T6-SB-L12-16-P14).

Even though few teachers recognized the importance of the examination to create pressure for students to study, none of them expressed positive views about the examination in terms of creating learning opportunities or developing students’ language proficiency.

What Teachers Do: Classroom Observations

This section discusses the findings in reference to the evidences collected from the English classroom observations at School A and School B. Three teachers (Porshi [T1], Laboni [T2], and Forid [T3]) from School A, and three teachers (Shakira [T6], Marzina [T7], and Diba [T8]) from School B participated in classroom observations (see Table 4.6; marked in blue). All six of these teachers participated in the interviews as well.

At School A, the classroom setting was typical for Bangladeshi schools (see Figure 4.13). It had benches for the students to sit on. In the front of the classroom, there was a blackboard and podium for the teachers. The benches were arranged in such a way that it was not easy for the teachers to go into the rows to facilitate instruction. The physical setting limited the possibility to do group or pair work in the classrooms.

Figure 4.13. How the classroom looks at School A.
The physical setting of the classroom at School B was similar to that of School A, except it had a PowerPoint projector along with a whiteboard (see Figure 4.14). In Bangladesh, these resources are not the norm at many schools. Despite the presence of this technology, I never saw the English teachers using the projectors in teaching. It appeared that teachers had not used their computers recently, as they were covered in thick dust. For the students, there were benches to sit on and the teacher’s designated place was in the front of the classroom. Like School A, the sitting arrangement in this school also constrained the possibility of doing pair or group work.

Figure 4.14. How the classroom looks at School B.

The following tables outline the observational data collected at School A and School B. Table 4.7 charts the data from School A, and Table 4.8 charts the data from School B. A small portion of data were collected after the internal examination which is marked in blue in the following tables.
Table 4.7

School A: Classroom Observation at a Glance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English classes observed</th>
<th>Porshi</th>
<th>Laboni (3 classes before the exam &amp; 1 class after the exam)</th>
<th>Forid (observed after the exam)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total time observed</strong></td>
<td>105 mins-3 classes <strong>(observed before the exam)</strong></td>
<td>140 mins-4 classes <strong>(observed before the exam &amp; 1 class after the exam)</strong></td>
<td>175 mins-5 classes <strong>(observed after the exam)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activities</strong></td>
<td>giving direct lecture 9.5%</td>
<td>giving direct lecture 0%</td>
<td>giving direct lecture- revising the exam topics (no interaction) 70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>drilling (individual) 50.47%</td>
<td>drilling (individual) 57%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>correction (as a classroom) 17.14%</td>
<td>correction (as a classroom) 21%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Test preparation</strong></td>
<td>tasks practiced: cloze test, sentence connectors, story completion, gap filling, dialogue writing</td>
<td>tasks practiced: Cloze test, open-ended questions from a passage, cloze test, summary, matching, ill in the blank, tag questions</td>
<td>tasks practiced: Completing sentences, suffix/prefix, voice, paragraph writing, informal/formal letter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>practicing exam items</td>
<td>drilling exam like practice sheets (model questions)</td>
<td>providing specific structure to complete the tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>giving exam tips</td>
<td>giving exam tips</td>
<td>giving specific exam tips on how to score higher than others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>stressing on practicing test items at home</td>
<td>stressing on practicing test items at home</td>
<td>stressing on practicing test items at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching materials</strong></td>
<td>used blackboard to write the practice materials from her personal notebook</td>
<td>exam like practice sheets</td>
<td>Teacher’s personal materials (used blackboard for the students to copy them)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Textbook (in the post exam classes)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Skills taught</strong></td>
<td>Reading 66%</td>
<td>Reading 75%</td>
<td>Writing 40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Writing 34%</td>
<td>Writing 50%</td>
<td>Grammar 60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grammar 66%</td>
<td>Grammar 25%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: data collected after the internal examination are highlighted in blue
**Table 4.8**

*School B: Classroom Observation at a Glance*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English classes observed</th>
<th>Shakira</th>
<th>Marzina</th>
<th>Diba</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total time observed</strong></td>
<td>90 minutes (two classes- one before and one after the examination)</td>
<td>160 minutes (four classes- two before and two after the examination)</td>
<td>160 minutes (four classes- two before and two after the examination)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activities</strong></td>
<td>Discussing and teaching</td>
<td>Direct teaching (explaining the lesson)</td>
<td>Giving direct lecture/Showing/demonstrating sample of expected outcome (writing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Drilling (individual)</td>
<td>Drilling (individual)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Correction (individual)</td>
<td>Correction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Test preparation</strong></td>
<td>Tasks practiced: Reading passage, passive sentences, complex &amp; compound sentences</td>
<td>Sentence completion, suffix/prefix, tag questions, narration, solving reading passages- MCQ, matching, filling the gaps</td>
<td>Tasks practiced: Solving reading passages-MCQ, matching, filling the gaps, practice story completion, writing paragraph, email, graph describing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Giving specific exam tips to practice the previous SSC questions</td>
<td>Practicing exam like model questions</td>
<td>Practicing timed writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stressing the importance of textbook passages in the exam</td>
<td>Practicing the most important tasks for the exam</td>
<td>Teaching specific techniques to use in the examination to secure marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Suggesting important topics for the exam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Discussing/teaching weak areas- more time spent in post exam time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching materials</strong></td>
<td>Prescribed textbook</td>
<td>Exclusively commercially published test preparation guidebook</td>
<td>Exclusively commercially published test preparation guidebook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>prescribed textbook</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Skills taught</strong></td>
<td>Pronunciation</td>
<td>Reading 50%</td>
<td>Reading 25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>Writing 25%</td>
<td>Writing 75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Grammar 25%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: data collected after the internal examination are highlighted in blue
The following data mapping table outlines the discussion to follow. Table 4.9 illustrates the themes and sub-themes (on the left) along with the selected examples (on the right) from the classroom observations conducted at School A and school B.

Table 4.9

*Themes Mapped out with Relevant Examples*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes &amp; sub-themes</th>
<th>Selected Sample Evidences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Teaching to the test</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1. Teaching/drilling exam tasks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.3 exam like practice materials</td>
<td>Practiced exam like practice sheets [Laboni, School A]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.3 timed practices</td>
<td>Solving model questions from the guidebook [Marzina, Diba, School B]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.3 giving correction</td>
<td>“You have only 7 minutes to write the summary and you have to practice being able to finish it in 7 minutes” [Diba, School B]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Importance of exam</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.1 Pre and post exam behavior</td>
<td>In post exam classes, those items were given importance in which students did not perform well in the exam [School A &amp; B]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.2 Stress on practicing previous question papers/model question</td>
<td>Little relax teaching environment [ School A &amp; B]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.3 Giving exam tips</td>
<td>“If you practice the previous five years of English SSC question papers, you are ready for the exam” [Shakira, School B]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.4 Marking important topics for exam</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.5 Exam like environment</td>
<td>While teaching paragraph writing, a teacher informed, “according to instruction given by the exam board, students who would use creative ideas would get 30% extra mark” [Forid, School A]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.6 Various internal exams/ exam feedback</td>
<td>“If the format of emails is accurate, you get 50% of the mark.” A Teacher marked important exam topics [Diba, School B]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher did classroom drills by using an exam like practice sheets [Laboni, School A]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>When one student asked help from the teachers, her response was, “write whatever you know. I will give the correction at the end of the class” [Marzina, School B]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers mentioned how failing in the internal exam would gatekeep them from sitting in the SSC exam [Laboni, Porshi, School A]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post exam classroom instructional topics were those test items in which students performed poorly [Forid, School A; Diba, School B]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
According to Table 4.9, two main themes were derived from the data: teaching to the test and instructional practices. Each of these themes has several corresponding sub-themes which are reported below.

**Teaching to the Test.** During the classroom observations at both School A and School B, teachers taught examination tasks, such as cloze tests, solving seen/unseen passages, various grammar items, summary, paragraph, informal/formal writing, storytelling, and dialogue writing (see Tables 4.7 & 4.8). All these tasks were directly connected to the SSC English examination. All the observed teachers except one (Forid, School A) invested on an average half of the class time in drilling the examination like practice materials which were replicas of the original public English examination questions. At School A, teachers made the students drilling teacher-made practice materials or practice sheets, while at School B, teachers only used the guidebooks. It

| 1.3 | little or no uses of textbooks | Teacher made practice materials [Laboni, Porshi, Forid, School A]  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Guidebook [Shakira, Marzina, Diba, School B]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Instructional practices</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1. Teacher centered</td>
<td>Lecturing or discussing the exam tasks, precisely telling the students how to write those tasks in the exam [Forid, School A; Diba, School B]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.1. Little or no student interaction</td>
<td>Students did not have any discussion about the teaching topic amongst themselves. All their concerns were triggered by the exam [School A; School B]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.2 students were exam driven</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.3. Individual classwork/ no classroom discussion</td>
<td>Students were not allowed to discuss with each other during the classwork [Diba, Marzina, School B]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2.1.4. Teacher correction | Correction was mostly given to individual students and sometimes discussed as a class [School A]  
|                                          | Correction was never discussed; it was more of giving the students a sample answer to memorize [School B] | |
| 2.2. Medium of instruction | Teachers tend use mostly Bangla (national language) and rarely there was a code switching to English [School A; School B] | |
| 2.3 Practicing only writing, reading & grammar | Only reading, writing and grammar were practices since they were important for the examination [School A; School B] | |
seemed that the sole objective of those teaching time was to prepare the students for the examination. Only one teacher, Forid from School A, did not use any practice materials in the classroom. Nonetheless, he was also teaching to the test: he explicitly taught students how to answer various examination items to score higher. All these six teachers from Schools A and B were teaching the format of the examination instead of the contents of the curriculum to increase students’ scores.

While practicing examination tasks, timed drilling and giving correction were common practices at both schools. Teachers recreated an examination-like environment in the classroom so that students could get into the pattern of taking the examination. For example, Laboni at School A only used examination like timed practice sheets in the classrooms. Diba at School B once gave seven minutes to complete the summary, and she stressed to develop the ability to perform the activities on time. Marzina at School B created such an examination environment in conducting the classwork that students were not allowed to ask for help from her or from the peer students. The classroom practice seemed like a prototype of the examination venue where students were not supposed to look for help from the peers or the teachers and were expected to complete the tasks on time.

Giving correction was the second most important activity after drilling the test tasks. However, at School A, correction was done as a group, whereas teachers gave individual correction at the counterpart school. On average, 15% to 20% of class time was invested in corrections at both schools. As an observer, my immediate impression was that the teachers were not concerned about the English proficiency of the students in giving the corrections. Rather, they wanted to make sure that students knew the correct answers before they sat for the SSC examination.
Further, giving regular examination tips was an integral part of classroom instruction at School A. For example, Laboni suggested using simple words instead of difficult words to avoid spelling mistakes, while Forid suggested using creative ideas to score better than other students. Teachers at both schools explicitly or implicitly emphasized the value of regularly practicing model questions. One specific example came from School B, where Shakira practicing the previous five years’ SSC English questions to ensure better marks in the upcoming examinations. These observations illustrate that teachers only cared about scoring high on the examination. During my observational period, I did not see teachers taking any effort to develop the English proficiency of the students. Direct or indirect, planned or unplanned, intended or unintended, examinations always triggered English classroom instructional practices.

None of the teachers used the textbook explicitly in classroom teaching. Teacher-made practice materials were used in School A’s English classrooms, while a commercially published guidebook dominated School B’s classrooms. In both cases, the core objective was to drill test-like practice items. Also, on the rare occasion that the NCTB prescribed textbook *English for Today* was used, it was examination-directed. Shakira, at School B, once used the textbook for conducting a reading passage and motivated the students saying, “Reading these passages will help you answer the grammar questions of the second paper as well.” The objectives of the textbook or curriculum had no role in these observed classes. Teachers from both schools sometimes practiced the texts from the NCTB prescribed textbook, since the SSC English examination directly used few texts from *English for Today*. But, for the activities, they preferred using the guidebook or practice sheets to drill the model question. In one such situation, Marzina from School B explained a reading passage from the textbook, but later she made the students practice activities from the guidebook. Evidently, teachers wanted the students to drill the examination tasks, for which guidebooks or teacher-made materials were ideal.
Practicing exam tasks covered a large portion of the teaching hours. At School A, there were regular weekly and monthly examinations followed by the tutorial exams given just before the internal examinations. Although not as examination oriented as School A, School B also had model tests and internal pre-selection and selection examinations for the SSC candidates. Students from the first school undertook rigorous model tests in the last two months before the board examination. Also, they were supposed to take a last internal examination just before the SSC examination as the final ticket to the board. Both Laboni and Porshi repeatedly mentioned to their classes that failing the exams would not allow them to take the SSC examination.

Students from School B also went through regular coaching and model tests leading up to the SSC examination. The post-examination classes I observed at both schools demonstrated how teachers use examination information in their classes. Diba used two post-examination classes to drill and discuss graph writing because students from her class did not do well in writing the graphs. On the other hand, Forid from School A decided to spend more time on teaching writing as his students did not do well in the writing part. Ostensibly, test preparation is an inseparable part of the instructional plans of the schools.

In the post-examination teaching period, there were a few specific changes in the teaching behaviour of the teachers. Before the examination, teachers mostly spent time in practicing the examination items and giving corrections. After the examination, they shifted from the “practicing of examination tasks” to the “teaching the examination techniques.” For example, instead of making the students drill examination-like practice materials, teachers started teaching the examination items with instructions on how to accomplish these items on the examination. Second, they took the initiative to teach the prescribed textbook (the nature of this uses is described earlier). In the earlier pre-examination classes, they never asked the students to bring out the textbook. However, in the post-examination classes, a few teachers asked the students to bring the English for Today textbook. Not bringing the textbook did not spoil the teaching plan...
as teachers already came to the class prepared either to use the practice materials or the guidebook. Third, there was a change in selecting the classroom activities. In the post-examination classes, teachers selected tasks that were hard for students on the examination. Writing seemed to be the weak area for most students, since at both schools, teachers identified that they needed to improve certain writing tasks (e.g. paragraph writing at School A; graph writing at School B) for their next round of examination preparation. Finally, as an observer, I felt that the tense classroom environment was more relaxed once the pre-selection examination was over. Even if teachers were still teaching, discussing, and drilling examination-related tasks, they did not seem in a hurry to complete those tasks. This relaxation was evident in the dropping attendance rates of students in the post-examination classes compared to the pre-examination classes. In conclusion classroom teaching was built on instructing students how to take the examination and how to score well on the SSC examination. Teaching was never focused on teaching English as a language; rather, it was always focused on teaching the test tasks.

**Instructional Practices.** The instructional practices observed at both research sites were grounded in the objectives of the exams and in helping students score higher on the SSC English examination. As discussed in the previous section, classroom instructions consisted mainly of drilling students on teacher-centric, examination-like practice materials. Instructional time revolved around teaching strategies for taking the examination. For example, Forid at School A and Diba at School B ended up only teaching how to achieve the examination tasks and secure marks. Even if they were not drilling, teachers still were teaching the examination tasks. Teachers were expected by the school administration and the students to teach to the test. The practice materials were designed as individual tasks. As a result, students were not given the opportunity to discuss the topics amongst themselves. Further, discussions during class were discouraged by the teachers. First, the physical arrangement and size of the classrooms (as described in the school profiles) did not allow the teachers to do any pair or group work, and
second, teachers did not seem to have any intention to initiate group discussions. All the questions or concerns raised by students were examination-related, such as, asking for marking the topics which were important for examination, requesting to revise the topics which were difficult for them, or simply asking for the correct answer. The examination-driven mindset of the students was also apparent in the post-examination classes, in which they wanted to know whether they did well and whether they would pass the examination.

Correcting tests was mostly a teacher-led process in the classrooms. For example, Marzina and Diba (School B) used to give one to one correction without creating the space of having a different answer from the students. In one of Diba’s classes, a student wanted to use a different idea in a writing paragraph, but Diba encouraged him to use the idea which was given in the guidebook. At School A, although Porshi and Laboni gave corrections through classroom discussion, there was seldom any discussion about the possibility of creative answers from the students.

Because of the test-directed classroom instructions, the practice materials only covered reading, writing, and grammar skills which were important for the SSC English examination. None of the observed teachers attempted to teach listening and speaking. Since the classroom objectives were directly built on the examination objectives, listening and speaking skills did not make it to the teaching syllabus.

The language of instruction in the classrooms was mostly Bangla (the national language of the country). Teachers rarely used English in the classrooms and consequently students also never used English in conversing with the teachers or with their peers. The passages in the exercise sheets were mostly translated into Bangla by the instructors. The difficult words were translated into Bangla.
Comparing School A and School B

Tables 4.7 and 4.8 show that both School A and B spent most of the class time drilling and practicing the various activities which were directly built on the SSC English examination tasks. However, the observational and the interview data revealed some differences between these two schools (see Figure 4.14).

Teachers at School A seemed to possess more examination knowledge. They gave regular tips about how to do well on the examination and what activities would help students to score higher. Even when they were doing direct teaching, they were teaching the tricks of the test. For example, Forid at School A specifically instructed students to use novel ideas in writing the paragraphs because the script markers at the board examinations were encouraged to give extra marks for novelty in writing. On the other hand, Diba at School B encouraged all the students to write the same content from the guidebook. While giving corrections to the paragraph, she read the written sample paragraph from the guidebook out loud and made it apparent that students should follow the sample. Although Forid explicitly taught the techniques of the tasks to score better, he discouraged memorization. On the other hand, Diba encouraged memorization by marking the important examination topics in order to inspire the students to memorize them. This observation was supported by teachers’ profiles in Table 4. Because teachers from School A were more experienced than teachers from School B. Among the three teachers I observed at the first school, two of them had served on the board as markers and question setters. Consequently, they had the knowledge to provide examination tips to the students. These teachers gave very specific examination ideas for examination task accomplishment. The three observed teachers from School B never gave any specific instruction on how to score better than other students besides stressing the importance of practicing. It could
be argued that the different ways School A’s teachers prepared the students for the examination would make School A stand out on the SSC English examination.

Figure 4.14. Differences between two schools.

At School B, correcting exams was an individual process and there was no classroom discussion about the correct answers. On the other hand at School A, teachers always discussed the various answers that students were bringing to the table. Giving correction as a class seemed to be a way to discuss the possibilities of a range of answers and demonstrating students’ ability to do the tasks. Teachers at School A mostly relied on teacher-made practice materials, but guidebook was the sole teaching material at the counterpart school. Since teachers made their practice materials instead of using a guidebook, these practice materials demonstrated more variations. Further, School A’s teachers tried to teach the techniques of writing. On the other hand, teachers from School B encouraged students to follow the writing samples given in the guidebook instead of teaching them the actual structure or techniques of writing.

At School A, English was taught in five days a week, compared to the three days of English classes at the foil school. School A had more time allocated for English instruction than School B. Further, as an observer, I felt a high level of pressure surrounding the examination at School A. There were several progress test examinations before students appeared at the final
public examination. In contrast, School B gave fewer practice exams. Even though both schools were preparing for the upcoming internal pre-selection examination, School B had a more relaxed environment than School A. The body language of the students and teachers, and their classroom behavior, was more tense at School A than at School B. This was made clear through School A teachers’ repeated mentions of the importance of passing the internal examinations to be able to sit for the SSC examination. Further, teachers at School B (for instance, Diba and Marzina) noted how at least using the correct format in the emails and storytelling would secure them some marks, whereas Forid at School A taught the students how to secure a highest score than other students.

Although both schools were found going through the SSC test preparation, test washback was more evident in the instructional practices at School A than in those of School B. However, this does not mean that the mismatch between the curriculum objectives and classroom objectives was less at School A. Teachers from both schools targeted to teach to the test exiting the curriculum objectives, but the SSC examination had a deeper influence on the instructional practices in School A. Test washback springs out of the direct alignment of classroom activities with the examination tasks, which are misaligned with the curriculum objectives. Nonetheless, washback effect intensifies and varies based on institutional contexts, how students value the exams, and teachers’ experiences. The more the participants feel the power of tests, the greater the possibility of washback leading to the possibility of better examination scores. This section reported how washback was perceived by the teachers and how it was observed in instructional practices; the next section explains how students perceived SSC English examination washback in their learning.
Washback on Learning

This section discusses findings obtained from 10 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with 49 students from the two schools where classroom observations and teacher interviews were conducted. The objective of the FGDs was to answer the third research question regarding how students at the SSC level perceived the effect of the SSC English examination on their learning. Specifically, data obtained from the FGDs provided insights about how the SSC examination influenced students’ English learning activities, English language proficiency, and preparation for the SSC examination (see Figure 4.15).

Figure 4.15. Focus group discussion supporting RQ 3.

Students’ Test Preparation and Learning

Table 4.10 shows the details of codes, clustered codes, and the themes along with selected quotations from the FGDs. For the details of the initial coding please see Appendix N (for samples) and see Chapter 3 for a description of the procedures for coding FGD data. In the table, I have created labels to identify the source of the quotes from the FGDs. For example, to identify a quote from focus group 1, School A, the label is SA-FGD-1 (see Appendix I). From the 10 focus groups with 49 students in two schools, I have developed four major themes: 1)
reasons for learning English; 2) examination directed classroom instruction; 3) students’ test preparation; and, 4) examination preparation vs. language proficiency (see Figure 4.16). For the sake of clarity, I have used different colors to indicate the four themes; otherwise, the colors do not carry any specific importance.
### Table 4.10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Clustered Codes</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sample Quotations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uses of English</td>
<td>Demonstrating power</td>
<td>Reasons of learning English</td>
<td>“Internet cannot be used using Bangla. At least Basic English is needed to browse. Watching videos on YouTube requires English” (SA-FGD-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English for access to</td>
<td>power of English</td>
<td></td>
<td>“There is no value in the job field if we don’t know English.” (SB-FGD-2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrating power</td>
<td>English as lingua franca</td>
<td></td>
<td>“If my English is not well, I am not going to get the admission in any of the good places.” (SA-FGD-3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power of English</td>
<td>International value of English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things students do/want to do to improve English proficiency</td>
<td>English proficiency offers access</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exam preparation does not contribute to English proficiency</td>
<td>Utilitarian value of English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things students do in classrooms as exam preparation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching center</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“For me, coaching centers and school classrooms are same—at both places, we do practice” (SA-FGD-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textbook</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“My EFCL book is new—it’s always in the drawer” (SA-FGD-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidebook</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“The guidebook contains a range of model questions, which are taught throughout the year” (SB-FGD-3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practicing exam taking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting suggestions from the teachers</td>
<td>Intense exam preparation</td>
<td>Students’ test preparation</td>
<td>“We have been writing the same topics since class six. We have written them for so many times that we do not feel that there is anything left to practice. This is true for exam, paragraph, writing, letters, we have been practicing them for past three four years” (SB-FGD-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English as lingua franca</td>
<td>Getting suggestions from the teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td>“There is no solution to do well except practice” (SA-FGD-3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilitarian value of English</td>
<td>Limited study for the exam</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>How to address speaking and listening</td>
<td>Topics are known and well practiced</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intense exam preparation</td>
<td>Common topics</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Limited study for the exam</td>
<td>Memorization</td>
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<tr>
<td>Topics are known and well practiced</td>
<td>Less of critical thinking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Easy to pass the exam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Confident about high score</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exam preparation does not contribute to English proficiency</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lessons about using English</td>
<td>What students do/want to do to improve English proficiency</td>
<td></td>
<td>“I do not know how much this preparation will help me in real life—my A+ does not make me confident to use English in real life” (SA-FGD-2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exams real life</td>
<td>Easy to pass the exam</td>
<td></td>
<td>“Activities which I believe would help me in improving my English, would not earn me an A+” (SB-FGD-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less of critical thinking</td>
<td>Confident about high score</td>
<td></td>
<td>“I do not understand what benefit I am going to have after studying these things at this level except passing the exam” (SB-FGD-2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comment topics</td>
<td>Address speaking and listening</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confident about high score</td>
<td>Limited uses of English in real life</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems in learning/using English</td>
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</table>
Figure 4.16. Four major themes derived from the FGDs.

Reasons for learning English. There are three major reasons why students at the SSC level value learning English in Bangladesh: the international status of English, the power of having English proficiency, and the need for English in order to succeed both academically and financially in the future.

All the FGDs acknowledged the importance of English as a lingua franca, or common language, for communicating with other countries. Students were aware of the value of English to communicate with the outer world. Conducting international business, speaking to foreigners, studying abroad, or working in other countries were the most important reasons for learning English. One of the participants uttered with total conviction that “English is an international language and we must learn this language to survive” (SB-FGD-5). Student participants in other FGDs were also agreed with this statement. The international status of English seemed to be related to the power of English as well. While English worked as a tool for inclusion in the case
of communication with the rest of the world, the same language acted as a tool of exclusion inside Bangladesh. The following excerpt from one of the FGDs sheds more light on this idea:

One day I was chatting with my friends in my room and our house helper came. Seeing her we quickly started talking in English, so that she did not know what we were talking about. So, she was just standing there, and she did not understand a word. It was fun. We do this all the time even in public places as well, when we know that some people might not understand what we are talking about (SB-FGD-1).

Students found it fascinating that they could use English while many others could not. The ability to use English gave them a sense of upper-class status and power. The same status que was reflected in identifying the domains of English uses as well. Participants from School A, unlike those from School B, mentioned “five-star restaurants,” “high end places,” and “international festivals” where they used English. These specific places apparently are status markers in the context of Bangladeshi society. It seemed that the ability to speak the English language made some students feel privileged or influential.

The ability to understand English was also associated with access to facilities such as the internet, social network, using devices, or manuals written in English. Students valued English learning because without the ability to use the language, they could not gain access to certain digital faculties. For example, one student noted that the, “internet cannot be used using Bangla. At least Basic English is needed to browse. Watching videos on YouTube requires English” (SA-FGD-1). Another student pointed out, “even to be able to use the new mobile phone also requires the basic level of English to be able to read the manual” (SB-FGD-4).

All participants of the 10 FGDs agreed on the fact that English was the route to a better education and professional career. For instance, one of the participants commented, “I want to
study abroad or want to go to a good university in the country. If my English is not good, I am not going to get the admission in any of the good places” (SA-FGD-3). Other students supported her without any disagreement. The same finding, that knowledge of English was essential to access to higher educational institutions, was extracted from other FGDs. Specifically, the participants in the FGDs valued getting A+ in English subject as important because all the top higher secondary colleges (the two years of education before university education) required A+ as one of the conditions of admission. Even if these participants did not have specific ideas about job fields, students in all 10 FGDs agreed that they needed some English proficiency to secure a better job. Statements like these were common: “there is no value in the job field if we don’t know English” (SB-FGD-2), “multinational companies only hire employee who are proficient in English” (SA-FGD-4) or “at workplaces 50% people speak in English. All the recruitment interviews are conducted in English. So, we need to be proficient in English” (SB-FGD-4). All the students explicitly used the phrase “better job” when they talked about the importance of English in their lives.

**Examination-directed classroom instruction.** The classroom activities which students listed, such as solving examination related tasks and solving examination model questions, were precisely examination-oriented. Students at School A practiced exercises provided by the teachers whereas students from School B used to practice model questions from the examination guidebook. The essence of classroom instruction was teaching the examination tasks and completing the examination syllabus. One of the FGD participants remarked, “teachers only try to complete the syllabus so that they can tell the headmaster that they had completed the examination syllabus” (SA-FGD-1). This sentiment was echoed in other FGDs: classroom teaching was all about completing the examination syllabus and as a result only examination tasks were practiced in the classroom. Regarding this, one of the students noted, “for me coaching centers and school classrooms are same except that we wear uniforms at school. At both places
we do practice” (SA-FGD-1). These examples illustrated the extent to which teaching to the test took place in classroom instruction. For instance, since listening and speaking were not assessed in the SSC English public examination, they were not taught in the classrooms. All 10 FGDs brought up in the discussion the issue that listening and speaking were not taught as any part of the classroom activities. The following excerpt explains the examination-oriented classroom instruction:

When we were in grade 6, occasionally teachers used to make us practice speaking but since we came to grade 9, they never practiced any speaking activities. From grade 9 we were only made to work for the board examination [SSC examination]. Now in grade 10, we are so busy in taking exams that we also do not have time to do anything else (SB-FGD-1).

Participants in other FGDs also resonated with the idea that grade 9 and especially grade 10, were dedicated to preparing the students for the upcoming SSC examination. Specially in grade 10 teachers were not teaching anything which was not crucial for the test. One of the FGD participants stated: “in grade 9, teachers used to teach various rules of English grammar or used to give us writing tips, but in grade 10 we are only practicing model examination questions” (SA-FGD-5). This discussion leads to the topic of intense examination preparation. In grade 10, as found in FGDs, students take various types of monthly and weekly tests as part of their SSC preparation. However, the number and intensity of examinations were slightly higher in School A compared to that of School B. Students from School A were worried about their internal examination more than the actual SSC English examination. Accounts such as, “we study harder for the internal school exams to pass. But we know that we will get A+ in SSC examination only if we pass in the school examination” (SA-FGD-3) explained the intensity and importance of the internal examinations at School A. Although preparation was not as rigorous as School A,
students at School B took many monthly examinations to be well prepared for the board examination.

Coaching centers also played an integral part of students’ examination preparation. Even though classroom instruction was mostly examination task-oriented, considering the small-time duration and large sizes of the classes, students felt that they still did not get ample practice opportunities inside the classroom or opportunities to work on their weak areas in English. As a result, to be prepared for the SSC examination, they chose to take extra coaching classes in which they solved more practice sheets and had more time to get help from those teachers to work on their English-language problem areas. Usually, students solved more practice sheets and took extra model tests in those coaching centers. The FGDs revealed that more of the students at School B chose to go to the coaching centers than at School A. One participant stated her reason for going to a coaching center: “Teachers never go into details of any topic. So, I go to coaching centers to understand those things in detailed” (SA-FGD-3). Others in the same FGD seemed to support her reasons. All FGDs agreed that taking more model tests and individual tutoring were the two primary reasons for going to the coaching centers. The following two quotes from two FGDs are illustrative:

Teachers come, take attendance, calms us down and makes us practice the essential tasks to cover the examination syllabus. He does not have time to explain anything. In coaching centers, they spend ample time for each of the tasks (SA-FGD-1).

Coaching centers make us practice variety of activities for the better examination preparation. They don’t worry about internal examination syllabus- their coaching is SSC examination directed. Moreover, we have more time, small number of students and can get individual coaching in the weak areas (SB-FGD-2).
Neither in the classroom teaching, nor in the coaching centers was the *EFT* textbook used for examination preparation. In the classrooms, students at both schools used to read the textbook passages but never had solved the textbook activities. One of the FGD participants bluntly said, “my *EFT* book is new—it’s always in the drawer. The model questions have the texts from *EFT*, so why do I need to use the *EFT* book?” (SA-FGD-1). Other FGDs also agreed on the fact that they did not need to use the textbook. At most, they read the passages from *EFT* as passages that may appear on the SSC English examination. Moreover, teachers had the students reading the passages from *EFT* only when they were in grade 9. In grade 10, teacher-made materials were used in case of School A and a specific guidebook was used in case of School B. FGDs from School B discussed how they only prepared for the internal examination based on the guidebook, that teachers used in the classroom. The following extract from one of the FGDs clarifies the situation:

The guidebook contains a range of model question, which are taught throughout the year. Let me give you an example: model question number 1 to 20 from the guidebook could be the syllabus for the first internal examination, and model question number 20 to 40 could be the syllabus of another internal examination. We solve them in getting ready for the examination (SB-FGD-3).

Students were not learning English as a language; rather, they were learning the examination tasks through drilling a range of sample questions. At both schools, teachers did not use the prescribed textbook in classroom instruction or preparing the students for the SSC examination. Instead, when the examination was near (when students moved to grade 10) teachers stopped using the textbook and focused more on solving various practice materials.
Students’ test preparation. It was clear from the FGDs that students did not consider
that the activities in the textbook was enough to prepare them for the examination. For example,
two of the students noted:

There are many things in the EFT textbook. There are grammar, new words and
activities. Since I want to do well in English in general, so I study EFT book a lot. But I
know my friends have never touched EFT book, rather they solve the guidebooks, model
questions, test papers where there are activities to practice. I will do the same if you are
talking about examination preparation (SA-FGD-3).

The textbook is good for general learning of English but not for preparing the
examination. The guidebook includes the important passages from the textbook with a
wide range of sample questions. The textbook does not have explanations, but the
guidebook explains those texts, questions and answers in Bangla. I will not be ready to
take the SSC examination if I only read the textbook. The guidebook has the model
questions which are similar to the SSC examination, which is really helpful (SB-FGD-5).

This awareness that EFT could be used for general learning was implicitly expressed by
other participants in this group and across other groups as well. Students’ views were narrow and
specific when it came to examination preparation. They believed that to score higher, they
needed to practice—there was no alternative to practice. The idea of practice and drilling were
recurrent in all focus groups. The drilling was rigorous when the examination was nearer. In
discussing the type of activities students would do to prepare themselves for the SSC English
examination, students from both schools primarily named solving test papers and previous board
questions as well as taking model tests at schools and coaching centers. In Bangladesh, after
schools are done with the internal SSC selection exams (commonly known as “test”), the
guidebook publishers publish a question bank with the question papers of prominent schools’
selection exams. This question bank is known as “test paper” in Bangladesh and is very popular amongst the candidates of the SSC examination. Understanding the patterns of the board examination question papers also came out as a technique in one of the FGDs when one of the participants commented, “if we practice previous 5 years to 10 years’ board questions, then we can expect that a few things would be repeated in our examination also” (SB-FGD-2). They were confident that by doing this “everything would be just on the fingertips” (SB-FGD-2) to be able to secure high score in the English SSC examination. Understanding the trends and patterns of the board questions was the main motivation behind their constant drilling of various question papers.

Another critical issue was revealed in the FGDs was that students followed a narrowed range of curriculum in their process of test preparation. They received suggestions from the teachers about important passages, topics for paragraphs, emails/letters, and rearranging. Even those suggestions were trimmed, as pointed out by one of the FGD participants: “we get suggestions before the SSC examination—we even cut them shorter based on our own understanding” (SA-FGD-1). Students made sure that they had accurately pin-pointed topics to be studied in the examination preparation.

Across the 10 FGDs, students unanimously agreed that they had been writing about the same topics since grade six. “The length of writing has increased,” they said, “but the topics haven’t changed” (SB-FGD-2). One of the participants from School A explained, “from class six to 10, we have been taught maximum 20 writing topics and that’s enough to score well in the SSC examination. Within these 20 also, we sort the important ones” (SA-FGD-2). These examples show the kind of concentrated test preparation students undergo for the SSC English examination. Examination candidates have prepared and practiced the common topics numerous times:
We have been writing the same topics since class six. We have written them for so many times that we do not feel that there is anything left to practice. This is true for writing emails, paragraphs, and letters. We have been practicing them for past three and four years (SB-FGD-1).

The same was true for grammar questions. For practicing items such as, narration, voice, and transformation, students completed commercially published grammar books which contained plenty of practice problems. Those practice sets included items from the previous year’s books, as one of the participants reported: “common questions are coming every year. Sometimes the same sentence is given with words here and there. Even if the exact question does not come, it’s like a math formula to solve narration, voice or transformation” (SA-FGD-2). In fact, students claimed that they learned grammar “by doing practice” and remembering the “forms but not the rules” (SB-FGD-3). That is why, across the FGDs, students directly or indirectly stated that they did not feel confident in answering the grammar items if they had not practiced them before.

Further, it was evident in the FGDs that students did not learn grammar to be able to use it in real life; instead, they wanted to make it sure that they answered examination questions correctly, either by practicing or memorization. One of the students questioned, “what is the purpose of learning narration, transformation and voice change?” (SA-FGD-4)

Memorization was addressed as another layer of students’ test preparation. However, there was disagreement among the 10 FGDs about whether they did memorize. A few students in FGDs at School B admitted that they had memorized compositions and letters/emails unlike their counterparts at School A, who asserted that they read the topics from several guidebooks but tried not to memorize. But these same students mutually agreed upon that they had been studying the same topics since grade six. Presumably, they did not have to do conscious memorization.

Regarding memorization, one of the students simply remarked, “we already have ideas about
them. We have been reading and writing about them since last four years. So, it’s in our brain” (SA-FGD-2). As a result, students in the FGDs discussed how there was a lack of critical thinking in their learning. “Creative writing is a problem area” (SB-FGD-3), one student stated. In a way, indirectly though, students were encouraged to do memorization by the teachers. In this regard, the following excerpt offers an anecdote:

Our English class teacher is very strict. He makes it sure that we understand what he says. For example, the way he has explained something, if we repeat the answer in the same way, he becomes very happy. He gets annoyed if we do mistake or do otherwise. Once I got scolded because my answer was different than what he gave (SA-FGD-5).

According to the above-mentioned quote, students (at least from this classroom) were discouraged to be creative in their learning of English. They were taught and encouraged to memorize. Praising this teacher, another student from the same FGD added, “we don’t have to think a lot while writing which saves time and reduces the chances of mistake in the examination” (SA-FGD-5). One undercurrent in the FGDs from School A was that students were aware of the tricks of scoring high. For example, issues like “having a better introduction or conclusions” (SA-FGD-2), “understanding a topic better” (SA-FGD-3) or “writing something new” (SA-FGD-2) were prominent in School A’s FGDs, but not in School B’s FGDs.

**Examination preparation versus language proficiency.** One of the themes that came out of the discussions of the students’ focus groups was that studying or preparing for the SSC English examination did not contribute to the English proficiency of the students. None of the students felt confident about their performance in real life based on the kind of preparation they did for the SSC English examination, although most of the students across the FGDs expressed their confidence in doing well on the board examination. Some honest confessions such as, “I do not know how much this preparation will help me in real life. My A+ does not make me
confident to be able to use English in real life” (SA-FGD-2) or “I am confident about my score in the SSC examination, but I am at all not confident about my English proficiency” (SB-FGD-5) shed light on the fact that preparation and getting A+ on the SSC examination were two different factors for the students. Since they took a narrow route to prepare for the examination, students were not sure if they could write about an “off-track” (SB-FGD-2) topic on the examination. One group from School B revealed that one of their internal English examinations was cancelled because it included a paragraph on “Information Technology,” which was not on the syllabus, and therefore, many students could not write about it (SB-FGD-3).

A few participants pointed out that, “if overall English proficiency is developed, it is possible to do well in the examination, but otherwise is not possible” (SA-FGD-3). On the other hand, a few of their fellow students opined that it was necessary to understand the pattern of the examination to secure high score, that is, “if I practice the same thing for 50 times, I will exactly know what to do in the examination” (SB-FGD-4). Eventually, all FGDs unarguably agreed that they viewed the English examination as one of the subjects they had to study to pass the secondary level. This is echoed in one participant’s statement: “I don’t think that the way we learn English is going to build my English proficiency. I feel like, it is all about passing a subject in a board examination” (SB-FGD-2). This sentiment was noted in all 10 FGDs from both the schools. The FGDs made it clear that students knew they could do well on the examination without developing any real English proficiency.

When asked what activities students would do to improve their general proficiency, unrelated to the SSC English examination, activities such as watching English movies, listening to English songs and news, reading English novels and newspapers, and conversing with friends and siblings in English were mentioned. However, for examination preparation they did not do any of those activities. Although students considered listening and speaking skills important,
they preferred to focus on reading and writing skills since these skills were assessed in the examination. A few FGDs revealed that they would have practiced speaking and listening if some marks were allocated in the SSC English examination for the purpose (SA-FGD-2 & SB-FGD-2).

One thought-provoking issue was that students did not feel they needed to use English in their daily lives in Bangladesh. While discussing reasons for learning English (see first theme), nobody mentioned that they needed English in their day-to-day lives. Group discussions revealed that students needed English primarily for securing admission into universities or colleges and getting a better job. One of the students stated, “in real life, I never heard anyone speaking only in English for 10-15 minutes. There is always a mix of Bangla and English. We don’t go to places where we only have to speak in English” (SA-FGD-1). In other words, some students saw no reason to learn practical English skills. From their perspective, students still wanted to learn English, but securing A+ was the primary objective. Thus, their examination preparation was limited to studying for the board examination.

This Chapter reported the findings to address the three research questions of the study. First, it explored the complex alignment relationship at the policy level; that is, the curriculum, textbook, and the examination did not share a linear and amiable relationship with each other. On top of that, it was not easy to explain the relationship, since the relationship is complicated by existing contextual problems within the country’s educational settings. Second, the gaps in the policy documents created situations in which teachers simply taught to the test in English classrooms. Their classroom activities were solidly based on the examination tasks which minimized the scope of learning opportunities for the students. Third, students perceived the negative washback of the SSC English examinations in their learning, which was not intended by
the English national curriculum. All their activities and attempts to learn English were test oriented. The next Chapter, which is the concluding part of the dissertation, synthesizes the findings, discusses the implications of the study, limitations of the findings, and future directions of washback research.
Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusions

This final Chapter contains a synthesis and discussion of the major findings of the study. It includes an acknowledgement of the limitations of the study and speculation about the future directions, significant contributions and implications of washback research. This final Chapter concludes with stating a personal reflection of the researcher.

The goal of my study was to answer three central research questions: 1) how curriculum, textbook, and examination were aligned with each other at the policy level; 2) how teachers perceived washback in their classroom instruction due to curriculum alignment at the policy level; and 3) how students realized washback on their learning due to the alignment at the policy level. The following table (see Figure 5.1) summarizes the findings (discussed in detail in Chapter 4) of the study within framework from Pellegrino et al. (2016). By answering these three questions, I explored how alignment or misalignment in the educational system may create test washback in teaching and learning.
Figure 5.1. Research questions and findings regarding the argument and evidence-based framework.

Figure 5.1 lays out answers to the three research questions and maps them according to the adapted framework. Results from RQ 1 revealed that the SSC English examination was largely misaligned with the curriculum and associated textbook. Answers to RQ 2 indicated that the English classroom instruction at the SSC level was completely examination-oriented, and teaching to the test, therefore, dominated classroom instruction. Findings from RQ 3 included accounts of students going through intense examination-oriented test preparation, which deviated from learning goals that had been set in the English curriculum.

This Chapter consists of two major sections. The first section discusses RQ 1, 2 and 3, considering their research findings. The second section highlights the limitations, future research, contributions, and implications of this study.

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<td>How curriculum, textbook &amp; the exam were aligned: policy documents</td>
<td>- The English National Curriculum (2012) and the textbook, English for Today were aligned to a large extent; - English for Today and the SSC examination were deceptively aligned with each other; - The curriculum and the exam were primarily misaligned with each other;</td>
<td>RQ 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>How classroom instruction was influenced by the alignment situation: teachers &amp; teaching</td>
<td>- Teachers followed the exam goals overlooking the curriculum goals and thus there was a teaching to the test situation; - There was limited uses of textbook; - Classroom instruction was completely exam oriented;</td>
<td>RQ 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>How learning was influenced by the alignment situation: students &amp; learning</td>
<td>- Students’ learning practices were mostly exam oriented; - Students went through intense test preparation at school because of the importance of the SSC examination; - The test preparation, to a large extent, did not contribute to the improvement of English proficiency;</td>
<td>RQ 3</td>
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This first section is divided into four sub-sections: 1) alignment at the policy level, 2) washback on teaching, 3) washback on learning, and 4) expanding the concept of washback.

**Misalignment at the Policy Level: RQ 1**

English (2010), one of the pioneer advocates of curriculum alignment studies, dismissed the idea of frontloading, or developing a curriculum before finding measures to test it, as occurred in Bangladesh. “The real agenda in frontloading curriculum revolves around defining the work to be done without also providing the means to enable closer supervision and evaluation from occurring simultaneously” (English, p. 83). Bangladesh had a different kind of “institutional frontloading.” One institution, NCTB, first developed the English curriculum and the Examination Board, a different administrative body, was responsible for conducting the examination based on the suggested curriculum. This appears to have caused a great deal of inconsistency at the institutional level. Figure 5.2 shows the institutional structure involved in the English curriculum, textbook, and examination in Bangladesh.

**Figure 5.2.** Organogram engaged in the process of curriculum implementation.
The Ministry of Education (MoE) worked in association with the Secondary & Higher Education Division (SHED) in Bangladesh. SHED was a policymaking institution that contains three sub-divisions: education boards, the Directorate of Secondary & Higher Education (DSHE) and the NCTB. The eight regional and two alternative (technical education and Madrassah) education boards were responsible for writing the questions for the SSC English examination and administering the central examination. Education boards had a special wing known as Bangladesh Examination Development Units (BEDU) to write SSC question papers. DSHE was responsible for the overall curriculum implementation in post-primary, secondary, and higher education. The NCTB initiated, planned and devised the curriculum, wrote the associated textbook, and provided sample SSC questions. This structure was the real problem: three autonomous bodies worked “separately” to align curriculum, classroom instruction, and examination. Although they were technically responsible to each other, my interview with the Aslam, the curriculum specialist, revealed that in practice, these bodies were not accountable to each other at all. They reported directly to SHED, and they did not communicate with each other.

There was a major gap between the goals of the English curriculum and the SSC English examination. From the interview with Aslam and my own observations, it appears that disagreement sprang out from the fact that the NCTB planned the curriculum and examination measures, but the examination was administered by the education boards. The goals of the curriculum designers were not transparent to the education board members who wrote the question papers. The question writers, recruited by the education boards, were all practicing schoolteachers, and schoolteachers were never included in the policy-making process. There was usually no training provided for writing the SSC English questions. However, in 2018, BEDU arranged a one-day training for the English question writers and moderators. Neither NCTB nor BEDU had an examination manual or other written examination specifications. This lack of
administrative clarity had resulted in misalignment between the components of the educational system. In fact, Webb (1997a) indicated this problem many years back that aligning the education components is never a linear process. Rather, successful alignment depends on many other factors, such as, in case of Bangladesh, the problematic bureaucracy was one of the obstacles in the process of curriculum alignment.

The document analysis indicated a great deal of misalignment between the English curriculum and SSC English examination because the test design failed to address the skills targeted in the curriculum and textbook. Since the English National Curriculum (2012) and its textbook, EFT, were both designed by the NCTB, they were aligned. The document analysis demonstrated that the activities in the textbook were designed to teach the four language skills, i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing. However, the analysis indicated that implementing those activities in classroom teaching required greater pedagogical skills than most Bangladeshi teachers possess. Rahman and Pandian (2018a) and Rahman et al., (2018a) shared the same concerns: due to a lack of trained teachers and adequate technological supports, the CLT activities in the textbook could not be applied. Integrating CLT activities in classroom teaching has not yet been achieved (Chowdhury & Ha, 2008; Hamid & Baldauf, 2008; Hamid, Karim & Mohamed, 2019; Hamid, Sussex, & Khan, 2009). Most English teachers, therefore, would prefer to not use the textbook in their classroom instruction at all, possibly because they lack the required skills to adapt these activities to their own contexts and classrooms. These concerns echoed in the interviews and classroom observation findings of this study.

In one of the pioneer washback models, Green (2007a) illustrated that test design is strongly connected with the positive or negative outcomes of washback. He suggested that there would be potential positive washback when the test design would be nearer to the focal construct. In other words, “the better a test represents target skills and knowledge, the more beneficial should be washback” (Johnson & Shaw, 2018). To achieve the most desired test washback, the
design of the associated examination should firmly be based on the targeted skills of the curriculum. Conversely, if the test design is not built on the goals of the curriculum, classroom teaching and learning is likely to be test directed. An examination that is misaligned with the curriculum creates the possibility of negative washback. The document analysis in this study showed that the test design of the English SSC examination was misaligned with the stated curriculum goals, which was recently indicated by Sultana’s (2018a) SSC English test review. The examination did not include all four language skills and therefore did not represent the communicative goals of the English National Curriculum (2012). Thus, the national curriculum was reduced to an operational curriculum. However, there were various financial, infrastructural, and contextual reasons which hindered the implementation of testing listening and speaking skills at the SSC level. Earlier research on the HSC examination in Bangladesh also indicated that there were practical reasons for not being able to include listening and speaking skills on the public examinations (Islam, Majid, Shahidullah, & Shams, 2001; Ali et al., 2018). Even the reading and writing sections were largely designed to promote memorization rather than the development of communicative language skills. Students did not need to acquire the language skills identified in the English curriculum in order to achieve high scores in the English SSC examination; rote memorization could earn them a better score (Asian Development Bank, 2015). The examination also failed to address the issue of creativity and critical thinking stated in the English curriculum by encouraging memorization.

In Bangladesh, based on the findings of my study, test washback took a more complicated route because of the unclear relationship between the curriculum, textbook, and examination shared. Figure 5.3 shows how the SSC examination did not match the curriculum goals. The SSC examination seemed to be a powerful member of the family who did not respect the basic rules of the house.
Figure 5.3 visualizes the relationship of curriculum, textbook, and examination within the context of my study. According to this figure, the goals and objectives of the English SSC curriculum were reflected in the textbook activities to a large extent, and thus the relationship was depicted by a direct arrow coming from curriculum to textbook. However, the textbook shared only a distant dotted line with the examination. The findings of the document analysis showed that the textbook activities for reading and writing corresponded with the examination activities to some extent, but the examination tasks were not designed following the textbook. The relationship between EFT and the SSC English examination was somewhat deceptive. At first, it seemed that they matched each other, but they did not because the examination tasks did not endorse the curriculum and textbook principles. Listening and speaking were not tested at all in the examination. However, the curriculum and the examination had the greatest mismatch with each other, shown in Figure 5.3 as a transparent wavy line, which is a clear case of construct under-representation. According to Messick (1996), construct under-representation takes place when the examination fails to measure all aspects of the constructs. The test design of the SSC English examination was not in alignment with the focal constructs of the English curriculum of the country. This denotes that the curriculum had the least influence on the examination. None of
the major objectives of the curriculum, such as acquiring competence in all four language skills, using the competence for effective communication in real life situations, developing creativity and critical thinking through English language, becoming independent learners of English by using reference skills, using language skills for utilizing information technology, using literary pieces in English for enjoyment, and language learning, were properly addressed in the examination. It is understandable that total alignment is not possible in many situations, however, as Linn (2005) opined, an approximate alignment is expected when evaluating the alignment between the test design and the curriculum objectives. In case of this study, the examination was totally misaligned with the curriculum.

Further, the purpose of the examination was not stated anywhere in the curriculum, nor were any test specifications provided describing the constructs to be measured in the SSC English examination. Fulcher and Davidson (2007) stressed the importance of having test specifications because they supply the rationale behind the test items. Instead, the NCTB provided a set of sample test papers which worked as the model for the test writers. This situation was even more threatening to the validity of the SSC English examination; as Fulcher (2010) warned, writing tests without having a clearly stated purpose leads to “design chaos” as well as “validity chaos at the end” (p. 96). The SSC English examination was vaguely designed and had neither a stated goal nor alignment with the English curriculum. At the document level, there was no transparency about the design of the examination.

The design of the SSC English examination did not seem to encourage positive washback effect on teaching and learning because of the misalignment amongst major policy documents in the education system. The idea is simple: if examinations “fail to measure accurately whatever it is, they are intended to measure” (Hughes, 2003, p. 2), there is a major misalignment on the policy level. In this situation, test washback would be undeniably negative and unintended for
the corresponding teaching and learning. Abdulhamid’s (2018) doctoral study evinced that a misaligned relationship between the examination and the curriculum had negative washback effects on students and teachers. Those findings resonate with the results of this doctoral study. The following sections discuss how this misalignment has created an environment of teaching to the test and learning to the test.

**Washback on Teaching: RQ 2**

The most significant finding of this study was that English teachers taught to the test in the classroom, which was found in many other pioneer washback studies (Alderson and Hamp-Lyons, 1996; Andrews, 1995; Cheng, 1998, 2005, 2008; Qi, 2007; Wall and Alderson, 1993; Wall, 1996; Watanabe, 1996); around the world. The classroom observational data complemented with interview data indicated that teachers only taught items that were directly included in the SSC English examination. Teachers never mentioned that they were teaching reading, writing, or any of the targeted skills. They aimed at teaching test items or topics. Classroom instruction was based on practicing previous questions, timed practices, and repetition. The use of prescribed textbook was limited to reading a few important passages followed by the questions supplied by a guidebook. This limited use of textbook also occurred because the SSC examination used a few reading passages directly from the textbook. The examination seemed to have a washback effect on the teaching materials as well. The supporting teaching or practice materials teachers used in the classroom instruction were sample examination tasks. Those were given to the students, so that they could practice preparing for the examination. Since the examination was largely misaligned with the English curriculum, washback was not a surprise considering the importance of this examination in the context.
The teachers’ interview data gave support to the classroom observational data. In these interviews, teachers revealed how they set the lesson plans or classroom objectives keeping the examination objectives in mind. Thus, they ended up not teaching listening and speaking at all in the classroom instruction. Skipping aural-oral skills in classroom teaching is a frequent finding (Ahmad and Rao, 2012) in the contexts where these skills are not tested but targeted in the curriculum (see Chapter 2 for details about the South Asian context). These sample teachers’ classroom instruction demonstrated the intense washback effect of the SSC examination. For the sake of the examination, they overlooked the curriculum goals and trained the students for the examination. The same was found in many of the other investigations carried out recently in the South Asian countries (Onabia, 2013; Dawadi, 2018; Rind & Mari, 2019), that the teaching content was narrowed down by the teachers to mirror the examination contents.

One recent study (Al Amin & Greenwood, 2018) conducted on the Bangladeshi examination system revealed that most of the English teachers thought that an effective English teacher “is someone who teaches only what will be important for the final examination” (p. 4). However, the teachers who participated in this doctoral study did not question what effective teaching was. They were not concerned about the washback effect of the examination on their instruction. Even though to some extent they agreed that students’ language proficiency was not going to improve based on their examination-directed teaching, still, they did not see developing language proficiency as one of their primary teaching goals, echoing the findings of Maniruzzaman (2012). One of the baseline studies carried out in Bangladeshi secondary schools indicated that teachers’ pedagogical approaches were not conducive to learning English (English in Action, 2009b). Indeed, this study revealed that the examination did not allow the teachers to see teaching as a way to develop English language proficiency. The teachers felt they were responsible for the examination results, but not for building the students’ ability to communicate
in English. If teachers concentrated on developing the English proficiency of the SSC test candidates, they would have been risking their students’ chances of achieving high scores on the examination—and high scores were the priority of the students, parents, and the schools. Doing test preparation was what they thought the right thing to do. All their activities were connected to how they perceived the importance of the examination.

When a test is important, it will create “intense washback” effect (Green, 2007a, p. 339) and the washback becomes more prominent in the form of more test preparation when the test is nearer (Cheng & Curtis, 2004). This study also revealed that the instruction became more test-directed when the examination was nearer. There was rigorous drilling of previous test papers and examination-like materials. In addition, teachers gave them suggestions on what to study for the examination. Rind and Mari’s (2019) study in Pakistan (a prototype education system similar to the system in Bangladesh) found how teachers created a list of topics which were repeated in the previous examination because they were likely to appear in the examination again. The same was the case in Bangladesh in my study. Teachers gave a list of topics to study when the examination was nearer. It is to be noted that their list of topics for teaching was always very limited. They taught the topic not the language skills associated with the topic as part of the test preparation.

In this study, the academic and professional background of the English teachers played a vital role in intensifying the examination effects in classroom instruction, which were earlier not explored except for a few studies (Hayes & Read, 2004; Green, 2006). Most of the sampled teachers had academic qualification in English literature- except for two teachers who were academically educated to teach English language. Although except one teacher, rest of the nine teachers had B.Ed. degree which was the required teaching qualification for most of teaching positions, this B.Ed. degree has always been regarded as not enough to provide necessary
practical training to the English teachers in Bangladesh. In this connection, several researchers (Ali & Walker 2014; Hamid, 2010; Islam, 2015) expressed their concerns that the training offered by the Teachers Training Colleges (TTC) are not enough to equip the English teachers with the necessary teaching abilities. In the introductory phase of CLT based English curriculum in Bangladesh, Selim and Mahboob (2001) identified teachers’ qualifications as the primary reasons behind the failure of implementation of the English curriculum in the country. Almost two decades later, the situation did not seem to have changed much. Karim et al., (2019) more recently urged for academic degrees specializing in teaching English language for the English teachers in Bangladesh claiming that these specialized degrees might be beneficial in improving the teaching skills. Thus, findings from earlier research and data from the classroom observation offered a window to question if these 10 teachers were enough trained both academically and professionally, would they have done conducted their classroom instruction in a different way?

The level of teaching experiences and exposures to the examination that these teachers (School A & School B) had also created a dynamic in the level of washback on their classroom instructions. Teachers of School A had more teaching experiences (long teaching experience), and they were closely involved in setting the question papers for the SSC English examination, script checking, and they attended more training unlike the teachers of School B. At School A, the deep knowledge about the examination and its expectation made them conduct a more test directed teaching in preparing the students to score higher in the SSC English examination. Teachers at School B whereas exclusively depended on guidebooks, School A’s teachers prepared the examination like materials by themselves to be used in classroom instruction. Teachers at School A used to provide more examination directed and related tips to the students to score higher unlike the counterpart. Both the interviews and the classroom observations indicated that School A’s teachers had more examination awareness and expertise compared to
the teachers of School B. However, this knowledge cannot be labeled as the assessment knowledge. Sultana’s (2019d) recent study revealed that English teachers at the secondary level in Bangladesh suffered from lack of assessment literacy which was somewhat responsible for creating negative test washback. Sultana’s ideas were also expressed by the curriculum specialist as well that the practicing English teachers did not have enough assessment knowledge. This doctoral study, although, did not explore the assessment literacy of the sampled English teachers, from the demography information of the 10 teachers it could be elicited that none of them (both School A & B) had any formal or informal training on language assessment. Teachers at School A probably demonstrated higher washback in their teaching because they knew what needed to be taught to score well but did not know the purposes behind those items. So, they preferred teaching the test items. They conducted a routine classroom assessment which was based on the SSC English examination. Probably if the teachers were assessment literate, they would have been able to resist the influence of examination in their teaching. Based on a washback research carried out within a teacher training program, Khan et al. (2019) suggested that offering more assessment exposure to trainee teachers could create positive washback. Similarly, the findings of this study indicated that there might be a connection between teaching to the test and teachers’ lack of assessment knowledge. However, this study did not directly tease out that relationship.

Further, complementing past studies (Ali et al., 2018; Islam et al., 2001; Rahman & Karim, 2015; Rahmatuzzaman, 2018) conducted in Bangladesh, this study revealed that teachers’ classroom instruction was more examination-directed because of contextual reasons. For the teachers, it was not possible to run a CLT-based classroom or work toward developing the English communication of the students when the average size of the classrooms was 60 to 80 students and the duration of each of class was 35 to 45 minutes. The situation was worse in the absence of required infrastructure or adequate logistical supports in the classrooms. These issues
were pointed out by the curriculum specialist participant as well; he noted that due to contextual problems, the English curriculum could not be implemented in the classrooms or in the SSC examination. Kirkpatrick and Gyem’s (2012) found similar issues in Bhutan. However, the biggest problem was teachers’ lack of intention to follow the objectives stated in the curriculum. Many researchers (Rahmatuzzman, 2018; Sanders, Wright, & Horn, 1997; Shohel & Banks, 2012) have claimed that if teachers want to, it is possible to overcome these contextual factors. The interviews and classroom observations clearly indicated teachers’ examination-oriented mindset. Teachers allowed the examination to influence their classroom instruction because they thought the examination was more important than developing the English proficiency of the students. In a test-score-driven country such as Bangladesh, teachers may not have felt the freedom to teach differently than their colleagues.

Test washback was more prominent because the test design of the SSC examination was not communicative in nature. Teachers’ interview, as well as the document analysis of the previous question papers, indicated that the nature of the question paper was responsible for creating such high test-oriented teaching. The SSC English examination did not create opportunities to teach and learn the English language. Rather, the fixity of the examination syllabus narrowed down the curriculum to that level, so that there seemed to be no change to get any positive examination washback on teaching and learning English. When examinations focus on memorization, teachers also tend to adopt the nature of the examination in building their teaching strategies. This generates serious negative washback effects (Tayeb et al., 2014; Rind & Mari, 2019). It is about the power of the test which influences the curriculum and innovation (Andrews, 2004). If tests are important, the test design can produce a greater influence on the goals of education as well (Ali, Hamid & Hardy, 2018), such as the case in this study.
This study confirmed the findings of Shepard’s (1990) that when teachers narrow the curriculum to the test contents, it may lead to the inflated score gains. The sampled population in this study raised questions about the quality of the SSC English examination because they did not consider the examination score reliable enough to validate the English proficiency of the students. The teachers knew that the high scores at the SSC English examination was the direct offshoot of their exam-directed teaching. Still, all the teachers chose to prepare the students for the examination due to the importance of examination scores in the context of the country, which echoes Khaniya’s (1990) opinion that when the examination affects lives, people will work for the examination regardless of its quality. This finding is consistent with Dawadi’s (2018) finding that even if the quality of the examination was questionable, teachers still taught to the test because the examination score was important for the school and students. This is the power of high stakes tests, as explained by Shohamy et al. (1996). In this dissertation, there was disapproval about how the examination was administrated and marked. Ali et al. (2018) and Sultana (2018a) found similar concerns in their studies: there was no transparency in how English examinations are designed, administered and validated. It could be argued that if the examination was in alignment with the curriculum, the classroom instruction would benefit from positive washback.

The discussion above shows that the way teachers taught to the test while teaching English in classrooms, it contradicted the stated principles in the English national curriculum. According to the *National Curriculum* (2012), the classroom instruction should be conducted based on the following principles:

- All the four basic language skills would be practised in class;
- Skills should be practised in an integrated manner - not in isolation;
- Skills practice should be done in meaningful contexts, i.e. practice in language use should go beyond the textbook and include real-life situations;
Interactive activities should be carried out between teachers and students, and more importantly between students and students. (p. 73)

None of the principles were followed in teaching of English as teachers superseded the curriculum goals for the sake of teaching examination tasks. In connection to the secondary English examination washback in Bangladesh, Al Amin and Greenwood (2018) expressed their concerns on the detrimental nature of the examinations that “they reduce classroom teaching and learning to a curriculum focused almost entirely on what is expected in the examination” (p. 15). The data from the interviews and classroom observations revealed the extreme test-driven nature of teachers’ classroom instruction. But, in a situation such as in this study that the curriculum and examination were misaligned with each other, what choice was left for the teachers in an educational setting where examination score carried greater importance? The same was revealed in one of the recent studies that most of the problems were related to the inconsistency between recommended teaching and the examination (Karim & Mohamed, 2019). Therefore, it could be said that because of the existing mismatch among the policy documents made the teachers aim at teaching to the test, which had created an unintended washback effect of the SSC English examination on the teaching of English in the country. Teachers, however, were not aware of this washback effects on their classroom instruction; for them, it was normal and routine.

Washback on Learning: RQ 3

In this study, the sampled students did intense test preparation for scoring higher in the examination. Their classroom instruction was based on test preparation format, and, they preferred going to the coaching centers for extra practice of examination materials and model tests. Students hardly had opportunities to use the textbook both in and out of the classroom test preparation period. As a result, the EFT textbook was not part of their test preparation. Rather, guidebook or extra test preparation materials made the top in their list of preference because they
were directly built on the SSC English examination format. This behavior towards practice and test preparation is a typical trait of negative washback on learning. Al Amin and Greenwood (2018) found the same in their study in the same context that students do not use a textbook at all and highly rely on coaching centers for preparing for the examination. The only doctoral level washback study on HSC English examination in Bangladesh revealed the same negative washback on learning, that is, students chose to rely on commercially published test materials rather than a textbook because those materials were directly built on the examination (Hoque, 2011). Similarly, Students’ learning in the context of my research was totally examination oriented. This penetrating nature of washback would hinder any chances of occurring real learning (which are mentioned in the national curriculum) in the process of test preparation.

Shih (2007) identified many test factors, such as associated loopholes of the test, the content of the test, the structure of the test, nature of the tested skills, and the format of the test as reasons for washback on students’ learning. This was the case in this doctoral study, as well. Students were very aware of all these traits of the SSC English examination. For example, after teachers gave a shorter list of suggested topics to study for the examination, students also used to pick out the suggested topics based on their understanding. This finding supports a recent washback study conducted by Sato (2019) in Japan, where students analyzed the question patterns by themselves and customized their test preparation based on their analysis. Sampled students in my study did so much of drilling of the previous SSC questions that they knew how much repletion was there. Moreover, they did not study any new topics at the SSC level- the topics were known to them since grade 6. The effect of washback on these sampled students was direct because they targeted the format and content of the examination to score higher. The same was found in a study conducted on the HSC examination in Pakistan which opined that if an examination follows the same pattern year after year, students are likely to guess the patterns.
Their preparation will only target the specific question patterns needed to pass the examination (Rind & Mari, 2019). Likewise, if an examination does not include any content from the prescribed curriculum, teachers and students may not include that content in their test preparation (Kirkpatrick & Zang, 2011; Qi, 2004). So, in the context of this doctoral research, the washback effect was wanted and intended—at least from the students’ perspectives—because students consciously underwent test preparation to score higher on the examination.

There was an unintended examination washback (at least from the curriculum perspective) on the students because they did not need to demonstrate English proficiency to carry out their regular day to day activities. While the English National Curriculum (2012) stressed the importance of learning English to be able to use the language in real-life situations, data from students’ FGDs indicated that there were no regular uses of English for the students in out-of-class situations. The following excerpt from one of the tourists who recently visited Bangladesh would visualize the reality of English uses in Bangladesh:

You cannot converse with the cab driver, you cannot even read the number plate on the car because the numbers and alphabets are inscribed in Bengali, you cannot take the assistance of several friendly smiling locals who really do want to help out but can't with their limited knowledge of English. And all this in the centre of Bangladesh's proud capital! … The doorman, the waiters, the concierge are very polite and friendly, but you need to know Bangla to understand what they are trying to tell you! … You cannot communicate with them for they speak only Bangla (Naik, 2018, Para 1, 2, 3).

The above-mentioned experience from a foreigner highlights that English is widely not used in Bangladesh for communications. We do not need English in our regular day-to-day life except in places such as, higher education and jobs, which was also revealed in the FGDs. The same issue was pointed out in one of the recent studies by Islam and Hashim (2019) where the
What is important to understand in the context, that, Bangladeshi students do not use English, yet they recognize the need of English for better prospects (English in Action, 2009a). Because of the limited scope of English uses in Bangladesh, it was more important for students to pass and obtain a higher score in the English examination than to be able to perform the language. Although they assumed that they might need English once they go for higher studies and jobs, they were not expected to use English in their day-to-day life. Thus, unlike Ma’s (2017) findings on how Chinese students valued test preparation which contributed to their learning of English, students in my study valued test preparation only to score higher or passing in the examination. Further, it was already discussed that the test preparations were narrowed down so much so that the scope of learning English was almost diminished. In this situation, examination washback should be expected rather than surprising.

It appeared that students might have two goals: an immediate goal was to achieve the highest score, and the long-term goal was to be able to use English in education and jobs. The same idea was found in a study conducted in Japan (Takagi, 2010) that students did not have any motivation or need to develop communicative skills. As a result, they studied only for the examination because they required to earn a good test score, even if there was no real deep and comprehensive learning of communication skills and language proficiency. Another study conducted in the context of Korea reported, “while almost all Korean people think English is important, many of them still do not have realistic expectations toward achieving their English learning goals. Some do not even know what goals they are trying to attain (Jeon, 2010, p. 56).” These findings in Japanese and Korean contexts resonate with the findings of this study in Bangladesh, that is, students’ immediate short-term goal was to prepare for the examination to earn a good score and not to develop the real communication skills. According to Bailey (1996),
this short-term goal may go against long-term learning goals, that is, to develop language proficiency. Bailey’s rationale behind this opinion is that students might not see the process of achieving both these goals as similar. The same was found in one of the recent studies by Dong (2019) that the test preparation strategies for achieving the immediate goals for a test score did not endorse the long-term learning goals. My study also resonated the results of these previous studies as the sampled students did not do the same activities to prepare for the examination and to improve the proficiency of English. Findings of this study suggested that students would have practiced different activities for developing English if they did not have to prepare for the examination. The test preparation did not improve students’ language proficiency.

The long-term goals of improving language skills are associated with the utilitarian perspective of English in Bangladesh. English proficiency is vital in Bangladesh in the manufacturing and service markets, widely used in the government bodies and associated with better employment and salary opportunities (Brunfaut & Green, 2017). So, the sampled students realized the value of learning English for securing a better future, if not immediate. Green’s (2007a) famous washback model claimed that if students find the test important and/or difficult, there would be intense washback. The first claim about the importance of examination proved to be accurate in this doctoral study, especially in case of School A. The school setting, interviews and the classroom observations at both the schools pointed that School A took the examination and its scores more seriously than School B. Eventually, the students also considered the score of the examination as important, whereas their counterparts were a bit more relaxed about exams and its scores. This finding is also explored in one of the washback studies conducted in China that washback and test preparation may vary because of school contexts and backgrounds (Ma, 2019). Having said that, all sampled students in my study felt intense test washback because their test preparation only targeted the score of the examination, not the actual language skills. Karim
and Mohamed’s (2019) recent study also indicated that students at the secondary level focus on reading and writing skills because listening and speaking skills were not tested in the examination. The same was found in this doctoral dissertation as well that the misalignment among curriculum, classroom teaching, and examination made them overlook the actual learning goals of English. In a score-oriented culture such as in Bangladesh, however, this research showed a different trend about the second issue, that is, examination difficulty; that even if students found the examination less difficult, still they went through intense test preparation. In this case, the only factor that brought intense washback was students’ belief about the outcomes of the examination. They knew that they needed a good score (preferably A+) to get admission into a good college and university and later to get jobs, because “tests determine the fates of millions of students and job-seekers in the South Asian nation of Bangladesh. The outcomes of these tests that create ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ in the education sector and the job market.” (Ali et al., 2018). Hence, it was more of a utilitarian purpose which triggered the motivation of the students to do well in the English examination. So, the test washback was related to the student’s perception of the test uses; that is, the examination score would shape the future of the students. This finding echoes Sun’s (2016) idea about how extrinsic motivation guides students towards test preparation.

The importance of examination scores in English is associated with the power of English in Bangladesh and worldwide. Learners recognized the uses of English as a powerful global and international lingua franca to communicate to the rest of the world, which echoes Cheng’s (2018) statement about the constantly growing population of users of English as an international language making tests of English even more influential. To be able to communicate in English was a status marker for the sampled students. Cheng and Curtis (2010) stated in this regard that the power within teaching and learning of English in a non-native context depends on the power
that the associated examination carries. The sample students considered English as an important subject to be tested at the SSC examination whose scores carried significance in their lives. Students were fully aware of the power of the SSC English examination. “This power prevails because large-scale testing scores are associated with important high-stakes decisions” (Cheng, 2018, p. 2). So, their intention and need created direct washback on their learning, which is unintended from the point of view of the curriculum but intended from the students’ perspective.

**Expanding the Concept of Washback**

The overall discussion leads to the general conclusion of this study: the SSC English examination had a negative washback effect on teaching and learning of English in Bangladesh primarily because of the mismatch between the curriculum, the textbook and the examination. Based on the results of this study, I have developed a model of washback (see Figure 5.4) visualizing how washback worked in the context of Bangladesh. Within the limited scope of the study, the following model offers a generic washback model in the context of Bangladesh based on the above findings of the study.
Figure 5.4. Washback due to misalignment in the system.

Figure 5.4 shows that the curriculum and textbook are misaligned with the examination, classroom instruction, and students’ learning. In this misalignment, the examination exerts direct influence on classroom instruction and students’ learning. Primarily because the examination is not in alignment with the curriculum goals and the textbook activities, so the design may promote negative washback. According to this model, the test design of the examination is one of the major reasons for creating test washback on teaching and learning, which Messick (1996) opined years back that test design could exert positive or negative washback.

One interesting point is that students’ learning is largely shaped by classroom instruction. Students receive direct instruction from the classrooms about the examination. How teachers teach and perceive the importance of the examination would influence how students perceive test-washback in their test preparation. While a prevailing misalignment at the policy level may cause substantial unintended test washback on teaching and learning, other contextual factors intensify the washback. Teacher factors such as teacher’s experiences and background, and attitude to the
examination score (see the top right side of the diagram in Figure 5.4) make the examination more influential. As discussed earlier, if the teachers consider the examination more important, their instruction is likely to be extremely test-directed. Further, when teachers know that students do not need to use the language out of the classroom, that is, the examination score is the only proof of their teaching outcome, they will try to teach to the test. In addition, how the examination score is valued by the teachers in the context also increases the intensity of the washback.

Again, there are a few factors (see the lower right side of the diagram in Figure 5.4) that intensify the washback on learning. Students’ social background may make them aspire for a higher score to meet parental as well as social expectations. Besides, teachers’ classroom instruction shapes how students perceive the test-washback in their learning. For example, when teachers exclusively make them practice reading and writing, by default, students’ out-of-the-classroom activities are controlled by the classroom materials. Also, if English is not needed in out-of-classroom situations, students tend to prepare for the examination to score higher because the score is perceived as needed.

The washback model mentioned above reinforces the idea that contextual factors may intensify how washback is shaped up or perceived, but test-washback is essentially rooted in the examination itself. This echoes one of the beginning washback hypothesis offered by Hughes (1993, p.2) that “the nature of a test may first affect the perceptions and attitudes of the participants towards their teaching and learning tasks,” and later Messick’s (1996) argument about the importance of test design in washback studies. Thus, this expanding concept directly links washback with the test validity. However, Alderson and Wall (1993) found washback too complex and contextual to link it with the test validity. Although the present expanding concept
of washback acknowledges the “myriad of forces operating within any educational context” (Booth, 2012, p. 290) which induce a washback effect (Cheng & Curtis, 2004), washback seems to be tightly connected with the test. So, as long as the teaching and learning activities are considered as the outcomes of a test in a given context, washback effect should be considered as one of the aspects of test validity. But, it is important to realize that washback is an extremely intricate process, so much so that sometimes it becomes difficult to pinpoint if an effect on teaching and learning is the influence of the test or the other factors in the education system.

Washback research, which officially began with Alderson and Wall’s (1993) widely cited publication, has conceptually and empirically evolved and expanded in the last 26 years. With the increasing dominance of the testing industry and high stakes tests, washback is no longer a surprise. Instead, washback is now considered one of the principles of language assessment (Nopita, 2019); that is, washback, be it positive or negative, is expected. More than understanding what washback is, it is vital to understand why test washback happens and how washback changes based on the surroundings. Figure 5.4, which shows a significant outcome of this study, evidences that the concept of washback is not only limited to the examination itself. The interplay of other elements within the operating educational system also produces test washback on teaching and learning. However, the present study confirms one important issue that there might be other contextual factors involved in intensifying the washback effect, fundamentally the source of washback, be it positive or negative is related to the design of the examination and the importance of examination within the context.

Limitations

Although exploring washback of the English SSC examination on teaching and learning has brought a richer and deeper understanding of the nature of washback, there are some
limitations which need to be considered while interpreting or generalizing the data in terms of its scope, generalization, and transferability.

One of the major limitations of this doctoral study is that the scope was limited due to time constraints and logistical restrictions within the research context. Data were collected only from two schools situated in the capital of the country. The results might be different if they were collected from more schools. Moreover, in Bangladesh, there exist different types of schools, which are essentially very distinct than each other (see Chapter 1). For example, schools under the Madrasa board (religious education-based board) also follow the same *National Curriculum* (2012), but most of the students studying in those schools come from a poor or underrepresented background. So, a washback study at those schools would be different than the kind of schools that I studied for this doctoral study. Likewise, schools situated in rural areas also will garner a different set of results.

In washback studies, validity issues are central. “By attempting to minimize sources of invalidity in language test design, the test deficiencies and contaminants that stimulate negative washback are also minimized, thereby increasing the likelihood of positive washback,” Messick noted (1996, p. 243). One of the central findings of the study was how the test design did not promote positive or intended washback on teaching and learning. However, it was beyond the scope of the research to collect other various forms of evidence (e.g., from parents, test administrators, or guidebook publishers) for a detailed examination of the validity of the SSC English examination. Any attempt of such kind was not possible considering there were no other validation studies available in the context of the examination. Moreover, NCTB and Education boards publish almost nothing about the technical quality of the examination. Having said that in my limited scope in this doctoral study, I provided as many details as possible about the examination in Chapter 1 and Chapter 4 to provide a detailed description of the examination.
Another limitation of the study is the lack of the data informing how students perform in English in real-life situation after passing the SSC English examinations, that is if they can do what they are expected to do in English based on their examination results. According to Tsagari (2007), studies on washback intends to investigate if students have learned more or better as an outcome of the test. More recently, Ferris (2018) emphasized the importance of collecting data from the students who exited from the program, which possibly will derive more objective data from the students. This study did not attempt to collect data of this nature, which was beyond the scope of this research work. Instead, the foci of the study were to understand how students’ learning was influenced by the SSC English examination at the schooling while students were prepared to take the examination. Probably, data demonstrating how students perform in real-life situations would be more evidential in establishing the washback effect on their learning outcomes.

**Future Directions**

The findings of the study pointed out a range of areas for future research.

First, for future research, understanding the complex nature of washback on other stakeholders (e.g., people administrating the examination, parents, school administrators, employers and graduated students) should continue to gain insights about the full scope of the SSC English examinations and its influences on teaching and learning. One of the worthwhile issues that the future researchers possibly should explore whether SSC graduates are able to perform the expected level of English in their real life, in the higher education, and in the job sectors. In this study, the students reported that they did not believe that they would be able to use English as a language to communicate if it was needed. So, future research work should include the graduates to explore how they perform. Moreover, data should be collected from
students having diverse economic, educational, and social backgrounds to comprehend and compare if washback varies across them.

Second, the findings of the study highlighted the multiple social and contextual factors in intensifying the washback of the examination. The way examinations are understood and perceived by individuals is largely dependent on how they are shaped by the society in general. For example, as a researcher, I felt that going to the coaching center was more of a norm than a need in my research context. There was a ‘strange’ coaching culture in the country, which I could not explore in my research. Moreover, the way the test preparation was done, it should raise ethical concerns regarding how education is understood in the country. Further washback research should target these aspects by drawing insights from other disciplines such as sociology or cultural studies.

Finally, due to time constraint to complete the dissertation on time, I could not collect data in different stages of the schooling (e.g., grade 9 of the program) to get more informed data. However, while conducting this research, I felt that future researchers need to conduct a longitudinal study to grasp the complexity of the washback phenomenon over time in the context. Therefore, future research studies should also be based on longitudinal data.

**Contributions**

This study has made some original contributions to the washback research. First, one of the major contributions of this study is engaging an evidence-based framework to explore how alignment creates a washback effect on teaching and learning. To my knowledge, this is the first washback study that contained empirical research about the link between alignment and washback in that context, which was earlier proposed in one of the literature reviews conducted by Sultana (2018c). Recently, Abdulhamid (2018) conducted a doctoral study in Libyan context investigating the relationship between alignment and washback. However, the study was
primarily an alignment study and was investigated based on alignment models. I have used a validity framework from the field of general education in a math classroom assessment context. In a way, this study addresses the gap which was pointed out in the recent study conducted by Anand (2018) in Ontario, Canada within the context of English for Academic Purposes (EAP): that washback studies need to make the connection between validity and influence of tests. Regarding this, Messick (1996) and more recently, Booth (2018) considered washback as an aspect of validity since washback looks at the consequences of tests. Kane (2013) pointed out that the concept of validity has changed to a large extent. Consequently, the primary issues are consequences, how they are studied, and how the results of these consequences should be understood (Cheng et al., 2015). This creates opportunities for washback researchers to be able to use validity frameworks in researching washback. This is one of the very few washback studies where a conceptual validity framework was used to guide the research design.

Second, this research attempted to understand how washback is realized and perceived at three important educational levels: the policy level, teaching level, and learning level. The research explored due to mismatch at the policy level, how the classroom instruction had an examination-oriented nature, and because of examination-oriented classroom instruction, the students’ learning also revolved around the examination contents. Thus, an overall picture of washback was explored in this investigation: what washback looked like, why it existed, and how it functioned in the context of Bangladesh. By doing so, this present washback study was able to address one of the calls in a recent study conducted in Bangladesh, that is, “inconsistencies between testing and curriculum, and gaps between policy expectations and realities also demand critical scrutiny” (Ali et al., 2018, p. 18). What is more, washback was explored at two different schools to perceive if the SSC English examination influenced the teaching and learning of English in a different way or the nature of washback changed because of the context. This
comprehensive account of washback contributes to the larger body of washback, which was conducted in different parts of the world. Washback researchers will be able to understand how test-washback functions in the countries where a similar situation exists or may compare with a contrasting setting to apprehend the contextual nature of washback.

Third, the findings of this investigation highlight how students perceive washback because of their short-term and long-term goals. As reported by the students that they did not need English in their regular day-to-day life in Bangladesh, their short-term goal became to score high in the SSC English examination. They needed a good score in the SSC English examination for higher education and better job prospects. Therefore, their learning revolves around their immediate need even though they acknowledged that eventually, they needed to learn English to be able to use it. Thus, this study makes a point in understanding students’ perceived need for learning a language and its relationship with washback as well as test preparation.

Finally, this study is one of the very few doctoral studies which explored a South Asian country attempting to understand the nature of washback in the Bangladeshi context. In the context of South Asia, there are only two well-cited doctoral studies, that is, Khaniya’s (1990) study investigating an English examination in Nepal and Wall’s (2005) washback research in Sri Lanka (see Chapter 2 for details). The findings of this study conducted in Bangladesh enriched the washback literature by adding some unique perspectives about the nature and effects of washback due to a misaligned situation. Furthermore, the results indicated that washback takes a different route depending on the financial condition as well. It pointed to the issue that examination and washback are needed to be understood within a political, social, and cultural perspective to fathom the intricacies of the phenomenon.

**Implications**

The contributions of this study carry implications for designers of curriculum and testing
as well as other stakeholders in the educational system in Bangladesh. First, the English National Curriculum (2012) was designed to teach English so that students could use the language in real-life communication. However, the design of the SSC English examination was inducing a construct under-representation issue, which in return was creating negative washback in teaching and learning of English. The test design of the English SSC examination should, therefore, be revised. Principle Seven of the International Language Testing Association (ILTA) Code of Ethics stresses that language tester should continuously work for improving the quality of the test (ILTA, 2018). This has not been happening in Bangladesh. The SSC English examination is two decades old, but there appears to be little evidence to suggest that the test designers have worked to improve the examination’s quality to promote positive washback.

Second, the curriculum does not define whether the SSC English examination is an achievement test or a proficiency test. However, Sultana’s (2018a) review of the examination and the data of this doctoral dissertation indicated that it is an achievement test. There should be a test specification to connect the SSC English examination to the curriculum and classroom instruction. Having a test specification possibly would reduce the issue of construct under-representation that currently creates negative washback on classroom instruction of English.

Third, the findings of the study emphasize the value of teachers’ role in creating washback in teaching and learning (Watanabe, 2004). The way that the SSC English curriculum and textbook were designed relies mostly on teachers and how they conduct instruction in their classrooms. The results of the study indicate that students’ beliefs about test preparation, attitudes towards the examination, and learning activities were largely shaped by their teachers. However, the sampled teachers’ demographic information points out their serious lack of professional training. Teacher training programs are necessary for inducing positive examination
washback; teachers must be equipped with the necessary skills to teach the expectations of the curriculum.

Finally, this work emphasizes the need to investigate washback in those less than ideal conditions rather than exclusively Western contexts. In a country like Bangladesh, washback takes a more complicated look because at times it becomes difficult to identify precise cause and effect. Testing is not the only factor in washback; it is one of many interrelated factors.

Conclusion

This dissertation highlights the value of using the alignment framework (Pellegrino et al., 2016) in exploring the complex nature of washback. The qualitative findings illuminate the complexity of washback created by various bureaucratic issues. These issues are further complicated by a lack of resources and the overall importance of examination scores. The inconsistencies at the policy level hinder the possible positive washback of the SSC English examination. At the policy level, the curriculum, textbook and the examination are not tightly woven to guide the teaching and learning of English at the SSC level. As a result, the SSC English examination has an unintended influence on the teaching and learning of English in Bangladesh; as noted by Tsagari and Cheng (2017), high-stakes examinations always influence teaching and learning. Curriculum expectations are superseded by teaching to the examination because earning good examination scores carries more value than learning English for practical communication. In the historical and cultural context of Bangladesh, the SSC English examination is a high-stakes examination. Stakeholders value its score because of its gatekeeping abilities. Because scores are consequential in deciding the academic and career trajectories of the test takers, an intense degree of passive washback effect is noticed in teaching, learning, and instruction at the SSC level. Considering the examination-oriented culture of the country,
teaching to the test by narrowing the curriculum to a de facto level is not unexpected. Proper curriculum alignment seems to be a plausible solution to this situation.

The existing system is clearly problematic and detrimental. Consequently, this doctoral study asserts Messick’s (1996) claim of the importance of test design in washback studies. The washback effect that the SSC English examination brings to the teaching and learning of English is closely associated with the fact that the design of the examination is totally misaligned with the stated objectives of the English curriculum and textbook of the country. Researchers have suggested focusing on test construction and evaluating the quality of those tests to reduce negative test effects in the developing countries (Eisemon, 1990; Heyneman & Ransom, 1990; Kellaghan & Greaney, 1992). It appears that negative washback both in teaching and learning of English in Bangladesh is caused, in part, by a test design that fails to induce positive washback. This examination has proved to be a failure in evaluating the achievement of learning goals. The SSC English examination system needs to be systematically aligned with the curriculum and thus, needs reform. However, in a developing country such as Bangladesh, washback takes a more complex and unpredictable route because of the contextual and social factors. Teaching and learning are not influenced by one factor. Several factors are involved in shaping the teaching and learning of English language at the SSC level. In this situation, systematic alignment of the components of the existing education system will not be a quick and easy process. The reform needs to be started from the policy level in agreement with the stakeholders and available resources to create sustainable and pragmatic English education at the secondary level contributing to the higher level of education of the country.

This study fleshes out the washback of the SSC English examination in two schools in Bangladesh. Even with its limited scope and parameters, this study demonstrates the multi-directional and complex nature of washback. It certainly involved many educational components
and multi-stakeholders. But real-life research is never seamless or definite. This washback study, instead of providing direct answers, raised many questions and indicated the practical problems that future washback studies could explore. The results of this study, therefore, call for further research and collaboration by including all stakeholders to optimize beneficial washback and to minimize the adverse effects of exams on teaching and learning.

**Personal Reflection**

Conducting this doctoral research created an opportunity for me to reflect on my experiences as a student, a teacher, and now a researcher in the Bangladeshi education system. When I was preparing for the SSC English examination more than 18 years ago, all I remember is going through rigorous memorization of open-ended questions. We used to prepare answers with the help of teachers and various guidebooks and memorized them. I took the SSC English examination in 2000, and from the following year, the SSC English examination was conducted based on the newly launched CLT-based curriculum – the examination this doctoral dissertation is based on. Many of my friends and I thought that CLT would bring changes in English teaching and learning, moving it from memorization to communication. However, while conducting this research I sadly found that CLT had replaced GTM but not the principles GTM was based upon. GTM is still functional in Bangladesh in the disguise of CLT. After two decades of CLT, students are still memorizing answers for the examination but not truly learning the language. Years ago, I memorized literary pieces, and now students are memorizing the “unseen/seen” compositions. My personal understanding is that English education in Bangladesh has deteriorated over the years instead of getting better. The teaching has largely remained same except that teachers are now using practice sheets. In the introduction, I mentioned that I became interested in washback research because I found that students with the highest scores on the English SSC examination had poor practical English language skills. Now I know that the way
they learn English for the examination does not help them use English to communicate. Students at the SSC level may pass the examination with highest grades but move to the next level of education with poor foundations in English language. But the question is what do we value in education? While collecting data and talking with several stakeholders, I realized that the value of education is limited to securing a good score. Nobody is going to question the morality of teaching and learning as long as students score higher. Running after the grades have superseded the actual purpose of education and ethics of teaching. Based on the findings of this doctoral study, the SSC English examination seems to create negative washback, forcing students to study for the score but fails to produce actual English language learning. The misalignment among policy, instruction, and examination is most likely responsible for the negative test washback of the SSC English examination in Bangladesh.
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## Appendix A: A sample page from the English *National Curriculum* (2012)

### Learning outcomes, functions, and language points

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning outcomes</th>
<th>Functions</th>
<th>Language points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **1. describe people and places**  
(Class periods: 6)  
Speaking and writing skills | asking about and describing people, their appearances, abilities, cultures, traditions, and national identities; asking about and describing homes, village/town/city etc. | determiners: *all, nearly all, most, many, a lot of, some, not many, a few, and few*; statements and short answers: *yes/no* and *wh*-questions; adverbs, tenses: *present simple, present continuous, present perfect, past simple, simple future*; passives: *use of was/were born* |
| **2. follow instructions, directions, requests, announcements and respond accordingly in social situations**  
(Class periods: 6)  
Listening and Speaking Skills | asking for and giving directions of a place, describing a map, etc.; asking for and responding to help; giving and understanding announcements in the bus/train stations, airports or any other places. | imperatives, questions, modals: *would you, could you, may I; passives, prepositions of place; countable and uncountable nouns* |
| **3. narrate incidents and events in a logical sequence**  
(Class periods: 6)  
Speaking and Writing skills | talking about present and past events, and festivals; giving opinions about present and past experiences. | determiners: *all, nearly all, most, many, a lot of, some, not many, a few, and few*; statements and short answers: *yes/no* and *wh*-questions; adverbs, tenses: *present simple, past simple, future simple, future with going to; yes/no and *wh*-questions*; statements, and short answers with regular and irregular verbs; degree of comparison: *adverb of frequency, time expressions, discourse markers, sentence connectors* |
| **4. ask for and give suggestions and opinions**  
(Class periods: 5)  
Listening and Speaking skills | asking and telling about problems, pleasures, likes and dislikes; seeking and giving suggestions. | present and past simple; use of *used to*; passives; modals; complex and compound sentences; relative pronouns; *factual statements (1st and second); use of *You could, You had better, You would rather*...*use of *I think, I believe, I maintain. This is my opinion that I consider etc.* |
| **5. exchange personal information** | Asking and answering questions about personal information such as date and place of birth, family use of was born and used to: passives, adverbs: *used to* |

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning outcomes</th>
<th>Functions</th>
<th>Language points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **6. participate in conversations, discussions, and debates**  
(Class periods: 5)  
Listening and Speaking skills | narrating something, making plans; giving suggestions, opinions; putting arguments in logical sequence. | negative statements: *adjectives, modals, simple future, use of *let us, tag questions, cohesive devices*; *therefore, so, however, in spite of, instead of, first, second, third, next, finally* etc. *条件句* |
| **7. tell stories**  
(Class periods: 10)  
Speaking and Writing skills | asking and talking about modern inventions and achievements; predicting | auxiliary verbs: *social expressions such as hang on, hurry up, wow, hold up in something, etc.*; present and past simple; past simple vs past perfect; questions and negatives: *conditional: infinitive expressions of feelings* |
| **8. surf net**  
(Class periods: 5)  
Reading and Writing skills | reading about and listening to potentials of media and e-communications; making effective e-communications through social networks and mobile technology. | tenses: *present simple, present continuous, present perfect, past simple*; *articles, quantity: some/any, there be* (present and past) |
| **9. recognize and use English sounds, stress and intonation appropriately while listening and speaking**  
(Class periods: 6)  
Listening and Speaking skills | recognizing and using sounds, stress, and intonation. |  |
| **10. listen for specific information on radio, television, and other announcements**  
(Class periods: 5)  
Listening and Speaking | listening to and making announcements, and advertisements for specific information; asking about and narrating problems; taking and giving interviews | tenses: *adjectives, adverbs and adverbials, some and any, many and much*; *a few and few*; *Wh*-questions, statements (positive and negatives), *conditional etc.* |
Appendix B: A sample page from the textbook *English for Today*

**Unit One**

**Good citizens**

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**Learning outcomes**

After we have studied the unit, we will be able to

- narrate incidents.
- participate in discussions.
- listen and understand others.
- describe something in writing.
Lesson 1: Mother’s Day

A Look at the picture and discuss the questions.

1 What do you think the woman is to the child?

2 Why is she holding the child on her flank?

3 Can a mother be compared to anybody? “She can be compared with no other; This lovely lady is none but my mother.”

B Listen to the teacher/CD and answer the questions that follow.

C Choose the correct answer.

1 According to ancient Greek myths Rhea is the
   a mother of gods.
   b goddess of love.
   c goddess of wealth.
   d goddess of health.

2 The name of Jesus Christ’s mother was
   a Rhea.
   b Mary
   c Anna
   d Anna Junior
Appendix C: A sample SSC English question paper from 2018

Ka Set

ENGLISH (COMPULSORY)

[According to the Syllabus of 2018]

FIRST PAPER

Subject Code: 107

Time—3 hours

Full marks—100

[N.B.—Answer all the questions. The figures in the right margin indicate full marks.]

Mainul Islam is a qualified farmer in Naogaon. Mr. Islam was very brilliant as a student. He took his higher education from Bangladesh Agricultural University in Mymensingh. After completing his higher education, Mainul came back home and started advanced farming. He has two other brothers who are graduates in different areas. The specialty of the Islam family is that they all are living in their village and all have fame in their own fields. His younger brother, who is a Rajshahi University graduate, is a science teacher in a local school. His youngest brother is a Social Science graduate and he too would like to start a local NGO to work for this area. When asked “What makes you decide to stay here in this village?”, Mr. Islam smiled. He said, “Look, it’s true that we could leave this village for a city life. I could be an officer or my brother could be a bureaucrat. But it didn’t attract us. We are sons of this soil. Yes, we have education but does education prepare a person only to be an officer? Don’t we have any obligation to the soil that has made us what we are?” He also added that every educated individual shouldn’t be a job seeker. He continued that since his discipline was Agriculture, after his education he took the occupation of a farmer. In response to the question whether they have any frustrations to live in a village, he confirmed that they were very pleased with their life. He said, “I work in my own farm, stay with my family members, pass time with my old friends, and sleep at my own home. All these count a lot.”

Mr. Islam is right. Many people go to cities and forget or loosen their roots knowingly or unknowingly. Mr. Islam and his brothers are great—they never forgot their roots. They not only stuck to their own roots, they have been torchbearers for others to be respectful of their own roots.

1. Choose the correct answer from the following alternatives: Marks

(a) According to Mr. Islam, should not be the only motto of education.

(i) acquisition of knowledge  (ii) to be aware of responsibilities

(iii) job seeking  (iv) fellow feeling

(b) Mainul along with his brothers in a village.

(i) live  (ii) work  (iii) studies  (iv) lives

(c) Mainul and his brothers are with their present life.

(i) frustrated (ii) dissatisfied (iii) satisfied (iv) annoyed

[Please turn over]
(d) William Somerset Maugham was one of the greatest short story writers of modern times.

(e) Despite being a doctor, he gave up medicine for literature because of having no charm.

(f) Then he took to writing plays.

8. Answer the following questions to write a paragraph on "Deforestation":
You should write it in about 150 words:
(a) What is deforestation?
(b) What are the causes of deforestation?
(c) What are the impacts of deforestation on human being, fauna, nature and climate?
(d) How will the low-lying countries be affected?
(e) How can deforestation be prevented?

9. Read the beginning of a story. Add at least ten new sentences to complete the story. Give a suitable title to it:

Sufia is a worker in a big garments factory. More than five thousand workers work in that factory. One day while she was busy in work a sound was heard, "Fire! Fire! Help! Help!"

10. The graph below shows the number of people using the internet from the year 2013 to 2017 in Bangladesh. Now describe the graph in 150 words. You should highlight and summarize the information given in the graph:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Internet Users (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013 15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014 30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015 25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016 25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017 40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. Suppose, you are Sayeem/Samina. You and your parents went to Chittagong by train a few days ago. You wish to share this new experience with your friend Abrar/Anika. Now write a letter to your friend sharing the experience of the train journey that you made.

12. Suppose, you are Anik/Anika. Your younger brother/sister, Rashed/Rashida goes to bed late and does not get up early. So he/she often goes to school late and feels drowsy.
Now, write a dialogue between you and your brother/sister about the importance of early rising.
Appendix D: Interview Guideline with the Curriculum Specialist Participant

Date of the interview: Time of the interview:
Interviewer: Interviewee:
Job title/Position of the interviewee: Place:

Background information
1. What is the official title of your job?
2. What capacities (e.g., curriculum, textbook, and examination, or teacher education) do you work in this position?
3. How long have you been working? Do you see any changes lately about SSC English examination?
4. What kind of academic and professional qualifications do you have?
5. Is there particular training for anyone who work as a curriculum developer, a textbook writer, and/or a test designer?

RQ1: How are the national English curriculum and its associated textbook aligned with the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) English examination at the policy level?
6. What are the objectives built into the national English curriculum at the SSC level? How do you plan to achieve those objectives designed at the policy level at the classroom instruction level?
7. What is the role of the textbook in implementing those curriculum objectives? Do the activities (examples, lessons and exercises) in the textbook address the objectives in the curriculum?
8. To what extent are the tasks included in the examination based on a) the objectives of the national English curriculum and b) the activities listed in the textbook?

RQ2: How does the alignment relationship create washback effects on the English classroom instruction at the SSC level? What is the nature of the washback effects, if any?
9. What are the major objectives and tasks of the English examination? Do the examination objectives and tasks endorse the curriculum and the textbook?
10. How is the SSC English examination expected to guide classroom instruction?
11. How do you make it sure that teachers understand the objectives of the curriculum and translate them into their classroom instruction?
12. What is the possible role of curriculum in classroom instruction? How are the teachers expected to set their instructional objectives?
13. While choosing other teaching materials/activities in addition to the textbook, what kind of guidelines do you set for the teachers to use?
14. Do you expect the teachers to practice the textbook activities in preparing the students for the examination?

RQ3: How does the alignment relationship create washback effects on the students’ learning at the SSC level? What is the nature of the washback effects, if any?

15. What does the curriculum mean by ‘students are able to use English in real life communication’?
16. What kinds of activities are the students expected to practice for preparing the examination?
17. How and to what extent are those activities able to develop students’ English proficiency?

Closing questions

18. As a curriculum specialist, how do you see and summarise the relationship between curriculum, textbook and SSC English examination in guiding teaching and learning?
19. Do you have any published test manual for the classroom teachers? How do they access to the test related information to prepare their students?
20. Are teachers involved when you revise and develop the English curriculum and the examination?
21. Does your organization offer training to the teachers to inform them about the teaching goals, revised curriculum, revised examinations etc.?
Appendix E: Interview Guideline with the Teacher Participants

Date of the interview: 
Time of the interview: 
Place: 
Job title/Position of the interviewee: 
Interviewer: 
Interviewee: 
Gender: 
Age range: 

Personal and background information:

1. What are your academic and professional qualifications? Do you have any qualification/certification in teaching English language?
2. How long have you been teaching? How long have you been teaching at Grade 9 and/or 10?
3. Have you worked as the English question paper writer for the SSC English examination?
   a. If yes, did you have any professional training or certification on testing?
   b. If yes, did your experience as a test writer help you in instructing or guiding or preparing the students for the examination/developing the lessons for classroom teaching?
4. Have you worked as the marker of the English paper at the SSC examination?
   a. If yes, did your experience as a marker help you in instructing or guiding or preparing the students for the examination?

RQ 2: How does the alignment relationship create washback effects on the English classroom instruction at the SSC level? What is the nature of the washback effects, if any?

Objectives

5. As a classroom teacher, how do you set objectives for your lessons? What are the guiding principles for setting the instructional objectives (from the curriculum, the textbook, and/or the examination)?
6. Can you explain your teaching philosophies in relation to English teaching?

Classroom activities and exam tasks

7. How do you select the classroom activities to support your objectives?
8. Do you use the associated textbook in your instruction? If yes, how do you use the textbook?
9. To what extent do the textbook activities help you in preparing the students for the examination?
10. What kind of activities do you use in classroom instruction to support the students to be successful in the examination?
11. Do you use different activities when the examination is nearer?
12. According to you, what are the key strategies to be successful in the SSC English examination?
13. What types of instructional techniques or methods do you use in developing the four skills of the students? Which skills do you focused? And why?

**RQ3:** How does the alignment relationship create washback effects on the students’ learning at the SSC level? What is the nature of the washback effects, if any?

**Influence of the examination on students’ learning**

14. Do you think that preparing for the examination is able to also develop the English proficiency of the students? Please explain your answer.
15. What kinds of activities do the students practice more or less in exam preparation?
16. Are those activities able to help the students use English language in real life communication?

**Closing questions**

17. How do you see and summarise the relationship of among the curriculum, classroom instruction and the examination?
18. Overall, how does the SSC English examination influence your classroom instruction (positive/negative)?
Appendix F: Focus Groups Guideline with the Student Participants

(This document will be translated in Bangla, that is, a simplified Bangla version will be used while conducting the focus groups)

Date of the session: 
Time of the session: 
Focus group moderator: 
Number of participants: 
Place: 
Age group of the participants: 

Welcome. Thank you for being here. Our discussion today will last about an hour. Please help yourself to the refreshments throughout the meeting.

You may not be familiar with focus groups. A focus group is a group discussion about your opinions. There are no right or wrong answers and there is no need for us to agree with each other or reach consensus. If anybody says something you have a question about or want to comment on, please do so. Please do not feel that you have to wait for me to ask you a question. My job is to focus the discussion of the issues. Finally, in a focus group, it is important to have only one person speak at a time. We want to be able to hear each person's comments. So please speak one at a time.

If at any point you do not understand something that I have said, please stop me and I will clarify. I encourage all of you to participate in the discussion—everyone’s ideas and opinions are important.

Please be assured that your anonymity and privacy will be protected to the extent possible. My study will not reveal your name or identity. The information you provide will be used only in conducting my research. Please respect each other’s confidentiality and contributions in this focus group discussion.

Opening questions

1. Tell us your name and what class are you in?
2. How is your preparation going for the upcoming SSC examination?

RQ3: How does the alignment relationship create washback effects on the students’ learning at the SSC level? What is the nature of the washback effects, if any?

Influence of the examination on students’ learning

3. What kind of English activities do you do in your classroom?
4. What kind of English activities do you do outside your classroom?
5. Do you use textbook activities? Do those activities help you in your examination preparation?
6. Do you practice all four skills? Which ones are the most important to you? Why?
7. What kind of strategies do you use to be successful in the examination?

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Closing questions

8. Do you think that exam preparation helps you in developing your English proficiency? Explain your answer.
9. What kind of activities do you think maybe able to develop your English proficiency?
Appendix G: Observational Protocol

Date: Number of students in the class:

Total time of observation: Class duration:

Length of teaching experience:

Description of the physical infrastructure of the classroom:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive notes (What I see and What I hear)</th>
<th>Reflective notes (What I think)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Guiding Principles while observing:

- How are curriculum objectives aligned with 1) the textbook objectives and 2) classroom instructional objectives?

- How are the examination tasks aligned with 1) the textbook activities and 2) classroom activities?

- How are classroom activities supporting students 1) English language learning and 2) test preparation for the examination?

- What are the influences of the examination on classroom teaching and learning?
Appendix H: Sample Transcriptions (interviews and FGDs), fieldnotes, & scratch notes

Sample Transcription of Curriculum Participants’ interview

Date: 15 May 2018
Place: participant’s residence

Did NCTB or board or ministry provide you with training to work as the curriculum specialist?

When I joined NCTB, they considered my academic background and experience to work in the field of ELT. But, to know something theoretically and use them in reality is something different. When I started MA in ELT in England, I had to learn about CLT curriculum and testing. But working as the curriculum developer was different. So, I started working we had one team leader expert in the field of curriculum developer. He time to time sat with us and explained us the objective and aims of the national curriculum, what type of curriculum was needed. So, he gave the primary ideas and guideline. But he made us free to work for the English curriculum.

About training, I did not have the training in the real sense of term, but somehow, I had the orientation from my ELT course in the UK. Later in my career, I attended two training programs in the USA and one in Thailand. And all these helped me somehow.

List of objectives: are they built on the SSC exam?

Are the objectives of the curriculum built on the SSC examination?

Bangladesh adapted CLT in 1995. From 1995 till today it is a long journey. Before 1995 we had an ELT teaching system which was primary based on lecture and GTM method. But when Bangladesh switched to CLT, we have been hammering since then for the equal distribution of teaching time for all four skills, as CLT emphasises teaching all four skills. Since 1995 till 2012, 17 years, individually different organizations and sometimes the ministry of education tried to chalk out how to give the assessment listening and speaking. But actually, nor the donors, or ministry of education or the teachers educators could come to any conclusion

The major problem is the size of the classrooms is too huge. When we have 80 or 100, in the public exam there are many hundred thousand students, what would be the modality to assess their speaking or listening skills. You can give me the example of IELTS but what would be their populations? 30000 or maximum 50000. But, I have sometimes six hundred thousand. From 1995 to 2001, it was not possible to do it in any means because the schools… there was no guarantee to smooth power supply. Initially, we thought that there would be CD or tape recorder. The schools did not have the instruments to use tape or CD. Then the donor agency agreed to provide the instruments. Then came the question of power supply. If we do not have any power supply, how would we play the cassettes or CDs. Alternately, we thought to supply the dry cell batteries. Then came the question who will continuously supply the batteries. And there was no consensus.

Since speaking and listening are not included in the exam, neither the teachers nor the students feel inclined to practice them in classroom. Ours is a very exam driven society. And the exam driven system as well. So, a certain portion of textbook could not be utilized. Whenever, the teachers saw any activities on speaking, they skip it. So, they heavily depend on writing and reading.
Sample Transcriptions of Teacher Interviews

5 Interviewer: মেইন প্রবলেম

6 Interviewee: I want the students to be a better user of English because, for higher
7 education or better job, they need to be proficient in English. But, without a better score
8 they wouldn't get the entry to their desired positions. সীমে একটা কোথাও যাবে সার্বিসে,
9 সঞ্জ্ঞা ওকে দেয়া বাধানাওর নিকে খেলায় রাখতে হয় এবং আমারা যখন বোঝার থাকা এখানে
10 করি তখন আমরা বুঝতে পারি যে, কিভাবে কেন প্যাটেলে নিকে একটা বাষ্প কি ধরনের মার্কস
11 ক্যালস করাতে পারলে সেটা আমরা বাছাড়ের ক্লাসকে সাতার করে পারি, পরামর্শ দিতে
12 পারি যে এভাবে এভাবে তোলার প্যাটেলে লিখতে, এভাবে ফলা করবে।
13 Interviewer: বোঝেন কেনো আপনাদের ইনস্ট্রক্টর দেন যে, আপনারা এভাবে লিখলে বাছাকে
14 এইটেকু মার্কস দিয়ে।

15 Interviewee: একে কিছু উপর একটা সিস্টেম থাকে যে বিএনসি বর্ধ তুলা এরকম, প্যাটেলের
16 তুলন এরকম আর না তুলন এরকম এর যাবার, এরকম কিছু ইনস্ট্রক্টর থাকে।
17 Interviewer: এটা কি বুঝতে পারি?
18 Interviewee: বুঝতে এর ক্ষেত্রে হচ্ছে কম্প্যালিয়শন পারি, যেটা মাত্র রাইচিং পারি।

19 Interviewer: হ্যা, বুঝিয়ে মাত্র ওরা আপনাদের ইনস্ট্রক্টর কি বুঝতে দেয়, মাত্র লিখে দেয়?
20 Interviewee: হ্যা, লিখে দেয়, লিখিত ইনস্ট্রক্টর দেয়।

21 Interviewer: আমরা, কি ধরনের সেম্পান, ম্যাক? বিকল ওগো বাইবে আমরা কখনোই পাই না। ওগোর
22 সোর্স অর ইনস্ট্রক্টর যায় করে ওরাও মাত্র মার্কস।

23 Interviewee: এটা মথ আমাদেরকে যেমন বলে দেয় কাজে প্রস্তুত কিছু দেয়। কিছু ব্যাপারে
24 কলাকিউশন থাকলে বলে যে ঠিক আছে কলাকিউশন আছে; যেমন পত বাছ আমি একটি থাকা দেখলাম,
25 একটা ট্রান্সফার দিয়ে তো ট্রান্সথ-এর মার্কস হল নোন-এর মার্কস হয়। তাপের কারেকশন দিল। তারপর
26 কিছু কিছু দিয়ে আইসিস দিল যা কিছু হার্স থাকে। রাইচিং পারি 80-90% দেয়া শেল এরকমতাতে
27 কেনাটা হলা, এটা আমাদের উপর ঘোর দেয় হয় একেকটা যে আমার প্রশ্ন হলো আমি এইটেকু দিয়ে
28 আর কিছু কিছু কেন্দ্র হবে বিএনসি এর ব্যাপারে, ট্রান্সফার এর ব্যাপারে তুমি লিখতে পারি তুমি
29 লিখতে বা, সেসব ক্ষেত্রে তখন আমরা ট্রান্সফারে যার এর কেন্দ্রেই থাকার চেষ্টা করি তখন; মাত্র লিখিত
30 ইনস্ট্রক্টর থাকে।

31 Interviewer: এখন ধরেন এটা কি আপনারা তো এগোলা থাকা চেয়ে এগোলা Passage of
32 Comprehension দেয়ালা আসে সেটা কি একটা আইডেন্ট হয়ে যায় যে ইন গাউ কেইস এই
33 টিউবের Comprehension প্লা আসে, যা আপনার ক্লাস পড়াজে সাহায্য করে।
Sample Transcription of Focus Group Discussions

Focus Group: Participants: 4

On textbook:

Participant 1: টেক্সটবুক দরকার প্যাসেজ গুলার জন্য। বই থেকে ই তো আসে। তাই অনেক সময় আর ভুল করার চাস থাকেনা। র গাইডবুক ও তো এক এ প্যাসেজ থাকে- সাধে অনেক রকমের পসিবল প্রশ্নও থাকে। তাই টেক্সটবুক এ আরে সময় নষ্ট করার হয় দরকার। (other three students supported this statement)

Participant 3: আমার টেক্সটবুক তো একদম নতুন। (adding to the previous statement)

On learning:

Participant 4: আমি ইংরেজি শুধুমাত্র পারি কিন্তু বলা এ মেইন সমস্যা। ইংরেজি মাঝে মাঝে মুভি দেখি, কিন্তু সার-টাইটেল দেখতে হই সব ভুলার জন্য। আমাদের তা প্রাক্তন করার কোন জায়গা নাই। আমি মাঝে মাঝে আমার ভাইর সাঠে ইংরেজি এ কথা বলার ট্রাই করি। স্কুল এ আমাদের ইংরেজি এ কথা বলার উপায় নাই। আগে ছোট ক্লাস এ আমাদের একটু ইংরেজি এ কথা বলা বা অন্য কিছু টিচার রা কারেন, আর ম্যাট্রিক্স পরীক্ষা সামনে তাই ক্লাস এ শুধু টেস্ট পেপার এ সলভ করি। ক্লাস এ যা করি, কোচিং ক্লাস এ আবার সেইটা ই করি। এরকম সলভ করতে করতে একটা পর্যায়ে এক ই জিনিস রিপিট হতে থাকে।

Interviewer: তোমরা কি সব মুখত কর?

Participant 1: আমার কাছে তিনটা গাইডবুক আছে। ইপ্ররটার্ট টপিক গুলা কে আমি নেট বানাই। টিচার আমাদের কে বলে যে ভাল ভাল লিখে শেখতে হবে। শুরুটা ভাল হতে হবে। তাই আমি নেট বানাই আর পরীক্ষা তে ওইটা ই লেখার চেষ্টা করি। (supported by the majority)

Participant 2: না আমি করিনা। আমি নেট বানাই না। আমি দেখে যাই। আর এই গুলা তে সেই ছোট বেলা থেকে পরিহত হাই, ইংরেজি এ বেশি কিছু পড়ার নাই আসলে। পরীক্ষা আসলে সাজেশন গুলা একটু পড়ে গেলে ই হয়। (he disagreed with other three- but the last part of the statement is supported by the rest of the group)

Interviewer: তোমরা কি এই টপিক গুলার বাইরে দেই, তুমি লিখতে পারবে? উদাহরণ- এখন যে ছাত্র আনোনল চলছে, ১০০ ওয়ার্ড এর মধ্যে লিখতে পারবে?

all of them: পারব মনে হয় কিন্তু গ্রামার ভুল হতে পারে। আর ৫০ হলে ভাল হিস। (seems to be under confident and confused)
**Sample Fieldnotes of Classroom Observations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive notes (What I see and What I hear)</th>
<th>Reflective notes (What I think)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Asked everyone to stand up and greet.</td>
<td>I think the teacher intended to practice EFT, but since the guidebook had a list of model questions, she chose to use it. Most of the students brought the guidebook (only 1/3). Only 2/3 brought the EFT. It was not needed even.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- People who did not bring the textbooks were asked to remain stand up.</td>
<td>It was a regular class practice - indirectly/indirectly teaching how to not do anything to meet the curriculum objective. She kept pressing them to find it quickly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- She wrote the question number from the model question book on the board and asked students to practice.</td>
<td>Students were not discussing anything related to critical thinking - they only asked questions when they did not know the answer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Students were asking how well the EFT was a passage from textbook p. 136 - Zohra Rahman - p. 146 - In a speech her teacher was very much aware of that she was practicing a text from the EFT, but she still used the model question book (INFECTION). As the EFT does not have model questions. (Focus 51 - they are all possible questions from the textbook passage in the guidebook) - She went to the desk of the students and corrected the caps - No discussion - Used RPS P.M.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The exercise, which used the CW from the model question book, was infect a passage from textbook.</td>
<td>Students were solving the question mechanically - occasionally teacher made it clear that they did so.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Everyone then went to their sections.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Students were given NHPS for their own school library.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- A dialogue writing (and effects of copying)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>P.M.</strong></td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Descriptive notes (What I see and What I hear)

UNSEEN PASSAGE
- Grasped the concept - explained the passage using brainstorming by line
- Initially students were not listening - teacher took time to settle them down
- Students were not interested to listen to what she was saying - eventually few started listening the discussion of the passage
- She was all smiling
- No class objective was set - the first thing was to start the class with CW
- She tried to help them in tackling the key words - end by giving examples from her side
- No USE of EFT
- She instructed about the went numbers from the summary
- She kept checking the time and made it sure that they solve the passage - all question
- Correction - students were asked to start up and give answer
- Told what is going to be the topic tomorrow
- The pass handout was similar to a question paper
- She checked the summary of all the students

Reflective notes (What I think)

Most of the students did not like the routine CWs, as if they were bored of this routine work.
- The common pattern of this class was giving CW/handout -> doing it -> giving correction by the teacher together.
- One noticeable thing is as exam was nearing the class attendance was going down slowly (are they going to coaching)
- It was difficult to catch the teaching cycle as none of the class was built on the previous class. As EFT was not used in the classroom - I did not know what was happening except observing them doing the CW. It seemed that students were not habitual in bringing EFT to the classroom.
- The reading passage was on individual work. In one of the classes - she asked the student to do a pair work for the passage, but all students were still solving them individually and the teacher also did not come much about how she told them to solve the work, the communicative purpose of was totally missing.
- Even the class was small in size but she chose to take the class like a big class - that doing routine drilling - today she could have solved the passage in a different way. It seemed that does not matter what the class size is, it is more of drilling the exam tasks.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive notes (What I see and What I hear)</th>
<th>Reflective notes (What I think)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Cloze test (without clues) <strong>10</strong></td>
<td>- Starting the class was difficult as students were not ready to listen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Based on grammar, vocabulary</td>
<td>- It took time to settle them down.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Constant code switching but mostly Bangla</td>
<td>- The introduction about today’s lesson was given in such a way that the importance of the cloze test in students’ lives but how the practice of cloze test was going to be helpful - wasn’t talked about.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Syntax</td>
<td>- The purpose of the class was explicitly to practice one of the exam task.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Becoming Laci class</td>
<td>- No use of textbook - she even didn’t ask about that. More importance was precisely given on practicing an activity which was going to come in all exams from class 6-12.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Exercise was written on the board and students copy them from board. Example) Not page.</td>
<td>- The teacher seemed to be less proficient. She wrote wrong answers on board which is the basic grammar item - spelling mistake: <strong>syntex</strong> -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- She gave importance about learning cloze test because it’s going to be in the syllabus from class 6-12. Explained the importance even and over. students took notes from the board.</td>
<td>- The beginning of the class seemed to be done to please the appearance. So kept talking about what could be done to get the cloze tests correctly. But while explaining the class activities she discussed them with the students. The class time was short and the class size was so big - it is simply impossible to use it in total communication. Authentic text was used.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correction was given in the last 10 minutes. (students wrote giving them - she was on the board answers)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sample scratch notes

Notes Interview: Loboni: first teacher agreed for classroom observations

Time: 3.00 pm, at her home

- Students were present at her residence when I reached for the interview
- The house seemed to be used for tuition
- She has an assistant to prepare the materials: typing, printing
- Model test: She asked for extra money for extra number of model tests

Initially she was confused and seemed little uncomfortable, but as the interview progressed, she opened up. She seemed to be having a genuine feeling for teaching and improving the students. However, I had to reassure about the privacy of the interview. She was comfortable in speaking in Bangla. She was very uncomfortable in speaking in English.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23 June 2018</td>
<td>class observation with Faria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They have half yearly examinations from 30 June—so, I hope to get the immediate washback effect during this week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Students seemed to interested to know what was going to come in the exam,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The way the class instruction is going, I am feeling as teacher was indirectly trying to tell what was important for the exam (not sure though😊)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 June</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix I: Data identification codes

Notes: All the transcripts were single lined, 12 fonts in Time New Roman. Each of the pages and lines were numbered for identify the quotes. The line numbers restarted in each of the pages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview with Aslam (Curriculum participant): IA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sample Codes for data identification</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IA-L50-P20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviews with the Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sample Codes for data identification</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T1-SA-L30-P10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T10-SB- L20-P90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Group Discussions (FGD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sample Codes for data identification</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD1- SA- L30-P100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD2- SB- L10-P120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix J: LOI/CF for the Curriculum Specialist Participant

Letter of Information and Consent Form (LOI/CF) for the Curriculum Specialist Participant

Study Title: An Exploration of Alignment of the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) English Examination with Curriculum and Classroom Instruction: A washback Study in the Context of Bangladesh

Name of Student Researcher: Nasreen Sultana, Faculty of Education, Queen’s University
Name of Supervisor: Dr. Liying Cheng, Faculty of Education, Queen’s University

I am Nasreen Sultana, a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Education, working under the supervision of Dr. Liying Cheng. I am requesting the resource person working at NCTB (National Curriculum and Textbook Board) of Bangladesh to participate in a research study examining the effect of English Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examination on classroom teaching and learning in Bangladesh. Specifically, the study examines the alignment of SSC English curriculum, teaching and testing and how that alignment is realized in classroom teaching. If you agree to participate, I will schedule the interview at a location and time of your convenience. It will be an hour-long interview. The interview will be audio-recorded and later transcribed. If needed or if I have any confusion with the data, I might follow you up later for further clarification.

There is no known risk for taking part in this study. While there are no direct benefits to you as a participant, study results will help me to understand the relationship of curriculum, and the English SSC examination with the classroom instruction. There is no obligation for you to say yes to take part in this study, as participation is completely voluntary. You do not have to answer questions, if you do not want to. You are free to withdraw all or any part of your data at any time after the interview until November 30, 2018 by contacting me at nasreen.sultana@queensu.ca.

The information you provide will be used only in conducting this proposed doctoral study. Your identity, and the confidentiality of your information will be protected to the extent possible. Proper storage and security procedures will be taken to secure the data. Your confidentiality will be protected to the extent possible by replacing your name with a pseudonym for all data and in all publications. The code list linking real names with pseudonyms will be stored separately and securely from the data. However, due to the small pool of participants, there is still a remote chance that someone familiar with the Bangladesh context may be able to identify you as my participant. I will securely store the data for at least five years.

I hope to publish the results of this study in my doctoral thesis and academic journals and present them at conferences. I will include quotes from some of the interviews when presenting my findings. However, I will never include any real names with quotes; I will use pseudonym, so that I never breach individual confidentiality. I will do my best to make sure quotes do not include information that could indirectly identify participants. During the interview, please let me know if you say anything you do not want me to quote.

If you have any ethics concerns, please contact the General Research Ethics Board (GREB) at 1-613-533-2988 or chair.GREB@queensu.ca.
If you have any questions about the research, please contact me, Nasreen Sultana, at nasreen.sultana@queensu.ca or at (88) 01717-040-267 my supervisor, Dr. Liying Cheng at (01) 613-533-6000 ext. 77431 or at liying.cheng@queensu.ca.

Please be informed that the communication with GREB and Dr. Cheng will need to be in English, but you can communicate with me using both Bangla and English.

This LOI/CF provides you with the details to help you make an informed choice. All your questions should be answered to your satisfaction before you decide whether or not to participate in this research study.

Keep one copy of the Letter of Information for your records and return one signed copy to the researcher, Nasreen Sultana, before she starts interviewing you.

By signing below, I am verifying that: I have read the Letter of Information and all of my questions have been answered.

Name of Participant: ___________________________________

Signature: ___________________________________________

Date: ________________________________________________
Appendix K: LOI/CF for the Teachers

Letter of Information and Consent Form (LOI/CF) for the Teacher Participants from the High Performing School

Study Title: An Exploration of Alignment of the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) English Examination with Curriculum and Classroom Instruction: A washback Study in the Context of Bangladesh

Name of Student Researcher: Nasreen Sultana, Faculty of Education, Queen’s University
Name of Supervisor: Dr. Liying Cheng, Faculty of Education, Queen’s University

I am Nasreen Sultana, a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Education, working under the supervision of Dr. Liying Cheng. I am requesting the English teachers at the SSC level to participate in a research study examining the effect of English Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examination on classroom teaching and learning in Bangladesh. Specifically, the study examines the alignment of SSC examination with the national English curriculum and its associated textbook, and classroom instruction, focusing on if and how that alignment relationship produces washback effects on teaching and learning. For the purpose of the study, I will collect data from two schools: one school is from the pool of high performing schools and the other school is from the pool of low performing schools based on the SSC results in the last five years. Your institution is selected based on its high performance in the SSC examination in one of the years of last five years. Therefore, the identity of the school will be protected to the extent possible. I have chosen Grade 10 because I intend to examine how the SSC English examination influence the immediate candidates of the examination.

I will be selecting only a subset (I will respond in affirmative up to five participants) of teachers to participate in this study. Should you not wish to participate please be assured that your principal will not be informed of who has declined to participate in this study. If you agree to participate, I will schedule the interview at a location and time of your convenience. It will be an hour-long interview. The interview will be audio-recorded and later transcribed. In addition I would like to observe few of your classes to understand the teaching practices. My plan is to observe your classes for two weeks and the focus of my observation would be teacher’s pedagogy.

There is no known risk for taking part in this study. While there are no direct benefits to you as a participant, study results will help me to understand the relationship of curriculum, and the English SSC examination with the classroom instruction. There is no obligation for you to say yes to take part in this study, as participation is completely voluntary. You do not have to answer questions, if you do not want to. You are free to withdraw all or any part of your data at any time after the interview until November 30, 2018 by contacting me at nasreen.sultana@queensu.ca.

The information you provide will be used only in conducting this proposed doctoral study. Your identity, and the confidentiality of your information will be protected to the extent possible. Proper storage and security procedures will be taken to secure the data. Your confidentiality will be protected to the extent possible by replacing your name with a pseudonym for all data and in all publications. The code list linking real names with pseudonyms will be stored separately and securely from the data. However, due to the small pool of participants, there is still a remote
chance that someone familiar with the Bangladesh context may be able to identify you as my participant. I will securely store the data for at least five years.

I hope to publish the results of this study in my doctoral thesis and academic journals and present them at conferences. I will include quotes from some of the interviews when presenting my findings. However, I will never include any real names with quotes; I will use pseudonym, so that I never breach individual confidentiality. I will do my best to make sure quotes do not include information that could indirectly identify participants. During the interview, please let me know if you say anything you do not want me to quote.

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If you have any questions about the research, please contact me, Nasreen Sultana, at nasreen.sultana@queensu.ca or at (88) 01717-040-267 my supervisor, Dr. Liying Cheng at (01) 613-533-6000 ext. 77431 or at liying.cheng@queensu.ca.

Please be informed that the communication with GREB and Dr. Cheng will need to be in English, but you can communicate with me using both Bangla and English.

This Letter of Information provides you with the details to help you make an informed choice. All your questions should be answered to your satisfaction before you decide whether or not to participate in this research study.

Keep one copy of the Letter of Information for your records and return one signed copy to the researcher, Nasreen Sultana, before she starts interviewing you.

By signing below, I am verifying that: I have read the Letter of Information and all of my questions have been answered.

Name of Participant: ___________________________________

Signature: ___________________________________________

Date: ________________________________________________
Letter of Information and Consent Form (LOI/CF) for the Teacher participants from the Low Performing School

Study Title: An Exploration of Alignment of the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) English Examination with Curriculum and Classroom Instruction: A washback Study in the Context of Bangladesh

Name of Student Researcher: Nasreen Sultana, Faculty of Education, Queen’s University
Name of Supervisor: Dr. Liying Cheng, Faculty of Education, Queen’s University

I am Nasreen Sultana, a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Education, working under the supervision of Dr. Liying Cheng. I am requesting the English teachers at the SSC level to participate in a research study examining the effect of English Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examination on classroom teaching and learning in Bangladesh. Specifically, the study examines the alignment of SSC examination with the national English curriculum and its associated textbook, and classroom instruction, focusing on if and how that alignment relationship produces washback effects on teaching and learning. For the purpose of the study, I will collect data from two schools: one school is from the pool of high performing schools and the other school is from the pool of low performing schools based on the SSC results in the last five years. Your institution is selected based on its low performance in the SSC examination in one of the years of last five years. Therefore, the identity of the school will be protected to the extent possible. I have chosen Grade 10 because I intend to examine how the SSC English examination influence the immediate candidates of the examination.

I will be selecting only a subset (I will respond in affirmative up to five participants) of teachers to participate in this study. Should you not wish to participate please be assured that your principal will not be informed of who has declined to participate in this study. If you agree to participate, I will schedule the interview at a location and time of your convenience. It will be an hour-long interview. The interview will be audio-recorded and later transcribed. In addition I would like to observe few of your classes to understand the teaching practices. My plan is to observe your classes for two weeks and the focus of my observation would be teacher’s pedagogy.

There is no known risk for taking part in this study. While there are no direct benefits to you as a participant, study results will help me to understand the relationship of curriculum, and the English SSC examination with the classroom instruction. There is no obligation for you to say yes to take part in this study, as participation is completely voluntary. You do not have to answer questions, if you do not want to. You are free to withdraw all or any part of your data at any time after the interview until November 30, 2018 by contacting me at nasreen.sultana@queensu.ca.

The information you provide will be used only in conducting this proposed doctoral study. Your identity, and the confidentiality of your information will be protected to the extent possible. Proper storage and security procedures will be taken to secure the data. Your confidentiality will be protected to the extent possible by replacing your name with a pseudonym for all data and in all publications. The code list linking real names with pseudonyms will be stored separately and securely from the data. However, due to the small pool of participants, there is still a remote chance that someone familiar with the Bangladesh context may be able to identify you as my participant. I will securely store the data for at least five years.
I hope to publish the results of this study in my doctoral thesis and academic journals and present them at conferences. I will include quotes from some of the interviews when presenting my findings. However, I will never include any real names with quotes; I will use pseudonym, so that I never breach individual confidentiality. I will do my best to make sure quotes do not include information that could indirectly identify participants. During the interview, please let me know if you say anything you do not want me to quote.

If you have any ethics concerns, please contact the General Research Ethics Board (GREB) at 1-613-533-2988 or chair.GREB@queensu.ca.

If you have any questions about the research, please contact me, Nasreen Sultana, at nasreen.sultana@queensu.ca or at (88) 01717-040-267 my supervisor, Dr. Liying Cheng at (01) 613-533-6000 ext. 77431 or at living.cheng@queensu.ca.

Please be informed that the communication with GREB and Dr. Cheng will need to be in English, but you can communicate with me using both Bangla and English.

This Letter of Information provides you with the details to help you make an informed choice. All your questions should be answered to your satisfaction before you decide whether or not to participate in this research study.

Keep one copy of the Letter of Information for your records and return one signed copy to the researcher, Nasreen Sultana, before she starts interviewing you.

By signing below, I am verifying that: I have read the Letter of Information and all of my questions have been answered.

Name of Participant: ________________________________

Signature: _________________________________________

Date: ____________________________________________
Appendix L: LOI/CF for the Students

Letter of Information and Consent (LOI/CF) Form for the Student Participants from the High Performing School

Study Title: An Exploration of Alignment of the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) English Examination with Curriculum and Classroom Instruction: A washback Study in the Context of Bangladesh

Name of Student Researcher: Nasreen Sultana, Faculty of Education, Queen’s University
Name of Supervisor: Dr. Liying Cheng, Faculty of Education, Queen’s University

I am Nasreen Sultana, a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Education, working under the supervision of Dr. Liying Cheng. I am requesting the students of Grade 10 to participate in a research study examining the effect of English Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examination on classroom teaching and learning in Bangladesh. Your participation is important to understand how the English SSC examination influences your learning, test preparation and English proficiency. For the purpose of the study, I will collect data from two schools: one school is from the pool of high performing schools and the other school is from the pool of low performing schools based on the SSC results in the last five years. Your institution is selected based on its high performance in the SSC examination in one of the years of last five years. Therefore, the identity of the school will be protected to the extent possible. I have chosen Grade 10 because I intend to examine how the SSC English examination influence the immediate candidates of the examination.

If you agree to participate, I will schedule the group discussions at a location and time of your convenience. The focus group discussions will run for an hour. The discussion will be audio-recorded and later transcribed. But, please be informed that 12/13 students from your school, who will express their interest to participate in this study, will be randomly chosen.

In addition to I may observe few of your classes but be assured that my observation will not record your identity or behaviour. I aim to observe teachers’ pedagogy.

There is no known risk for taking part in this study. While there are no direct benefits to you as a participant, study results will help me to understand the relationship of curriculum, and the English SSC examination with the classroom instruction. There is no obligation for you to say yes to take part in this study, as participation is completely voluntary. You do not have to answer questions, if you do not want to. You are free to withdraw at anytime during the focus group discussion, but it will not be possible to withdraw what you have said before the time at which you withdrew. As a result, once the focus group is done, you will not be able to withdraw any part of your data.

The information you provide will be used only in conducting this proposed doctoral study. Your identity, and the confidentiality of your information will be protected to the extent possible. Proper storage and security procedures will be taken to secure the data. Your confidentiality will be protected to the extent possible by replacing your name with a pseudonym for all data and in all publications. The code list linking real names with pseudonyms will be stored separately and securely from the data. However, due to the small pool of participants, there is still a remote
chance that someone familiar with the Bangladesh context may be able to identify you as my participant. I will securely store the data for at least five years.

I hope to publish the results of this study in my doctoral thesis and academic journals and present them at conferences. I will include quotes from some of you when presenting my findings. However, I will never include any real names with quotes; I will use pseudonym, so that I never breach individual confidentiality. I will do my best to make sure quotes do not include information that could indirectly identify participants. During the discussion, please let me know if you say anything you do not want me to quote.

If you have any ethics concerns, please contact the General Research Ethics Board (GREB) at 1-613-533-2988 or chair.GREB@queensu.ca.

If you have any questions about the research, please contact me, Nasreen Sultana, at nasreen.sultana@queensu.ca or at (88) 01717-040-267 my supervisor, Dr. Liying Cheng at (01) 613-533-6000 ext. 77431 or at liying.cheng@queensu.ca.

Please be informed that the communication with GREB and Dr. Cheng will need to be in English, but you can communicate with me using both Bangla and English.

This Letter of Information provides you with the details to help you make an informed choice. All your questions should be answered to your satisfaction before you decide whether or not to participate in this research study.

This consent form must be signed by your parents to be eligible as one of the participants in the study. Keep one copy of the Letter of Information for your records and return one copy to the researcher, Nasreen Sultana before you start the focus group discussions.

By signing below, I am verifying that: I have read the Letter of Information and all of my questions have been answered.

Name of participant: ___________________________________

Name of person signing the form: _________________________

Relationship with the participant: _________________________

Signature: ___________________________________________

Date: ________________________________________________
Letter of Information and Consent (LOI/CF) Form for the Student Participants from the Low Performing School

Study Title: An Exploration of Alignment of the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) English Examination with Curriculum and Classroom Instruction: A washback Study in the Context of Bangladesh

Name of Student Researcher: Nasreen Sultana, Faculty of Education, Queen’s University
Name of Supervisor: Dr. Liying Cheng, Faculty of Education, Queen’s University

I am Nasreen Sultana, a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Education, working under the supervision of Dr. Liying Cheng. I am requesting the students of Grade 10 to participate in a research study examining the effect of English Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examination on classroom teaching and learning in Bangladesh. Your participation is important to understand how the English SSC examination influences your learning, test preparation and English proficiency. For the purpose of the study, I will collect data from two schools: one school is from the pool of high performing schools and the other school is from the pool of low performing schools based on the SSC results in the last five years. Your institution is selected based on its low performance in the SSC examination in one of the years of last five years. Therefore, the identity of the school will be protected to the extent possible. I have chosen Grade 10 because I intend to examine how the SSC English examination influence the immediate candidates of the examination.

If you agree to participate, I will schedule the group discussions at a location and time of your convenience. The focus group discussions will run for an hour. The discussion will be audio-recorded and later transcribed. But, please be informed that 12/13 students from your school, who will express their interest to participate in this study, will be randomly chosen.

In addition to I may observe few of your classes but be assured that my observation will not record your identity or behaviour. I aim to observe teachers’ pedagogy.

There is no known risk for taking part in this study. While there are no direct benefits to you as a participant, study results will help me to understand the relationship of curriculum, and the English SSC examination with the classroom instruction. There is no obligation for you to say yes to take part in this study, as participation is completely voluntary. You do not have to answer questions, if you do not want to. You are free to withdraw at anytime during the focus group discussion, but it will not be possible to withdraw what you have said before the time at which you withdrew. As a result, once the focus group is done, you will not be able to withdraw any part of your data.

The information you provide will be used only in conducting this proposed doctoral study. Your identity, and the confidentiality of your information will be protected to the extent possible. Proper storage and security procedures will be taken to secure the data. Your confidentiality will be protected to the extent possible by replacing your name with a pseudonym for all data and in all publications. The code list linking real names with pseudonyms will be stored separately and securely from the data. However, due to the small pool of participants, there is still a remote chance that someone familiar with the Bangladesh context may be able to identify you as my participant. I will securely store the data for at least five years.
I hope to publish the results of this study in my doctoral thesis and academic journals and present them at conferences. I will include quotes from some of you when presenting my findings. However, I will never include any real names with quotes; I will use pseudonym, so that I never breach individual confidentiality. I will do my best to make sure quotes do not include information that could indirectly identify participants. During the discussion, please let me know if you say anything you do not want me to quote. If you have any ethics concerns, please contact the General Research Ethics Board (GREB) at 1-613-533-2988 or chair.GREB@queensu.ca.

If you have any questions about the research, please contact me, Nasreen Sultana, at nasreen.sultana@queensu.ca or at (88) 01717-040-267 my supervisor, Dr. Liying Cheng at (01) 613-533-6000 ext. 77431 or at living.cheng@queensu.ca.

Please be informed that the communication with GREB and Dr. Cheng will need to be in English, but you can communicate with me using both Bangla and English.

This Letter of Information provides you with the details to help you make an informed choice. All your questions should be answered to your satisfaction before you decide whether or not to participate in this research study.

This consent form must be signed by your parents to be eligible as one of the participants in the study. Keep one copy of the Letter of Information for your records and return one copy to the researcher, Nasreen Sultana before you start the focus group discussions.

By signing below, I am verifying that: I have read the Letter of Information and all of my questions have been answered.

Name of participant: ___________________________________

Name of person signing the form: _________________________

Relationship with the participant: ________________________

Signature: ___________________________________________

Date: ________________________________________________
Appendix M: Ethics Clearance Letter

Ms. Naureen Sultana
Ph.D. Candidate
Faculty of Education
Queen's University
Duncan McArthur Hall
511 Union Street West
Kingston, ON, K7M 5R7

Dear Ms. Sultana:

GREB TRAQ #: 602587
Title: “GEDUC-896-18 An Exploration of Alignment of the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) English Examination with Curriculum and Classroom Instruction: A Washback Study in the Context of Bangladesh”

The General Research Ethics Board (GREB) has reviewed and cleared your request for renewal of ethics clearance for the above-named study. This renewal is valid for one year from May 25, 2019. Prior to the next renewal date, you will be sent a reminder memo and the link to ROMEO to renew for another year. You are reminded of your obligation to submit an Annual Renewal/Closure Form prior to the annual renewal due date (access this form at http://www.queensu.ca/traq/signon.html; click on "Events;" under "Create New Event" click on "General Research Ethics Board Annual Renewal/Closure Form for Cleared Studies"). Please note that when your research project is completed, you need to submit an Annual Renewal/Complted Form in ROMEO/traq indicating that the project is 'completed' so that the file can be closed. This should be submitted at the time of completion; there is no need to wait until the annual renewal due date.

You are reminded of your obligation to advise the GREB of any adverse event(s) that occur during this one-year period. An adverse event includes, but is not limited to, a complaint, a change or unexpected event that alters the level of risk for the researcher or participants or situation that requires a substantial change in approach to a participant(s). You are also advised that all adverse events must be reported to the GREB within 48 hours. To submit an adverse event report, access the application at http://www.queensu.ca/traq/signon.html; click on "Events;" under "Create New Event" click on "General Research Ethics Board Adverse Event Form."

You are also reminded, that all changes that might affect human participants must be cleared by the GREB. For example, you must report changes in study procedures or implementation of new aspects into the study procedures. Your request for protocol changes will be forwarded to the appropriate GREB reviewers and/or the GREB Chair. To submit an amendment form, access the application at http://www.queensu.ca/traq/signon.html; click on "Events;" under "Create New Event" click on "General Research Ethics Board Request for the Amendment of Approved Studies."

On behalf of the General Research Ethics Board, I wish you continued success in your research.

Yours sincerely,

Chair, General Research Ethics Board (GREB)
Professor Dean A. Tripp, PhD
Department of Psychology, Anesthesiology & Urology Queen’s University

c.: Dr. Liying Cheng, Supervisor
Dr. Pamela Beach, Chair, Uni REB
Haven Jerreisi-Poodle, Dept. Admin.
Appendix N: Sample coding of 10 focus groups

**School A, Focus Group 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open coding Phase 1</th>
<th>High end restaurants, international festivals, Use of internet</th>
<th>Participate in English language clubs, English debate, watching English movies, conversing in English with friends</th>
<th>Practicing topics which are important for exam, solving question papers of other schools (test papers), practicing exam topics in classroom and getting correction, no speaking and listening practice, memorize the compositions, no listening and speaking</th>
<th>More model tests, practicing sheets, Textbook is almost new, I don’t touch my textbook- it’s in the drawer, teachers do not use textbook in classroom</th>
<th>Too many exam at school- don’t find it hard anymore, Before the SSC exam, teachers give suggestions to study specifically for the exam- they only read those</th>
<th>Getting A+ in English is easier than other subjects</th>
<th>Lack of vocabulary, less fluency in speaking, grammar, speaking skill is important</th>
<th>Not that many places to use English except academia or jobs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Axial coding Phase 2 codes</td>
<td>Uses of English, English for access to</td>
<td>Demonstrating power/ power of English</td>
<td>Things students do in classrooms/ as exam preparation</td>
<td>Coaching centers</td>
<td>Uses of textbook/ guidebook</td>
<td>Practicing exam taking/ getting suggestions</td>
<td>Confident about high score</td>
<td>Problems in learning/using English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selected quotes from participants</td>
<td>“Internet cannot be used using Bangla. At least Basic English is needed to browse. Watching videos on YouTube requires English.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“In international festivals everyone speaks in English.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Teachers only try to complete the syllabus so that they can tell the headmaster that they completed.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“For me coaching center and school classrooms are same except that we wear uniforms at school. At both the places we do practice.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“English is never a problem area for me. I don’t know why I find it easy to score, but I score high”.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“My EFT book is new- it’s always in the drawer. The model questions have the texts from EFT, so why do I need to use the EFT book?”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Doing more practice in the coaching center creates a confidence that I can score well”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“I try to write something in a different way to get better score than others”.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“In real life, I never hard anyone speaking only in English for 10-15 minutes. There is always a mix of Bangla and English. We don’t go to places where we only have to speak in English”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Teachers come, take attendance, calms us down and makes us to practice the important tasks to cover the exam syllabus. He does not have time to explain anything. In coaching centers, they spend ample time for each of the tasks.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“We get suggestions before the SSC examination- we even cut them shorter based on our own understanding.”</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### School B, Focus Group 1

#### Open coding Phase 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internation al language, lingua franca, communicate with the outer countries, securing jobs home and abroad, going abroad for higher studies, doing business with other countries, to digitalize the country,</th>
<th>to demonstrate power in front of somebody who does not know English,</th>
<th>Writing journals/diaries, conversing in Eng. with friends, watching English movies, listening to English songs, practicing role playing, using phone dictionary for quick access to word meaning, role play, dialogue practicing, no listening and speaking</th>
<th>Practicing model questions, drilling various exam tasks, practicing the weak areas, Solving previous years’ question when the exam is nearer</th>
<th>No activities are practiced from textbook, reading passages from textbooks but practicing the model questions to drill the exam items, no textbook uses in Grade 10,</th>
<th>Practicing the same topics for emails/letters or compositions since class six, students only prepare the topics given in the school prepared syllabus, they make notes from several guidebooks, claim that they don’t memorize</th>
<th>Not that worried about passing the exam</th>
<th>Problem in speaking, not able to understand English (listening), lack of vocabulary, not confident if something comes out of syllabus, speaking is weak</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading and understanding the installation manuals, given priorities everywhere, going for university education, five-star hotels/restaurants, branded shops, to use internet, College admission,</td>
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</table>

#### Axial coding Phase 2 codes

<p>| Internation al value of English, English for access to/utilitarian value of English | Demonstrating power/ power | Things students do/wants to do to improve | Things students do in classrooms/ as | Coaches/ centers | Uses of textbook/guidebook | Topics are known and well practiced | Easy to pass the SSC English | Problems in learning/using English |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selected quotes from participants</th>
<th>of English proficiency exam preparation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“one day I was chatting with my friends in my room and our house helper came. Seeing her we quickly started talking in English, so that she did not know what we were talking about. So, she was just standing there, and she did not understand a word. It was fun. We do this all the time even in public places as well, when we know that some people might not understand what we are talking about.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“When we were in Grade six, occasionally teachers used to make us practice speaking but since we came to Grade 9, they never practiced any speaking activities. From Garde 9 we were only made to work for the board examination. Now in Grade 10, we are so busy in taking exams that we also do not have time to do anything else.”</td>
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<td>“we need to write and read in English when we go to universities”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Activities which I believe would help me in improvising my English, would not earn me an A+.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“We have been writing the same topics since class six. We have written them for so many times that we do not feel that there is anything left to practice. This is true for email, paragraph, writing letters. We have been practicing them for past three four years.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“If something new is given, if the topic is known to us, we think we would be able to write to some extent. Probably we would be able to at least 50 words.”</td>
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<td>“Because of business my dad has to communicate in English but sometimes he cannot do that on his own. So, while writing emails, he asks me to help him out. CV writing also could be helpful.”</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix O: Major washback studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Test/Place</th>
<th>Instruments and participants</th>
<th>Major Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Khan, Aziz, and Stapa (2019)</td>
<td>English language school-based assessment at the lower-secondary level of education in Malaysia</td>
<td>Surveyed 38 teacher trainees</td>
<td>Pre-service teachers are required to be given more exposure to the synergistic assessment system so that positive washback can be created when these trainees start teaching;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nopita (2019)</td>
<td>Undergraduate writing course at an Indonesian University</td>
<td>Interview with the teachers and students and classrooms observation</td>
<td>The teachers and students enjoyed the benefit of positive washback because of the targeted measurement-driven instructional design; The findings of the current study revealed the positive direction of students’ choice of English skill-focused courses, in particular among the students who had previous unsuccessful test attempts;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ma (2019)</td>
<td>CET 4 in China</td>
<td>Questionnaire with 534 students and an official CET test was administered</td>
<td>The findings of this study also revealed positive washback in students’ test preparation for English language tests in the Chinese testing context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rind &amp; Mari (2019)</td>
<td>HSC English exam in Pakistan</td>
<td>Document analysis of the question papers; Interviews with 11 teachers and 21 students from 5 schools;</td>
<td>Learning of the students, teaching of the teachers and test preparation were in alignment with each other which contradicted the standards for the National Curriculum for English Curriculum; The HSC exam was memorization and full of repetitions of the previous examinations, which creates serious negative washback on teaching and learning; The prescribed textbook was ignored in the exam;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdulhamid (2018)</td>
<td>Secondary Education Certificate Examination of English (rSECEE) in Libya</td>
<td>alignment study in phase one and interview, questionnaire and observations with the EFL teachers in phase two</td>
<td>There is limited-to-no degree of alignment between the rSECEE and the EFL content standards; rSECEE does not meet Webb’s (1997) comprehensive criteria; rSECEE appears to have had negative washback on some teachers and their teaching, but little-to-no negative washback on other teachers; rSECEE may have had negative washback on learners and their learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Study Title</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Findings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anand (2018)</td>
<td>A newly introduced EAP program in Canada</td>
<td>administrators, teachers, &amp; students</td>
<td>Despite the communicative and student-centered teaching philosophies of the EAP program and its teachers, all stakeholders addressed negative washback of the former testing regime; There was mixed washback of the new examination on teaching and learning, but the negative washback was not rooted in the high-stakes test per se, but in programmatic tensions such as the high value placed on writing skills as compared to the relatively low value of speaking skills and other academic skills. program. These factors inhibited the implementation of the new testing regime, and also the lack of synergism – an Inter-elemental factor certainly appeared to generate negative washback on teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Amin &amp; Greenwood (2018)</td>
<td>Secondary English examination in Bangladesh</td>
<td>Survey with 216 secondary English teachers and interviews with 42 students, 35 teachers, 12 teacher trainers, 4 principals and 12 parents</td>
<td>Th examinations have detrimental effects on teaching and learning of English as they reduce classroom teaching and learning to a curriculum focused almost entirely on what is expected in the examination; Because of the emphasis both parents and students place on examination results teachers are discouraged from teaching a richer curriculum and coaching centres are rewarded; We argue that the examination system does indeed require significant reform.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dawadi (2018)</td>
<td>SLC in Nepal</td>
<td>120 secondary level English teachers from six different districts for questionnaire, interviews and classroom observations</td>
<td>Teachers held negative views about the test; Teachers view about increasing the passing rate was inconsistent with the policy makers perception of the test; The teachers argued that the exam results do not reflect students’ real levels in English and also cannot discriminate well among students. Indicating; The SLC examination also seems to induce pervasive negative washback on teaching content selection of the current curriculum as teachers focused on activities/lessons from various units in the prescribed textbooks, and neglected others that were deemed important in the curriculum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kim (2017)</td>
<td>TOEFL in Korean</td>
<td>-Qualitative data analysis - Over 150 pages of anonymous online forum postings made by Korean TOEFL-takers from two websites</td>
<td>The score of the writing may not accurately indicate the writing ability of the Korean students’, because most of the students tend to practice TOEFL writing templates and memorize them. Even the benefits of attending private institutes were also tied to the benefits of obtaining templates from the institutes. - Local materials were more helpful - concerns about strong, negative washback effects evidenced by the way many Korean students purportedly prepare for the TOEFL writing test.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Ma (2017) [Doctoral dissertation]** | **TOEFL iBT and the CET4 in China** | **Document analysis, classroom observations, interviews, questionnaires and test score with students, teachers and administrations** | - The findings showed that to help Chinese students achieve success on the two tests, test familiarization, English skills improvement, and stress management were the best perceived test preparation practices used by the students, the teachers, and the administrators.  
- Even though there was not an immediate score gain, students valued the test preparation for the benefits they received from the appropriate focus, strategies, and resources for improving their English skills as well as the motivational strength they developed. |
| **Memon & Memon (2017) [Journal article]** | **MA final examination at a university in Pakistan** | **20 test candidates** | - Students considered the examination less valid because they got poor score and with that score, they were not eligible to apply at many jobs. |
| **Wenyuan (2017) [Journal article]** | **CET Spoken English in China** | **Questionnaire & interviews with Chinese test takers** | - Participants had positive attitude towards the test and they find the test important,  
- Teachers need to use more communicative oriented activities in the teaching |
| **Allen (2016) [Journal article]** | **IELTS in Japanese tertiary context** | **Questionnaire with undergraduates at a Japanese university** | - The IELTS Test created positive washback on learners’ language ability and test preparation strategies;  
- The score gain depends on the time spent in practicing. And taking the first test helped student to understand the expectation and constructs of the test;  
- Perceived importance, test taker’s personal interest, social norms, other educational background are influential in determining test preparation behaviour. |
| **Choi (2016) [Journal article]** | **University admission test in Korea** | **Interview & questionnaire with six test-takers preparing for two Korean university admission tests** | - students placed much more faith in the assessment when the information regarding the test construct was relayed in a clear and consistent manner  
- information released about the test, the difficulty of the test, test-takers’ study style, parents’ interventions, and financial as well as geographical access to private institutions all played significant roles in determining the test preparation process. |
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<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Study Title</th>
<th>Research Methodologies</th>
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<tr>
<td>Froehlich (2016)</td>
<td>Oral Exam EuroCom in German</td>
<td>- Interview - Questionnaire - Classroom Observation</td>
<td>- Although the test brought changed in content, teaching methodology and classroom instruction, teachers and students had negative feelings about the test, - Students wanted more clarification about the scoring and test requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loumbourdi (2016)</td>
<td>First Certificate in English (FCE) in Greece</td>
<td>- Questionnaire - Interview - Class observation</td>
<td>- Teachers prepared the students only for the test due to the pressure of school, parents, students’ expectation and Greek society in general.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ma &amp; Cheng (2016)</td>
<td>TOEFL</td>
<td>- Interview with the students &amp; document analysis</td>
<td>- Native English background influenced students the most in their TOEFL test preparation course in China, - They wanted to develop their English proficiency along with the score;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meletiadou &amp; Tsagari (2016)</td>
<td>General English course in Cyprus</td>
<td>- Questionnaire with 40 EFL learners</td>
<td>- Peer assessment made the student more aware, independent, reflective and engaged in their own learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memon (2015)</td>
<td>IELTS in Pakistan</td>
<td>- pre- and post-study testing, classroom observations, semi structured interviews with two teachers, informal conversational interviews with 20 test-preparers and questionnaire with test takers, teachers and test-preparers</td>
<td>- IELTS test-preparers and test-takers are primarily motivated to take the test for emigration and study abroad, - The test preparers have high expectations from the course regarding improvement of their English proficiency which are generally not met, - Disappointed test-takers hold some beliefs that their IELTS course and test will be of benefit to them in Pakistan, - Because public education is not meeting the demand for English, IELTS is now perceived as a route of English education and general certification, and a badge of middle-class status if not actual material gain.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>Findings</td>
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| Papakammeno (2016)      | Multi-exam classes in Greece                                           | Class observation & interviews with teachers | - Multi-exam class had lesser washback than the one exam class,  
- Washback got intensified as the exam drew closer;  
- Other factors, such as, students, teachers’ beliefs and background, parental and organizational pressure played a major role in creating washback |
| Pan (2016)              | English proficiency certificate exit requirement in Taiwan             | Pre-and post test score compared, group with exit exam requirement was compared with the group without, & interviews with the test takers | - the amount of time spent on language learning plays an essential role in determining the degree to which student scores improve,  
- test requirement policy plays a minimal role in improving student proficiency |
| Zou & Xu (2016)         | Test for English Majors for Grade Eight (TEM8) in China               | Questionnaire with University program administrators | - the more the test reflects the focal construct, the more it ensures the quality of the test. |
| Cheng & Sun (2015)      | Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) in Canada               | focus group & questionnaire with the students, & test scores | - For the L2 students, the test measures primarily their English language proficiency, particularly vocabulary, which was not one of the test construct, which resulted in poor performance of the L2 test takers,  
- |
| Pan (2014)              | GEPT and TOEIC Taiwan                                                 | Questionnaires with 589 Taiwanese university students & GEPT and TOEIC scores before and after the introduction of the exit tests in Taiwan | - English certification exit requirements appear to promote students’ autonomous learning for test preparation by making use of in class test related materials and school resources;  
- High proficiency students tend to use a variety of learning strategies compared to their counterparts; |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Study Title</th>
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<th>Findings</th>
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</table>
| Zhan and Andrews (2014)         | CET-4 in China                       | 106 diary entries and 30 post-diary interviews with Chinese undergraduate students | - informants’ superficial understanding of the revised CET-4 appeared to prevent them from adopting the radical changes in learning expected by the CET-4 designers.  
- Beliefs regarding the revised CET-4, Self-knowledge, Past learning and test-taking experience, Others’ experience in taking the CET-4, Learning environment and Possible CET-4 self mediated washback |
| Pan & Newfields (2013)          | English proficiency exit examination at the tertiary level in Taiwan | Interview & questionnaire with students from two universities with and without English exits exam requirements          | - minor differences between the two groups of students in terms of their motivation to learn English, how they prepared for tests, and the time they reputed devoted to their English studies,  
- English certification exit requirements did not enhance student motivation to a large extent, |
| Hung (2012)                     | EFL teacher preparation course       | Interviews, observations, document analysis, and reflective journals    | - e-portfolio assessments generated a community of practice, peer learning, enhanced the learning of content knowledge, promoted professional development, and cultivated critical thinking. |
| Xie & Andrews (2012)            | CET-4 in China                       | Questionnaire with the test takers                                      | - test takers who endorsed test design positively and language skills as necessary tended to show more confidence towards test taking; higher self-efficacy, in turn, is associated with greater engagement in preparation.  
- test taker perceptions of test design also affect usage of preparation strategies. |
<p>| Cheng, Andrews, &amp; Yu (2011)     | School Based Assessment (SBA) in Hong Kong | Questionnaire with students parents                                    | - students with higher self-rated English proficiency practiced more test related activities both inside and outside of the class |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Huang (2011) [Journal article]</th>
<th>EFL listening &amp; speaking Taiwanese University</th>
<th>Questionnaire with students</th>
<th>-CAs were better received by high scorer students and DAs by low scorers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tsagari (2011) [Journal article]</td>
<td>First Certificate in English (Cambridge ESOL) Greece</td>
<td>Interviews with native and non-native FCE teachers</td>
<td>-explores the relationship between the intended influence of the FCE exam, teachers’ perceptions towards the exam and their classroom practices, -factors that seem to influence teaching and learning beyond the exam itself, such as, teachers’ negative view towards the test, educational setting, parental intervention, traditions of teaching around</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maniruzzaman &amp; Hoque (2010) [Journal article]</td>
<td>HSC English exam in Bangladesh</td>
<td>Questionnaire with students and teachers</td>
<td>- Teachers are not aware of curriculum objectives; - teachers narrow down the syllabus, and teach their students the selected topics to be tested in the examination. Teachers teach the test and the test taking strategies, because it is relevant to the test score and test results. - The exam has negative washback on teaching and learning;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muñoz &amp; Álvarez (2010) [Journal article]</td>
<td>EFL oral assessment in Colombia</td>
<td>Questionnaire with teachers, Class observation, external evaluations of students’ oral performance</td>
<td>-The constant guidance during the teaching period helped the teachers in the experimental group to achieve beneficial washback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qi (2005) [Journal article]</td>
<td>The National Matriculation English Test (NMET) in China</td>
<td>Questionnaire &amp; interviews with test designers, inspectors, &amp; students</td>
<td>- conflict Between designers’ and other stakeholders’ views made the test an ineffective agent for changing teaching and learning in the way intended by its constructors and the policymakers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shih (2009) [Journal article]</td>
<td>General English Proficiency Test (GEPT) Taiwan</td>
<td></td>
<td>The objectives of the course and the relation of the course to the school’s policy seemed to be the cardinal factors in determining the degree of washback on teaching</td>
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<tr>
<td>Study (Year)</td>
<td>Methodology Details</td>
<td>Results</td>
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| Green (2007) [Journal article] | 3 courses: IELTS prep, academic writing prep and combination of these two | - No clear advantage for focused test preparation.  
- It was students’ personal goal and motivation which helped them in getting better score. Therefore, the researcher suggested to contrive beneficial washback, the goal for taking the test should be clear for both teachers and students. |
| Shih (2007) [Journal article] | General English Proficiency Test (GEPT) Taiwan | - The GEPT had elicited a varying but minor impact on learners at both schools, although a slightly higher degree of washback was found at the school with exit requirements.  
- Different degree of washback on different students. |
| Green (2006) [Journal article] | IELTS written tasks vs English for Academic Purpose at UK Universities | - A washback model is offered;  
- There was no significant difference between the two class types, however, many of the differences found could be linked rather to teachers’ level of professional training and beliefs of effective teaching than to the influence of the test itself.  
- Some features in the IELTS classes are closely linked to the test design of the test, such as, timed writing and specific topics of writing. |
| Green (2006) [Journal article] | IELTS academic writing, students from China preparing for the UK universities | - Narrow preparation strategies were not driven primarily by learner expectations.  
- Learner perceptions of course outcomes are affected by the course focus reported by teachers, but that the relationship is not deterministic. |
| Cheng (2005) [Doctoral dissertation] | Hong Kong Certificate of Education in English (HKCEE) | - Although teachers retained a positive attitude towards the new tests, however, that does not make them to change their teaching methodology.  
- There was a change in teaching content |
| Fournier-Kowalesk (2005) [Doctoral dissertation] | an intermediate level Spanish class at a university program in the USA | - Teachers did more of test preparation as they gained more insight about the course even though it was a low stake test,  
- Teachers’ personal factors as well as academic experience and background play a role in their way of teaching and thinking |
<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Study Type</th>
<th>Data Collection Method</th>
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<tr>
<td>Wall (2005)</td>
<td></td>
<td>O’ Level Exam in Sri Lanka</td>
<td>Questionnaire &amp; interviews with teachers, classroom observation</td>
<td>- Test brought a change in teaching content but not in teaching methodology, - Limited washback effect because of teacher’s resistance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burrows (2004)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Adult migrant English program in Australia</td>
<td>Questionnaire &amp; interviews with teachers, classroom observation</td>
<td>- A different degree of washback effect was noticed in the teachers influenced by their own beliefs and experiences. - Teachers had adapted or adopted or rejected the new test in their teaching. Based on the findings, the author assumed that unlike in high-stakes testing situations, classroom-based assessment has a degree of choice for the teachers about their decisions in classroom teaching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheng (2004)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hong Kong Certificate of Education Exam in English (HKCCE)</td>
<td>Questionnaire with teachers</td>
<td>- Although teachers had positive attitude towards the test, they were reluctant in changing their classroom instruction, - They were interested in preparing the students for the test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gosa (2004)</td>
<td></td>
<td>IELTS in Romania</td>
<td>Analysis of students’ diary</td>
<td>- Students’ expectation from the test was the single most factor in determining their attitude towards teaching and learning activities, - Their expectations of the test influenced their own learnings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hayes &amp; Read (2004)</td>
<td></td>
<td>IELTS</td>
<td>Class observation, interview &amp; questionnaire with students &amp; teachers</td>
<td>-experienced IELTS teacher’s teaching was more exam oriented because of his familiarity with the test and practice materials unlike the less experienced teacher. However, there was no significant different in terms of score, -Washback effects vary depending on the teachers’ background too -There was clear washback of the test on teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weigle (2004)</td>
<td></td>
<td>A test requirement for the NNS at the University in the USA</td>
<td>Interview with teachers</td>
<td>- The test preparation taught the students critical thinking and text analysis abilities which were useful in all other academic courses, -The test was able to create positive washback effect both in teaching and learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Study Title</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Findings</td>
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</table>
| Rehmani                 | 2003 | Secondary English Public exam in Pakistan                                  | Four head teachers, 8 teachers, and 16 students (four of from 4 schools) were interviewed | - Compared to grade 8, there is concentrated test preparation in grade 9 and 10 because now teachers and students target the board examination.  
- This study confirms that up to class VIII the internal school assessment system supports teaching and learning approaches and promotes to some extent higher order skills but as soon as they enter into grade IX and X the whole teaching and learning gets driven by the external public examination system. |
| Cheng                   | 1999 | Hong Kong Certificate of Education Exam in English (HKCCE)                 | Classroom observation                             | - Teachers had positive attitude towards the test and they perceived the reasons behind the decisions of exam change,  
- The exam pushed them to change their classroom activities given the importance of this public examination, but not changed them in their fundamental beliefs and attitudes about teaching and learning |
| Cheng                   | 1997 | Hong Kong Certificate of Education Exam in English (HKCCE)                 | Interview & Questionnaire with teachers           | - Teachers changed the content and activities,  
- But the methodology remained unchanged |
| Wall and Alderson       | 1993 | New English exam at the secondary level in Sri Lanka                       | Questionnaire with teachers & classroom observation | - Teachers changed the teaching contents, primarily based on the textbooks, not because of the exam,  
- NO change in methodologies,  
- Intense test preparation based on commercial materials,  
- Washback was limited |
| Khaniya                 | 1990 | School Leaving Certificate (SLC) English exam in Nepal                     |                                                   | - The results indicate that SLC English exam had a negative washback on the teaching and learning of the SLC English course because it failed to allow the students and the teacher to work for the course objectives of the SLC English.  
- It was concluded that washback is an inherent quality of a final exam; people whose future is affected by the exam-results work for the exam regardless of the quality of the exam. Whether the washback is negative or positive is dependent on what the exam measures; |

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