

Wash back of The Vietnam 6-Levels Foreign Language Competency Framework on Institutional Policies and Teaching English for Non-English Major Students at Hanoi Law University

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Dinh Thi Phuong Hoa

Hanoi Law University, Ha Noi, VietNam

Abstract: This study investigates the wash back effects of the Vietnamese Six-Level Foreign Language Proficiency Framework (VLFLPF) and its associated English Proficiency Test (EPT.3) on institutional policies and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching practices for non-English-major students at Hanoi Law University (HLU). Employing a qualitative case study design, data were collected through document analysis, classroom observations, and semi-structured interviews with university leaders and English instructors. Findings indicate that implementing VLFLPF has led to positive and negative wash back. Positively, it influenced curriculum reforms, assessment practices, and the incorporation of communicative teaching methodologies aligned with the CEFR. However, negative wash back was observed in the reliance on test-preparation materials and constraints in classroom instruction due to large class sizes and limited resources. Teachers' awareness of test demands shaped their pedagogical choices, while institutional policies emphasized standardizing English outcomes. The study contributes to understanding how national language frameworks influence educational practice and offers implications for policymakers, curriculum designers, and language educators seeking to optimize the wash back effects of proficiency-oriented assessments.

Keywords: wash back, KNLNNVN, proficiency, institutional policies and language teaching.

INTRODUCTION

In the context of increasing integration and globalization, English is widely recognized for its significant role. The importance of English has led to growing emphasis on developing English language teaching in many countries (Khamkhien, 2010). Moreover, English has transcended its original boundaries and emerged as a global lingua franca, functioning as an international language (Halliday, 2017).

In Vietnam, English has been a compulsory subject at lower secondary, upper secondary, and tertiary levels, and an elective subject at the primary level since 1982. Despite its crucial role, the teaching and learning of English for non-English-major students in Vietnam have yet to meet expectations, particularly in the development of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Many teachers rely on traditional approaches, such as teacher-centered instruction or the grammar-translation method. In response to the demands of modern society during the globalization era, the Prime Minister of Vietnam issued Decision No. 2080/QĐ-TTg on December 22, 2008, approving the project "Teaching and Learning Foreign Languages in the National Education System for the Period 2017–2025." This project aims to reform and evaluate foreign language teaching and learning across all educational levels within the national education system.

The Vietnamese Six-Level Foreign Language Proficiency Framework (VLFLPF) was introduced as part of this project. This framework comprises six levels, aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for

Languages (CEFR) and other international language proficiency standards. It serves as a reference for curriculum design and instructional planning. For non-language-major higher education institutions, the new language training program requires students to achieve Level 3 of the VLFLPF, equivalent to B1 under the CEFR, upon graduation.

Based on this framework, English Proficiency Tests (EPT) for levels 2 to 6 have been developed and implemented. Specifically, EPT.3 corresponds to B1, while EPT.4, EPT.5, and EPT.6 correspond to B2, C1, and C2 of the CEFR, respectively. Consequently, EPT.3 has become a high-stakes exam with significant implications for non-English-major students. In response, teachers and students have begun adapting their teaching and learning methods to meet the VLFLPF and EPT.3 requirements, and test preparation courses have emerged in the Vietnamese market. At Hanoi Law University (HLU), English teachers are crucial in preparing students for these examinations. HLU, as a non-language-major higher education institution, has required students to attain Level 3 of the VLFLPF upon graduation since 2017. This policy change is expected to influence both institutional policy and the practice of teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at HLU.

Washback, a concept in language testing, refers to the impact of a test on teaching and learning activities (Alderson & Wall, 1993). Understanding the wash back effects of the VLFLPF and EPT.3 is essential to assess how these frameworks and exams influence educational practices and outcomes. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the

wash back effects of the VLFLPF and EPT.3 on EFL teaching policy and practice for non-English-major students at HLU. By examining these effects, the study seeks to provide insights into how national language proficiency frameworks and associated exams shape educational practices in specific institutional contexts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Definition of Wash back

The term “wash back,” also known as “backwash,” is not commonly found in standard dictionaries but is widely used in applied linguistics and language testing. Wash back refers to the influence of tests on teaching and learning, including curriculum design, instructional methods, and learner behavior (Alderson & Wall, 1993; Bailey, 1999; Khaniya, 1990; Messick, 1996; Watanabe, 1996). According to Rahman et al. (2023), wash back describes how assessment practices impact instructional content, pedagogical approaches, and learner behavior.

Early definitions describe wash back as the extent to which a test causes teachers and learners to engage in activities they would not otherwise undertake without the test (Alderson & Wall, 1993). In other words, wash back encompasses any changes in curriculum or teaching methodology prompted by the implementation of a test.

Wash back (or backwash) denotes the effects that a test exerts on teaching and learning in the classroom. In applied linguistics, wash back is understood as the influence of assessment practices on instructional content, methods, and learner behaviors (Rahman et al., 2023). Tsagari and Cheng (2017) note that wash back typically refers to classroom-level effects of testing, distinguishing it from broader “impact” on educational policy or society. Early definitions framed wash back as the extent to which a test leads teachers and learners to do things they would not otherwise do. In other words, washback describes any change in curricula or pedagogy that results from administering a test.

In the educational evaluation literature, Fitz-Gibbon (1996) defined impact as any effect of the service [or of an event or initiative] on an individual or group. This definition accepts that the impact can be positive or negative and may be intended or accidental. When holding this definition, measuring impact is about identifying and evaluating change (Streat field & Markless, 2009, p. 134). Regarding this, Messick (1989) expanded the theory of consequential validity, changing the former concepts about score explanation and test use. The concept of wash back in test validity research is primarily associated with Messick’s concept of consequential validity. Therefore, wash back is defined as an “instance of the consequential feature of

construct validity and a focal point of validity research” (Messick, 1996, p.242), which covers sections of test use, the impact of testing on test-takers and educators, the interpretation of results by decision-makers, and any possible misuses, abuses, and involuntary effects of tests. The impacts of tests on teachers, students, institutions, and society are accordingly considered one type of validity evidence. Many other researchers have also emphasized the meaning of justifying test use and discovering its significances (Cronbach, 1988; Shohamy, 2000). Therefore, wash back also plays a significant role in the process of educational innovation and evaluation in English language teaching and learning (Hoa Đình, 2017).

Wash back effects are commonly classified as positive or negative, and as intended or unintended. Positive wash back occurs when a test encourages desirable instructional practices and helps achieve curricular goals, whereas negative wash back arises when a test has harmful or unintended consequences for teaching and learning. Likewise, an intended wash back effect is one that aligns with the test designers’ objectives, while unintended wash back refers to side effects that were not planned or desired. In practice, any influence of a test on classroom practice – whether it is beneficial or detrimental, deliberate or accidental – falls under the concept of wash back (Rahman et al., 2023). For example, a well-aligned test that motivates communicative instruction may produce positive wash back, whereas a high-stakes test focused on drill and memorization may induce negative wash back (i.e. narrowing of the curriculum).

Wash back is also intimately connected to issues of test validity, especially consequential validity. Within Messick’s unified validity framework, the social consequences of test use are part of construct validity, and wash back constitutes an important form of evidence about a test’s validity. Saglam and Tsagari (2022) emphasize that “wash back is seen as an inherent quality of any kind of assessment” and that it is conceptualized under the consequential aspect of validity. Similarly, Tsagari and Cheng (2017) argue that the effects of testing on classroom practices must be “weighted in evaluating validity,” since they represent one form of a test’s consequences. In sum, examining wash back helps test developers and researchers judge whether a test is serving its intended educational purposes: widespread positive wash back can support claims of validity, whereas pervasive negative washback may indicate misalignment between the test and its curricular aims.

In this study, “washback” is used to describe the influence of the VLFLPF on the teaching and learning of EFL at HLU. The study investigates how the VLFLPF shapes institutional policies and classroom practices,

offering insights into the impact of national language proficiency frameworks within the Vietnamese educational context. For instance, if the VLFLPF promotes communicative skills-based instruction, it may result in positive wash back; conversely, negative wash back may occur if it drives test-oriented teaching.

Wash back Models and Empirical Studies on English Language Teaching and Learning

The field of wash back has been investigated by many researchers around the world. Among these, the washback model of Alderson and Wall (1993) is considered a classic and landmark study. Alderson and Wall (1993, p. 120-121) developed the fifteen hypotheses (WHs for short) that combine different possible aspects of wash back, including the effect on what to teach/learn, how to teach/learn, the rate and sequence of teaching/learning, the degree and depth of teaching/learning and the attitudes to content, method, etc. of teaching/learning. Alderson and Hamp-Lyons model (1996, p. 296) reviewed and corrected WHs of Alderson and Wall (1993) that “tests will have different amounts and types of wash back on some teachers and some learners than other teachers and learners”.

Regarding this, Hughes’s model (1993) differentiates between participants; processes and products in the context of teaching and learning that discover those parts may be affected by tests. A few years later, based on Hughes’s model (1993), Bailey (1996) conducted her model (Figure 1). Her model is innovative in that it is grounded in empirical research evidence from educational revolution taking place in the Hong Kong context Bailey’s model (1996) describes the participants (include students, teachers, materials writers, curriculum designers, and researchers) and products (learning, teaching, new materials and curricula, research results). However, she does not clarify the process that means her model did not describe why the participants did what they did. She stated that a test first directly influences the awareness and behaviors of the participants towards their tasks, and this awareness and behaviours consecutively influence what processes the participants will attain their own expected products. Lastly, the term “wash back” means not only the consequences of testing on three parts (participants, processes, and products) but also their response toward the test. It highlights the perceptions and attitudes participants and how three parts affect what they do (Bailey, 1999, p.10). Therefore, three parts are the research central of this work.

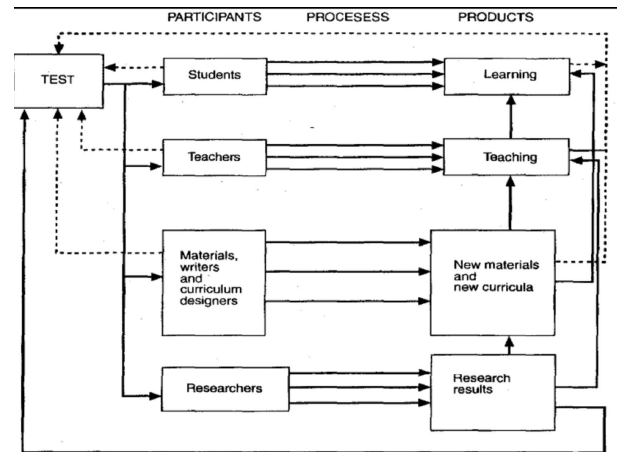


Figure 1. Bailey's washback model (1996)

Accordingly, Nguyen (1997) was adapted from the previous research in the field of washback, among which the study of Wall and Alderson (1993) was the point of departure and the foundation for her study. Nguyen (1997) conducted research in Vietnam concerning washback effects of the international English language testing system (IELTS) at Foreign Languages College (FLC), Vietnam National University in Hanoi (VNU). Nguyen (1997) designed two models of washback on the teacher-level and student-level (Figure 2 and 3). Her study explored how an external standardized test of English language – represented by IELTS that affects the institutional curriculum, the teaching and learning of EFL for English major students at FLC, VNU.

Figure 2. Nguyen's model of washback on the teacher-level (1997)

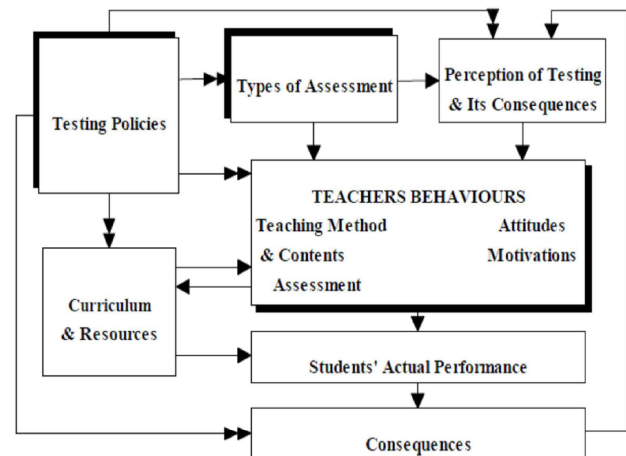
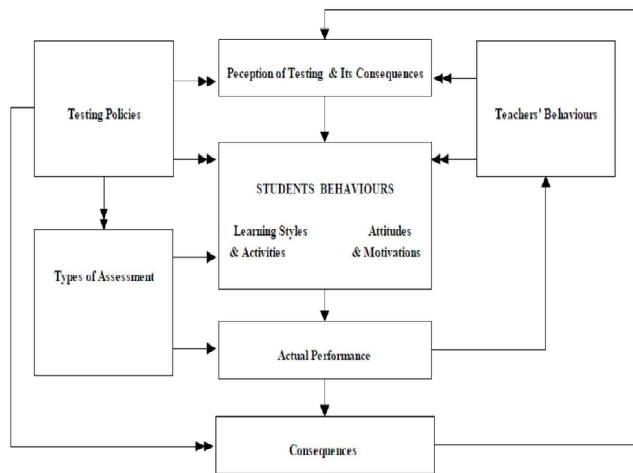


Figure 3. Nguyen's model of washback on the student-level (1997)



Recent empirical studies (2015–2025) have applied these concepts to specific high-stakes tests and EFL contexts. In many Asian countries the CEFR has been adopted as a policy framework, leading researchers to examine the washback of newly aligned national exams. For example, Vietnam introduced a six-level proficiency framework (KNLNNVN) aligned to the CEFR, along with a corresponding graduation exit test (VSTEP). Đinh and Widodo (2021) reported that these CEFR-based requirements significantly changed teaching practices: teachers adjusted curriculum content and assessment methods to meet the new standards. Similarly, Doan and Piamsai (2025) found that Vietnam's VSTEP (levels 3–5, aligned to B1–C1 CEFR) had positive washback on learners: a majority of students reported that the exam prompted them to use more cognitive and meta cognitive

learning strategies (especially in speaking and writing). These studies suggest that aligning tests with clear proficiency benchmarks can reorient classroom activities toward targeted language skills.

High-stakes international tests also show strong washback in EFL settings. In Vietnam, Barnes (2016) observed that the TOEFL iBT test “influenced both what the teachers taught and how they taught” – teachers reoriented instruction toward TOEFL content and relied heavily on test-preparation materials. IELTS washback has likewise been investigated: Nguyen (2023) surveyed Vietnamese English majors preparing for an IELTS exit requirement and found a mix of positive and negative effects. Students reported that IELTS motivated greater effort to improve English (positive washback) but also induced stress due to its difficulty (negative washback). Thus, global proficiency tests can significantly shape learner motivation, classroom focus, and teaching methods in EFL programs.

Comparable patterns have been observed in other Asian contexts. Khan, Hassan, and Cheng (2025) studied Malaysia's recent shift to a School-Based Assessment (SBA) system for lower-secondary English. Although the reform aimed to promote communicative teaching and critical thinking, the researchers found that entrenched exam culture limited its impact. Inadequate teacher training, resource shortages, and ongoing reliance on central exams meant that formative-assessment practices were not fully realized. Overall, these empirical studies from Southeast Asia underline those contextual factors – policy implementation, resources, and attitudes – strongly mediate washback. Even well-designed assessment reforms may face barriers to positive washback if systemic support is lacking.

Table 1. Major Washback Models and Key Features

Model	Key Focus / Components	Example / Notes (Citation)
Alderson & Wall (1993)	15 hypotheses describing how tests influence <i>teaching content, methodology, syllabus, learner attitudes</i> , etc.; stressed no simple test→outcome mapping.	Established foundational ideas of washback (origin of term “washback”).
Hughes (1993)	Basic framework: Participants (teachers, learners, etc.), Processes (instructional activities), Products (learning outcomes, materials).	One of earliest models; clarifies who/what in education can be affected by testing.
Bailey (1996)	Empirical model (Hong Kong): distinguishes “washback to the program” (teacher/curriculum effects) vs. “to the learners”; emphasizes how test-derived information and scores shape stakeholder attitudes.	Grounded in observation; shows how test prep and results feed back into teaching/learning.
Alderson & Hamp-Lyons (1996)	Study of a TOEFL-prep course: showed washback varies by context, with different teachers and learners experiencing different effects.	Highlighted that test effects depend on specific test and group (contextual variability).

Nguyen (1997)	Linked teacher-level and student-level models for IELTS washback in Vietnam.	Example of context-specific model: examined IELTS washback on Vietnamese English curricula.
Green (2007)	Conceptualized washback by Direction (positive/negative), Intensity, Variability (across individuals).	Emphasizes that test design and stakeholder differences determine the strength and nature of washback.

Drawing on washback models and some empirical studies on language teaching of Alderson and Wall (1993), Alderson and Hamp-Lyon (1996) and Nguyen (1997), this study will be designed to investigate “*Washback of The Vietnam 6-levels Foreign Language Competency Framework on Teaching and Learning English as Foreign Language for non-English major students at Hanoi Law University*”. However, due to the scope and length of this paper, the authors therefore focus on discovering the washback existence of institutional policies and EFL teaching at HLU.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA

The design is adapted from the previous research in the field of washback, among which the study of Wall and Alderson (1993) as well as Nguyen (1997) were the points of departure and the foundation for the present work. This work was conducted from between August 2016 and December 2024 to collected data of three kinds: (1) documents analysis, (2) semi-structured interview and (3) classroom observations (videotapes). However, the data from (1) and (2) is considered backdrop to the discussion (3) because of the extent of the data and space limitation.

A Description of Subjects of The Work At HLU

The subjects of the project were Rector of HLU, Head of Undergraduate Training Department, two leaders of General English Section and Legal English Section, teachers of English at HLU.

HLU is Undergraduate institution that is not specialized in foreign languages; the new language-training program must require a language proficiency of KNLNNVN level 3 upon graduation. However, because of limitation of training time and English in mixed-big sized classes (from 35 to over 45 students) in a large room where is between 60 and 105 square meters in area, no microphone, and thus, some students could not listen to all lessons clearly. Students were from 18 to 22 years of age. They were from different Northern areas of Vietnam. Although, they had 3 years of learning English at high schools, their English proficiency was at beginner level (A0), the Rector of HLU decided to apply for English proficiency of KNLNNVN level 3 (B1) upon graduation. As a result, EPT.3 (B1) of KNLNNVN will be used for university graduation.

Conducting the Document Analysis

The researcher collected all institutional policy documents on innovating curriculum, methods of assessment the official course documents, and supplementary materials according to KNLNNVN and EPT.3 for getting the data because such artifacts of everyday experience can provide information about what has been encouraged or discouraged; about what has happened or will happen. Etc. (Hinchey, 2008, p.77). Therefore, such documents are useful for educational research. For getting the exact information, thick descriptions were transcribed into written form and would be assessed in short and translated precisely.

Conducting the Observations

After receiving the permission of all participants, four classes were chosen for videotaping, and then the videotapes were transcribed into written form (Hinchey, 2008, p.85). The lesson videotaping happened from August 2023 to May 2024. 20 English lessons were observed. 55 minutes of every observation was the length of each lesson period. Furthermore, when observing, the researcher carried out at least fifteen minutes of some individual interviews for triangulation. Among these, the researcher recorded the attitudes of the teachers and students and the discussion between the participants when taking tasks were allocated in order to discover what teachers used and taught, and how students responded. The researcher also discovered how EPT.3 influences teachers and students. For getting the exact information, thick descriptions and the responds of teachers and students in a natural manner, teachers and students were explained about the observation. These descriptive data would be assessed and treated according to their common outcomes.

Conducting the Interviews

According to Carew and Lightfoot (1979), observations do not by themselves explain the participants' intention and reason for action. Therefore, the data of observations were instrumental in the development of interview questions.

After observations, the interviews were held because the participants had a few experiences of teaching and learning English by that time. The open-ended questions were designed to attain the best feasible quality of responses from the members because the open-ended questions were used to add the depth of the data via participants' individual experiences (Creswell, 2008, as cited in Boyce, 2010, p. 43).

Moreover, these open-ended questions were applied in both individual interviews and focus group. This combination helped to focus on getting the specific information that would be comparable across the group of participants (Cohen, et al., 2000, as cited in Boyce, 2010, p. 44).

The authors carried out at least five 1-hour informal individual interviews and focus groups with 13 participants in separate classrooms. After receiving the permission of all participants, all formal individual interviews were audio taped and transcribed in short and translated precisely.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2. The changes in teaching contents and methods of assessment

Year	Teaching hours of semester 1	Teaching hours of semester 2	Teaching Contents of semester 1	Teaching Contents of semester 2	Formative assessment	Summative assessment (achievement test)	Learning outcomes of university graduation
2017	80 periods	55 periods	From Unit 1 to Unit 14 of Lifeline textbook (Elementary)	From Unit 1 to Unit 6 of Lifeline textbook (Pre-intermediate)	Questions and Answers or Writing Test (Grammar or Reading exercise)	Writing Test (Grammar and Reading exercise)	
2023	80 periods	55 periods	Four skills and grammar/ vocabulary of KNLNNVN level 2 (English A1-A2)	Four skills and grammar/ vocabulary of KNLNNVN level 3 (English A2 – B1)	Speaking Test/ Reading Test/ Listening Test or Writing Test	Writing Test (Objective test and Writing test)	EPT.3 of KNLNNVN (English B1)

In 2023, some more authentic materials are included as the official documents (See Appendix 1 for details).

Teachers of English are encouraged to use texts taken from journals, books and news for listening/speaking/reading and writing skills. The practices are designed by teachers were short answer questions, gap-filling/identifications sentences/paragraphs, etc. that are identical to EPT.3 of KNLNNVN or practice tests at A2 and B1 level.

The analysis of the official course documents indicated the official course documents were set before 2017 for semesters 1 and 2 were not EPT.3 of KNLNNVN or practice tests at A2 and B1 level. This shows that the impact of those on the teaching before 2013. Since 2014, a new trend has been seen: teachers of English have been encouraged to use a variety of authentic materials besides the official course documents. Thus, caution must be taken when interpreting the official course documents. This is also an issue that was mentioned in the interview with leaders and teachers.

Supplementary Materials Used by Teachers

Results of Document Analysis

As stated in the methodology, document analysis involved institutional policies on curriculum, the official course documents, methods of assessment and supplementary materials used by teachers. Relevant details of the analyses are given below.

Curriculum and methods of Assessment

Teaching contents and methods of assessment have been changed. Table 2 illustrates the changes in teaching contents and methods of assessment.

Results of the analysis of the supplementary materials practiced by teachers of English and students indicated they used various authentic materials (See Appendix I) – including commercial publications, journals, books, and news for listening/speaking/reading and writing skills. Table 3 illustrates the changes in using materials:

Table 3. The changes in supplementary using materials

Topics	Sources
Hobbies and interests/ People/ Places/ Relationships/ Food and Drink/ Entertainment/ Jobs/ Culture/ Sports/ Education/ Science and technology	VOA News/ TV News/Journals Film/ English songs Newspaper/Book/ Magazines

They covered most CEF materials that were available in Vietnam. Teachers and students did not use other kinds of materials (This is dealt with in the results of the interview). The effects of Cambridge ESOL tests were seen in the official course documents, but these materials were chosen after 2013. Teachers of English tended to use materials from CEF and Cambridge ESOL sources to prepare students for semester examinations and EPT.3 examination. The analysis

designates that other kinds of materials have no influences on teachers and students. It must thus be deduced that EPT.3 and Cambridge ESOL examinations have an impact on the choice of materials for teachers of English and students.

Leaders claimed that the formative assessment and semester examinations of English are like EPT.3 and Cambridge ESOL tests (apart from the sub-writing of semester examinations). However, because of time limitation and mixed-big size class, one of four sub-tests (listening/speaking/reading/writing test) is applied for both formative assessment and semester examinations at HLU. The analysis indicated that a part of the semester examination focused on testing the mastery of grammar structures and vocabulary and that type of English test had stayed unchanged. There have been changes in the nature of the examination and the changes in question look undifferentiated to EPT.3 and Cambridge ESOL item types and content (see Appendix II). Hence, the interpretation must be that the semester examinations were shaped on the EPT.3 and Cambridge ESOL examinations in the four sub-tests (listening/speaking/reading/writing test) as far as item types and content are concerned.

However, there are some adjustments in terms of length of time for different sub-tests and the level of difficulty of each test for different semester levels. This results in the number of questions for each sub-test being different. The scores of the examination still followed the traditional Vietnamese scale as a 10-point scale with point 1 = lowest and point 10 = highest. The differences in the score can be explained by recalling that the semester examinations are achievement tests whilst EPT.3 and Cambridge ESOL tests are proficiency tests. Nonetheless, it must be deduced that the semester examinations are EPT.3 and Cambridge ESOL-type tests.

Results of Interviews

Informal conversational interviews were conducted with 9/12 teachers of English after four-classroom observations and in groups at the office during tea break. Semi-structured interviews were held with the Rector of HLU, Head of Undergraduate Training Department, two leaders of General English Section and Legal English Section (see Appendix III). Relevant results are presented below.

100% teachers of English had already obtained M.A. degrees. One of them got C1 and four other teachers had obtained M.A. degrees at universities in either Australia or the USA. However, all teachers experienced over 7 years of teaching EFL and thus they could understand the changes on the national and institutional policies on EFL teaching and learning between 2013 and 2014. 100% of teachers often collected materials of CEF, EPT.3 and Cambridge ESOL-type to use in class. They also asserted that there were many

practice tests for EPT.3 and Cambridge ESOL examinations. They reported that they had been using them because materials for Cambridge ESOL tests were included in the office course documents and therefore, they did not design task for students. They also expressed that they wanted their students to be familiar with numerous text contents and types of the principle of the EPT.3 and Cambridge ESOL tests. This helps the indication that there is interaction between teaching and learning and that this is interaction is related to the washback of KNLNNVN and EPT.

From these comments, they may be inferred that there had been many more materials on the market that were designed to prepare for EPT.3 and Cambridge ESOL examinations. It could also be said that teachers reacted differently to the needs of the test and self-designing tasks were also a problem for inexperienced teachers.

The selection of supplementary materials in is an indicator of KNLNNVN and EPT washback on the use of materials.

Some of teachers did not think that they taught to the tests, they claimed that they taught to expand student's English. Thus, teachers described that reveal the trend to advocate the EPT.3 and Cambridge ESOL tests. In addition, nearly 71% of teachers said that they change their teaching methods to demand the changes of formative assessment and semester exams.

According to the Rector of HLU, the number of students admitted to HLU was increasing to meet the demands of society, and society demanded a high quality of training outcomes, particularly English proficiency of students. That was why the assessment of EFL learning outcomes at HLU must be innovated to meet the necessities of society. The Rector asserted that he wanted to maintain the institutional policies on English teaching according to KNLNNVN next years because of its useful.

Head of Undergraduate Training Department, two leaders of General English Section and Legal English Section asserted that the semester exams of English were shaped on EPT.3 and Cambridge ESOL tests and that they were EPT.3-type, except for writing sub-test and the score scheme. Furthermore, teachers of English were acquainted with EPT.3 and Cambridge ESOL tests and they understood that the semester exams of EFL were shaped on EPT.3 and Cambridge ESOL tests. They believed that their tests were standardized because their tests were designed on EPT.3 and Cambridge ESOL tests. Therefore, the semester exams of EFL positively influenced curriculum designers, the EFL teaching and learning at HLU. Their answers illustrated that the tests in use are evidence of EPT.3 of KNLNNVN washback.

In short, the responses of teachers and leaders revealed that there were EPT.3 and KNLNNVN washback

on what teachers used and on semester exams or in other words, teaching contents. Teachers agreed that formative assessment and semester exams corresponded to one of EPT.3 sub-tests. Nonetheless, few teachers supported that there was evidence of content washback on what they used. Accordingly, KNLNNVN and EPT.3 have various types of washback on some teachers and learners than on other teachers and learners. This is relevant to result of Alderson and Hamp-Lyons (1996) and Nguyen (1997).

Results of Observations

Because investigations of KNLNNVN and EPT.3's influences on EFL teaching at HLU, the authors observed two teachers to see whether washback existed in their classrooms.

The authors observed three classes of English A1-A2 in semester 1 and two classes of English A2-B1 in semester 2. Two teachers and their students agreed to be videotaped. Two teachers were both female, with ten years of experience. Two teachers and their students used materials from CEF type. Textbooks were English File third edition A1-A2 and A2-B1 (Oxford, 2012). The supplementary

materials are Cambridge Key English Test 1, 2 (CUP, 2003) and English Grammar in Use (Murphy, 2011). Two teachers focused on four skills, grammar, and vocabulary. Students worked in pair or group-work and made presentations and then two teachers corrected their errors. Because of time limitation, not all students could have a chance to speak English.

In short, the result of observations corresponded to the responses of teachers and leaders. Two teachers used a variety of materials from CEF type. These materials are in line with the EPT.3 of KNLNNVN's approach. The methodology of two teachers was communicative approach. It was hard to define whether the EFL teaching methodology was influenced by EPT.3 of KNLNNVN's approach or by the methodology of the used materials. However, this is an indication of EPT.3 of KNLNNVN's existence on EFL teaching. Table 4 shows the data synthesis of the content and teaching methods between level 3/6 (EPT.3) KNLNNVN, teaching materials and syllabus of English 3 subject that have been used in classroom.

Table 4. Summarizing and comparing the content and teaching methods between level 3/6 (B1) KNLNNVN, teaching materials and syllabus of English 3 subject

No.	Contents and English Teaching Methods	KNLNNVN and EPT.3				Teaching materials B1 (English File – Pre-intermediate)				Syllabus of English 3 subject level 3/6 (B1) KNLNNVN			
I	Topics	<i>listening comprehension skills</i>	<i>Speaking skills</i>	<i>Reading comprehension skills</i>	<i>Writing skills</i>	<i>listening comprehension skills</i>	<i>Speaking skills</i>	<i>Reading comprehension skills</i>	<i>Writing skills</i>	<i>listening comprehension skills</i>	<i>Speaking skills</i>	<i>Reading comprehension skills</i>	<i>Writing skills</i>
Sum		12	12	12	12	8	11	8	4	12	12	12	12
%		100	100	100	100	66.66	91.66	66.66	33.33	100	100	100	100
Other Topics		0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
percentage % of other topics		0	0	0	0	100	100	100	100	0	0	0	0
II	Types of questions in English	<i>listening comprehension</i>	<i>Speaking skills</i>	<i>Reading comprehension</i>	<i>Writing skills</i>	<i>listening comprehension</i>	<i>Speaking skills</i>	<i>Reading comprehension</i>	<i>Writing skills</i>	<i>listening comprehension</i>	<i>Speaking skills</i>	<i>Reading comprehension</i>	<i>Writing skills</i>
Sum		17	17	17	17	10	9	10	7	17	17	17	17
percentage % of Types of questions in English		100	100	100	100	58.8	52.94	58.8	41.17	100	100	100	100
III	The English grammar exercises	<i>listening comprehension</i>	<i>Speaking skills</i>	<i>Reading comprehension</i>	<i>Writing skills</i>	<i>listening comprehension</i>	<i>Speaking skills</i>	<i>Reading comprehension</i>	<i>Writing skills</i>	<i>listening comprehension</i>	<i>Speaking skills</i>	<i>Reading comprehension</i>	<i>Writing skills</i>
Sum		8	8	8	8	6	3	5	5	8	8	8	8
percentage		100	100	100	100	75	37.5	62.5	62.5	100	100	100	100

% of The English grammar exercises														
B	Teaching activities in classroom	<i>listening comprehension</i>	<i>Speaking skills</i>	<i>Reading comprehension</i>	<i>Writing skills</i>	<i>listening comprehension skills</i>	<i>Speaking skills</i>	<i>Reading comprehension skills</i>	<i>Writing skills</i>	<i>listening comprehension skills</i>	<i>Speaking skills</i>	<i>Reading comprehension skills</i>	<i>Writing skills</i>	
Sum		6	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	5	5	5	5	
percentage % of Teaching activities in classroom		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	83.33	83.33	83.33	83.33	83.33	

To sum up, KNLNNVN and EPT.3 have been considered one of the dominant determiners of what happens in classrooms that influence EFL teaching activities at HLU. The influences have been classified directly and indirectly, either positively or negatively. The curriculum, the official course documents, methods of assessment, methods of teaching and supplementary materials are innovated by the positive influences of tests. However, some inexperienced teachers did not design the tasks for students but relied on the available materials in the market that were related to negative washback.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This study explored the washback effects of the VLFLPF and its Level 3 English Proficiency Test (EPT.3) on institutional policies and English language teaching for non-English-major students at HLU. The findings provide clear evidence that both intended and unintended forms of washback have emerged following the implementation of VLFLPF. On the institutional level, policies have been adjusted to align with national language standards, leading to revisions in curriculum design, assessment methods, and teaching materials. Teachers have shifted toward CEFR-aligned instruction at the classroom level, with increased use of communicative and skills-based approaches. Positive washback was evident in aligning teaching objectives with assessment demands, integrating authentic materials, and the heightened awareness among educators of language proficiency benchmarks. However, the study also revealed aspects of negative washback, including the overreliance on test preparation resources, limited opportunities for student-centered learning due to large class sizes, and the lack of training in test design and evaluation for some instructors. These challenges highlight the complexity of implementing assessment-driven reforms, especially in resource-constrained environments.

Based on these findings, several recommendations are proposed: For Policy Makers: The Ministry of Education and Training should consider developing and distributing a standardized bank of test items modelled on EPT and

Cambridge ESOL formats. This would ensure consistency across institutions and reduce teacher workload in test design. For Institutions: Universities should invest in professional development programs that train English teachers in educational assessment, curriculum innovation, and task design, emphasizing promoting positive washback. For Educators: Teachers are encouraged to balance test-oriented instruction with communicative language teaching, using proficiency-based frameworks as a guide rather than a constraint. For Researchers: Further longitudinal studies should be conducted to track the evolving impact of VLFLPF and EPT.3, particularly across diverse institutional contexts.

In conclusion, the study contributes to the growing body of research on language assessment washback, particularly within Southeast Asian EFL contexts. It underscores the need for coherent policy implementation, systemic support, and continuous pedagogical innovation to realize the full benefits of high-stakes language proficiency frameworks.

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